

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 28 February 2022

Report author: Head of Planning and Development

Title: Watford to Croxley Link

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the progress to date on the development of potential Conceptual Designs for the Watford to Croxley Link (W2CL) scheme, and seeks approval for the next steps including project governance arrangements, financial implications, legal implications, and communications.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Ongoing cost of developing the conceptual designs and strategic business case in advance of securing funding to deliver next stage of project	Utilisation of Council funding without guarantee of delivery.	Ensure joint funding from partner organisations e.g., HCC.	tolerate	3x4=12
Unable to agree a strong Governance structure with partners	Increased likelihood of abortive work as well as delayed approvals	Governance structure to be developed. MoU to be completed as first step	treat	2x4=8
Uncertainty about the future of the	Wider connectivity benefits of the	Included in scope for consideration by suppliers	tolerate	3x2=6

Abbey Line and progress with HERT	project are unclear or may not be realised	undertaking the Conceptual Designs Continued engagement and lobbying/engagement of HCC on Abbey Line and HERT		
Getting buy-in and full support for process and findings from key stakeholders	This could result in delays to programme while resolved, and changes to scope required at a later date to capture changed views	Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to be developed during/after the Conceptual Design work	treat	2x3=6
Environmental constraints within both the natural and built environment not adequately considered at this stage	Could prevent or delay the project from moving into the next stage	Key environmental constraints included as part of the scope for the Conceptual Design work	treat	2x3=6
Potential change to HCC policies that conflict with the conceptual designs and impact the scheme.	Lack of support from HCC to progress the project	Continue to work closely with HCC on Sustainable Transport Strategy for Watford. Influence development of next iteration of Local Transport Plan.	tolerate	1x3=3
Not effectively dealing with messaging, media and communication	Lack of support and engagement. Unable to manage expectations.	Develop a Communications Plan with partners	treat	2x2=4

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet notes the progress made so far on the development of the W2CL Conceptual Designs and the proposed procurement approach (which includes a competitive tender process in early 2022).

- 3.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Group Head of Place Shaping to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix 1) with Hertfordshire County Council, Three Rivers District Council and Network Rail (the 'Partner Organisations'), subject to any amendments to be agreed with the Group Head of Democracy and Governance
- 3.3 That Cabinet approves the procurement and subsequent working in partnership with the Partner Organisations to develop the Conceptual Designs for the Watford to Croxley Link (W2CL) scheme.
- 3.4 That Cabinet notes and endorses the use of delegated authority by the Group Head of Place Shaping to utilise £150,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding to fund part of the budget for the Conceptual Designs.

Further information:

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Report approved by: Tom Dobrashian

4.0 **Detailed proposal**

Existing Challenges

- 4.1 The council is in the final stage of preparing a new Local Plan and Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS) for Watford. Significant growth in housing and jobs is proposed, with employment up by 15% in 2031 and population rising by 16% in that time. The government has indicated that a minimum of 784 new homes per year will be needed and this has been reflected in the new Local Plan. Similar growth is also expected in the wider region including Three Rivers, resulting in a higher number of commutes into Watford. This growth will put additional pressure on the current infrastructure, which is already experiencing high levels of demand.
- 4.2 Whilst Watford continues to enjoy excellent public transport connectivity to London, the wider transport offer for journeys within Watford and to neighbouring areas is limited, with no rail link offered between the Overground and Metropolitan line, a relatively unattractive bus offer compared to the private car journey times and high levels of road congestion that is a barrier to walking and cycling when combined with limited dedicated infrastructure.
- 4.3 Currently, a high proportion of journeys into Watford are made by car, particularly journeys originating from the North-West, such as Three Rivers and Dacorum. Car is also the predominant mode of transport for journeys within Watford, making up

49% of commuting trips. As a result, there is a high level of congestion on the radial routes in Watford and within the town centre, particularly on the Ring Road where delays can trigger congestion throughout the wider borough with resultant congestion, air quality, environmental and social issues.

- 4.4 There is therefore a need to provide improved sustainable connections to key destinations and integrate with existing and planned passenger transport measures and improvements to walking and cycling facilities.

Potential Solutions

- 4.5 The new Local Plan and STS set out a wide range of measures that will manage the potential impacts of growth in the short to medium terms (0-15 years). However, the new Local Plan recognises that more radical sustainable transport inventions are likely to be required to mitigate the potential impact of growth beyond the period of the new Local Plan. In response to this the new Local Plan continues to seek to safeguard the land currently occupied by the disused former Croxley line, so that it can be used to provide a sustainable transport corridor in the future.
- 4.6 Following the cancellation of the Metropolitan Line Extension (MLX) project, there is a need to explore alternative options to provide a viable sustainable transport link between Watford Junction and Croxley. In addition, Hertfordshire County Council are developing options for a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) project, called the HERT, and exploring the potential for Abbey Line improvements through the Restoring Your Railway (RYR) fund. This together with new forms of mobility coming forward means that there is a need to now seek industry expertise from the market to develop potential concept designs and mobility solutions that meets the needs of improving connectivity within Watford and its immediate surroundings and connect into these wider transport schemes.
- 4.7 Watford Borough Council, working with partners, is now seeking to consider a wide range of potential mobility solutions, including active travel, e-mobility, autonomous shared mobility, and transit. The aim is to commission work in the form of Conceptual Designs that aim to understand the potential for innovation, inform the business case, harness local characteristics, inform the commercial, operational and delivery models and demonstrate a viable and best value solution for the Watford to Croxley link.

Delivery Partners

- 4.8 The project is to be delivered in a partnership between Watford Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Network Rail and Three Rivers District Council, supported informally by Transport for London. As transport authority, Hertfordshire County Council is leading the procurement and will be the lead organisation for the procurement and sponsorship of a Conceptual Design contract. If Watford commits funding to the project the expectation is that Watford would work in partnership

with the other named organisations entering into the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with HCC taking a leading role in the procurement in terms of setting the brief and tender evaluation.

- 4.9 The partnership is seeking to engage two or three suppliers to concurrently and independently develop creative and feasible conceptual designs for potential mobility solutions for the Watford to Croxley link. Funding will be available for each supplier, who has been successfully awarded a contract, to develop conceptual designs. The partnership is seeking to select suppliers based on their potential to generate a creative, but deliverable, viable and feasible conceptual design for the route.
- 4.10 The partnership wants to encourage suppliers that can develop a range of mobility solutions. Conceptual designs will need to propose solutions for each aspect of the route, from the type of mobility solution to the way in which the network / route will be operated. These solutions must achieve the objectives of the project and comply with known constraints as detailed in the project specification. Suppliers will need to evidence how and why their proposed solutions achieve the project specification, and demonstrate that collectively the solutions provide a complete, coherent and feasible concept which illustrates to the partnership what a range of potential mobility solutions could be, how they can be delivered and how they could be operated. To do this the partnership is developing a specification to cover:
- Equipment;
 - Infrastructure;
 - Operations;
 - Commercial; and
 - Environment and Sustainability.
- 4.11 These will articulate the outcomes that the partnership is seeking to achieve for the route and will set out constraints that any concepts must recognise. The conceptual designs delivered by a supplier shall explain the supplier's proposed solution for each component of the specification, providing an evidence-based rationale as to how the proposed solution will achieve the stated outcomes and comply with the constraints as per the specification. Suppliers shall also provide an evidence-based rationale as to how the solutions for each component are compatible and coherent with each other. Visualisation will be an important part of articulating the supplier's proposed solutions.
- 4.12 The concept designs will inform a range of mobility solutions for the route They must also meet the following objectives:

Aim	Objective
Enhance Strategic Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable connectivity to major centres of population and within the geographies relevant to the Project • Improved access via interchange at Watford Junction, High Street and Metropolitan Line • Sustainable connectivity to the planned across Hertfordshire HERT scheme • Develop Watford Junction as a rail interchange hub
Enhance Local Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved sustainable connectivity from Watford and Croxley Business Parks • Improved sustainable connectivity from Riverwell / Hospital • Improve access to/from/in the stations/interchanges for all users • Improve connectivity with Watford Town centre town and other key areas of employment e.g., Croxley Business Park, recreation e.g., WFC or large residential developmental areas.
Support Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved mobility by sustainable modes • Improve interchange between all forms of mobility • Reliable journeys • Improved journey experience for all users/customers • Improved access to key connection points, including homes, jobs, facilities
Improvement of Watford Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced congestion • Support place-making through positive design and integration with public realm • Improved environment at stations and interchanges • Cater for future demands

4.13 The anticipated timescales are set out below

PIN for PPME	5 th November 2021
PPME Virtual Event	29 th November 2021
Place Contract Notice	28 th February 2022
SQ Submission Closing Date	4 th April 2022
Tender Period	April – May 2022
Award of Contract	June/July 2022
Concept Design commencement	Summer 2022
Concept Design completion	Winter 2022/23

Conceptual Designs Approach

- 4.14 A Pre-Procurement Market Engagement (PPME) event has been held with interested parties from across the industry market on the 29th November 2021.
- 4.15 The purpose of the PPME was to raise the profile of the project, obtain industry engagement and set out, and seek, views on the procurement approach to be adopted. The PPME was well attended by around 50 delegates

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the preparation of the Conceptual Design procurement strategy and supporting documentation has been funded by HCC.
- 5.1.2 The budget for the Conceptual Designs work is expected to be £300,000 and currently it is intended that these costs will be split 50/50 between HCC and WBC. TRDC have been approached to make a contribution and if they were to do so this could be used to increase the budget for the work or reduce the contributions from WBC and HCC proportionally. Under the existing CIL governance arrangements the Group Head of Place Shaping has delegated powers to spend up to £200,000 of CIL funding per annum and it is proposed the WBC contribution of £150,000 would be funded from CIL.
- 5.1.3 The Council has not identified any further funding for work beyond the Conceptual Designs. There is also no guarantee that further work will be undertaken beyond the current stage depending on the outcomes of the work. This is not uncommon for a project of this potential scale and complexity where there is a need to forward fund feasibility work to inform the concept stage.
- 5.1.4 If the scheme progresses beyond the concept stage it will need to be developed in line with the DfT business case requirements and as such funding for the Strategic Outline Business Case will be required in due course. This is likely to require funding from the partnership and further support will also be sought to fund this activity, it may be possible to draw on Department for Transport (DfT) funding for stages of the business case development. If sufficient funding cannot be secured for any future stage of work then the project may stall or cease.

5.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that legal support for the procurement is being provided by HCC as the lead authority.

5.2.2 Work is ongoing on the draft MOU attached as appendix 1.

5.2.3 The Memorandum of Understanding is not legally binding, but provides a commitment to work together to over-come obstacles.

5.2.4 It is intended to use CIL contributions to contribute toward the funding of this work. CIL can be used for the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure which includes transport.

5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered that at this stage there no equalities or human rights implications arising from this report.

5.3.2 Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 The project is currently being overseen by the Group Head of Place Shaping and the Head of Planning and Development. The Council intend to recruit a Transport Planning Manager who will provide support to the project.

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 No implications.

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 No implications

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 The project will help support the Council's sustainable transport objectives.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft Memorandum of Understanding

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.