

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	19 MARCH 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	17
TITLE:	MAJOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS PROJECTS - UPDATE		
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update on the current major transport and highways projects in Reading, namely:

- Reading Station Area Redevelopment (Cow Lane bridges).
- Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes - South Reading Mass Rapid Transit, Green Park Station, TVP Park & Ride, East Reading Mass Rapid Transit and National Cycle Network Route 422.
- Unfunded schemes - Reading West Station upgrade and Third Thames Bridge.

1.2 This report also advises of any future key programme dates associated with the schemes.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the Committee notes the contents of the report.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.

4. THE PROPOSAL

Reading Station

Cow Lane Bridges - Highway Works

- 4.1 This scheme will unlock the historic bottle neck at Cow Lane by providing two lanes for traffic alongside a continuous shared path for pedestrians and cyclists. The scheme was originally intended to be delivered as part of the Reading Station Area redevelopment scheme, however as previously reported to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee the need to undertake a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process has significantly delayed implementation of the scheme. This has also led to increased scheme costs as the original estimates to deliver the scheme were based on utilising Network Rail's existing contractor responsible for the viaduct, who were already mobilised between the two bridges.
- 4.2 Network Rail undertook a value engineering exercise for the scheme which the Council was involved in, primarily to ensure the essential elements of the scheme (such as the new footway on the east side of the southern bridge) were retained. The value engineering exercise identified some potential areas where the project scope could be reduced without affecting the overall project objectives. The main points to note relate to the pedestrian facilities to cross the road between both bridges and a subsequent new layout to include a zebra crossing (instead of a pedestrian refuge) and a request by Network Rail to close Cow Lane throughout the duration of the works, which was rejected by the Council.
- 4.3 Network Rail has appointed a contractor to deliver the scheme with a scheduled completion date of summer 2018. Construction works commenced in November including demolishing the old railway bridge which has been successfully completed. Officers continue to liaise with Network Rail regarding the traffic management requirements for the scheme, resulting in a one-way system being implemented in December 2017.
- 4.4 Following completion of the Network Rail scheme, the Council intends to deliver a series of complementary public transport, walking and cycling enhancements on the Oxford Road corridor.

Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes

South Reading Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.5 South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a series of bus priority measures on the A33 corridor between Mere oak Park & Ride and Reading town centre. The scheme will reduce congestion and journey times, improving public transport reliability on the main growth corridor into Reading. Any proposal will not reduce existing highway capacity along the A33 as the scheme will create additional capacity for public transport.
- 4.6 Phases 1 & 2 of the scheme, from M4 J11 to Island Road, were granted full funding approval from the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB) in November 2015. Construction of Phase 1A was completed in December 2016, consisting of a new southbound bus lane between the A33 junction with Imperial Way and the existing bus priority provided through M4 Junction 11. The scheme is achieved predominantly by utilising space in the central reservations and realigning existing lanes where required.
- 4.7 Construction of Phases 1B and 2 of the scheme was undertaken between April and November 2017. This involved the creation of outbound bus lanes between the A33 junctions with Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island) and Imperial Way, linking to the Phase 1A scheme. Off-peak lane closures were required to facilitate the construction work and the scheme was opened in December 2017.
- 4.8 Phases 3 and 4 of the scheme were granted programme entry status by the BLTB in March 2017. Preparation of the full business case is complete and the scheme was granted financial approval by the BLTB meeting in November 2017. The scheme includes the following elements:
- Outbound bus lane on London Street;
 - Extension of the inbound bus lane on Bridge Street;
 - Upgrade of the traffic signals on the Oracle roundabout to a MOVA method of control.
 - Outbound bus lane on the A33 approach to Rose Kiln Lane;
 - Outbound bus lane on the A33 between Rose Kiln Lane and Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island);
 - Inbound bus lane on the A33 between Imperial Way and South Oak Way; and
 - Upgrade of the traffic signals on the Bennet Road gyratory to a MOVA method of control.
- 4.9 The previously proposed section of inbound bus lane at the Oracle roundabout has been removed from the scheme following a decision from this Committee in January. Construction works are due to commence on site in March on the remaining town centre sections of the scheme, with works on the A33 to follow from the summer.

Green Park Station

- 4.10 Reading Green Park Station is a proposed new railway station on the Reading to Basingstoke line. The station and multi-modal interchange will significantly improve accessibility and connectivity to this area of south Reading which has large-scale development proposed including the expansion of Green Park business park, Green Park Village residential development and the Royal Elm Park mixed use development.
- 4.11 The scheme was granted financial approval by the BLTB in November 2014. The funding package includes £9.15m from the Local Growth Fund, £4.6m from private developer Section 106 contributions and £2.3m from the New Stations Fund 2, which was announced by the DfT in July 2017. The additional funding will enable enhanced passenger facilities to be provided at the station to help cater for the significant level of proposed development in the surrounding area.
- 4.12 The concept designs for the station have been produced by Network Rail, and Balfour Beatty has been appointed to undertake the detailed design and construction of the station which is being progressed in partnership with Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR) to ensure the station complies with the latest railway standards. Design work for the multi-modal interchange and surface level car park has been completed and enabling works are due to commence on-site in March.
- 4.13 An indicative programme for delivery of the station by summer 2019 has been agreed with the DfT, Network Rail and GWR, based on the requirement for the station to be included within the specification for the Great Western Franchise. The revised programme is due to delays with the concept design work which is being undertaken by Network Rail, and the change in scope of the project due to the recently announced additional funding from the New Stations Fund.

TVP Park & Ride and East Reading Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.14 Thames Valley Park (TVP) Park & Ride is a proposed park & ride facility off the A3290 being led by Wokingham Borough Council. East Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a proposed public transport, walking and cycle link between central Reading and the TVP park & ride site, running parallel to the Great Western mainline, being led by Reading Borough Council. Both schemes were granted programme entry status by the BLTB in July 2014.
- 4.15 A consultation was undertaken by Wokingham Borough Council during November 2015 regarding the TVP park & ride proposals, and planning permission was granted by Wokingham Borough Council in November 2016 with works due to start on-site in the summer.

- 4.16 A consultation for the MRT scheme was undertaken during July 2016, including a public drop-in session at the Waterside Centre in close proximity to the route. The exhibition was also on display at the Civic Offices and on the Council's website.
- 4.17 The MRT scheme planning application was submitted in July 2017 and further public exhibitions took place to raise awareness of the scheme. The planning application is currently being considered by the Local Planning Authorities for both Reading and Wokingham.
- 4.18 Preparation of the full scheme business case for the MRT scheme is complete and financial approval was granted for the scheme by the BLTB meeting in November 2017. The business case demonstrates that the scheme represents 'high value for money' in line with central Government guidance and will provide significant benefits to Reading and the wider area.

National Cycle Network Route 422

- 4.19 National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 422 is a proposed cross-Berkshire cycle route between Newbury and Windsor. The route would provide an enhanced east-west cycle facility through Reading, linking to existing cycle routes to the north and south of the borough. The scheme was granted full funding approval from the BLTB in November 2015.
- 4.20 Preferred option development has been undertaken and the detailed design for Phase 1 of the scheme is complete, which is the provision of a shared path on the northern side of the Bath Road between the Borough boundary and Berkeley Avenue. The first phase of works commenced in February 2017 and was completed in July 2017. Traffic signal upgrades converting the pedestrian crossing to the east of Southcote Road are complete and upgrades at Liebenrod Road are expected to be complete mid-March.
- 4.21 Phase 2 of the scheme, from Bath Road/Berkeley Avenue through the town centre to east Reading, was granted scheme and spend approval at Policy Committee in September 2017. Proposed works include alterations to an existing raised table at the junction of Watlington Street and London Road and a contraflow cycle facility on Kennet Side which are subject to statutory processes. The second phase of works commenced on Berkeley Avenue in January 2018 and is expected to move to Bridge Street in March.
- 4.22 Feedback on the final phase of the NCN programme is currently being reviewed and the plans finalised. The proposed scheme builds on works delivered as part of the LSTF programme by extending shared-use facilities along Wokingham Road from Cemetery Junction to Three Tuns. Measures will include improved pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities, junction treatments, signing and footway widening, including proposed changes to the existing pedestrian crossing on Wokingham Road to the east of St Bartholomews Road.

Unfunded Schemes

Reading West Station Upgrade

- 4.23 The Council has been working with Great Western Railway and Network Rail to produce a Masterplan for improved passenger facilities at Reading West Station. The proposals include accessibility improvements including lift access to the platforms from the Oxford Road and enhancements to the path from the Tilehurst Road, provision of a station building on the Oxford Road and associated interchange enhancements such as increased cycle parking. It also includes improvements within the station itself including wider platforms, longer canopies, enhanced lighting and CCTV coverage, and improvements to the entrance from Tilehurst Road including provision of a gateline and ticket machines.
- 4.24 Delivery of the scheme is split into two distinct phases, with Network Rail due to implement Phase 1 as part of their wider programme of works for electrification of the line between Southcote Junction and Newbury. This includes replacing the footbridge and providing a stepped access from the town centre side of the Oxford Road to the outbound platform (for services towards Basingstoke). The second phase of works is currently unfunded, however the Council will continue to explore potential funding sources for the scheme alongside Network Rail and GWR.

Third Thames Bridge

- 4.25 A Third Thames Bridge over the River Thames is a longstanding element of Reading's transport strategy to improve travel options throughout the wider area, and to help relieve traffic congestion north of the river and in the town centre. A working group has been established to investigate the traffic implications and prepare an outline business case for the proposed bridge, led by Wokingham Borough Council in partnership with Reading Borough Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and Oxfordshire LEP.
- 4.26 Preparation of the Outline Strategic Business Case for the scheme is complete and was discussed at a Summit meeting called by the MP for Reading East in September 2017. The business case shows there is a strong case for a two lane traffic bridge in this location, with the full documentation available on Wokingham Borough Council's website here - <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/parking-road-works-and-transport/transport-and-roads-guidance-and-plans/>
- 4.27 The Cross Thames Travel Group is currently exploring options to fund the next stage of scheme development work, which includes production of the full scheme business case.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The delivery of the projects outlined in this report help to deliver the following Corporate Plan Service Priorities:

- Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active.
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 The projects have and will be communicated to the local community through public exhibitions and Council meetings.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The creation of - and changes to existing - Traffic Regulation Orders will require advertisement and consultation, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 At the relevant time, the Council will carry out an equality impact assessment scoping exercise on all projects.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None relating to this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Major Transport Scheme Update reports to Strategic, Environment, Planning and Transport Committee and Traffic Management Sub-Committee, from 2015 onwards.