

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	14 JANUARY 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	15
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
- Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes - Green Park Station, Southern and Eastern Mass Rapid Transit, Eastern Park and Ride, National Cycle Network Route 422 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 Sub-Committee note 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 As previously reported to the Sub-Committee in March 2015, the Public Inquiry was held and completed on 13th January 2015.
- 4.2 All the objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) were withdrawn but as they were outstanding when the public inquiry was held, the Department for Transport were not able to make a decision until they received the Inspector's report.
- 4.3 This process has now been completed, and The Secretary of State for Transport has confirmed both the CPO and SRO (Side Roads Order).
- 4.4 Alongside completing the necessary legal procedures to complete the CPO, Network Rail have for some time been engaged in a procurement process for the works liaising with existing contractors working on the Reading Station Area Redevelopment Project. The CPO process has delayed delivery, and the contractor Network Rail had identified to complete the highway works has since left site. Since the last Traffic Management Sub-Committee meeting, Network Rail have identified some potential issues with the overall cost profile to deliver the project, and some design issues with existing utility services in the road. At this stage, Network Rail are reviewing the cost profile and design to establish a future programme of works but clearly this has added some delay to the expected delivery of the project by Summer 2016. Officers of the Council are engaged in this process, and will provide a further update at the meeting if any more developments take place.

Cycle Parking on the North side of the Station

- 4.5 A new cycle parking hub with space for approximately 600 bikes is due to be introduced in the area previously used as a site compound on the corner of the multi-storey car park. The works programme has now been confirmed with adjustments to an existing electricity cable having taken place in November 2015. The Council will commence the main construction works in January 2016 with completion expected by the end of March 2016.
- 4.6 In the interim, additional cycle parking for 212 bikes has been introduced to cater for the high demand in this area.

Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes

Green Park Station

- 4.7 Reading Green Park Station is a proposed new railway station on the Reading to Basingstoke line. The station and multi-modal interchange would 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 proposed Royal Elm Park mixed use development.
- 4.8 The scheme was granted financial approval by the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2014, with a programmed station opening date of December 2018 subject to Network Rail delivering electrification of the line between Southcote Junction and Basingstoke as committed prior to this date. The recently published Hendy Review includes a recommendation to delay electrification of this line to an unspecified date between 2019-2024, however the Berkshire Local Transport Body has agreed that the scheme should be progressed in line with the original timescales and therefore officers will continue to work with colleagues at Network Rail and Great Western Railway to progress scheme development, including detailed design work for the station and multi-modal interchange. The Lead Member has written again to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chairman of Network Rail urging them to reconsider the electrification timetable so as to align it with the completion of Green Park Station.

South Reading Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.9 South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a proposed series of bus priority measures on the A33 corridor between MereOak Park & Ride and Reading town centre. The scheme would 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.
- 4.10 Phases 1 & 2 of the scheme, from M4 J11 to Island Road, were granted full funding approval from the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2015. Officers are continuing to progress the detailed design for the scheme, including utility and geotechnical surveys, to enable a programme for scheme delivery during 2016/17 and 2017/18 to be finalised.
- 4.11 In addition, options for Phase 3 of the MRT scheme are currently being investigated to provide further bus priority measures between Island Road and Reading town centre.

East Reading Park & Ride and Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.12 East Reading Park & Ride (P&R) is a proposed park and ride facility off the A3290 and East Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a proposed public

transport link between central Reading and the park and ride site, running parallel to the Great Western mainline.

- 4.13 The schemes were granted indicative funding approval in July 2014 and financial approval will be sought from the Berkshire Local Transport Body when the full business case for each scheme has been prepared.
- 4.14 A consultation was undertaken by Wokingham Borough Council during November 2015 regarding the P&R proposals, and timescales for further development of each scheme are currently under review, subject to the outcome of the consultation and business case work.

National Cycle Network Route 422

- 4.15 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.
- 4.16 The scheme was granted full funding approval from the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2015. Preferred option development and detailed design for the scheme will be undertaken in partnership with all authorities to ensure a programme for delivery of the full scheme can be agreed.

Third Thames Bridge

- 4.17 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. A group has been established to investigate the traffic implications and prepare an outline business case for the proposed bridge, led by Wokingham Borough Council and in partnership with Reading Borough Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and Oxfordshire LEP.
- 4.18 The Wokingham Strategic Transport Model is currently being updated to enable the modelling and business case work to be undertaken, with initial results anticipated for Spring 2016 which will inform the next steps for the project.
- 4.19 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

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 local exhibitions and Council meetings.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None relating to this report.

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 The costs associated with delivery of the Park and Ride schemes and the Cycle Hub are met by the DfT Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

9.2 The costs associated with the delivery of the LEP Growth Deal schemes are met by a combination of LEP and local funding.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Traffic Management Sub-Committee reports.