

# Report to Leader

**Decision to be taken on or after 15<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

**Decision can normally be implemented at least 3 working days after decision has been signed.**

**Cabinet Member Report No. L02.18**

**Title:** **High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan  
Queen Victoria Road / Easton Street (Phase 5)**

**Date:** 7 June 2018

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**Local members affected:** Mrs Lesley Clarke OBE

*For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444*

## Summary

1. Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and Wycombe District Council (WDC) together with Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) have secured £14.5m of funding to deliver the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan
2. The High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan/Southern Quadrant (HWTCMPSQ) scheme forms part of the BTVLEP Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2014.
3. The SEP scheme for HWTCMPSQ includes the design and construction of the Alternative Route – along Desborough Road/Lily's Walk, across the Gas Works on a new road link, and along Queen Alexandra Road to the bottom of Marlow Hill; as well as completing detailed design and construction of highway and public realm improvements at Cressex Road/Cressex Link Road and Queen Victoria Road/Easton Street.

A40/Oxford Road/Bridge Street, Abbey Way Gyratory and Dovecot Road gyratory schemes do not have approved budgets to proceed beyond their detailed design phase. Further to the current Masterplan it does not at present include the closure of Abbey Way Flyover, the long term future of which is being kept under review.

## **Recommendation**

**AGREE: To support the final designs including amendments made during consultation of Phase 5 so that the project can begin construction in early Summer 2018. Post consultation designs are provided in Appendix 1 as a pdf.**

**AGREE: To delegate authority to the Head of Highways Infrastructure Projects for any further design changes in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transportation and local Member.**

**AGREE: To procure main works contractor in line with the agreed budgets as defined within T12.16 - High Wycombe Town Centre Master Plan Southern Quadrant HWTCMPSQ Business Case.**

**AGREE: To delegate authority to the Head of Highways Infrastructure Projects to approve the award of the construction contract in line with the High Wycombe Town Centre Business Case**

This report sets out all of the relevant information regarding the design aspects and consultation

**TO NOTE: Note the comments arising from the consultation, and BCC & WDC conclusions reached on the various public comments made during the December 2017 – January 2018 consultation as set out in Appendix 3.**

### **A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision**

- A.1 In 2004, Wycombe District Council (WDC) in partnership with Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) produced a 30-year vision and Masterplan for High Wycombe town centre. The vision focussed upon reconnecting and enhancing the town centre environment. The current highway network was identified as having a negative and intrusive impact on the town centre and the provision of an alternative cross-town route and the removal of the elevated Abbey Way flyover were identified as schemes to reconfigure the highway network to address these issues
- A.2 The design of Phases 1, 2, 3 & 4 was agreed by the Project Board and had Cabinet Member for Transportation approval in different stages between 2015 - 2017. The construction of the Alternative Route commenced in 2015 with Phase 1 at Westbourne Street completed on site in December 2015. Phase 2 construction began at the end of September 2016 and was completed in July 2017. Phase 4 construction began in October 2017 and is due to be complete in July 2018. Phase 3, Suffield Hill, a new road constructed through the old gas works site will be completed by Spring 2019. The design ethos for this phase and the rest of the Town Centre Masterplan is based upon Manual for Streets 1 & 2 standards.
- A.3 The design of Phase 5 has been developed by DRF Consulting Engineers Ltd who led on the supervision of the Phase 1 works at Westbourne Street and was commissioned to

design and supervise Phases 2, 3 & 4 along Desborough Road, Suffield Hill, Suffield Road and Queen Alexandra Road.

- A.4 The scheme features a non-standard palette of materials utilising buff coloured resin and asphalt on footways, on the new central medians and on the many informal crossing points in contrast to the regular black asphalt on the highway. The design incorporates high quality finishes throughout including granite setts for kerbing and drainage and high specification lighting columns.
- A.5 The scheme is designed to reduce the physical impact of the highway network on the environmental quality of the town centre, contributing to an improved image and sense of place in the town, and increased accessibility for pedestrians, through introducing two informal pedestrian crossings and a fully formalised signalised junction at the Easton Street / Crendon Street / High Street / Queen Victoria Road junction.
- A.6 The attached general arrangement plan shown in Appendix 1 shows the overall design taken forward for construction following consultation. Below sets out the specific features to be incorporated as part of the design including changes made as a result of the consultation feedback.

### **Public Consultation**

- A.7 Consultation of Phase 5 was advertised throughout the period by various means including updating BCC and WDC Local Members, updating the project website, radio interviews by Cllr Mark Shaw, advertising on Wycombe Sound radio station, a press release was provided by the Bucks Free Press, distribution of flyers to surrounding residents and businesses, erecting posters at High Wycombe Railway Station, BCC and WDC owned cars parks within High Wycombe town centre, providing Eden Shopping Centre and the High Wycombe BidCo with posters and brochures and circulating an electronic bulletin to various stakeholders.
- A.8 The public consultation phase took place between Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 and Friday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and public displays of the detailed plans were placed High Wycombe Library, next to Eden Shopping Centre. Two public information events took place outside the Guild Hall on High Wycombe High Street on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November and Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November between the hours of 10:00 – 15:00, where approximately 400 members of the public attended to understand and discuss the plans with Project Officers, where they raised a mixture of concerns, queries and comments. We have also received approximately 30 responses via the project email address [hitmailbox@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:hitmailbox@buckscc.gov.uk) which have been logged.
- A.9 The event was principally aimed at giving people information on the scheme design and the construction programme. BCC also arranged meetings prior to and during the consultation period with key stakeholder including: Thames Valley Police, High Wycombe BidCo, Wycombe Market Representatives, Transport for Buckinghamshire, Wycombe District Council, Taxi Representatives, The Hub, Wycombe Area Access For All, High Wycombe Society, Swan Theatre, Wycombe Abbey School, Royal Grammar School, First Group Buses and Carousel Bus Group.

A.10 A project scheme brochure was distributed to all key stakeholders and members of the public. A copy of the brochure is readily available on the project webpage: [www.buckscc.gov.uk/qvr](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/qvr)

A.11 Consultation responses. The attached summary in Appendix 2 highlights the results to the main questions asked in the consultation questionnaire. The attached summary in Appendix 3 highlights the main points fed back through the consultation process as well as the BCC responses. This summary document will be available on the BCC website as part of our feedback on the consultation process. The public opinion of Phase 5 was generally mixed with various concerns expressed regarding traffic, parking arrangements and the proposed footpath through the library gardens.

A.12 Following consultation, the main changes the project team have made to the design of the scheme are alterations to the Easton Street on street parking arrangements, introduction of a half depth bay on Easton Street, removal of proposed bus stop on the eastbound lane of Abbey Way, and the decision not to include a footpath through the Library Gardens.

### **Design specifics**

A.13 The return of two-way traffic lanes on Queen Victoria Road and Easton Street from single direction, to improve journey times and ease congestion, particularly Northbound and Southbound. Appendices 4 & 5 illustrate the average AM & PM journey time savings once the scheme has been completed.

A.14 A fully signalised junction at Easton Street / Crendon Street / High Street / Queen Victoria Road with no right hand turns from any arm permitted, to aid traffic flows and ease congestion. The junction will include an all red phase for vehicles to allow pedestrians to cross any of the junction arms at one time. The Easton Street / Abbey Way junction will include a new signalised crossing for pedestrians to use across Abbey Way.

A.15 Informal pedestrian crossing facilities. New central median and crossing points at the southern end of Queen Victoria Road and towards the eastern end of Easton Street will be constructed.

A.16 Enhanced lighting columns and luminaires. The lighting is being replaced throughout the entire alternative route to provide more direct and higher efficiency lighting to enhance the route for road and pedestrian users. A number of the columns will also include facilities to hold combinations of banners, hanging baskets and Christmas light decorations.

A.17 Easton Street Parking Arrangements. The on street parking on Easton Street allowing short term parking and loading/unloading for the local businesses will be maintained. A 7m long disabled parking bay has also been included.

A.18 Restricted Parking Zone. The entire Phase 5 project will feature a Restricted Parking Zone. The parking restrictions will also apply to disabled badge holders.

A.19 Half-depth layby along Easton Street. We have worked closely with The Hub, BCC Passenger Transport and TfB Parking Services to agree that the half depth layby will serve buses and coaches, and also wedding / funeral related vehicles for The Hub, allowing clearance for westbound traffic. This will allow vehicles to park on Easton Street, whilst not impeding traffic.

A.20 Enhanced drainage. Footways will be buff resin construction and will feature new gully chambers as part of our enhanced drainage solutions with existing gulleys cleaned out. The carriageway and footway drainage calculations have been based on various storm intensities in line with best practise.

A.21 Approximate 3m lane carriageways. Narrow lanes are being introduced with granite setts and channels to make the route appear narrow whilst still accommodating larger vehicles such as buses, emergency vehicles and HGVs. This specification aims to achieve slow and steady traffic speeds along the route. The lanes are widened at all junctions to ensure the route can accommodate the swept paths of large HGVs and buses passing at these points. The project layout itself has been subject to independent Road Safety Audits (RSA) following completion of prelim and detailed design, with 2 further audits post construction.

A.22 Library Gardens Footpath. Following consultation WDC Town Committee decided they would prefer not to have a footpath through the Library Gardens adjacent to Queen Victoria Road. Instead the profile of the road on Queen Victoria Road will now be raised to allow enough clearance above the services for the widened carriageway. As a result of choosing the more expensive option the scheme has been significantly value engineered over the design period to ensure that the design remains both affordable within the approved business case budget and yet capable of delivering the benefits identified.

A.23 Police Station Arrangements. We have worked closely with Thames Valley Police and WDC Planning to agree that a police custody van parking space will be constructed in between the Police Station and the Town Hall on Queen Victoria Road. This will allow police custody vehicles to load and unload off the carriageway, without obstructing the traffic flows. The Police Station wall will also be relocated further into the footway to allow an easier and safer egress onto Queen Victoria Road for police vehicles. As the area is within a conservation area, the wall will be built to the same specification of the existing wall to meet planning requirements. Pre-application discussions have taken place with WDC Planning and the planning application for the new wall will be completed prior to any works on the wall is undertaken. The new area of land behind the police station wall will be stopped up and transferred to Thames Valley Police, who are aware of this.

A.24 Site Compound Location. We are working closely with Wycombe District Council to agree arrangements for the site compound as well as liaising via the District Council with Wycombe Town Committee and other interested parties.

A.25 Construction arrangements. We will seek to ensure that the public are regularly updated on the works in the area as we construct the various sections. Traffic management measures will include lane closures, some night time closures and where necessary to expedite works there could be some daytime road closures for short periods. The public will be kept up to date on the arrangements through our website [www.buckscc.gov.uk/qvr](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/qvr), regular bulletins that go to a large number of stakeholders,

residents and businesses, variable message signs, as well as periodic press releases and social media updates with #HWTCMP@BucksCC.

- A.26 In line with the close partnership working to date on TCMP, changes required to the design will be discussed at an appropriate level within the TCMP Governance arrangements as set out in the project initiation documentation and as shown in Appendix 6.

## **B. Other options available, and their pros and cons**

- B.1 The funding for the scheme based on the current detailed design has already been approved by Buckinghamshire County Council, Wycombe District Council and Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership with funding secured from the Local Growth Fund and CIL monies. Therefore there are limited options available should the design not be approved at this time. Any delay could postpone completion of Phase 5 beyond the LGF funding window which ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

## **C. Resource implications**

- C.1 As part of the mini competition for Phase 4, we have a preferred contractor, Eurovia, subject to agreeing a target cost. A target cost with the contractor has been agreed in principle at £2,526,805.91 (including project risk), compared to a construction budget of £2,577,699. The Project Team have also set aside a BCC risk budget of £199,440 and an Optimism Bias of £427,121. Currently Phase 5 is projected to cost £3,260,226 against a budget of £3,720,993 (£460,768 below budget). A Summary of Project Costs can be found at Appendix 7.

The contractor is ready to mobilise in mid-June and so a prompt decision is needed to adhere to the project programme as well as to minimise any delays achieving the LGF funding deadline of 31 March 2019.

## **D. Value for Money (VfM) Self-Assessment**

- D.1 Efficiency – the palette of materials has been robustly challenged to ensure it represents the lowest cost consistent with the required performance, quality, durability, safety and life-time maintenance costs.
- D.2 Economy – we are using MHA, recognised a one of the leading civils engineering frameworks in the UK. The scheme has been through a process of Value Engineering that has sought to reduce the costs of scheme elements to achieve an appropriate and affordable cost whilst delivering overall project aims.
- D.3 Effectiveness - It is expected that the project will be effective in delivering its ambitions in terms of economic regeneration and public realm improvement, enhancing High Wycombe Town Centre as the focus of inward investment.

## **E. Other implications/issues**

E.1 N/A

## **H. Cabinet Member for Transport's views**

H.1 Prior to consultation Cabinet Member for Transportation Mr Mark Shaw stated "This scheme aims to encourage visitors, shoppers and businesses into the town, and help them by reducing their journey times," said Mark. "We want to make it safer and better for motorists and pedestrians who use the busy town centre roads, and I'd encourage people to take part in the consultation because it's important to listen to them, and modify our plans accordingly."

## **I. Communication**

The public will be kept up to date on the arrangements through our website [www.buckscc.gov.uk/qvr](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/qvr), regular bulletins that go to a large number of stakeholders, residents and businesses, as well as periodic press releases and social media updates with #HWTCMP@BucksCC.

## **J. Progress Monitoring**

- J.1 In order to assess the impact of Phase 5, the performance indicators highlighted in section 2.5.2 of the Outline Business Case will continue to be used. The Transport Appraisal includes a range of indicators to assess the performance of the new network and to determine the potential in removing the Abbey Way Flyover ramps.
- J.2 A full list of indicators is contained within the Transport Forecasting and Assessment report, (not attached) but some of which have been highlighted below:
- Vehicles speed along Gas Work Link corridor maintained 15 - 20mph
  - Queue length on Marlow Hill within Daws Lane
  - Queue length on London Road approach within Bowerdean Road
  - Queue length within extent of Suffield Road
  - Queue length within extent of Bridge Street
  - Journey time southbound on Amersham Hill to Marlow Hill is equivalent to baseline
  - Journey time northbound from Marlow Hill to Amersham Hill is equivalent to Do Nothing
  - No blocking back to car park exit barrier on egress from Lily's Walk

## **K. Review**

K.1 N/A

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## **Background Papers**

Appendix 1 Phase 5 - General Arrangement Plan

Appendix 2 Phase 5 Consultation Results

Appendix 3 Consultation Responses – a summary

Appendix 4 Journey Times AM

Appendix 5 Journey Times PM

Appendix 6 Project Governance

Appendix 7 Project Finances

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### ***Your questions and views***

*If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.*

*If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2018. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 383679), or e-mail to [democracy@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckscc.gov.uk)*