

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

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| TO: | TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE | | |
| DATE: | 9th JANUARY 2020 | | |
| TITLE: | OXFORD ROAD CORRIDOR STUDY - UPDATE | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | TONY PAGE | PORTFOLIO: | STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT |
| SERVICE: | PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND REGULATORY SERVICES | WARDS: | ABBEY/BATTLE/NORCOT |
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Sub-Committee on progress with the Oxford Road corridor Study.
- 1.2 Drawings associated to the Oxford Road corridor study can be viewed on the council website at:

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/transport-schemes-and-projects>

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee note the contents of this report and the proposed delivery programme.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The proposals are in line with Reading Borough Council's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) for the period 2011-26 and current traffic management policies and standards.

4. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The Council, as the Local Highway Authority, is responsible for the provision, improvement and maintenance of transport infrastructure within the Borough. In support of this work the Council developed a number of area transport studies to investigate transport improvements for the area in line with the Council's objectives as set out in the Local Transport Plan 2011-26.
- 4.2 The Oxford Road corridor study was established with the purpose of identifying, defining and prioritising transport schemes following the opening up of Cow Lane to full height vehicles. The overriding objective of the study was to take a balanced approach to enhancing the local area and connecting links, through measures that improve accessibility, road safety for all users, better managing traffic and parking, and encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking.
- 4.3 As reported to the Sub-Committee earlier this year, a series of revised proposals were submitted to further enhance the previous plans and in particular provide improvements to bus journey times. The proposals achieve this through the reallocation of existing road space, or by minor adjustments to the road alignment. Where these adjustments have been considered necessary, Officers have sought to design the scheme in a way that minimises the extent of these works to ensure that they are cost effective, relative to the anticipated benefits.
- 4.4 These improvements to bus lanes will also provide additional areas for cycling outside of the general traffic lanes and further encourage cycling as a transport mode.
- 4.5 In order to take the proposals forward to delivery, a further statutory consultation will need to be carried out. This consultation is programmed to take place in February/March 2020 with supporting public exhibitions to help raise awareness of the project with residents, businesses and local road users. The exhibitions will take place in Battle Library as it is regarded as the most central location.
- 4.6 Subject to no objections being received during the consultation, officers plan to commence works during the summer holidays. The programme of works is likely to take 6-8 weeks to complete. If objections are received, they will be considered at the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in June 2020.
- 4.7 Alongside the measures detailed in this report, there will be further phases of the study which will specifically focus on the use of the Oxford Road corridor and surrounding roads. This will include the potential for an area-wide 20mph speed limit or zone, measures to prevent through traffic such as bus gates/lanes, environmental enhancements and a full review of the current Strategic HGV route to the Oxford Road from Junction 12 of the M4. All of

these areas will be considered as a part of the development of the next Local Transport Plan for Reading which is currently being prepared for consultation during Spring/Summer 2020.

Oxford Road - Pay and Display Scheme

- 4.8 During the March 2018 meeting of the Sub-Committee, members agreed to the implementation of an on-street charging scheme in place of the limited waiting bays on Oxford Road, between Howard Street and Brock Barracks.
- 4.9 Ward members have since asked officers to review the agreed tariff and consider the impact of a free period. There is some concern that drivers will seek free parking in the side roads where there is some shared use provision to avoid payment. Whilst this is a valid concern in reality drivers seek parking in side streets now as kerbside space along the Oxford Road can be hard to find. The current parking only allows 20 minutes maximum stay but this is difficult to enforce and consequently cars are parked much longer than the regulation allows. Part of the justification for on-street charging is to ensure drivers only park for the time they need. The charges, as already agreed by TM Sub, are designed to encourage a turnover of space, which in-turn will increase access to kerbside space and promote local trade. Also, by applying charges, this is an opportunity to increase the length of stay. At the moment only a maximum of 20 mins is permitted. The new charges allow up to 2 hours giving increased choice to park on the Oxford Road and not just the side streets as currently.
- 4.10 However, should a free period be desired there are costs to be considered. As the tariff is offered in 20min segments the obvious consideration is to make the first 20mins free of charge. From an analysis of existing on-street charges offered in 20 minute segments just over 15% of drivers use just the first 20 minutes. The current equipment does not allow for a free period and to ensure any such free period is managed this requires a change. The only way to manage a free period is to link this to the vehicle parked by registering the vehicle registration number. This requires a key pad to be added to the on-street payment machine where the driver has to declare their registration number when they take a ticket. This is not a typical application within Reading and will cost approx. £2K to carry out this change. To ensure only one free period is taken once within the no return period this requires an annual software licence of £2040 for the 17 pay machines installed under this scheme.
- 4.11 There is no allocated funding for making the change to the tariff, introducing a free period and ensuring the free period is then not abused. Furthermore, on-street parking charges form part of the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to ensure it remains sustainable.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The delivery of schemes 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 Informal and formal statutory consultation has already been carried out. Further statutory consultation and public exhibitions will take place early in 2020.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Traffic Regulation Orders will be made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. Serving of notices for pedestrian crossings will be carried out to the requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (section 23).

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 has considered the equality impact for the proposals in the study area. There is expected to be significant benefit to all users of the highway within the study area but particularly to public transport users, pedestrians and cyclists.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Oxford Road corridor study is funded from developer contributions collected through Battle Hospital Section 106 or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This funding is capital

expenditure and does not affect the Council's revenue budget position.

- 9.2 On-street parking charges already form part of the Council's MTFS to ensure the council remains sustainable. Any changes to this scheme will require funding (circa £2K capital and £2040.00 annual additional revenue. The implications of the loss of income, expected to be 15%, will need assessment within the MTFS.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Oxford Road Corridor Study - Update (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, March 2018 & January 2019).
- 10.2 Results of Informal Consultation - Possible Closure of Meadow Road and Milford Road (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, June 2018).
- 10.3 Major Transport and Highways Projects - Update (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, September 2018).
- 10.4 Results of Statutory Consultations - Bus Lanes and On-Street Pay & Display (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, March 2018).