

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	20 NOVEMBER 2019	AGENDA ITEM:	13
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
- South Reading Mass Rapid Transit
- Thames Valley Park Park & Ride
- Reading Green Park Station
- Reading West Station Upgrade
- National Cycle Network Route 422

1.2 The report also provides an update on 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 funding secured from Great Western Railway's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund for enhancements at Reading Station interchange and approves and grants scheme and spend approval for the scheme budget of £40,000.
- 2.3 That the Committee notes the additional funding secured for Green Park Station from the Local Growth Fund and New Stations Fund 2, and approves and grants scheme and spend approval for the revised budget of £20.077m for the scheme.
- 2.4 That the Committee notes the progress with developing possible future schemes, including the submission of funding bids as set out within the report.

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 £40m 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 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 The Council undertook a public consultation on the high-level principles to underpin development of a new Local Transport Plan from July to September 2019. This will build on the high-level transport strategy set out within the adopted Local Plan and will be consistent with the emerging Climate Change Strategy.

4. THE PROPOSAL

Major Transport Scheme Programme

Reading Station Area Redevelopment

- 4.1 The Network Rail led scheme to unlock the historic bottle neck at Cow Lane by providing two lanes for traffic alongside a continuous shared path for pedestrians and cyclists was opened for two-way traffic without signals for the first time on Monday 25th February 2019, with the full scheme including pedestrian and cycle routes subsequently opened on Monday 15th April 2019.

- 4.2 Following completion of the Network Rail led scheme, the Council is developing a series of complementary public transport, walking and cycling enhancements on the Oxford Road corridor, and has recently implemented a reduced speed limit of 30mph on Cow Lane and Portman Road.
- 4.3 To enhance facilities at Reading Station itself, the Council has secured funding of £36,000 from Great Western Railway's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund for the delivery of wayfinding and cycle parking security improvements at Reading Station interchange. Officers have developed the project alongside input from partners, including the British Transport Police and Thames Valley Police.
- 4.4 The scheme will include the installation of additional CCTV cameras within the cycle parking hub at the northern interchange, which will be connected to the central CCTV facility overseen by the Council and Thames Valley Police, and bike marking initiatives. The scheme also includes the installation of new high-quality pedestrian wayfinding units to the south of the station, to provide a comprehensive system in addition to the pedestrian signage installed as part of the Abbey Quarter project. The wayfinding units are being designed so they could be rolled out further across the town as part of a longer-term strategy of enhanced information for pedestrians and cyclists, subject to future funding bids.

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 MereOak 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.
- 4.6 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 scheme is now complete with the following sections of bus priority delivered:
- Outbound bus lane between the A33 junction with Imperial Way and the existing bus priority provided through M4 Junction 11.
 - Outbound bus lanes between the A33 junctions with Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island) and Imperial Way.
 - Inbound bus lane on the A33 between Imperial Way and South Oak Way.
- 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. Construction commenced in March 2018 and the 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 November 2019.

4.8 Detailed design work for the remaining elements of the phases 3 and 4 scheme is complete and procurement of a contractor is currently being undertaken. This includes the following elements with construction works scheduled to commence in spring 2020:

- Outbound bus lane on the A33 between Rose Kiln Lane and Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island).
- Inbound bus lane on the A33 between Longwater Avenue and Island Road.
- Upgrade of the traffic signals to a MOVA method of control at a number of junctions on the MRT route including the A33 Bennet Road gyratory.

Thames Valley Park Park & Ride

4.9 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.

4.10 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'.

4.11 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 by the end of 2019.

Reading Green Park Station

4.12 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.

- 4.13 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), who will ultimately own and operate the station. Funding has been secured from the Local Growth Fund (£9.15m), s106 developer contributions (£5.6m) and the New Station's Fund (£2.3m)
- 4.14 Balfour Beatty has been appointed to undertake the detailed design and construction of the station by the Council. 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 a new planning application for the station building elements of the scheme which was which granted consent in September 2019.
- 4.15 The Council has worked with railway industry partners to address budget pressures for the latest station elements of the scheme, resulting in an additional £2.477m funding being secured from the New Stations Fund and £550k from the Local Growth Fund to ensure we can provide the best possible facilities for passengers from station opening. This will result in the overall budget for the station being £20.077m. The indicative programme for delivery of the station has been updated to winter 2020.

Reading West Station Upgrade

- 4.16 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.
- 4.17 The BLTB allocated funding for a package of passenger enhancements at the station in January 2019, subject to approval of the scheme business case which is due to be submitted to the BLTB in November 2019. 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.
- 4.18 The scheme also includes works implemented by Network Rail as part of their wider programme of works for electrification of the line between Southcote Junction and Newbury to provide of a stepped access from the town centre side of the Oxford Road to the outbound platform (for services towards Basingstoke).

- 4.19 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.

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 and the elements within Reading are being delivered in phases as set out below.
- 4.21 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 the majority of construction completed in July 2017. The remaining element of this phase involves widening the footway and associated improvements between the junctions with New Lane Hill and Greenwood Road. These works have been complicated by the presence of a poorly maintained, privately-own retaining wall at the edge of the footway, however an engineering solution has been identified and works to complete this section are due to commence in late 2019.
- 4.22 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. The majority of works for this phase are now complete, with the works at Berkeley Avenue currently being undertaken.
- 4.23 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 Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) programme by enhancing cycle facilities along Wokingham Road from Cemetery Junction to Three Tuns. Works commenced in April 2019 including improved pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities at side road junctions and between Cemetery Junction and Palmer Park Avenue, and implementation of a tiger crossing facility outside the entrance to Palmer Park on Wokingham Road. Recommendations from the road safety audit undertaken on the tiger crossing in summer 2019 have been implemented, including the application of coloured anti-skid on the

approaches. The remaining elements of the scheme to Three Tuns are currently being implemented by the in-house Highways team as part of the annual resurfacing programme on Wokingham Road.

Future Funding Opportunities & Unfunded Schemes

Reading Station Interchange Enhancements

- 4.24 Great Western Railway (GWR) launched a further round of the Customer and Communities Improvement Fund in summer 2019, for which the Council submitted bids for funding cycle parking improvements at the south-east interchange and for access improvements to the southern interchange, which was backed by the Access and Disabilities Working Group and Reading Association for the Blind. The accessibility bid seeks to provide directional tactile paving so people who are blind or visually impaired can navigate the public square more easily and for the installation of contrasting strips on street furniture to reduce hazards.
- 4.25 GWR is currently reviewing funding applications and will make a recommendation to the Department for Transport regarding which bids should be funded. An announcement is expected in early 2020.

South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (Future Phases)

- 4.26 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 Department for Transport (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.

Third Thames Crossing East of Reading

- 4.27 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 in Reading, Sonning and Henley. 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.
- 4.28 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/>.

- 4.29 A high-level feasibility study has been undertaken to investigate the buildability, outline costs and programme for constructing a bridge in line with the recommendations set out in the Outline Strategic Business Case. This work was completed in October 2019 and it confirms that it would be feasible to construct a river crossing in the proposed location, and provides high-level cost and programme information to feed into future work for the project.
- 4.30 The scheme has been nominated for prioritisation by TfSE for possible funding through the DfT's Large Local Major Schemes programme. TfSE ranked the scheme as the second highest priority scheme of this magnitude in the South East region and has subsequently submitted the proposal to the DfT for consideration for funding. 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.
- 4.31 An MP summit meeting to review progress on the scheme was called by the MPs for Reading East and Henley Constituencies on 18th October 2019. The meeting discussed the work completed to date, alternative route options for the proposed crossing, the need for further investigation of mitigation measures on the existing road network and possible sources of funding to progress the next stages of scheme development, pending a decision from the DfT on the Large Local Major Schemes funding bid.

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':
- 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.
- 9.2 The funding envelope for the Reading Station interchange scheme includes £36,000 of external funding secured from Great Western Railway's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund and £4,000 of local contribution funded by the Council from the annual Integrated Transport Block grant provided by the DfT.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Major Transport Scheme Update Reports to Strategic, Environment, Planning and Transport Committee from 2015 onwards.