

HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN: NEXT PHASES

Cabinet Member: Councillor Ms Katrina Wood

Ward Affected: Abbey

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PROPOSED DECISION

That as part of the delivery of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan, approval is sought to proceed with the Queen Victoria Road/Easton Street element of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan, funding for which was approved in principle by Cabinet in June 2016, and is considered annually by Cabinet as part of the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 Funding Allocations.

Reason for Decision

To support the delivery of the Local Growth Deal Major Scheme and regeneration of High Wycombe

Corporate Implications

1. Section 274 of the Highways Act 1980 allows the Council to contribute to the expenses of the Highway Authority when it is satisfied that it is to the benefit of the Council's area.
2. Section 1(1) of the Localism Act 2011 (the general power of competence) allows local authorities to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to the limits on the general power in section 2, 3 and 4. 3
3. As part of the Delivery and Site Allocations Development Plan Document the Masterplan has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.
4. The current stages of the Masterplan (together with some Southern Quadrant improvements) form part of a Local Growth Deal which in 2014 secured a commitment in principle of £8.48m central government funding via the Local Enterprise Partnership, subject to local funding also being provided through CIL.
5. The overall TCMP programme is 13 months into a 3 year programme and remains on track to be delivered within budget. Phase 1 was completed in Dec 2015. Phase 2 will be substantially completed in July 2017. Phases 3-6 are due to commence and complete prior to the March 2019 end date. We are confident we can deliver the Queen Victoria Road scheme in line with the funding and programme parameters which have already been agreed.
6. CIL is allocated on an annual basis, and formal decisions about future funding will be made as part of that process. However, as the improvement of High Wycombe town centre is a corporate objective it is likely that future years will continue to allocate similar funding levels to the project.
7. The masterplan provides the opportunity to re-establish the River Wye at Oxford Street. £50,000 of CIL funding has been allocated to undertake river feasibility and design work. This has been merged with the budget for the detailed design of the Oxford Road area to progress the detailed design of the river as part of the overall highways design.
8. Funding has also been identified for future maintenance, for the costs incurred above a standard road design. An initial amount of £30,000 has been allocated.

Future amounts will be sought in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding agreed between Wycombe District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, and the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP).

9. The works are being delivered by BCC, in partnership with WDC and BTVLEP.

Executive Summary

10. This report notes progress on delivery of the schemes funded as part of the Local Growth Deal 2014 and seeks approval to proceed with the Queen Victoria Road element of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan in preference to the Oxford Road element, and to begin consultation with stakeholders and the wider public relating to detailed design of Queen Victoria Road and Easton Street.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

11. The recommendations support the Council's priorities particularly in relation to Place and Pounds, as well as Sustainable Community Strategy themes of Thriving Economy and Sustainable Environment.

Background and Issues

12. The phase 1 in the delivery of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan was the Westbourne Street Link, completed in 2015 and jointly funded by BCC and WDC.
13. Subsequent to delivery of the Westbourne Street Link, Wycombe District Council (WDC) and Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) together with Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) have agreed a package of £14.526m of funding as part of the Local Growth Deal 2014 for the delivery of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan, to be spent by March 2019. The release of funding was agreed by the LEP in May 2016 and by WDC Cabinet 6th June 2016. (See background papers) The funding is broken down as follows:

Table 1: **Breakdown of HWTCMP funding package**

Funder	Amount
BTVLEP	£8.48m
WDC CIL	£5.351m
WDC in-kind staff contribution	£0.12m
BCC	£0.575m
Total	£14.526m

14. In accordance with the WDC Cabinet decision of 6th June 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between BCC, WDC, and BTVLEP on 30 September 2016, (see background papers) setting out details of governance, reporting, programme, budget, contingency, and future maintenance for the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan/Southern Quadrant schemes.

15. Risk is dealt with by the MOU in two ways, firstly through detailed budget for each scheme/project within the overall Major Scheme, including a costed risk register, and secondly through the agreed governance which sets out tolerances in terms of time, cost and scope/quality, beyond which the matter should be escalated to a senior level in the respective organisations which are party to the MOU.
16. The High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan/Southern Quadrant scheme forms part of the BTVLEP Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2014.
17. The scheme, which was approved by Cabinet June 2016, includes sufficient funding for:
 - Phase 2 of the Alternative Route which is on schedule to be completed shortly.
 - Phases 3 & 4 the completion 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. The work on Phase 4 is due to begin in autumn 2017, whilst Phase 3 will be completed as part of the redevelopment of the gas works site.
 - Highway improvements at Cressex including the Cressex Road/Cressex Link Road junction
 - Construction of highway and public realm improvements at Oxford Road/Bridge Street/Archway, or Queen Victoria Road/Easton Street. When the LEP released funding it was noted that a decision would be made concerning which scheme should be progressed following design work and consideration of the potential to secure funding for the remaking of the river Wye (which is also outside the scope of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan/Southern Quadrant funding).
18. Further phases of the Masterplan scheme including Abbey Way Gyratory and Dovecot Road gyratory schemes are not currently funded as part of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan/Southern Quadrant scheme.
19. Based on traffic performance and contribution to public realm improvements the changes to Abbey Way Gyratory and Dovecote Gyratory are not prioritised. The Abbey Way Gyratory scheme has the potential to contribute to consolidation and enhancement of the Swan frontage site however the redevelopment of this remains some way off and the postponement of this scheme is unlikely to prejudice the prospects for redevelopment in the foreseeable future. Deferring these two phases of the Masterplan may allow further thinking regarding the future role of the flyover to be considered in the design
20. The current Masterplan does not at present include the closure of Abbey Way Flyover, the long term future of which is being kept under review, and which will be informed by performance of the alternative route when it is completed.
21. As stated in the Cabinet report of June 2016 funding available to deliver High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan/Southern Quadrant is insufficient to deliver both Oxford Road and Queen Victoria Road/Easton Street
22. The recommendation is to pursue Queen Victoria Road / Easton Street over Oxford Road. This is in large part because changes to Oxford Road present an opportunity to in the future to remake the River Wye along a stretch from Brook Street to the Oxford Road roundabout – making use of land that is no longer required for carriageway. However, this changes the scope of the project, and

requires additional funding, as well as requiring consent from the Environment Agency. In all the combined cost of delivering both the road works and the river is likely to be in excess of £5m.

23. A Task and Finish Group has been asked to examine the potential future opportunity of returning the River Wye to Oxford Road, with a further report on its implementation, including possible funding sources, to be brought to Cabinet in due course.
24. Satisfying these requirements and securing funding to make up the shortfall would take a significant amount of time and would not be able to be resolved in time to allow the construction works to be completed by the end of March 2019. Whilst the road works could proceed in advance of works to the river, this would miss the opportunity to realise significant savings from carrying out the works together, effectively increasing the cost of works, as well as extending disruption to town centre users. This option is therefore not preferred.
25. The proposed works to Queen Victoria Road/Easton Street are less complex than those required to Oxford Road (see background papers) and include :
 - The reintroduction of two-way vehicular traffic to Queen Victoria Road and Easton Street;
 - Retention and redesign of the signals at the junction of QVR/Easton Street/Crendon Street/High Street;
 - Potential creation of a pedestrian footpath through library gardens to supplement the pedestrian footway on the west side of QVR which will be made narrower due to required changes to carriageway width. Whilst this measure would allow greater public appreciation of the gardens, it would require agreement from the Charity Commission;
 - Retention of on-street parking serving Easton Street;
 - Renewing surfacing throughout in accordance with the palate of materials established on the Alternative Route; and
 - Additional tree planting where space permits.
26. At £3.74m, the proposed works to QVR/Easton Street are capable of being carried out within the current funding package and deliver benefits in terms of traffic flow whilst enabling environmental improvements and supporting regeneration on the eastern side of town. It is therefore recommended that this option be progressed.

Consultation

27. The proposals for High Wycombe Town Centre are set out in the adopted Delivery and Site Allocation (DSA) Plan (July 2013) which was subject to extensive public consultation, including a public inquiry, prior to its adoption.
28. Subject to Cabinet approval, it is intended to begin a programme of public consultation and stakeholder engagement on the QVR/Easton Street scheme summer 2017. This consultation would be led by BCC with support from WDC officers.
29. In addition to these specific consultations, public information is provided annually as part of the process to agree a programme for the use of developer contributions (CIL and s106).
30. Local Members and the Chairman of the High Wycombe Town Committee have been consulted on the recommendation within this report.

Options

31. To implement Queen Victoria Road rather than Oxford Road (recommended);
32. To implement Oxford Road rather than Queen Victoria Road. Progressing this option now would need to allow for the future remaking of the river but this work would have to be undertaken at a later stage and would therefore not benefit from cost savings which would otherwise be realised through undertaking the works concurrently. It would also result in additional disruption to pedestrian and traffic flows whilst additional construction works took place;
33. To prioritise Dovecot Gyratory or Abbey Way Gyratory (currently unfunded) over either of the two options above; or
34. To not undertake any scheme, and cease the implementation of the masterplan.
35. Not to agree to proceed with either the Queen Victoria Road or the Oxford Road elements of the High Wycombe Town Centre Masterplan would raise the risk of non-delivery against the agreed terms of the Local Growth Deal funding package and potentially could result in the loss of the central government funding that has been secured.

Conclusions

36. It is recommended that approval be granted to proceed with the Queen Victoria Road scheme in order to take advantage of the Local Growth Deal funding that has been secured.

Next Steps

37. Subject to approval public consultation will be progressed by BCC on the detailed design of Queen Victoria Road/Easton Street scheme to include members, key town stakeholders including the High Wycombe Town Committee, and the public communications brochure similar to that produced for Westbourne St will be produced.

Background Papers

WDC Cabinet Agenda and Minutes Cabinet Monday, 6th June, 2016 7.00 pm, Agenda item 10, Local Growth Deal – High Wycombe Town Centre/Southern

Memorandum of Understanding Between Funding and Delivery Parties to the High Wycombe Town Centre /Southern Quadrant, signed 30 September 2016 (will need to be included)