

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

<b>TO:</b>	<b>TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>9 MARCH 2017</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>MAJOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS PROJECTS - UPDATE</b>		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>TONY PAGE</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT</b>
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>TRANSPORTATION AND STREETCARE</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>BOROUGHWIDE</b>
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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 - Green Park Station, Reading West Station upgrade, Southern and Eastern Mass Rapid Transit, Eastern Park and Ride, National Cycle Network Route 422 and Third Thames Bridge.
- Whiteknights Reservoir Scheme

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

**2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

2.1 That the 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 reported to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in various reports over the past 12 months, Network Rail identified some potential issues with the overall cost profile to deliver the Cow Lane highway project, and they discovered some potential design issues with existing utility services in the road. As a reminder to the Committee, the original cost 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. Unfortunately, the CPO process delayed the proposed programme, and this contractor has since left site.
- 4.2 Network Rail have completed a value engineering exercise alongside a main contractor in order to identify potential cost savings by redesigning and reducing the scope of certain elements of the project. The Council has been involved in the review primarily to ensure the essential elements of the scheme are retained, (such as the new footway on the east side of the southern bridge). The Council remains reliant on Network Rail in confirming a programme of works, and Network Rail remain the lead organisation in delivering the project.
- 4.3 The value engineering exercise to date has identified some potential areas where the overall project scope can 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 has since been rejected by the Council.
- 4.4 Network Rail confirmed in December 2016 that they are now required to carry out a full procurement process in order to identify a suitable contractor to construct the scheme. Network Rail have confirmed this process will unfortunately delay the start of works until after the 2017 Reading Festival. Network Rail have confirmed they are currently progressing the procurement process and will be able to provide a programme of works once a contractor has been secured.
- 4.5 Officers will continue to update Members on the latest position through the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

## Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes

### Green Park Station

- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 The scheme was granted financial approval by the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2014, with a programmed station opening date of December 2018. Design work for the station is being progressed in partnership with Network Rail and Great Western Railway to ensure the station complies with the latest railway standards. An updated programme has been agreed between all project partners in line with the target opening date for the station of December 2018. Design work for the multi-modal interchange and surface level car park is being progressed in parallel with the station design work.
- 4.8 It was agreed by the Berkshire Local Transport Body in July that an additional £2.75m funding from the LEP's unallocated capital pot should be allocated to Green Park Station. This will ensure that passenger facilities at the station can be enhanced in line with the increased anticipated demand for the station due to the level of proposed development in the surrounding area.
- 4.9 A bid has been submitted to the New Stations Fund for £2.8m additional funding which if successful would further improve passenger facilities at the station. A decision is anticipated by Network Rail in Spring 2017.

### Reading West Station Upgrade

- 4.10 The Council has been working with Great Western Railway and Network Rail to produce a Masterplan for significantly 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; 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.
- 4.11 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.

- 4.12 Unfortunately, the funding bid to the Local Growth Fund to support Phase 2 of the scheme was unsuccessful. Therefore, at this time, the Council will continue to explore other potential funding sources alongside Network Rail and GWR.

#### South Reading Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.13 South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a proposed series of bus priority measures on the A33 corridor between Mere oak 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.
- 4.14 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. Detailed design for Phase 1A is complete and design for Phases 1B and 2 are being finalised.
- 4.15 Phase 1A of the scheme commenced on-site on 5<sup>th</sup> September for a period of 3 months. This initial phase of works involved construction of a series of bus lanes 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. Phase 1b and 2 are due to commence in the Spring 2017 subject to completion of the tender process.
- 4.16 In addition, options for future phases of the South MRT scheme are currently being investigated to provide further bus priority measures between Island Road and Reading town centre. Phases 3 and 4 of the scheme have been ranked as the highest priority transport scheme in Berkshire for future funding from the Local Growth Fund and indicative funding for the scheme was allocated by the Government in February 2017.

#### East Reading Park & Ride and Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.17 East Reading Park & Ride (P&R) is a proposed park and ride facility off the A3290 being led by Wokingham Borough Council 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 being led by Reading Borough Council.
- 4.18 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.
- 4.19 A consultation was undertaken by Wokingham Borough Council during November 2015 regarding the P&R proposals, and a planning application was

submitted in the summer. Wokingham Borough Council have now approved the planning application.

- 4.20 A public drop-in session took place on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July between 13.00 and 19.00 at the Waterside Centre in Thames Valley Park to gain feedback on the MRT scheme prior to the school summer holidays. The exhibition was also on display at the Civic Offices. The initial consultation has been completed and feedback is being incorporated into the scheme design. Submission of the planning application is likely to be early Summer 2017.
- 4.21 Preparation of the full scheme business case for the MRT scheme is being progressed and the assessment is anticipated to be submitted to the Berkshire Local Transport Body in March 2017 to seek full financial approval for the MRT scheme. This is subject to the outcome of the independent assessment of the business case by the LEP and their assessors.

#### National Cycle Network Route 422

- 4.22 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.
- 4.23 The scheme was granted full funding approval from the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2015. Preferred option development has been undertaken and detailed design for the scheme is complete for Phase 1, 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 in Reading commenced in February 2017 and are progressing well.

#### Third Thames Bridge

- 4.24 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.
- 4.25 Production of the outline strategic business case is being led by Wokingham Borough Council on behalf of the Cross Thames Travel Group. Unfortunately, the bid for funding to the DfT to produce the full business case was not successful. Therefore, options to progress the development of the scheme will be investigated by the joint group.

#### Whiteknights Reservoir Scheme:

- 4.26 Whiteknights Reservoir is a 70,000m<sup>3</sup> capacity reservoir retained by an earth fill embankment dam and is located within the University of Reading grounds and borders Whiteknights Road and the Borough boundary.
- 4.27 There are three 'Statutory Undertakers' that own land forming part of the reservoir, as set out in The Reservoirs Act 1975; the University of Reading, Reading Borough Council (both in its highway and land owning capacity) and B & M Care.
- 4.28 The scheme consists of constructing a flood retaining wall of approximately 72m in length along the frontage of the Council owned Mockbeggar Allotment site in order to divert flood water to the spillway in the grounds of the B&M Care Home. To enable the construction of this flood wall the embankment dam will be strengthened with the addition of gabion baskets along the toe and engineering backfill to slacken the slope on the downstream side of the embankment. Improvements to the highway drainage system are also being undertaken as well as enhanced landscaping.
- 4.29 The scheme was tendered in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, with a contract awarded to Topbond Plc in August 2016.
- 4.30 Works commenced on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2016 and following on site engineering difficulties is now reprogrammed for completion mid to late May 2017.
- 4.31 To date the contractor has installed the drainage and gabion basket retaining structure.
- 4.32 Works on the 72 m long flood retaining wall commenced early February 2017 and is due for completion by the end of March / early April 2017. A single lane closure along Whiteknights Road adjacent to the site, (to provide a safe pedestrian access), is being managed by temporary traffic signals, which has been in place from 18<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and will run until the end of April 2017.
- 4.33 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 None relating to this report.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 Traffic Management Sub-Committee and Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee reports.