

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	3 NOVEMBER 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	MAJOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS PROJECTS - UPDATE		
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update on the current major transport and highways projects in Reading, namely:

- Reading Station Area Redevelopment (Cow Lane bridges)
- Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes - Green Park Station, Reading West Station upgrade, Southern and Eastern Mass Rapid Transit, Eastern Park and Ride, National Cycle Network Route 422 and Third Thames Bridge.
- Whiteknights Reservoir Scheme
- Pothole Plan

1.2 This report also advises of any future key programme dates associated with the schemes.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee note the report.

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

Reading Station

Cow Lane Bridges - Highway works

- 4.1 As reported to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in various reports over the past 12 months, Network Rail identified some potential issues with the overall cost profile to deliver the Cow Lane highway project, and they discovered some potential design issues with existing utility services in the road. As a reminder to the Committee, the original cost estimates to deliver the scheme were based on utilising Network Rail's existing contractor responsible for the viaduct, who were already mobilised between the two bridges. Unfortunately, the CPO process delayed the proposed programme, and this contractor has since left site.
- 4.2 Network Rail have engaged their consultants to complete a value engineering exercise alongside the likely main contractor in order to identify potential cost savings by redesigning and reducing the scope of certain elements of the project. The Council has been involved in the review primarily to ensure the essential elements of the scheme are retained, (such as the new footway on the east side of the southern bridge). The Council remains reliant on Network Rail in confirming a programme of works, and Network Rail remain the lead organisation in delivering the project.
- 4.3 The value engineering exercise to date has identified some potential areas where the overall project scope can be reduced without affecting the overall project objectives. The main points to note relate to the pedestrian facilities to cross the road between both bridges and a subsequent new layout to include a zebra crossing (instead of a pedestrian refuge), and a request by Network Rail to close Cow Lane throughout the duration of the works, which has since been rejected by the Council.

- 4.4 Final designs will now take place by Network Rail's consultant, with a more detailed presentation of the final layout expected late October early November 2016. It is also likely Network Rail will be able to confirm the programme of works at this point. Officers will continue to update Members on the latest position through the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

Thames Valley Berkshire Growth Deal Schemes

Green Park Station

- 4.5 Reading Green Park Station is a proposed new railway station on the Reading to Basingstoke line. The station and multi-modal interchange would 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 proposed Royal Elm Park mixed use development.
- 4.6 The scheme was granted financial approval by the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2014, with a programmed station opening date of December 2018. Design work for the station is being progressed in partnership with Network Rail and Great Western Railway to ensure the station complies with the latest railway standards. An updated programme has been agreed between all project partners in line with the target opening date for the station of December 2018. Design work for the multi-modal interchange and surface level car park is being progressed in parallel with the station design work.
- 4.7 It was agreed by the Berkshire Local Transport Body in July that an additional £2.75m funding from the LEP's unallocated capital pot should be allocated to Green Park Station. This will ensure that passenger facilities at the station can be enhanced in line with the increased anticipated demand for the station due to the level of proposed development in the surrounding area.
- 4.8 Discussions are on-going between the DfT and Great Western Railway regarding the availability of trains to serve the station, however the Berkshire Local Transport Body has agreed that the scheme should be progressed in line with the original programme.

Reading West Station Upgrade

- 4.9 The Council has been working with Great Western Railway and Network Rail to produce a Masterplan for significantly improved passenger facilities at Reading West Station. The proposals include accessibility improvements including lift access to the platforms from the Oxford Road and enhancements to the path from the Tilehurst Road; provision of a station building on the Oxford Road and associated interchange enhancements such as increased cycle parking; improvements within the station itself including wider platforms, longer canopies, enhanced lighting and CCTV coverage;

and improvements to the entrance from Tilehurst Road including provision of a gateline and ticket machines.

- 4.10 Delivery of the scheme is split into two distinct phases, with Network Rail due to implement Phase 1 as part of their wider programme of works for electrification of the line between Southcote Junction and Newbury. Phase 2, which includes significant improvements such as the station building on the Oxford Road, is currently unfunded however officers will continue to seek funding for the scheme from all available sources, including a bid to the Local Growth Fund for which a decision is expected from Government in November.

South Reading Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.11 South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a proposed series of bus priority measures on the A33 corridor between Mere oak Park & Ride and Reading town centre. The scheme would reduce congestion and journey times, improving public transport reliability on the main growth corridor into Reading. Any proposal will not reduce existing highway capacity along the A33.
- 4.12 Phases 1 & 2 of the scheme, from M4 J11 to Island Road, were granted full funding approval from the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2015. Detailed design for Phase 1A is complete and design for Phases 1B and 2 are being finalised.
- 4.13 A contractor has been appointed for construction of Phase 1A with works commencing on-site on 5th September for a period of 3 months. This initial phase of works involves construction of a series of bus lanes between the A33 junction with Imperial Way and the existing bus priority provided through M4 Junction 11. The scheme is achieved predominantly by utilising space in the central reservations and realigning existing lanes where required.
- 4.14 In addition, options for future phases of the South MRT scheme are currently being investigated to provide further bus priority measures between Island Road and Reading town centre. Phases 3 and 4 of the scheme have been ranked as the highest priority transport scheme in Berkshire for future funding from the Local Growth Fund, again a decision is anticipated from Government in November.

East Reading Park & Ride and Mass Rapid Transit

- 4.15 East Reading Park & Ride (P&R) is a proposed park and ride facility off the A3290 being led by Wokingham Borough Council and East Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) is a proposed public transport link between central Reading and the park and ride site, running parallel to the Great Western mainline being led by Reading Borough Council.

- 4.16 The schemes were granted indicative funding approval in July 2014 and financial approval will be sought from the Berkshire Local Transport Body when the full business case for each scheme has been prepared.
- 4.17 A consultation was undertaken by Wokingham Borough Council during November 2015 regarding the P&R proposals, and a planning application was submitted in the summer. Work on the planning application for the Mass Rapid Transit scheme is being progressed with the objective of submitting the application early in 2017. A public drop-in session took place on Tuesday 19th July between 13.00 and 19.00 at the Waterside Centre in Thames Valley Park to gain feedback on the MRT scheme prior to the school summer holidays. The exhibition was also on display at the Civic Offices. The initial consultation has been completed and feedback is being incorporated into the scheme design prior to submission of the planning application.
- 4.18 Preparation of the full scheme business case for the MRT scheme is being progressed and the assessment is anticipated to be submitted to the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November to seek full financial approval for the MRT scheme.

National Cycle Network Route 422

- 4.19 National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 422 is a proposed cross-Berkshire cycle route between Newbury and Windsor. The route would provide an enhanced east-west cycle facility through Reading, linking to existing cycle routes to the north and south of the borough.
- 4.20 The scheme was granted full funding approval from the Berkshire Local Transport Body in November 2015. Preferred option development has been undertaken and detailed design for the scheme is complete for Phase 1, which is the provision of a shared path on the northern side of the Bath Road between the Borough boundary and Berkeley Avenue. A programme for delivery of the full scheme is being agreed between project partners, however it is anticipated that the works in Reading will be able to commence before Christmas 2016.

Third Thames Bridge

- 4.21 A Third Thames Bridge over the River Thames is a longstanding element of Reading's transport strategy to improve travel options throughout the wider area. A group has been established to investigate the traffic implications and prepare an outline business case for the proposed bridge, led by Wokingham Borough Council and in partnership with Reading Borough Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and Oxfordshire LEP.

- 4.22 The Wokingham Strategic Transport Model is currently being updated to enable the modelling and business case work to be undertaken, and a bid has been submitted to the DfT to seek funding to undertake the next stage of the business case work for the scheme.

Whiteknights Reservoir Scheme:

- 4.23 Whiteknights Reservoir is a 70,000m³ capacity reservoir retained by an earthfill embankment dam and is located within the University of Reading grounds and borders Whiteknights Road and the Borough boundary.
- 4.24 There are three 'Statutory Undertakers' that own land forming part of the reservoir, as set out in The Reservoirs Act 1975; the University of Reading, Reading Borough Council (both in its highway and land owning capacity) and B & M Care.
- 4.25 The scheme consists of constructing a flood wall of approximately 72m in length along the frontage of the Council owned Mockbeggar Allotment site in order to divert flood water to the spillway in the grounds of the B&M Care Home. To enable the construction of this flood wall the embankment dam will be strengthened with the addition of gabion baskets along the toe and engineering backfill to slacken the slope on the downstream side of the embankment. Improvements to the highway drainage system are also being undertaken as well as enhanced landscaping.
- 4.26 The scheme was tendered in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, with a contract awarded to Topbond Plc in August 2016.
- 4.27 Works commenced on 15th August 2016 and are programmed for completion on 23rd December 2016.
- 4.28 To date the contractor has cleared the site, created a works vehicle access ramp into the site, installed the drainage and commenced works on the gabion basket retaining structure.
- 4.29 The programme indicates that the gabion basket retaining structure will be completed by 4th November and works on the flood wall running along the length of the Mockbeggar Allotment site will commence on the 7th November with the hand railings being installed from the 12th December 2016.
- 4.30 A single lane closure along Whiteknights Road managed by temporary traffic signals will be required from the 4th November until the 20th December 2016.
- 4.31 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Pothole Repair Plan

- 4.32 Reading Borough Council received £60,000 share from the Department for Transport's £50 Million Pothole Action Fund this Financial Year.
- 4.33 The Council's standard investigatory depth for carriageway defects is 50mm. The Pothole Repair Plan enables the Council to repair defects of a minimum depth of 30mm to those roads in greatest need on an agreed priority basis.
- 4.34 The Department for Transport expects this Council to achieve 1,132 pothole repairs based on the £60,000 share from the Pothole Action Fund this financial year. This is based on an average cost for a pothole repair of £53.00. We expect this target to be the minimum number of pothole repairs carried out within this Council's share of the fund.
- 4.35 To date we have repaired 391 potholes at an average cost of £ 43 per pothole.
- 4.36 The Pothole Repair Plan is operating concurrently with the statutory highway inspection regime using existing Highway Operative resources and plant/equipment.

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:
- Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active.
 - Providing infrastructure to support the economy.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None relating to this report.

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 None relating to this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Traffic Management Sub-Committee and Strategic Planning and Transport Committee reports.