

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet **DATE:** 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015

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**PORTFOLIO:** Councillor Sohail Munawar  
Commissioner for Social and Economic Inclusion.

### **PART I** **KEY DECISION**

#### **SLOUGH MASS RAPID TRANSIT (SMaRT) DETAILED DESIGN AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the current progress of the Slough Mass Rapid Transit (SMaRT) scheme detailed designs, and to provide Cabinet with feedback from the SMaRT public consultations held in October 2014.

##### **2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

- 2.1. The Cabinet is requested to resolve that the progress made on this project, as set out below, be noted:
- (a) That the detailed designs for the SMaRT scheme are currently underway.
  - (b) That a public consultation into the SMaRT scheme has been completed.
  - (c) That the results of the public consultation into the SMaRT scheme are as outlined in Section 5 of this document.
  - (d) That the consultation results are accepted and that the designs are amended to reflect the points raised during the consultation.
  - (e) That the conclusions of this Cabinet meeting are accepted and shall be implemented in line with the Council's procurement policy.

##### **3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Corporate Plan**

###### **3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

###### **Health**

3.1. Aims relating to this report:

- Ensuring better community engagement to improve the wellbeing of our residents
- Increase residents' level of physical activity

- 3.2. The SMaRT project will promote sustainable alternatives to private cars, and will ensure that major employment areas such as Slough Trading Estate and the town centre will be accessible by sustainable transport. This increased accessibility and connectivity will help residents to make healthier and more sustainable choices about how they travel, and will enhance social inclusion.
- 3.3. Relieving traffic congestion and reducing stop-start traffic will also have a beneficial effect on air quality, particularly in Air Quality Management Areas 3 and 4 (Tuns Lane/Farnham Road and Town Centre.)

## **Economy and Skills**

- 3.4. Aims relating to this report:
  - Increase prosperity of the community and town
  - Maintain and grow the town's economy
  - Improve transport and communications infrastructure
  - Increase inward investment and town centre regeneration
- 3.5. The scheme helps to reduce congestion, improve journey time reliability, and enhances access to the Town Centre, Trading Estate and Heathrow. In doing so, the scheme will make Slough a more attractive location for business investment, thus contributing to the local economy.
- 3.6. By tackling congestion, SMaRT also has the potential to reduce the current £34 million that Slough loses each year in wasted travel time alone.
- 3.7. SMaRT is linked to the delivery of the 150,000 sq m of office and ancillary space proposed in the Trading Estate masterplan, and will enable over 60,000 sq m of office space and other developments to be delivered in the town centre as part of the 'Heart of Slough' project.
- 3.8. Lastly, SMaRT will enable access to a new secondary school in eastern Slough, thus contributing to the provision of skills and educational opportunities for young people.

## **Regeneration and Environment**

- 3.9. Aims relating to this report:
  - Facilitate the regeneration of Slough town centre to become a thriving sub regional hub for public transport, retail, culture and living
  - Encourage private sector investment to create employment and economic activity that will increase the viability and vitality of the town
  - Maintain and improve access to recreational and leisure facilities, including parks and open spaces, using these in such a way as to ensure local people gain most benefit
- 3.10. Providing a sustainable service which will act as a genuine alternative to the private car will reduce congestion on the approach to the town centre by encouraging people to leave their cars at home and make use of sustainable transport choices. In turn, this will contribute towards a reduction in emissions from 'stop start' road traffic, which will have a positive impact on the environment and on Slough's AQMAs.

- 3.11. Increased connectivity to the town centre will also encourage retail developments and greater patronage of the town centre's amenities, thus contributing to its regeneration.

## **Housing**

- 3.12. Aims relating to this report:
- Better housing standards, including efficiency and more choice and affordability
  - Continue to develop a mix of housing in terms of tenure and size to meet the needs of the current and future population
- 3.13. SMaRT will unlock the potential delivery of 2,300 dwellings in the centre of Slough as part of the 'Heart of Slough' project. With the scheme stretching to Junction 5 of the M4 it will also enable an additional 1,000 dwellings in the borough and will provide good links to enable housing opportunities to the east of Slough.
- 3.14. Land acquired west of the Tuns junction to assist the MRT scheme will also be used as part of a regeneration project to improve the image of the town by providing high quality housing.

## **Safer Communities**

- 3.15. Aims relating to this report:
- A place where people feel safe to live, visit, work and play
  - Promote cohesive open communities that value diversity, encourage a sense of belonging and engender a sense of local pride
- 3.16. Increased connectivity and accessibility to the town centre on safe and sustainable modes of public transport will encourage greater social inclusion.
- 3.17. Further, the regeneration of the local area that is likely to occur as a result of the scheme will also improve the image of Slough and engender a sense of local pride.

## **Cross-Cutting themes**

### **Civic responsibility**

- 3.18. The SMaRT scheme will provide a genuine sustainable alternative to the private car. This will encourage residents to make sustainable transport choices, and will also enable them to walk for part of their journey rather than using private cars to undertake door to door trips. The scheme will therefore encourage residents to make responsible choices to improve their health and the sustainability of their travel.

### **Improving the image of the town**

- 3.19. The project will reduce congestion on one of the main approaches into the town centre and Slough Trading Estate, which has the potential to significantly improve the image and perception of the town in the eyes of businesses and visitors. Moreover, the increased connectivity to the centre of town and the Trading Estate will contribute towards enhancing the image of Slough as an economic hub and an excellent location for business investment.

#### 4. **Other Implications**

##### **(a) Financial**

- 4.1. It is important to note the significant financial contribution from the council to this scheme of £8.701m. This will need to be factored into the next Capital Strategy (2015-20) as part of the planning process; this will come to Cabinet early in 2015. This cost will be borne by the Council's General Fund capital programme, and this will result in a revenue cost through either reduced investment balances or through the need to borrow additional funds. The Capital strategy is due to be approved by full Council in February 2015 and at this point, if approved, the scheme will receive the finalised approval for funding from SBC.

Contributions will come from:

SBC General Fund: £2.319m

TVBLEP: £5.6m

S106 : £782,000 (includes Castleview)

##### **(b) Risk Management**

- 4.2. Full details relating to this section of the report were presented to Cabinet and resolved on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Please refer to Cabinet Report 'Slough Mass Rapid Transit Scheme (SMaRT) Phase 1,' 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014 for further details.

##### **(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

- 4.3. Full details relating to this section of the report were presented to Cabinet and resolved on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Please refer to Cabinet Report 'Slough Mass Rapid Transit Scheme (SMaRT) Phase 1,' 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014 for further details.

##### **(d) Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 4.4. The development of a rapid transit service along the A4 corridor was an integral part of Slough's Third Local Transport Plan 2011- 2026 which was the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment carried out in 2010.
- 4.5. Full details relating to this section of the report were presented to Cabinet and resolved on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Please refer to Cabinet Report 'Slough Mass Rapid Transit Scheme (SMaRT) Phase 1,' 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014 for further details.

##### **(e) Workforce**

- 4.6. No issues.

##### **(f) Property**

- 4.7. Full details relating to this section of the report were presented to Cabinet and resolved on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014. Please refer to Cabinet Report 'Slough Mass Rapid Transit Scheme (SMaRT) Phase 1,' 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014 for further details.

## **5. Supporting Information**

### **Strategic Context**

- 5.1. The CPO process for this scheme is being managed as per the details in the report presented to Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

### **Benefits**

- 5.2. The SMaRT scheme will deliver a number of benefits for residents and businesses. Firstly, the scheme will help to deliver traffic improvements and reduce congestion, leading to improved and more reliable journey times for local people and commuters.
- 5.3. Residents will enjoy the benefits of a reduction in traffic congestion along the A4 through the removal of localised pinch points between Galvin Road and the Tuns Junction and also between Upton Court Road and High Street, Langley. The scheme will also contribute to enhancing access into the centre of Slough, and will play a part towards the regeneration of this key strategic route. Pinch point removal, regeneration and enhanced connectivity is likely to encourage greater investment and patronage in the town, therefore making it a more attractive place to live, work, and shop.
- 5.4. The scheme will also unlock over 60,000 sq m of office space, and 2,300 dwellings and other developments in the centre of Slough. It will also enable an additional 1,000 dwellings to be delivered in the town over and above current LDF allocations. SMaRT will also mitigate existing and forecast levels of congestion, and will make a significant contribution to enabling the creation of at least 4,750 new direct full time jobs in Slough and over 2,000 further indirect full-time jobs.
- 5.5. SMaRT will also attract money into Slough. Enhanced connectivity to Heathrow, Slough Trading Estate and the centre of Slough will encourage residents and businesses from neighbouring boroughs to live, work, and visit Slough. This will lead to increased expenditure in the centre of the town, which in turn will contribute towards its continued regeneration and revitalisation. Further, as outlined above, the scheme also unlocks opportunities for housing and employment floor space.
- 5.6. The scheme will also help to deliver a modal shift, by initiating a step change in public transport to and from the airport and the wider Slough area. Whilst the shuttle bus services that are currently provided by individual businesses along the A4 Bath Road deliver a number of benefits, there is room for these services to be consolidated and improved. The SMaRT scheme will accomplish this by delivering a service that is suitable for business and public use, in contrast to the shuttle bus service, which only provides for businesses. Not only does this provide an additional service for residents, but the increased patronage that will occur from streamlining business and resident services into one scheme could also lead to a reduction in ticket prices. Therefore, the SMaRT scheme will also help to provide a reliable, sustainable, and affordable way for residents to travel.
- 5.7. Modal shift will bring other benefits to the town specifically a reduction in cars on the road network. It is not possible to predict the reduction in cars on the network but similar MRT schemes have seen between 19% and 28% of journey's switched from

car to bus. This shift would have a positive impact on the network and on improving air quality in the town.

- 5.8. SMaRT also complements a number of Slough Borough Council's proposed new schemes. For example, the Slough Basin and Stoke Road regeneration schemes will improve connectivity between Slough and its surrounding boroughs. However, improved connectivity between Slough and its surrounding areas is futile if Slough itself is not connected, and if visitors are not able to travel easily around Slough's key strategic locations when they arrive. This connectivity within Slough itself is delivered by SMaRT. The SMaRT scheme therefore complements these proposed schemes in order to ensure that Slough's external links are also easily accessible internally via sustainable modes of transport. This will make Slough more attractive and will encourage residents, businesses and visitors to invest in Slough.
- 5.9. Further, the proposed A332 and A355 route enhancement schemes will reduce congestion along a number of Slough's strategic routes, thus improving access into the centre of Slough, the M4, and Slough Trading Estate. Both schemes also unlock opportunities for housing in addition to new office and ancillary space. There is also an opportunity to unlock further housing opportunities as a result of the A355 route enhancement, as well as the regeneration of parts of Slough along the Farnham Road and Chalvey.
- 5.10. By linking the areas served by these improved strategic routes, including the Trading Estate and the centre of the town, SMaRT will once again succeed in improving Slough's internal accessibility. In the same way as it enhances the Slough Basin and Stoke Road schemes, SMaRT will also complement and improve the external accessibility delivered by schemes such as the A332 and A355 route enhancements, by ensuring that the newly improved connections to the M4 and other strategic locations are also easily reached internally via public transport. By complementing and enhancing the delivery of the A332 and A355 schemes, SMaRT will also contribute towards unlocking the opportunities for housing and employment floor space detailed above.

### **Public Consultation**

- 5.11. 550 consultation leaflets were sent to residents and businesses via post, and roughly another 50 were sent in an additional postal delivery. Approximately 600 consultation leaflets were therefore delivered to residents and businesses via the postal service. Roughly 200 were taken to the public consultation events, meaning that between 600 and 700 paper copies of the consultation leaflets were given to residents. The leaflets gave residents the option to respond to the consultation questionnaire via the freepost address on the back of the leaflet, or via the Council's online consultation portal.
- 5.12. Slough Borough Council received 29 responses via post, and 393 via the online portal. In total therefore, Slough Borough Council received 422 responses to the estimated 600- 700 leaflets that were distributed. Responses were received from both residents and businesses. These results suggest a high level of public interest in the scheme from residents and businesses alike, and also suggest that people showed a strong preference for completing the questionnaire online rather than via post.

## Total Responses (Online and Postal)

### Figures:

| <b>Question</b>   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>No Response</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Do you agree with the removal of on-street parking on the westbound service road from Twinches Lane to the PC World junction?   | 200        | 200       | 22                 |
| Do you agree with the removal of on-street parking on the eastbound service road between O2 and Galvin Road?  | 200        | 198       | 24                 |
| Do you support the proposed eastbound and westbound one-way roads between Ipswich Rd to Leigh Road? (Eastbound one-way)   | 178        | 219       | 25                 |
| Do you support the proposed eastbound and westbound one-way roads between Leigh Road to Twinches Lane? (Eastbound one-way)  | 173        | 223       | 26                 |
| Do you support the proposed eastbound and westbound one-way roads between Galvin Road to Thirkleby Close? (Eastbound one-way)   | 175        | 224       | 23                 |
| Do you support the proposed eastbound and westbound one-way roads between Twinches Lane to the A4 and its junction with service road opposite Leigh Road? (Eastbound one-way)                       | 168        | 225       | 29                 |
| Do you support the proposed eastbound and westbound one-way roads between Westgate retail park to the service road opposite Leigh Road? (Eastbound one-way)   | 159        | 233       | 30                 |
| Do you support the proposed bus stop hub located on the Bath Road (near Ipswich Road)?  | 224        | 167       | 31                 |
| To reduce congestion we are proposing to widen the carriage way, do you agree with the road widening on the north side of A4 near Tesco and Wexham Road?  | 251        | 149       | 22                 |
| To reduce congestion we are proposing to widen the carriage way, do you agree with the road widening on the south side of the A4 between High Street Langley/ Ditton Road junction and Ditton Park? | 243        | 164       | 15                 |

- 5.13. Following public consultation on this scheme, Slough Borough Council received a number of comments from residents and businesses, including a petition.
- 5.14. The concerns highlighted by residents and businesses are being addressed, and will be used to inform the detailed design process.
- 5.15. Residents used this opportunity to raise a number of issues, including concerns that the scheme will lead to; an increase in noise and pollution; an increase in congestion; loss of footpaths and compromised pedestrian safety; damage to the landscape; and a decrease in property value. Some residents also questioned the value added by the scheme, due to the fact that there are already 12 buses per hour along this route these issues were replicated in the petition.
- 5.16. Slough Borough Council's response is that there is not likely to be any increase in either noise or pollution. The buses will be hybrid buses, meaning that the type of vehicles used along this route will actually be less polluting and much quieter than conventional vehicles.
- 5.17. Furthermore, congestion is in fact likely to be reduced due to the fact that dedicated bus lanes will be provided, thus freeing space on the A4 for private cars. By providing excellent public transport links to the centre of the town, the scheme is also likely to encourage car owners to utilise public transport, thus reducing the amount of traffic on the road.
- 5.18. In addition to this, public footways will in fact remain in place, and are affected only insofar as being redirected.

- 5.19. Moreover, landscaping will be carried out, and existing highway land will be utilised in order to prevent damage to the landscape.
- 5.20. As has already been stated, noise, pollution and congestion are likely to reduce following the implementation of SMaRT, meaning that these factors are unlikely to cause any fall in property values. It is also conceivable that property values may increase, due to the fact that fast services to Heathrow and the centre of Slough are accessible from their properties.
- 5.21. Lastly, residents highlighted concerns that there will be no value added by the scheme as there are already 12 buses per hour on this route. The scheme will make existing services quicker, meaning that it will be easier and faster to access the Trading Estate, centre of town, and Heathrow. Furthermore, the scheme will utilise highway land rather than park or private land, so it adds value to the existing bus service without damaging Slough's parks and green spaces.
- 5.22. Businesses have also expressed concerns about junction capacity and the facilities for access into their car parks along the A4 Bath Road. Officers have met with SEGRO representing the businesses and also separately individual companies to discuss their concerns.
- 5.23. The main concern of access will not be removed as part of this scheme and so businesses will still be able to continue as before. However, the main issue for businesses has been the direction of traffic in the service road between in each junction which can be seen in the responses. This concern has been overcome by agreeing to undertake the traffic regulation order under an experimental order allowing both the businesses and the council the opportunity to see how traffic and businesses are coping with the new layout, if changes are required then experimental order can be altered.
- 5.24. The concern of capacity at each junction is a valid point raised by businesses. The design of each junction specifically with regard to traffic signal timings is now made easier through the SMaRT scheme. The new One Way proposals for the service road will enable the Council to determine the amount of time to allocate to each entrance and exit point. The Council is not able to do this with the existing layout as drivers habits change depending on the levels of congestion and therefore they have joined the service road at different junctions. The new proposal will not permit this and therefore designers will be able to predict with confidence the movements at each junction and apportion sufficient time for vehicles entering and exiting the service road.
- 5.25. Questions were also asked why the MRT service is switching to the service road at Twinches Lane and not Wellcroft Road. Designers will review the potential to run the bus from Wellcroft Road and/or Cranborne Road. However, between Cranborne Road and Wellcroft Road there are residential properties and pockets of private land, it is felt that due to the number of trips made by residents and the businesses in this location, that there would be too many conflicts with the new service.
- 5.26. The CPO process is at a point where negotiations with SMC Ford over the amount of land required to deliver the improvements is reaching a conclusion. Agreements have been reached in principle for the remaining sites and therefore there is confidence in completing in concluding the purchases before the scheme commences next year.



5.27. As stated above, the concerns highlighted by residents and businesses are being addressed, and will be used to inform the detailed design process.

## **6. Comments of Other Committees**

6.1. At the Cabinet meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014, Cabinet received a report entitled 'Slough Mass Rapid Transit Scheme (SMaRT) Phase 1.' This report outlined the first phase of the scheme in detail.

6.2. The most recent progress on the detailed designs and the public consultation has not been taken to, or been commented on by, any other committees.

## **7. Conclusion**

7.1. The CPO process for this scheme is being managed as per the details in the report presented to Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and that progress has been made with the majority of property owners along the A4.

7.2. There is general support for the scheme from both businesses and the wider public through the various exhibitions and presentations around the town.

7.3. The detailed design for the scheme is being amended to reflect the comments received through the consultation process such as signal timing, access arrangements and direction of traffic on the service roads, following meetings with the various companies along the A4.

7.4. That the representations from residents and businesses be set aside as the concerns raised have been incorporated into the design

7.3. That Slough Borough Council go out to tender on this scheme, and on the A332 and A355 route enhancement schemes, in March 2015.

7.6. Slough Borough Council received 29 responses to the SMaRT consultation via post, and 393 via the online portal. These results suggest a high level of public interest in the scheme from businesses and residents alike, and also suggest that people showed a strong preference for completing the questionnaire online rather than via post.

## **8. Appendices Attached**

None.

## **9. Background Papers**

'1' <http://www.slough.gov.uk/council/strategies-plans-and-policies/local-transport-plan-ltp3.aspx>

'2' <http://www.slough.gov.uk/parking-travel-and-roads/plans-for-the-future.aspx>

'3' <http://www.slough.gov.uk/parking-travel-and-roads/slough-mass-rapid-transit-smart.aspx>

'4' <http://static.slough.gov.uk/downloads/SJWSbooklet-final-2013.pdf>