

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
PANEL

TUESDAY, 29 AUGUST 2017

PRESENT: Councillors Hari Sharma (Chairman), Jesse Grey (Vice-Chairman), Wisdom Da Costa, Marius Gilmore and Maureen Hunt

Also in attendance: Councillor Beer

Officers: Andy Jeffs, Wendy Binmore, David Scott and Russell O'Keefe

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Paul Lion and Julian Sharpe.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Hunt – Declared a personal interest as she owns a property in Maidenhead; Cllr Hunt stated it was not a prejudicial interest and she had attended Panel with an open mind.

STATION OPPORTUNITY AREA

Russel O'Keefe, Executive Director stated the report was an update on the improvements to the forecourt of Maidenhead train station. The Council had secured subject to demonstrating a business case £6.5m funding for the project and a lot of work had been carried out on the project in order to get the right option to support the business case. A number of options had been looked at including a bus interchange but, there had been no appetite with the adjacent landowners to join a scheme and the costs associated with acquiring the land prohibited the bus interchange option. However, it was an option that could be looked at again in the future in a few years if circumstances changed.

The Executive Director explained there were three main elements to the scheme which were:

- i) Improved connections between journeys made on foot, bicycle, bus, train, taxi and car.
- ii) Improved linkages between the rail station and the town centre, with environmental enhancements for the station forecourt that will transform the area and create a high-quality gateway to the town centre.
- iii) Construction of replacement parking for any spaces that are displaced from the forecourt in order to create the interchange.

He added that any parking lost would be replaced elsewhere and it would encourage a gateway into the regenerated Town Centre. He directed Members to 2.6 of the report that showed more detail of the scheme with improved pedestrian routing, a cycle hub, drop off and revised pick up zone and a taxi rank. The appendix showed an indicative sketch drawing of the area and gave an indication of how the key elements could look like once completed. The new station forecourt would also include improved access to the Town Centre by way of either a footbridge or better surface crossing.

The next steps would be a further consultation and once the final design was produced, discussions with Network Rail and other stakeholders would begin. The Executive Director assured Members that other partners and stakeholders were very supportive of the scheme.

The Executive Director said he should have some draft designs in the next week and further work was being undertaken to check that they meet the business case; the bar for the business case was set quite high but the scope of the benefits to be taken into consideration had been widened so it was not purely based on the transport benefits alone. Sign off on the project would be in October 2017 by the Cabinet Regeneration Sub Committee; if all approved, the scheme would progress the project from the LEP who will decide on the final funding.

The Chairman stated the estimated contribution from the Borough was 20% of the final costs and the rest of the funding of £6.75m would be received from the LEP Growth Fund. He stated it was a good deal but the development would put pressure on the infrastructure of the area. He added a similar sized plot in Perth City in Australia had an underground bus station which was able to double the bus movements. The Borough did not need a big space to manoeuvre vehicles and with this project and the small site it was, he felt the Borough should be looking to incorporate a bus interchange as it was a perfect site for a bus station. The Chairman stated there did not need to be a big site to have interchange facilities; it worked well in Australia and the Town Centre needed a bus hub. All bus and coach operators used hubs and it would create a good link between Maidenhead and Reading to Heathrow. Councillor Grey stated the report was to note the details but he noticed in section 2.8 of the report that a bus interchange was not considered as part of the development, he queried why it was not considered. The Executive Director stated a lot of work was done on the potential for a bus interchange but, it could be done in such a confined space. There was not enough land available and it could not go under the ground as it was very expensive. The only way to do a safe interchange was to take adjoining land but, the local landowners were not interested at the present time. It was still a potential option that could be re-considered in the future.

Councillor Grey asked for clarification with the modelling of the lights system and there being a no right turn into Queens Street. The Executive Director explained the Council had bought a transport model for the BLP and it could model different scenarios; once the final design had been found, he could flow it through the model and see how it would impact the flow of traffic.

The Executive Director confirmed in response to queries regarding other funding streams other than from the LEP Growth Fund, that as part of the original proposals, there had been funding pledges from the Landings development and discussions had also taken place with other development partners for funding. The Chairman said the Borough did not have £17 million, but he believed there was central government funding available for bus station investments for interchanges. The Executive Director confirmed he had looked at other possible funding schemes but the challenge was that those schemes did not achieve the cost : benefit ratio. The LEP had since agreed the Borough could now explore wider benefits to the area.

Councillor Hunt stated there were 10 car spaces in the scheme and she queried if there was any other parking available as it got quite congested in and around the station at peak times. The Executive Director confirmed the scheme had looked at flows of taxi queuing. created a greater space for everyone to drop off and collect. The

concept outline design was the best that could be offered and some public parking would need to be moved off site to Stafferton Way.

The Chairman said he had seen a model at Heathrow where there was three bus stops in a row but it acted in the same way as a bus interchange. He felt the space at Maidenhead Station was far bigger with a lot more room. He felt a similar scheme could be incorporated at Maidenhead as that at Heathrow so buses and taxis used the same space. It was an option that should still be looked at. The current bus arrangement was not sustainable; and from a safety point of view, buses as well as trains and taxis should be used.

Councillor Hunt felt the cycle area seemed very large. The Executive Director confirmed the cycle area and storage was to significantly increase in the new scheme. Worked up designs would be available in the coming weeks and the outline design before the Panel was just a indicative concept. The final designs would include more details and bridge. He confirmed that although not all of the bike storage was in use at present, with Crossrail, the use would grow further.

Councillor Beer said most of the Panel were disappointed that there would not be a bus interchange. He and Councillor Grey had been trying to get a multi-vehicle interchange which would disperse commuter traffic and it was very disappointing that the idea had been side-lined due to cost. He added it made sense to link all public transport modes and it could be very convenient; which would also reduce pollution. The interchange should be prioritised.

Councillor Beer explained he had looked at Google Maps and Network Rail owned a lot of land to the west of Maidenhead Station; if it was Network Rail land, it could be used for parking and that would mean there would be room enough for a multi-vehicle interchange.

Councillor Beer stated the bridge to disperse pedestrians was essential; he had left meetings in Maidenhead and there was a flood of people in that area so, to separate vehicles and pedestrian traffic would cost money but, would be very attractive.

Councillor Beer explained that he was a Member of the Cycle Forum and the cycle storage facilities at the station were very attractive but, they needed to be secure; he added it appeared a great deal of space had been allocated for cycle storage. He presumed the shaded area and white area on the drawing were separate areas for pedestrians and cyclists as it was very important that vehicles and cycles be kept separate. Councillor Beer also suggested the name of the forecourt should be something more imaginative, other than Station Square. The loading bay between the disabled parking area, trees and seats would be very disruptive and it made no sense to park in the middle of an open space to load and unload. He added there should be an attractive arch attracting people into the area.

The Executive Director Corporate & Community Services confirmed that a bus interchange was not possible without the significant compulsory purchase of land at significant additional cost. Councillor Gilmore suggested removing the 20 casual parking spaces to make way for a bus interchange. The Executive Director confirmed that the space would still not be big enough for a bus interchange.

The drawing in front of Members was not the final design and the land was very small for a forecourt; he had tried to do as much with the site as possible to improve flow.

Councillor Hunt said there was going to be 4,000 new Town centre dwellings built in Maidenhead and buses would not be needed as commuters could walk. It was the urban areas that would use the bus. She added that there would be a lot of people that dropped their spouses to work or the station. People that lived in rural areas would use their cars and people were unlikely to get a bus to town if they could use their cars. People with luggage traveling by train were more likely to get a taxi and those working in the city were likely to walk to the station.

Councillor Da Costa queried why the Borough were carrying out the works and not the rail companies. The Executive Director confirmed the borough bid for the work as a part of the new vision for the Town Centre. The funding was for economic growth and further details would be made available the following week. The borough's contribution would be met from S106 funds from developers. The Executive Director estimated that the Borough's contribution would be approximately £1.25m which was set aside specifically for transport projects.

Councillor Da Costa wanted to know who defined the core elements of the project. The Executive Director confirmed that the core elements were part of the original proposals based on assessment of what would benefit the Town Centre. Project Centre Ltd were the specific framework partners and they had a contract with the Borough and that design work that was extra to the contract was to be carried out on a fee paying basis.

Councillor Da Costa queried how people would get from the station to the car park at Stafferton Way. The Head of Communities and Highways confirmed it was a three minute walk with the majority of station car parking already situated at Stafferton Way.

Councillor Da Costa stated Regulation 19 of the BLP included a bus station. The Executive Director stated that the logical place for a bus station would be in the same area as the train station which could still be an option in perhaps eight to 10 years. The BLP did not include that but the infrastructure delivery plan did cover it. The Council would continue to talk to landowners to try and find a solution. Councillor Da Costa asked when the parking strategy would be made available. The Executive Director confirmed the Strategy was made available in July 2017. The business case for the LEP would go to Cab Regen Sub Committee in October 2017 for final sign off. The Executive Director re-stated it had been looked at a multiple of times and that with the current land available it was not possible to have a safe bus interchange station at that site...

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: That The Panel unanimously agreed to recommend the paper as per the officers recommendations with the additional comment that the addition or inclusion of a bus interchange should be considered at a later date.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 7.28 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....