

A34 MAJOR ROAD NETWORK (MRN) CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – UPDATE REPORT

Report of the Corporate Director for Place

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The A34 corridor through Stockport has been identified as a priority for investment in both the Stockport District Local Implementation Plan (as part of the Greater Manchester Transport Delivery Plan) and the draft SEMMMS (South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy) Refresh.
- 1.2 The A34 has been designated as part of the national Major Roads Network (MRN). Transport for the North (TfN) issued a call for potential schemes on the MRN in 2019 and subsequently prioritised the A34 corridor scheme for funding by central Government.
- 1.3 A Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for proposed improvements along the A34 corridor through Stockport was submitted to Department for Transport (DfT) in 2019 to demonstrate the rationale for change and providing the case for Major Road Network (MRN) investment.
- 1.4 In early 2020 funding was approved to further develop schemes and undertake stakeholder and public consultation. The developed schemes will subsequently be included as part of a submission for the Outline Business Case (OBC) in March 2021 which will seek confirmation of support for funding and delivery of the scheme and the opportunity to move to a final business case submission in spring 2022. Should funding be approved the schemes will be delivered between 2022 and 2025.
- 1.5 The reason behind why this route was identified with a need for investment was due to the following factors:
 - The stretch of the A34 (from A560 to A555), currently experiences high traffic volumes, congestion and slow journey times.
 - It is a key route connecting Stockport, Manchester and Cheshire East and includes a mix of traffic and journey purposes; however, the route is particularly busy with commuters.
 - Provision of existing infrastructure for sustainable travel modes is also poor, resulting in low levels of uptake amongst those that could potentially walk or cycle for short journeys.
 - Accident analysis outlines clustering highlights accident clusters and a high proportion of accidents involving cyclists, particularly at the Cheadle Royal junction.
- 1.6 As a result, specific objectives of the proposals were recognised:
 - Support economic growth and rebalancing
 - Support housing delivery with sustainable infrastructure
 - Support all road users by improving accessibility to key sites
 - Support strategic road network

- Improve active mode uptake along and across the corridor
- Reduce congestion and improve journey times through technology

1.7 The schemes which have been developed are described below. The feasibility drawings which are intended to be submitted are included in Appendix A:

- **Gatley Road Crossing** – A new controlled crossing on the A560 (Gatley Road) and a cycle link between the A34 and Broadway via residential roads including Marchbank Drive, Wensley Road, Milton Crescent and High Grove Road.
- **Wilmslow Road** – a new signalled junction at Wilmslow Road / Broadway to include cycle and pedestrian crossings and links (known as a CYCLOPS for ‘Cycle Optimised Protected Signals’ junction).
- **Broadway** - A new cycle route along Broadway with raised junction tables to slow vehicle speeds.
- **The Kingsway School subway and Foxland Road** - A new subway (replacing the existing sub-standard subway) under the A34 which connecting Broadway and Foxland Road (and the separate campuses of The Kingway School) with additional traffic calming measures along Foxland Road.
- **A34 Kingsway (Broadway to Cheadle Royal)** - Provision of cycle facilities on both sides of the A34 Kingsway between The Kingsway School subway and Cheadle Royal roundabout.
- **Cheadle Royal Roundabout** - Improvements to the large, grade-separated junction at Cheadle Royal for traffic, pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.
- **A34 Kingsway (Cheadle Royal to Bradshaw Hall Lane)** – A new cycle route along the western side of the A34 from the Cheadle Royal junction to Bradshaw Hall Lane.
- **Eden Park Roundabout** - Remodelling of this junction to avoid congestion, improve crossings and allow for access to the west to Wilmslow Road. This helps the existing network for vehicles and users and makes the network more resilient.
- **Stanley Road / Earl Road** - Upgrade this junction to reduce congestion and provide improved pedestrian and cycle links.
- **Stanley Road Roundabout** - Works to mitigate traffic impact from the proposed Garden Village Handforth development on the A34 and improve local access.
- **A34 / A555 Junction** - Works to mitigate traffic impact from the proposed Garden Village Handforth development on the A34 and A555 and improve sustainable travel facilities.
- **Eden Park Cycle Route** – An off carriageway cycle and pedestrian route linking Stanley Road to Bruntwood Park.

1.8 This report provides an update on the progress of developing the A34 MRN Corridor Improvement Scheme including the consultation process, development of the schemes and development of the outline business case. This report will recommend that approval to submit the outline business case and subsequent final business case and requests the necessary approvals for the implementation of this plan will be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration.

2. Business Case Development

- 2.1 The Outline Business Case will contain 5 cases which will be reviewed by central Government to appraise the scheme and allow a funding decision to be made.
- 2.2 **The Strategic Case** will focus on demonstrating the need for interventions along the A34 MRN corridor, alignment with national and local policy and scale of forecast travel demand. It will demonstrate how the scheme would support access to education, business, employment and housing developments through improving the highway, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure and how it aligns with government ambitions to promote sustainable and active mode of travel. This will build upon the work already carried out to demonstrate the strategic context and need for intervention; demonstrating how the option/s taken forward meet the objectives of the scheme.
- 2.3 **The Economic Case** will present an assessment of benefits and costs proportionate to this stage of scheme development. The following impacts will be appraised and included in the overall value for money assessment:
- Journey time savings and vehicle operating costs;
 - Active modes through the Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit (AMAT);
 - Safety Impacts
 - A quantitative assessment of Greenhouse Gas
 - Scheme costs
- 2.4 At submission of the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) this was reported as a BCR of 3.574 or very high value for money. A verbal update will be provided on this following further development work.
- 2.5 The Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) is only one component of value for money, therefore the economic assessment will be accompanied by a strong narrative demonstrating the wider value of the scheme and how it complements wider transport and economic development initiatives. For example, how it will support economic growth, housing and employment developments in the wider hinterland.
- 2.6 **The Financial Case** will consider construction costs along with information on which parties provide funding to show the financial implications of the scheme. The financial analysis will include results of any risk assessment and profiling of the spend to demonstrate financial viability and deliverability.
- 2.7 **The Commercial Case** will identify potential procurement routes and the approach to procurement option selection, providing a high-level indication of the key services, outputs and milestones required. This will demonstrate the Contracting mechanisms for the delivery phase of the project.
- 2.8 **The Management Case** will outline the proposed approach to governing the delivery of the proposed scheme, managing the delivery programme and risks, engaging with stakeholders and the public and ensuring benefits are realised. This will demonstrate and evidence that robust arrangements are in place for delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the scheme.

3. SCHEME PROGRESS

- 3.1 Since the package received a funding allocation as part of the successful bid in 2019 considerable work has been undertaken to progress the development of both outline business case and the schemes included within them.
- 3.2 This work includes developing feasibility options for the schemes including traffic modelling, identifying land ownerships, identifying necessary consents, preliminary costs, undertaking a risk assessment to identify and manage risks, environmental and ecological appraisals including noise and air quality impacts and consultation on the proposed schemes.
- 3.3 As part of the development of the business case the strategic case has to be developed and various appraisal processes undertaken to establish the economic value and benefits of the scheme.
- 3.4 Pre-application planning advice for the schemes where planning permission has been identified as being necessary are being submitted and in principle support is being sought regarding acquiring any land.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 An area wide public consultation was undertaken between Monday 5th October and Friday 13th November 2020 informing the local community and stakeholders of the proposed measures and capturing their views. The consultation comprised a leaflet drop to 17,000 households directing the public to an interactive webpage on Stockport Council's 'have your say' website, temporary signage erected close to the location of the proposals and banners located in public areas including John Lewis foyer, Tesco foyer at Handforth Dean and Cheadle Library. Directly affected stakeholders were also separately briefed on the proposals.
- 4.2 Over 350 online responses were received with majority support for all schemes. Scheme 4 (Kingsway School subway) and Scheme 12 (The Eden Park Cycle Route) were most supported with in excess of 80% of respondents in agreement.
- 4.3 Scheme development since consultation has considered local comments.
- 4.4 Affected Ward Councillors were briefed on the proposals prior to the commencement of consultation and have also received a further briefing on the changes made as a result of the local feedback received. The proposals have been taken to Area Committees on the 2nd and 4th February 2021.
- 4.5 A detailed summary of consultation methods, the responses and comments received to the consultation can be found in the 'A34 MRN – Consultation Report' included as Appendix B.

5. SCHEME FUNDING

- 5.1 The scheme had an estimated cost of £31m at the SOBC submission. Following further development of the schemes and more detailed cost reviews, the scheme cost is now estimated to be in the order of £35m-£37m. Note that these figures are current estimates and will be further reviewed as the final business cases are developed. DfT assessment criteria indicate that a match funding contribution of at least 15% is expected. This puts the required contribution in the region of £5.25m - £5.55m.
- 5.2 Since the submission of the SOBC, central Government issued new guidelines on the design of cycling and walking schemes. This has led to significant changes in the schemes, including much more segregation between pedestrians and cyclists, which has led to a substantial change to scheme costs.
- 5.3 It is anticipated that the 15% contribution will come from the North Cheshire (Handforth) Garden Village, and/or s106 monies from local development sites e.g. Seashell Trust. As these contributions are mostly yet to be secured, there remains some risk that they may not ultimately be available. Therefore, the council is being asked to underwrite any shortfall in the match funding obtained.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 It is proposed that the outline business case will be completed and submitted to the Department for Transport for the whole scheme in March 2021. It is expected that, if the bid is successful, the DfT will make an announcement in late May/early June 2021 to allow the scheme to be developed to a final business case for submission in early 2022 once all the approvals, consents and contractor costs have been collated and a final business case document drafted.
- 6.2 Subject to the approval of the full business case funding will be available in 2022. This development process will include option appraisals, consultation with key stakeholders, land acquisition by agreement or through the use of compulsory purchase powers and the submission of planning applications where appropriate. The development of the schemes through feasibility to detailed design and contractors costs.
- 6.3 Cabinet will be requested to:
- Note the findings of the consultation and agree to the further development of the schemes as recommended in the report.
 - Approve the approach to the development and submission of the outline business case and subsequent full business case.
 - Delegate to the Section 151 Officer, the Corporate Director Place in consultation with Cabinet Member (Economy & Regeneration), the authority to approve the Outline Business Case and the full business case.
- 6.4 If funding is secured from the DfT to progress to the next stage of development, Cabinet are also requested to:

- Agree to authorise officers to enter into negotiations with affected landowners to secure the necessary land by agreement.
- Delegate to the Corporate Director Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy & Regeneration the authority to enter into agreement with the landowners for temporary access rights and purchase the land necessary to construct the scheme.
- Agree in principle to the use of CPO powers, if necessary, to acquire land and property and existing rights and interests in the proposed order land, where acquisition by agreement is not possible;
- Agree to authorise officers to take all necessary steps to commence the process for the making, confirmation and implementation of a CPO, including securing the appointment of suitable external advisors and preparing all necessary CPO documentation;
- Note that a further report will be presented to the Cabinet to approve the making of any CPO and to confirm the extent of the order land to be acquired following the finalisation of the necessary preparatory work.
- Approve that officers develop and consult on the Traffic Regulation Orders to support the schemes and their construction.
- Approve that officers develop and submit the necessary planning applications.
- Approve the delegation of all matters relating to the DfT grant offer and its terms, and any implications for the Scheme and the agreement with DfT to the Corporate Director Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member Economy and Regeneration.
- Delegate to the Corporate Director Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member (Economy & Regeneration) the authority to approve the final schemes and their construction programme following approval of the final business cases.
- Approve that the Council underwrites the local contribution and if required, makes up the shortfall in funding.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 This report provides a detailed update on the progress with developing the Stockport A34 Major Road Network Corridor Improvement Scheme and The Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the content and comment on the report and recommendations as appropriate.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.

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