

GREEK STREET BRIDGE

Report of the Corporate Director (Place) and Deputy Chief Executive

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Greek Street Bridge is a key structure for the town's transport links, in particular for rail and future Metrolink access to Stockport station, as well as being a key route for motorists accessing the town centre and Edgeley. The bridge is also vitally important for delivering the new housing, employment space, and infrastructure that the Town Centre needs - especially in Town Centre West where the Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) is tasked with delivering 3,500 new homes.
- 1.2 Securing a better long-term future for the bridge complements and aligns with the strategy for the Mayoral Development Corporation area and investments made to date at the Stockport Exchange office development as well as the new homes coming forward in the St Thomas' Gardens scheme on Shaw Heath, the Weir Mill and Interchange schemes on King Street West, and the Royal George Village scheme on Greek Street.
- 1.3 Replacement of the bridge has been identified as a key priority both within the GM 2040 Transport Strategy Delivery Plan, Stockport District Local Implementation Plan, and Stockport Station Growth Prospectus.
- 1.4 The Council has recently submitted a bid to the Levelling Up Fund to enable improvements at Stockport Station as identified in the Growth Prospectus. These include upgrades to the platforms, passenger facilities, and subway alongside improvements to better pedestrian and cycle routes to the station from Thompson Street Bridge and the A6.
- 1.5 Thompson Street Bridge supports sustainable transport movements between Edgeley and Stockport whilst Greek Street is the adjacent vehicular crossing. Replacement of the bridge at Thompson Street is being progressed by Network Rail, having previously been removed on safety grounds, with a contribution from the Council through the Mayoral Challenge Fund separately.
- 1.6 The Greek Street scheme will build on these investments around the station supporting key vehicle, pedestrian and cycle movements through this part of Stockport.
- 1.7 Network Rail have made the Council aware that Greek Street bridge has a limited life span and requires replacement. This offers an opportunity to future proof the new structure for the future implementation of a tram-train Metrolink service between Stockport and the Airport. Furthermore, cycle and walking facilities within the area of the bridge can be improved to connect routes being installed under the Mayoral Challenge Fund to support sustainable transport and the Stockport Climate Action Now agenda.

1.8A £7million grant contribution from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority has been secured as part of the Transforming Cities Fund 2, this is available to support development of the scheme with release of the construction element subject to a suitable business case for investment being agreed.

1.7 This paper provides an update on progress with the Scheme, options being considered and seeks approval to progress its delivery.

2. THE PROPOSED SCHEME

2.1 Network Rail have made the Council aware that the bridge has a limited life span and requires replacement, with funding secured to deliver a like for like replacement by March 2024. A solution to repair the existing structure to extend its life span was considered by Network Rail and found not to be viable when comparing the capital costs against a replacement structure. Ongoing dialogue with Network Rail has been underway to jointly consider alternative options which future proofs the structure for the future delivery of tram-train Metrolink into Stockport Station and to consider wider improvements to the cycling and walking network to align with the current programme of works being undertaken.

The potential options which are being considered are:

Option A – Offline option (preferred)

Option A involves a solution which allows the existing bridge to be replaced whilst also constructing a route adjacent to the new structure for future Metrolink services. A feasibility level solution has been worked up which would see the bridge replaced with a new bridge to the south of the existing Greek Street Bridge, which would allow construction of that new bridge prior to demolition of the existing structure. This would ensure one of these bridges was available for use throughout the works helping to minimise disruption. Furthermore, this option would see the bridge futureproofed to accommodate the Metrolink proposals by providing an additional structure to the west of the new rail bridge.

This option will require land acquisition and building demolition, and it is anticipated that it will still lead to notable disruption during construction (though the disruption would be less significant than under Option B or C). This option would still require significant works to allow for Metrolink tram-train facilities to be constructed in the future, particularly around King Street West under which a tunnel would be required. The new bridge would however enable a crossing point of railway to be maintained during those works. Improved cycling and walking facilities would be provided to link with cycle routes being delivered as part of the Mayoral Challenge Fund (MCF) programme in the area. The current cost estimate for the construction of this option is circa £23m -£28m, and therefore represents a significant investment which would need to be supported through an appropriate business case. This costs includes for the new bridge; adjacent Metrolink tunnel; new road connections and realignment; pedestrian and cycle improvements from Edgeley to Shaw Heath; and removal of the existing bridge.

Network Rail would contribute an equivalent monetary value as for Option C (current Network Rail allocation in their financial plan is £5.7m) with the Council and

Transport for Greater Manchester funding the balance of between £17.3 and £22.3m through Transforming Cities 2 (£7m) and other future grant contributions.

Option B – Enhanced in-situ option

Option B would involve replacement of the bridge and roundabout in its current location, some future provision would be made for Metrolink sufficient to ensure that the bridge would not need to be replaced once again for Metrolink to be constructed. The extent of that future proofing would be determined during the next stage of development however unlike for Option A the bridge would almost certainly need to again be closed for periods of time during Metrolinks construction resulting in further highway disruption. There is also potential for this option to have a great impact on Castle Street which would be abortive should Metrolink not be progressed. Some improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities will be considered but would be more limited than for Option A with the roundabout needing to be retained.

Network Rail would contribute an equivalent monetary value as for Option C with the Council and TfGM funding the balance through Transforming Cities 2 or other future grant contributions.

Option C – Like-for-like replacement

Option C involves Network Rail replacing the existing bridge with the roundabout remaining in the same location with limited or no future provision for Metrolink. This has the potential to cause significant disruption during the construction works to the operation of the highway whilst the bridge is out of use, fully or in part, for periods of time. As this new structure would not be future proofed for Metrolink the bridge is likely replaced / altered again in future should the Metrolink tram – train aspirations be delivered. In preparation for this the Council has in recent years made Booth Street two-way to ensure a vehicular route can be maintained across the railway in this part of the town should this option be progressed, but this will lack the capacity to allow the highway network to operate without significant delays. Network Rail have allocated £5.7m towards replacement of the structure within their financial plan, during the next stage of development this figure will be validated. 5. Under Bridgeguard, the Council would be required to make a 5% contribution towards this scheme (approx. £0.3m based on Network Rails allocation) with Network Rail funding the remainder.

2.2 Network Rail are working with the Council and Transport for Greater Manchester to review the viability of Options A and B and a Strategic Outline Business Case is in production. If this is not viable Network Rail would need to progress Option C as the current structure requires replacement to maintain this vital highway connection.

2.3 The estimated cost for the next phase of development work is up to £0.5m and the work would be undertaken by Network Rail under agreement with the Council.

2.4 The replacement of such a structure within such a constrained location is complex and costs are substantial. Therefore, a package approach to funding is required. To date, funding has been provisionally identified from the following sources:

- a. Network Rail have confirmed that they have funds to replace the existing structure by March 2024, this would deliver Option C and be a contribution to Option A or B (subject to the business case)

b. Via TfGM and the GMCA, A provision of £7m has been made using Transforming Cities Fund 2 to support the project, subject to the scheme and business case being agreed

2.5 Beyond the funding sources listed above officers are investigating other sources of funding including the Intracity Fund to finance the scheme.

2.6 Discussions are ongoing between Network Rail, TfGM and the Council to understand the approval and construction timelines.

3. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 The work linked to this report is fully funded. Officers are investigating various funding options for the capital works, once the best route has been chosen, in order to limit any funding the Council would have to make in the future.

3.2 Risks

3.3.1 Business Case viability – A Business Case for investment is required which may fail to present a case for investment due to Value for Money assessment against high capital costs.

3.3.2 Disruption during construction – Both options presented will cause disruption to road users and pedestrians. The Metrolink Tram-Train proposals will still require significant and disruptive works in the area even if Option A is selected.

3.3.3 Land acquisition - Land and property acquisition will be required (likely via Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) which can be time consuming.

3.3.4 Availability of funding - there remains a significant funding gap beyond the funds secured to date.

3.3.5 Metrolink business case and funding – The business case for the future Metrolink connection may not be successful or funding not secured leading to addition infrastructure as part of Option A or B not being utilised. The case to progress Metrolink from Stockport to Manchester Airport will be undermined by not providing passive provision provided by Option A.

3.3.6 Scheme design may not accommodate Metrolink tram-train requirements – The design for the future Metro-link connection is not yet approved or consented, During this process design changes or mitigation requirements may mean that the futureproofed option may require some re-work.

3.3.7 Funding – The Council as the promoting authority would take the financial risk of project delivery.

3.4 Options

3.4.1 Support the progressing of optioneering, appraisal and design work by Network Rail under a delivery agreement with the Council, supported by TfGM and funded by Transforming Cities Fund 2 to consider an 'offline' or 'enhanced' option replacement

structure at Greek Street to support future Metrolink tram-train. The estimated cost for the next stage of development is up to £0.5m delivered by Network Rail under agreement with the Council.

- 3.4.2 Note the Network Rail intention to replace the Greek Street Bridge 'like for like' and the requirement for a 5% contribution (estimated at £0.3m) under Bridgeguard from the Council in future years.

3.4 Future savings/ efficiencies

- 3.4.1 None

4 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The terms of the delivery of the infrastructure would be embodied in a delivery agreement between the Council and Network Rail.
- 4.2 The Highways Act 1980 contains powers which would assist the Council in delivery of the project and the Council as highway authority can enter into agreements with developers for works in the highway. The Act also provides for the compulsory purchase of land for the construction or improvement of highways.
- 4.3 Where bridges constructed by Network Rail carry a public highway, by virtue of the Transport Act s116 the highway surface would become the responsibility of the Council.
- 4.4 Under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 the Council as traffic authority has the power to make temporary traffic regulation orders to regulate traffic and these powers would need to be invoked during the works to enable safe and efficient passage of traffic during construction and/or repair.

5 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 5.1 None

6 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 An equalities impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the business case development process.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.1 A full environmental impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the business case development process.
- 7.2 The scheme is seeking to deliver significant improvements to cycling and walking provision in the area, and future proof the delivery of a Metrolink connection to Stockport Station. Both of these are seen as an essential part of the Council's long term transport strategy and will make a contribution to reducing carbon emissions resulting from transport in the borough.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Cabinet approves delegation of authority to Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with S151 and Cabinet Member for Economy and Regeneration approval to enter into a delivery agreement with Network Rail to progress optioneering, appraisal and design of the enhanced options, the estimated cost is up to £0.5m to be funded by Transforming Cities Fund 2.
- 8.2 Cabinet approves Council officers to work with officers from TfGM to seek approval for an appropriate release of development funding including from the identified £7m Transforming Cities Fund 2.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Mark Glynn on Tel: 0161-474-3700 or by email on mark.glynn@stockport.gov.uk