

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
<b>DATE:</b>	18 MARCH 2019		
<b>TITLE:</b>	MAJOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS PROJECTS - UPDATE		
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#### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update on key progress and milestones associated with the current programme of major transport and highways projects in Reading, including:

- Reading Station Area Redevelopment (Cow Lane Bridges)
- South Reading Mass Rapid Transit
- Reading Green Park Station
- Thames Valley Park Park & Ride
- East Reading Mass Rapid Transit
- National Cycle Network Route 422
- Reading West Station Upgrade

1.2 The report also provides an update on future funding opportunities for currently unfunded schemes.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the Committee notes the progress on delivery of the programme of major transport schemes as set out within the report.

- 2.2 That the Committee notes the opening of Cow Lane to two-way traffic without signals for the first time on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February.
- 2.3 That the Committee notes the reallocation of funding for the East Reading MRT scheme to other schemes across Berkshire, including the Reading West Station Upgrade, Theale Station Park & Rail Upgrade and Coppid Beech Park & Ride schemes.

### 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

#### Major Transport Scheme Programme

#### Reading Station Area Redevelopment (Cow Lane Bridges)

- 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 the need to undertake a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) significantly delayed implementation of the scheme. This 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 on-site.
- 4.2 Network Rail undertook a value engineering exercise to identify potential areas where the project scope could be reduced without affecting the overall project objectives. The Council was involved in this process to ensure the essential elements of the scheme (such as the new footway on the east side of the southern bridge) were retained. The main outcome was a revised highway layout, including a zebra crossing (instead of a pedestrian refuge) between the two bridges.
- 4.3 Network Rail appointed a contractor to deliver the scheme and construction works commenced on-site in November 2017. The contractors have encountered significant issues with unforeseen ground conditions, drainage issues and uncharted buried services on the site, resulting in the full opening of the new scheme being delayed. The temporary one-way traffic flow under Cow Lane bridge, which was implemented in December 2017, returned to two-way in July 2018 as part of the revised programme. The route was opened for two-way traffic without signals for the first time on

Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019, with the full scheme including pedestrian and cycle routes to be complete in the summer.

- 4.4 Following completion of the Network Rail led scheme, the Council intends to deliver a series of complementary public transport, walking and cycling enhancements on the Oxford Road corridor. In addition, the Sub-Committee has agreed to conduct a statutory consultation on proposals to reduce the speed limit on Richfield Road, Cow Lane and Portman Road to 30mph.

#### South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (Phases 1-4)

- 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 objective of the scheme is to manage congestion and improve public transport journey times and reliability on the main growth corridor into Reading. The scheme will not reduce existing highway capacity along the A33 as additional capacity for public transport will be provided.
- 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 and scheme and spend approval by Policy Committee in April 2016. 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. 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.
- 4.7 Phases 3 and 4 of the scheme were granted full financial approval by the BLTB in November 2017 and scheme and spend approval by Policy Committee in January 2018. The scheme includes the following elements:
- Extension of the inbound bus lane on Bridge Street (Phase 3);
  - Outbound bus lane on London Street (Phase 3);
  - Upgrade of the traffic signals on the Oracle roundabout to a MOVA method of control (Phase 4);
  - Outbound bus lane on the A33 approach to Rose Kiln Lane (Phase 3);
  - Outbound bus lane on the A33 between Rose Kiln Lane and Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island) (Phase 4);
  - Inbound bus lane on the A33 between Imperial Way and South Oak Way (Phase 3);
  - Inbound bus lane on the A33 between Longwater Avenue and Island Road (Phase 4); and
  - Upgrade of the traffic signals on the Bennet Road gyratory to a MOVA method of control (Phase 4).

- 4.8 Construction of the town centre sections of Phase 3 of the scheme in Bridge Street and London Street commenced in March 2018 and is now complete. Construction of the elements of Phase 3 on the A33 commenced on-site in August and is progressing well, with completion expected in summer 2019. Design work for the Phase 4 elements of the scheme is on-going.

#### Reading Green Park Station

- 4.9 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.
- 4.10 The scheme was granted financial approval by the BLTB in November 2014, and scheme and spend approval by Policy Committee in September 2017. 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 additional demand from the significant level of proposed development in the surrounding area.
- 4.11 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). Design work for the multi-modal interchange and surface level car park has been completed and enabling works commenced on-site in March 2018, including a fill operation to bring the ground up to the required levels and utility diversions.
- 4.12 Detailed design work for the station is being progressed in partnership with Network Rail and GWR, in parallel with the enabling works for the interchange being undertaken. This includes a requirement to amend the planning consent following the change in scope of the project due to the additional funding secured from the New Stations Fund. The planning and design process is on-going and the indicative programme for delivery of the station has been updated to spring 2020.

#### Thames Valley Park Park & Ride

- 4.13 Thames Valley Park Park & Ride is a new park & ride facility off the A3290 to the east of Reading, in close proximity to Thames Valley Park business park. The scheme is being led by Wokingham Borough Council and was granted programme full financial approval by the BLTB in July 2017.

- 4.14 A public consultation on the scheme proposals was undertaken during November 2015 and planning permission was granted by Wokingham Borough Council in November 2016. This planning consent was subsequently varied through a Section 73 application in October 2018 to reflect the updated design for the scheme, which includes planting in a 'living wall'.
- 4.15 Wokingham has appointed a contractor to deliver the scheme and construction work has commenced on-site, with clearance works undertaken in February 2018. The latest programme is for construction to be complete in summer 2019.

#### East Reading Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.16 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. Full financial approval was granted for the scheme by the BLTB in November 2017, with the business case demonstrating the scheme represents 'high value for money' in line with central Government guidance, providing significant benefits to Reading and the wider area.
- 4.17 A planning application for the scheme was submitted in July 2017, following public consultation undertaken during July 2016 and further public exhibitions to raise awareness of the scheme following the planning submission. A number of significant amendments were made to the scheme to enhance the mitigation measures proposed as a result of feedback received through the consultation and planning process, and although Reading's Planning Applications Committee resolved to grant planning permission for the scheme in March, Wokingham's Planning Committee refused permission in June 2018.
- 4.18 A revised planning application to address the concerns raised by Wokingham's Planning Committee was subsequently prepared, including further public consultation undertaken during September on possible amendments to enhance the appearance of the scheme. Fundamental structural changes were not possible as the scheme needed to retain the core public transport, walking and cycling elements as set out in Reading and Wokingham's Planning and Transport Plans and the scheme business case, therefore hanging landscaping was selected as the preferred option, which is consistent with the revised proposal for the TVP P&R scheme. Unfortunately, Wokingham's Planning Committee refused permission for the revised application in December.
- 4.19 The second planning application refusal by Wokingham means the scheme cannot be delivered in the timescales required by the funding grant conditions, therefore the Berkshire Local Transport Body has reallocated the funding to other schemes across Berkshire, including Reading West Station Upgrade, Theale Station Park & Rail Upgrade and Coppid Beech Park & Ride

site. The Council does not intend to pursue the scheme further at the current time and will be undertaking a consultation on development of a new Local Transport Plan to invite suggestions to tackle the current and forecast congestion and air quality issues within the borough.

#### NCN (National Cycle Network) Route 422

- 4.20 National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 422 is a new cross-Berkshire cycle route between Newbury and Ascot. The route will 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 by the BLTB in November 2015.
- 4.21 Phase 1 of the scheme includes the provision of a shared path on the northern side of the Bath Road between the Borough boundary and Berkeley Avenue, and was granted scheme and spend approval by Policy Committee in January 2017. The first phase of works commenced in February 2017 and was largely completed in July 2017. The crossing upgrade, part-funded by the development adjacent to Bath Road on Circuit Lane, is now complete. Improvements to a privately-own wall, between New Lane Hill and Greenwood Road, and adjacent footway widening works, are subject to further feasibility work and available budget after the completion of the final phase.
- 4.22 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. Completed works include the installation of two tiger crossings on Duke Street and Yield Hall Place and imprinting key crossing points along Berkeley Avenue. Improved signing along the route, and through the Oracle, is expected to be complete in early 2019, along with on-carriageway cycle facilities on Berkeley Avenue. The Traffic Regulation Order for a contraflow cycle facility on Kennet Side is expected to be advertised in March, following approval at Traffic Management Sub-Committee in March 2018.
- 4.23 Phase 3 of the scheme builds on previous works delivered as part of the LSTF programme by extending shared-use facilities along Wokingham Road from Cemetery Junction to Three Tuns, and was granted scheme and spend approval by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in November 2018. Measures 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. Designs for the section near the junction with Crescent Road are being finalised following feedback at November's Traffic Management Sub-Committee. Preparations for the delivery of phase 3 works are underway and are expected to commence in April 2019.

## Reading West Station Upgrade

- 4.24 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 a comprehensive programme of enhancement works, to be delivered in phases as and when funding becomes available.
- 4.25 The BLTB allocated funding for a package of passenger enhancements at the station in January 2019, subject to approval of the scheme business case. These improvements include provision of a station building at the Oxford Road entrance to the station and associated interchange enhancements such as increased cycle parking, enhancements within the station itself such as enhanced lighting and CCTV coverage, and improvements to the entrance from Tilehurst Road.
- 4.26 The scheme includes the elements implemented by Network Rail as part of their wider programme of works for electrification of the line between Southcote Junction and Newbury. These works include provision of a stepped access from the town centre side of the Oxford Road to the outbound platform (for services towards Basingstoke), and removal of the existing footbridge within the station.
- 4.27 Accessibility enhancements are not included within the current scheme due to Network Rail's requirement for a full rebuild of the platforms prior to any accessibility enhancements being implemented, which means this is unaffordable within the funding envelope for the current scheme. Therefore, as previously reported the Council has nominated the station for consideration for funding from the Access for All programme, administered by the DfT and Network Rail. If funding is secured, this would be focused on accessibility enhancements at the station as part of the wider Masterplan vision. No local funding has been committed as part of this process and the Committee will be kept updated on progress with this funding opportunity.

## Future Funding Opportunities & Unfunded Schemes

### South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (Future Phases)

- 4.28 As set out above, the South Reading MRT scheme is being delivered in phases as funding becomes available, with phases 3 and 4 currently being delivered. As previously reported, the Council has nominated this scheme for prioritisation by Transport for the South East (TfSE) for possible funding through the Major Road Network (MRN) programme being developed by the DfT. No local funding has been committed as part of this process and the Committee will be kept updated on progress. If the scheme is prioritised and funding subsequently allocated, scheme and spend approval will be sought from a relevant Committee.

### Tilehurst Station Access Improvements

- 4.29 As previously reported, the Council has nominated Tilehurst Station for consideration for funding from the Access for All programme, with the objective of providing lifts at the station. Again no local funding has been committed as part of this process and the Committee will be kept updated on progress.

### Third Thames Crossing East of Reading

- 4.30 A third vehicular crossing 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.
- 4.31 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/>.
- 4.32 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. In the interim, the working group is developing options for a high-level feasibility study to consider the buildability, outline costs and programme for the proposed crossing, and mitigation measures on the existing road network.
- 4.33 As previously reported, the Council has also nominated this scheme for prioritisation by TfSE for possible funding through the Major Road Network (MRN) programme, being developed by the DfT. No local funding has been committed as part of this process and the Committee will be kept updated on progress. If the scheme is prioritised and funding subsequently allocated, scheme and spend approval will be sought from a relevant Committee.

## **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:

- Securing the economic success of Reading.
- Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

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

6.2 Statutory consultation will be conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation. Notices will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and will be erected on lamp columns within the affected area.

6.3 Objectors to statutory consultations will be contacted with the decision of the Sub-Committee, following publication of the agreed meeting minutes.

## **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 All schemes included in the current programme being delivered by the Council are included in the Council's Capital Programme. This sets out the funding sources and funding profile for each scheme.

## **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.