

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	9th JULY 2019		
TITLE:	MAJOR TRANSPORT 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 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
- National Cycle Network Route 422
- Reading West Station Upgrade

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

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 completion of the Cow Lane scheme.
- 2.3 That the Committee notes the submission of the Third Thames Crossing scheme for prioritisation by Transport for the South East (TfSE) for possible funding through the DfT's Large Local Major Schemes programme.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan supports the delivery of new transport infrastructure in order to manage levels of congestion and improve air quality, whilst accommodating the significant levels of planned growth. The Council's Capital Programme approved in February 2019 provides capital funding of over £30m for the projects listed below. Funding is provided from grants received from the Local Enterprise Partnership and central Government, developer contributions, investment from Network Rail and Great Western Railway and from Council borrowing.
- 3.2 The Council's current Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for the period 2011-26 was adopted by Full Council in March 2011, setting the overarching transport policy for the Borough.
- 3.3 In July the Council will be launching a consultation to help inform development of a new Local Transport Plan. This will build on the high-level transport strategy set out within the emerging Local Plan.

4. THE PROPOSAL

Major Transport Scheme Programme

Reading Station Area Redevelopment (Cow Lane Bridges)

- 4.1 The objective of the scheme was to 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 its implementation.
- 4.2 Network Rail appointed a contractor to deliver the scheme and construction commenced on-site in November 2017. The contractors encountered significant issues with unforeseen ground conditions, drainage issues and uncharted buried services on the site, which resulted in the full opening of the new scheme being delayed. However, the route was opened for two-way traffic without signals for the first time on Monday 25th February 2019,

and the full scheme including pedestrian and cycle routes was opened on Monday 15th April.

- 4.3 Following completion of the Network Rail led scheme, the Council is now developing a series of complementary public transport, walking and cycling enhancements on the Oxford Road corridor. In addition, the proposal to reduce the speed limit on Richfield Avenue, Cow Lane and Portman Road to 30mph is being progressed. The statutory consultation has been undertaken, and subject to approval from Traffic Management Sub-Committee the reduced speed limit is due to be implemented by September 2019.

South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (Phases 1-4)

- 4.4 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, through the addition of new dedicated capacity for public transport services.
- 4.5 Phases 1 & 2 of the scheme 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. The latest position on each section of the scheme is set out below:
- Outbound bus lane between the A33 junction with Imperial Way and the existing bus priority provided through M4 Junction 11 - Complete.
 - Outbound bus lanes between the A33 junctions with Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island) and Imperial Way - Complete.
 - Inbound bus lane on the A33 between Imperial Way and South Oak Way - Under construction with completion scheduled for summer 2019.
- 4.6 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. Construction commenced in March 2018 and latest position on each section of the scheme is set out below:
- Extension of the inbound bus lane on Bridge Street - Complete.
 - Outbound bus lane on London Street - Complete.
 - Outbound bus lane on the A33 approach to Rose Kiln Lane - Under construction with completion scheduled for autumn 2019.
- 4.7 Detailed design work and procurement of a contractor for the remaining elements of the phases 3 and 4 scheme is currently being undertaken, which includes the following sections with construction works scheduled to commence in spring 2020:

- Outbound bus lane on the A33 between Rose Kiln Lane and Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island) - Scheduled for completion in autumn 2020.
- Inbound bus lane on the A33 between Longwater Avenue and Island Road - Feasibility and associated timescales currently being investigated.
- Upgrade of the traffic signals on the A33 Bennet Road gyratory to a MOVA method of control - Scheduled for completion in summer 2020.
- Upgrade of the traffic signals on the Oracle roundabout to a MOVA method of control - Scheduled for completion in summer 2020.

Reading Green Park Station

- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 The scheme was granted financial approval by the BLTB in November 2014; and scheme and spend approval by Policy Committee in September 2017. Concept designs for the station have been produced by Network Rail and planning permission was secured in 2015. The scheme is being progressed in partnership with Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR). Funding has been secured from the Local Growth Fund (£9.15m), s106 developer contributions (£5.6m) and the New Station's Fund (£2.3m).
- 4.10 Balfour Beatty has been appointed to undertake the detailed design and construction of the station. Design work for the multi-modal interchange and surface level car is complete and construction works commenced on-site in March 2018. Detailed design work for the station is being progressed in parallel with the construction of the interchange, including submission of a new planning application for the station building elements of the scheme which was submitted in June 2019.
- 4.11 The Council is currently working with railway industry partners to address budget pressures for the station elements of the scheme due to the requirements of the railway industry, and to ensure we can provide the best possible facilities for passengers from station opening. The indicative programme for delivery of the station has been updated to summer 2020.

Thames Valley Park Park & Ride

- 4.12 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 full financial approval by the BLTB in July 2017.

- 4.13 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'.
- 4.14 Wokingham has appointed a contractor to deliver the scheme and construction work commenced on-site in February 2018. The latest programme is for construction to be complete in September 2019.

NCN (National Cycle Network) Route 422

- 4.15 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.
- 4.16 Phase 1 of the scheme was granted scheme and spend approval by Policy Committee in January 2017. It includes the provision of a shared path on the northern side of the Bath Road between the Borough boundary and Berkeley Avenue, with construction completed in July 2017. The remaining element of this phase includes improvements to a privately-own wall, between New Lane Hill and Greenwood Road, and adjacent footway widening works, which are subject to further feasibility work which is currently being undertaken.
- 4.17 Phase 2 of the scheme was granted scheme and spend approval at Policy Committee in September 2017. It includes the provision of a route from Bath Road/Berkeley Avenue through the town centre to east Reading, including the installation of two tiger crossings on Duke Street and Yield Hall Place, imprinting at key crossing points and on-carriageway cycle facilities along Berkeley Avenue, improved signing along the route including through the Oracle shopping centre, and a contraflow cycle facility on Kennet Side. Construction of this phase of the scheme is due for completion in August 2019.
- 4.18 Phase 3 of the scheme was granted scheme and spend approval by the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee in November 2018. It 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. Works commenced in April 2019 and are due to be completed by autumn 2019. Works completed to date have concentrated on the section between Cemetery Junction and Palmer Park Avenue, including improved pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities at side road junctions and to the east of St Bartholomews Avenue. The in-house Highways team will

now focus on improvements to the path running adjacent to Wokingham Road through Palmer Park.

Reading West Station Upgrade

- 4.19 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 funding becomes available.
- 4.20 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.
- 4.21 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).
- 4.22 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, the Council will continue to seek opportunities to secure funding for these elements of the overall Masterplan vision for the station.

Future Funding Opportunities & Unfunded Schemes

South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (Future Phases)

- 4.23 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 had 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, however unfortunately as this is predominantly a public transport scheme it did not qualify for this funding source. Therefore, the Council will continue to seek other opportunities to secure funding for future elements of the overall scheme.

Tilehurst Station Access Improvements

- 4.24 The Council is continuing to seek funding opportunities in partnership with railway industry partners for the provision of lifts at Tilehurst Station to make the station fully accessible.

Third Thames Crossing East of Reading

- 4.25 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. The Cross Thames Travel Group has been established to progress the scheme, which is currently 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 was completed 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. In the interim, a high-level feasibility study is being undertaken to consider the buildability, outline costs and programme for the proposed crossing, and investigation of mitigation measures on the existing road network.
- 4.28 Wokingham Borough Council, with support from Reading, has nominated this scheme for prioritisation by TfSE for possible funding through the DfT's Large Local Major Schemes programme. 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 service priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan 'Shaping Reading's Future: 2018 -2021' (updated Spring 2019):
- Securing the economic success of Reading and provision of job opportunities.
 - Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe.
 - Promoting health, education, culture & wellbeing.

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.

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 The Council, and where appropriate partner delivery organisations, have carried out an equality impact assessment scoping exercise on all of the projects included within the current capital programme.

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 from 2015 onwards.