

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
<b>DATE:</b>	18 NOVEMBER 2020	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	12
<b>TITLE:</b>	ACTIVE TRAVEL PROGRAMME AND SCHOOL STREETS UPDATE		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	COUNCILLOR PAGE	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT
<b>SERVICE:</b>	PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND REGULATORY SERVICES	<b>WARDS:</b>	ALL
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To update members of the committee on the Council's Active Travel programme, as approved by Policy Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020.
- 1.2 To update members of the committee on the Council's School Streets initiative and to seek authority to progress an experimental School Street in Downing Road and Lambourne Close.
- 1.3 Appendix A - Map of Emergency Active Travel Fund Schemes  
Appendix B - Traffic Management Plan  
Appendix C - Summary of Consultation Responses  
Appendix D - Stage 1 Road Safety Audit Report

#### 2 RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That members of the Committee note the report.
- 2.2 That the Committee agrees to:
  - 2.2.1 The approval of an experimental School Street on Downing Road and Lambourne Close, Reading
  - 2.2.2 That in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport and Ward Councillors, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the appropriate (experimental) traffic regulation order for the proposed School Street on Downing Road and Lambourne Close in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
  - 2.2.3 That subject to no objections being received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the experimental order permanent.

**2.2.4 If objections are received, they will be reported back to the Committee at the appropriate time.**

### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan supports the delivery of new transport infrastructure in order to manage levels of congestion, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions, whilst accommodating the significant levels of planned economic growth. The Council's approved Capital Programme provides capital funding of over £40m for key infrastructure projects. Funding is provided from grants received from the Local Enterprise Partnership and Central Government, developer contributions, investment from Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR), and Council borrowing.
- 3.2 Consultation on Council's new Local Transport Plan (LTP) was undertaken from 4th May to 30th Aug 2020. The new strategy has been developed to help achieve wider objectives including the Reading 2050 Vision, the Climate Emergency which was declared in February 2019 and improved air quality. It is heavily focused on addressing these wider challenges through a package of solutions to both provide realistic sustainable alternatives to the private car, alongside measures to manage demand to improve air quality and congestion. The new strategy has been aligned with other Council strategies including the new Local Plan and draft Climate Emergency Strategy and formal Council adoption will be sought in December 2020.
- 3.3 The Council has agreed a Strategic Framework (March 2020) which sets out the Council's key priorities including support for business and the economy. The proposals set out in this report support accessibility for all by providing an improved travel choice to support the long term recovery of Reading.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 At the meeting of Policy Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020, members approved progression of a series of Active Travel proposals in Reading. These proposals were presented in response to the coronavirus pandemic, which, alongside the Climate Emergency, have dramatically enhanced the focus on enabling greater levels of active travel through the provision of walking and cycling facilities.
- 4.2 The proposals were developed with a view to short term measures that could be implemented quickly, and medium to longer term measures that, subject to the level of funding released by the Department for Transport (DfT), could be developed and implemented over the next few years.
- 4.3 The approved schemes are as follows: -

#### **Short Term projects**

- Gosbrook Road
- Sidmouth Street
- Reading Bridge
- Cycle lanes on Oxford Road
- Whitley Street Local Centre
- Southampton Street / Silver Street
- Redlands Road

### Medium Term projects

- Blagrove Street
- Basingstoke Road
- London Road
- 20mph speed limit review

### Long Term projects

- Scheme from the Centre to East Reading through a joined-up approach to the provision of sustainable transport facilities on Kings Road and London Road.
- Enhancements in West Reading including on Bath Road and further opportunities along the Oxford Road to deliver the new sections of bus lane as a part of the agreed corridor study and enhance and complement the current scheme.
- Opportunities in North Reading, including improved access to Christchurch Bridge alongside walking and cycling enhancements in Caversham local centre and on Caversham Bridge.
- Progression of measures in South Reading including on Basingstoke Road, Shinfield Road and the A33 public transport scheme.
- Enhancements to walking and cycling routes to/from and through the town centre alongside improving the quality of the urban realm.

## 5. CURRENT PROGRESS

- 5.1 In early June, the DfT formally announced the Active Travel funding programme, and confirmed the available funding (subject to application) for each authority. Reading was allocated indicative funding in two tranches; £295k in the first tranche and £1,179k in the second tranche.
- 5.2 On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020, the DfT announced the outcome of the Council's Tranche 1 application. The award was 75% (£221,240) of the indicative allocation. The DfT stated the reduced amount was due to the fact not all proposals reallocated road space for walking and cycling. This has been challenged by Officers as Reading Bridge, Gosbrook Road and Sidmouth Street all met this requirement. The DfT indicated that Council's should seek to recover any reduced funding through the Tranche 2 bid with a strong focus on further ambitious active travel proposals.
- 5.3 On 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020, the DfT announced the guidance and process for applying for Tranche 2 funding with the deadline for bids being 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

### Active Travel - Tranche 1

- 5.3 The delivery of the "Tranche 1" proposals is now almost complete. The following temporary schemes have or are in the process of being delivered in September 2020:-
- George Street, Reading bridge - reallocation road space to create new cycle facilities. **Complete**
  - Southampton Street, Silver Street & Mount Pleasant- reallocation road space to create new cycle facilities. **Complete**
  - Sidmouth Street - temporary one-way restriction and lane closure to provide a segregated two-way cycle lane. **Complete**
  - Whitley Street - reallocation road space to create new cycle facilities. **Complete**
  - Oxford Road (Tilehurst) - reallocation road space to create new cycle facilities. **Complete**
  - Redlands Road - cycle markings and road safety improvements. **Complete**
  - Christchurch Road - cycle markings - **TBC (delay due to utility works)**
  - Oxford Road (between Norcot Road and the town centre) - cycle markings. **Complete**

- 5.4 At the end of August, the scheme in Gosbrook Road and Westfield Road was introduced. However, in response to concerns raised by the local community and the dangerous behaviour of a minority of motorists ignoring the one-way system, the scheme has now been removed. Whilst there will be some costs associated with the delivery of the scheme, the majority of materials can be reused on other schemes.
- 5.5 Officers will commence the review process of each temporary Tranche 1 scheme early in 2021 which will be based on traffic data, user feedback, and safety records. Further updates on progress will be reported through this and other Committee's in the coming months.

### **Active Travel - Tranche 2**

- 5.6 The Council's Tranche 2 Active Travel bid to the Department for Transport (DfT) was submitted on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020. Due to the indicative funding allocated at £1.179m, the programme of improvements for pedestrians and cyclists is made up of two 'core' schemes and three further supplementary schemes (subject to additional funding), in addition to a package of promotional activities.
- 5.8 The Council's full bid to Government includes the following schemes:
- Southampton Street and Oracle Roundabout (Pell Street - Inner Distribution Road/Bridge Street - Core Scheme) - Create a segregated cycle lane along Southampton Street, with changes at the junctions at either end, linking with existing cycle infrastructure through the reallocation of road space from general traffic. A key 'missing link' in the existing network, it will provide a continuous link between exiting routes including NCN Routes 4 and 422, and the mandatory cycle lane recently been implemented in Phase One of the Council's Active Travel programme.
  - Bath Road/Castle Hill (Southcote Lane - Inner Distribution Road/Castle Street - Core Scheme) - Running from the IDR to Russell Street, reallocate road space from general traffic to create a segregated lane for cyclists to and from the town centre. A further 'missing link' on the existing network. An additional scheme (Russell Street - Southcote Lane) if funding allows, would extend the route west, linking with the new NCN route 422 and connecting with existing routes west of the railway bridge. Both cyclists and pedestrians will benefit from the physically segregated route.
  - Shinfield Road (Christchurch Green - Whitley Wood Road - additional scheme) Create a segregated two-way cycle lane, linking to the Phase One schemes on Redlands Road and Christchurch Road. A high-quality facility on a key route between South Reading and Royal Berkshire Hospital, the University of Reading, local centres and Reading town centre.
  - London Road (Borough boundary to Cemetery Junction - additional scheme) Reallocate road space from general traffic to create an inbound shared bus and cycle lane. This will provide a key missing link with the shared bus and cycle route being implemented in Phase One on London Road outside of the RBH, and Wokingham Borough Council's proposed shared bus and cycle route on London Road (up to Shepherds House roundabout).
  - Forbury Road/Vastern Rad (Watlington Street - Reading Bridge - additional scheme) Create a segregated two-way cycle lane by reallocating road space from general traffic on this section of the IDR. This will also provide further separation

for pedestrians through lower volumes of cyclists using the existing shared pavement.

More details on all the 'Tranche 2' schemes, as well as those delivered in Tranche 1, can be found on the dedicated Active Travel webpage [www.reading.gov.uk/activetravel](http://www.reading.gov.uk/activetravel). Appendix A illustrates both Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 schemes.

- 5.9 At the time of writing, the DfT have confirmed the announcement on the second tranche funding is imminent, and a further update will be given at the meeting or in an addendum to the report if received earlier. In preparation of the announcement, Officers are also preparing a scheme delivery programme to align with the likely spend deadlines.

### School Streets

- 5.10 The Council have engaged with several schools regarding the potential implementation of a School Street outside their school. To date, Park Lane Primary (Junior School) is the only school to have formally applied to implement a School Street on Downing Road and Lambourne Close.
- 5.11 Two further School Street proposals are currently in the planning stages. Maiden Erlegh School in Reading, UTC and Alfred Sutton Primary School, who are developing a joint proposal are currently carrying out an informal consultation with affected properties and parents/carers on the proposal to implement a School Street on Crescent Road between Wokingham Road and Bulmershe Road. Wilson Primary School are currently carrying out an informal consultation with affected properties and parents/carers on the proposal to implement a School Street on Wilson Road, including Lundy Lane, Tofrek Terrace and Westbourne Terrace.
- 5.12 Park Lane Primary (Junior School) have undertaken informal consultation with affected properties and parents/carers on the proposal to implement a School Street on Downing Road and Lambourne Close, details of which are shown in the Traffic Management Plan - Appendix B. No objections were received as part of this consultation however Officers have requested that formal notification is received from The Royal British Legion (located at the northern end of Downing Road) that they do not object to the School Street proposal. Appendix C of this report provides a summary of the consultation responses received.
- 5.13 In assessing the application, Council Officers have carried out parking and traffic surveys on the proposed School Street and neighbouring streets, to determine the current baseline usage of the streets. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit has been undertaken by an independent road safety auditor on the proposed School Street, and no safety concerns were identified within the report - Appendix D. Subject to approval of this School Street proposal, a Stage 2 Road Safety Audit will be carried out prior to its implementation.
- 5.14 Following the submission of a School Street application and supporting evidence by Park Lane Primary (Junior School), Officers have reviewed the application and subject to the school receiving approval from The Royal British Legion, a School Street on Downing Road and Lambourne Close is recommended for approval.
- 5.15 Subject to approval, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services will make the appropriate (experimental) traffic regulation order in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

- 5.16 After an initial 6-months of the experimental order, provided no objections are received the Committee is asked to authorise the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make the traffic regulation order permanent. Should objections be received, these will be reported back to the Committee at the appropriate time.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 As detailed in paragraph 5.1 and 5.2 above, since the Policy Committee report in May 2020, an element of funding for the proposals listed will now be supported by the DfT Active Travel Fund. Additional funding will be required to deliver the whole programme and this will be subject to further DfT grant funding opportunities. The Council used capital funding to quickly deliver the Tranche 1 schemes, which will be claimed back through the Government's Active Travel Fund. The use of consultants can also be funded by the programme.

## **7. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 7.1 The Council has adopted a Strategic Framework (March 2020) which sets out the Council's key priorities including:

- To keep social care services running for the children and adults who need them;
- To support vulnerable and isolated people during the crisis;
- To support business and the economy, which will secure the long term recovery of Reading.

- 7.2 These proposed measures will enable residents and people who work and study in Reading to more easily consider a return to work or a return to normal activities as the lockdown measures are gradually lifted. Transport is integral to the functioning of business and the economy and it is suggested that these measures to promote more walking and cycling opportunities will have a positive impact for business and the economy as well as helping people to feel safe.

## **8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 8.1 Advertising of the Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders will be conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation. Notices will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and erected on lamp columns within the affected area. If this is not possible, alternative means will be proposed such as delivering the notice to each property within the affected area and promoting the notice in the online version of local media. Subject to the outcome of the Tranche 2 bid, further local consultation may be carried out prior to scheme delivery.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149 the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.

- 9.2 The Council has reviewed the scope of the proposals as outlined within this report and considers that the proposals have no direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics. However, the service will meet with representatives of the Access and

Disability forums to determine whether they have any concerns or issues regarding the proposals.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Some interventions will not require Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). Others will require TROs, of which there are different types. The main ones are:

- Permanent: this process includes prior consultation on the proposed scheme design, a 21-day notice period for statutory consultees and others who can log objections; there could be a public inquiry in some circumstances.
- Temporary: these can be in place for up to 18 months. There is a 7-day notice period prior to making the TRO and a 14-day notification requirement after it is made, plus publicity requirements. These are most suitable for putting in place temporary measures and road closures. Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders will require advertisement, in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order will be made in accordance with section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended.
- Experimental: Any experimental order will be made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and advertised in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure)(England and Wales) Regulations 1996. The order can operate for a maximum of 18 months. Any comments or objections to the order can be made during the first 6 months of operation, after which the Council will consider and decide to either continue with the experiment for a further 12 months, remove the experiment or make the scheme permanent.

10.2 Necessary changes to Highway signs and road markings, including temporary, will need to be implemented in accordance with the Traffic Signs, Regulations and General Directions 2016 and associated Code of Practice for temporary Highway signing.

## **11. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in the draft Climate Emergency Strategy this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions, however significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.

11.2 Proposals set out in this paper seek to support a step-change in transport infrastructure and services and a shift towards sustainable and clean modes of transport as attractive alternatives to private vehicles. This builds on the considerable success of increasing the number of walking, cycling and public transport trips into Reading town centre to 80% as part of the delivery of previous Local Transport Plans.

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 Policy Committee report - 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

12.2 Traffic Management Sub-Committee 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 and 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020.