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**Report for:           TRAFFIC & ROAD SAFETY  
                                  ADVISORY PANEL**

**Date of Meeting:**    11<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Subject:**             **INFORMATION REPORT**  
Wealdstone Town Centre Improvement  
Scheme – Update

**Key Decision:**       No as advisory panel, but the subject  
matter is a key decision

**Responsible  
Officer:**             Paul Walker, Corporate Director -  
Community

**Portfolio Holder:**   Councillor Varsha Parmar, Portfolio  
Holder for Environment

**Exempt:**             No

**Decision subject  
to Call-in:**         No, an information report

**Wards affected:**     Marlborough, Wealdstone

**Enclosures:**        **Appendix A** – Detailed plans of proposed  
scheme

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report provides an update on the town centre improvement scheme for Wealdstone and the delivery programme.

### **Recommendations:**

None, the report is for information only.

### **Reason: (For recommendations)**

The investment in this scheme will improve journey times on bus routes and the road network in the town, improve the public realm, support active travel modes and give a boost to the local economy.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introduction**

- 2.1 Wealdstone has been identified by the Council and the Mayor of London as a priority area for regeneration and is designated in the Harrow Core Strategy and the London Plan as an Opportunity Area. The vision for the area as described in the Harrow and Wealdstone Area Action Plan and updated in the draft Regeneration Strategy 2014 – 2026 is to deliver 5,500 new homes, a new school and health centre and around 3,000 additional new jobs.
- 2.2 The redevelopment of a number of key development sites in the area will change travel patterns and increase travel demand on the network which will have implications for transport infrastructure in Wealdstone. In order to help unlock the wider development potential of Wealdstone a transport study was undertaken in 2017 to assess the impact of all known and committed development on the transport network and to identify opportunities to enhance the transport network and public realm to support growth. This included the three Council-owned sites in the regeneration programme, Poets corner (existing civic centre site), Byron Park (leisure centre site) and Peel House car park (potential new civic centre).
- 2.3 The study showed that the background growth in vehicular traffic would remain relatively static over the 5 year study period and that most of the expansion in journeys from the growing population would be via sustainable transport with an increasing mode share of walking, cycling and bus trips in particular. It is therefore essential that the transport infrastructure of Wealdstone is improved to accommodate these additional journeys. A large proportion of these additional trips will be by bus and so the road network will need to be designed to

enable better bus journey time reliability and to facilitate future expansion of bus services.

2.4 The study recommended two major infrastructure initiatives to support regeneration as follows:

- A town centre scheme to improve the reliability and expansion of buses on the High Street, two options were identified for further analysis.
- A liveable neighbourhood to create healthy streets around the town centre and enable more walking, cycling and better access to bus networks in the wider Wealdstone area. This requires a bid to be submitted to TfL.

2.5 Since the transport study was completed TfL have recognised the merits of a town centre scheme in this location and over the last three years have funded detailed transport modelling and scheme design work to assess the benefits on bus services. In November 2019 TfL confirmed that the expected benefits for bus services and the wider High Street were significant and agreed to take forward the scheme.

### **Options considered**

2.6 The transport study proposed two options for a town centre improvement scheme as follows:

- Bus routes retain their existing routes and junctions and road layouts on the network are improved to maximise performance.
- Southbound bus services are diverted along a central bus lane in George Gange Way and both southbound and west bound bus services enter the town via Canning Road and junctions and road layouts on the network are improved to maximise performance.

2.7 The transport modelling work demonstrated that diverting some bus routes would allow significant improvements to bus journey times and would address wider network performance issues along the A409 corridor when compared with retaining the existing bus routes. This was therefore the preferred option. The existing bus stops on the routes will remain in the same locations with only minor variations.

2.8 The scheme has a validated cost benefit ratio (BCR) of 7.8. Schemes are normally required to exceed a BCR of 2 to be considered by TfL and so the benefits of this scheme are considered very significant and will have a beneficial impact for bus passengers and for the movement of traffic generally.

## Proposed Scheme

2.9 The proposed scheme layout plans can be seen in Appendix A. The main features of the scheme are as follows:

- The diversion of southbound bus services along a central bus lane in George Gange Way and a new traffic signal junction at George Gange Way / Canning Road. This will allow this part of the A409 corridor to flow more freely and provide a dedicated lane for buses. The new traffic signals will facilitate buses to turn right into the town centre via Canning Road and also provide a dedicated pedestrian crossing phase for pedestrians to cross George Gange Way safely. The possible future location of a Civic Centre on the corner of this junction will benefit from improved access to buses and a pedestrian crossing facility.
- Canning Road will be made one way towards the High Street and facilitate southbound and west bound buses from the A409 entering the town centre. The existing east / west cycle route will be accommodated on the northern side of the road and a new bus stop located on the southern side.
- The bus stops arrangement outside the Wealdstone Centre, directly opposite each other, will be revised to prevent the current problem with obstruction of through traffic when buses are stopped at both stops at the same time. The southbound bus stop will be relocated to Canning Road in very close proximity to the existing stop. This will improve traffic flow in this part of the High Street.
- The High Street will be made one way between Canning Road and George Gange Way for northbound buses and general traffic. Entry into the High Street from the A409 corridor is currently restricted to general traffic and so this arrangement will have a negligible impact. Provision will be made for a future north / south cycle route that will pass along the western side of the road between Canning Road and Gordon Road. The proposed cycle route is a TfL sponsored initiative that will provide a high specification cycle route between Harrow Weald and Kenton via Wealdstone. It is important that this scheme and the proposed cycle route integrate effectively.
- All of the traffic signals on the A409 north / south corridor currently operate independently which is very inefficient for controlling traffic flow and movement. The scheme will introduce a SCOOT urban traffic control system which will link, control and optimise the performance of all the traffic signals to improve the overall throughput of traffic and reduce congestion and delay.

- Palmerston Road will be made one way for traffic entering the town from the A409 corridor. The surface level and multi storey car parks entrances and exits will operate in the same way as existing. Bus standing bays will be provided in Palmerston Road and improve the current situation in which there is no bus standing provision available in the town. Bus stands allow buses to lay over for short-term parking to allow driver changes and driver rest breaks which are important for ensuring the efficient and effective operation of bus services.
- The High Street public realm between George Gange Way and the Station will be refurbished with wider footways narrower carriageways, new street lighting and street furniture and revised arrangements for parking and loading. This will be very similar to the improvements made in Station Road in Harrow Town Centre some years ago. This will transform the appearance of the street and provide better conditions for people passing through and shopping in the High Street.
- The station entrance area will be redesigned to provide more space for pedestrians and create an enhanced public realm that will create an attractive gateway into the town from the station.

2.10 The scheme is expected to have significant benefits for the town centre and the local economy. In particular the main benefits will be as follows:

- Faster more pleasant and reliable journeys for bus passengers and an increase in the uptake of bus travel locally.
- A greater potential to expand bus services to meet the demands of a growing population.
- An increase in bus patronage and pedestrian footfall in the High Street shopping area that will provide a boost for the local economy with a potentially beneficial impact on trade for local businesses.
- A general improvement of the movement of traffic on the A409 corridor (High Street / George Gange Way).
- An improved street environment and public realm along the High Street that will encourage more walking and cycling activity in the area and provide a more pleasant experience for people spending time in the centre and develop a sense of civic pride in the town.
- An opportunity to design out any crime from the street environment where possible in collaboration with the Police and other key stakeholders.

## **Consultation and approvals**

- 2.11 Cabinet on 9th January 2020 approved the scheme in principle and authorised the Portfolio Holder for Environment, following consultation with the Corporate Director – Community, to:
- consider the responses to public consultation and approve the final scheme to be taken forward,
  - undertake statutory consultation on traffic regulation orders required to implement the scheme,
  - consider representations received from the statutory consultation and agree the traffic regulation orders to be implemented for the scheme.
- 2.12 The overall cost of implementing the scheme is estimated at £2.4 million. TfL will fund £1.5 million and the remaining £900k will be funded by the borough as a match fund. An allocation for the match fund has been made in the Capital Programme.
- 2.13 A full public consultation on the scheme was undertaken in January 2020 and involved distributing leaflets across 3000 premises in the town to publicise the proposals. The Council's consultation portal was used to receive feedback and public exhibitions were organised to show the proposals and answer public questions.
- 2.14 The results demonstrated that the scheme was received positively and on 16<sup>th</sup> March the Portfolio holder for Environment subsequently approved the consultation results and allowed the scheme to proceed to statutory consultation. The results of consultation were shared with TfL who confirmed that the results were satisfactory, and the scheme would be funded and could proceed to implementation.
- 2.15 The statutory consultation for the traffic and parking restrictions involved with the scheme was undertaken in March / April and advertised on the Council's website, on street notices placed in the affected streets and publicised in the Harrow Times and London Gazette. Leaflets were also posted widely across Wealdstone to advertise the statutory consultation.
- 2.16 There were four objections received during the statutory consultation period and these have now been considered by the Portfolio Holder for Environment on 17<sup>th</sup> December as well as officer comments addressing the representations received and has approved the traffic regulation orders being made and the implementation of the scheme.

## **Implementation**

- 2.17 The detailed design of the scheme has been on-going since late 2019 and is already complete. Funding for implementation was expected at the start of the 2020/21 financial year, however, the Coronavirus health crisis delayed the award due to the financial crisis in TfL. With the support of government financial assistance in November TfL have now confirmed a £1m allocation for 2020/21 to start the implementation of the scheme. With only a short time remaining to the

end of the financial year officers have acted quickly to organise work and mobilise resources to start construction early in 2021.

2.18 The proposed phasing of the construction works has taken account of a wide range of factors:

- Minimising disruption to traffic.
- Access requirements for businesses, including deliveries.
- Maintaining access to the town centre car parks.
- The diversion of bus services and bus stops temporarily and permanently as a part of the scheme.
- Statutory undertaker’s diversionary works.
- Ensuring acceptable public health and safety.
- Taking account of other roadworks and activities on the network that can affect traffic flow during this period.
- Any new traffic and parking restrictions will be introduced on a phase by phase basis.

The provisional construction phasing plan developed with the Council’s highways contractor and other delivery partners is shown below:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
Phase 1 - A409 High Street / George Gange Way & Canning Road (Gladstone Way to George Gange Way)	Feb – Mar 2021
Phase 2 – Canning Road (Gladstone Way to High Street) & High Street (Canning Road to Palmerston Road)	Apr - May
Phase 3 – High Street (Canning Road to George Gange Way)	Jun – Jul 2021
Phase 4 - High Street (Palmerston Road to Masons Avenue) west side	Aug – Sep 2021
Phase 5 – High Street (Palmerston Road to Masons Avenue) east side	Oct – Nov 2021
Phase 6 – Palmerston Road	
Phase 7 – Harrow & Wealdstone Station area	Jan – Feb 2022

2.19 This is a provisional programme and is therefore subject to change. Construction projects by their nature can have unforeseen complications and inevitably the programme will need to adapt. Ensuring that any changes and implications are informed to the public will be a key consideration.

2.20 The project will require extensive communications to keep local people advised of the access requirements of each construction phase in order to minimise disruption and inconvenience. Key user groups affected are businesses, people with disabilities, pedestrians, cyclists and bus passengers. Any communications will be targeted accordingly to the most affected user groups to ensure they are aware of the latest plan.

## Staffing/workforce

- 2.21 The scheme will be project-managed using existing staff resources within the Traffic, Highways & Asset Management Service and also utilising the resources of the Council's engaged transport consultant and highways contractor.

## Ward Councillors' comments

- 2.22 Ward councillors have been briefed with regard to the Wealdstone Transport Study and the major transport infrastructure projects recommended, including the town centre scheme detailed in this report. Regular reports have also been provided to the Traffic & Road Safety Advisory Panel. Ward councillors have provided feedback during these briefings.

## Performance Issues

- 2.23 Implementing this scheme will help to meet the borough outcome indicator targets identified in the Transport Local Implementation Plan (LIP). The shorter term targets in the LIP are as follows:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Borough target</b>	<b>Year</b>
<u>Overarching mode share aim – changing the transport mix</u>		
Londoners' trips to be on foot, by cycle or by public transport	50%	2021
<b>Healthy Streets and healthy people</b>		
<u>Outcome 1: London's streets will be healthy and more Londoners will travel actively</u>		
Londoners to do at least the 20 minutes of active travel they need to stay healthy each day	34%	2021
Londoners have access to a safe and pleasant cycle network	10%	2021
<u>Outcome 2: London's streets will be safe and secure</u>		
Deaths and serious injuries from all road collisions to be eliminated from our streets	38KSIs	2022
<u>Outcome 3: London's streets will be used more efficiently and have less traffic on them</u>		
Reduce the volume of traffic in London.	568 million annual vehicle km miles	2021
Reduce the number of freight trips in the central London morning peak.	N/A	N/A
Reduce car ownership in London.	100,600	2021
<u>Outcome 4: London's streets will be clean and green</u>		
Reduced CO <sub>2</sub> emissions.	124,800 tonnes	2021
Reduced NO <sub>x</sub> emissions.	210 tonnes	2021
Reduced particulate emissions.	43 tonnes PM <sub>10</sub> 21 tonnes PM <sub>2.5</sub>	2021
<b>A good public transport experience</b>		
<u>Outcome 5: The public transport network will meet the needs of a growing London</u>		
More trips by public transport - 14-15 million trips made by public transport every day by 2041.	125,000 trips	2021
<u>Outcome 6: Public transport will be safe, affordable and</u>		

accessible to all

Everyone will be able to travel spontaneously and independently. 5 mins 2041

Outcome 7: Journeys by public transport will be pleasant, fast and reliable

Bus journeys will be quick and reliable, an attractive alternative to the car 11.5mph 2021

### **New homes and jobs**

Outcome 8: Active, efficient and sustainable travel will be the best options in new developments

Outcome 9: Transport investment will unlock the delivery of new homes and jobs

Delivery of Section 106 agreements 100% 2021

CIL funding allocations used for strategic transport initiatives 100% 2021

## **Environmental Implications**

2.24 The third transport LIP underwent a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This indicated that there are environmental benefits from delivering the policies and programme of investment included. The main benefits on the population are in improving air quality and human health. No negative environmental issues were identified as part of the SEA.

2.25 The proposed scheme fully accords with the principles of LIP3 and will encourage modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport and promote healthier lifestyles, reduce accidents and improve road safety, reduce congestion, pollution and improve air quality.

## **Data Protection Implications**

2.26 There are no data protection implications.

## **Risk Management Implications**

2.27 There are risks to delivery of the scheme associated with public acceptance of the scheme, impact on bus passengers during changes to bus services, ensuring a safe and serviceable design and a safe method of construction that mitigates hazards to the public. These risks are addressed through the established risk management procedures within the Traffic, Highways & Asset Management Service.

2.28 Full public consultation and engagement has already been undertaken to ensure that public acceptance of the scheme is supported by a majority of the community affected.

2.29 Under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 a design risk assessment has been undertaken as a part of developing the scheme to assess any potential risks from proposed changes to the street environment in terms of construction, future operation and maintenance. As far as practicable, risks have been designed out of the proposed scheme.

- 2.30 The Council's client team and highways contractor are developing a construction health and safety plan to ensure that any risks associated with building the scheme are fully mitigated and that there is a clear plan with construction phasing and sequencing in place which ensures public safety.
- 2.31 There will be on-going engagement with TfL in order to coordinate the diversion of bus routes and the sequencing of construction work on the highway to ensure that bus passengers are not adversely disrupted by the works.

### **Procurement Implications**

- 2.32 Where needed, consultants and contractors have been procured to investigate, develop and deliver proposals. This is business as usual. The work will be procured in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

### **Legal Implications**

- 2.33 The Traffic Management Act 2004 places an obligation on authorities to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on their road network. Authorities are required to make arrangements as they consider appropriate for planning and carrying out the action to be taken in performing the duty.
- 2.34 The proposed amendments to traffic and parking restrictions will require the appropriate legal process to be undertaken before they can be physically implemented.
- 2.35 Subject to statutory consultation requirements, the Council has powers to introduce and amend the operational provisions for traffic and parking restrictions under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 and the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 as amended by the Traffic Orders Procedure (Coronavirus) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 which came into effect on 23 May 2020 and will remain in force until 30 April 2021.

### **Financial Implications**

- 2.36 The cost of implementing the scheme is £2.4 million. TfL will fund £1.5 million and Harrow will provide a match fund of £900k to undertake scheme implementation. The project will span two financial years and the funding is split between them.
- 2.37 In the 2020/21 capital programme there is £1m allocated from TfL external grant funding.
- 2.38 In 2021/22 £1,400k is allocated in the capital programme made up of £900k Harrow CIL funding and £500k external grant funding from TfL.

2.39 As a consequence of the financial position of TfL negotiations between government and TfL are currently ongoing to agree financial assistance for 2021/22 and future years. This will be based on TfL submitting an acceptable management plan to improve their financial security by 2023. Their deadline for doing this is 11<sup>th</sup> January. There therefore remains a small risk over the agreement of any plan and the allocation of funds by TfL for the scheme in 2021/22. As a consequence, consideration has been given to how to ensure the delivery of the project in such an event and it is expected that the Highways Capital Programme would be used as a contingency in order to avoid any further capital borrowing. It is, however, very unlikely that this will be required.

### **Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty**

2.40 LIP3 underwent an Equalities Impact Assessment and the Council has had due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it as required under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

2.41 It is considered that the proposed scheme will be of benefit to all and particularly the groups in the table below:

<b>Protected characteristic</b>	<b>Benefit</b>
Gender	Mothers with young children and elderly people generally benefit most from schemes that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport because improved road layouts and public realm provide improved safety, security and convenience and improved access to the town centre and facilities.
Disability	People with physical and visual impairment generally benefit most from schemes that prioritise walking and public transport because improved road layouts and public realm provide ease of access with fewer obstructions, improved safety, security and convenience to access the town centre and facilities.
Age	Young children and elderly people generally benefit most from schemes that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport because improved road layouts and public realm provide improved safety, security and convenience and improved access to the town centre and facilities. A reduction in the influx of traffic into an area will reduce particulate emissions and air pollution, to which children are particularly sensitive.

## Council Priorities

2.42 The following table show the key inputs from the strategy that will support the Council priorities.

Council Priorities	Impact
Building homes and infrastructure	The town centre scheme and improved bus services will help the Council's regeneration programme by supporting population growth and facilitating the increasing number of journeys on the transport network
Improving the environment and addressing climate change	The improved public realm will reduce obstructions to walking journeys to the town centre and public transport connections particularly for the mobility and visually impaired.
Supporting Those Most in Need  Addressing health and social care inequality	The scheme will support healthier lifestyles which will improve public health and the burden on health services and social care.
Thriving economy  Tackling poverty and inequality	The improvements to the public realm and public transport services will support the local economy and help to make the town centre a more pleasant place to spend time in and to do shopping and support more local employment.

## Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

**Statutory Officer: Jessie Man**

Signed on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

**Date: 21 December 2020**

**Statutory Officer: Jimmy Walsh**

Signed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date: 04 January 2021**

## **Section 3 - Procurement Officer Clearance**

**Statutory Officer: Nimesh Mehta**

Signed by the Head of Procurement

**Date: 29 December 2020**

## **Section 3 – Corporate Director Clearance**

**Statutory Officer: Paul Walker**

Signed by the Corporate Director - Community

**Date: 06 January 2021**

## **Mandatory Checks**

Ward Councillors notified: **NO, as the report is for information only**

**EqIA carried out: YES**

**EqIA cleared by: Dave Corby, Community - Equality Task Group (DETG) Chair**

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

### **Contact:**

David Eaglesham, Head of Traffic, Highways & Asset Management, 020 8424 1500, david.eaglesham@harrow.gov.uk

### **Background Papers:**

Transport Local Implementation Plan

<https://www.harrow.gov.uk/road-maintenance-travel/harrow-transport-policy-documents>

Wealdstone Transport Study (2017)

<https://www.harrow.gov.uk/road-maintenance-travel/wealdstone-transport-plan>