

CABINET

4 FEBRUARY 2009

WINCHESTER TOWN ACCESS PLAN AND SOUTH OF WINCHESTER PARK & RIDE

REPORT OF HEAD OF ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Contact Officer: Andy Hickman Tel No: 01962 848105
email:ahickman@winchester.gov.uk

RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB1628 - Winchester Town Access Plan Consultation – 13 February 2008

CAB1367 - South Winchester Park And Ride – 13 December 2006

LE18 - Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 -26 January 2006

EA55 - Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 - 16 March 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report updates Cabinet on the progress being made on a number of key transportation issues facing Winchester. It briefly examines the progress being made on the development of the Winchester Town Access Plan (WTAP), the Winchester Town Traffic Study commissioned by the County Council and the new Park & Ride facility to be constructed south of Winchester.

Cabinet will be aware that the City Council and the County Council are cooperating on the preparation of a Winchester Town Access Plan (WTAP). The Access Plan will help to shape the way in which people get to and from Winchester and how they move about whilst in the town. This is an important element in defining what kind of place Winchester is and connects directly with the Local Transport Plan, Local Development Framework, economic development strategic documents and the Vision for Winchester.

Following on from the public consultation exercise in 2008, and a number of additional studies, officers are now looking to further develop the draft plan and to seek Members' approval for the overall approach to be taken. A significant step has been the County Council's commissioning of consultants to undertake a comprehensive review into Winchester Traffic Management system.

The report also details the progress made on the second park and ride facility to the south of Winchester and seeks approval for the City Council to continue negotiations with the County on taking the lease for the new site and further consider what options for tendering the bus services it requires. No decision has yet been made on which of the possible bus routes is the preferred option, nor have any supporting bus priority measures been identified. This report makes no request for additional funding, but does notify Members of the likely long term financial commitment that may be required to operate the new scheme; this will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That Cabinet notes the progress being made on the Winchester Town Access Plan.
2. That the Head of Access and Infrastructure seeks to arrange a Members' seminar with the County Council and their consultants in order to consider the next stage of the Traffic Management study for Winchester and a report be made to the Cabinet (Traffic and Parking) Committee on the proposed way forward.
3. That Cabinet confirms the City Council's support in principle for the provision of a second park and ride service south of Winchester and that the Head of Access and Infrastructure be authorised to enter into further discussions with the County Council on the City Council taking the lease for the new site.
4. That the Head of Access and Infrastructure reports back to Cabinet on the heads of terms for the lease and an evaluation of the financial implications of running the second park and ride service.

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DETAIL

1 Winchester Town Access Plan

- 1.1 The Winchester Town Access Plan is being prepared jointly by the City Council and the County Council which will set out proposals to reduce demand for car based travel, manage current traffic management issues and invest in new solutions to offer more and better travel choices. For the County Council in particular the Winchester Town Access Plan (and others they are working on elsewhere) is an integral part of the Local Transport Plan.
- 1.2 Transport and movement is a vital component of the social and economic infrastructure of a place. Decisions on these issues help to define the nature of the places we live in and the kind of future they have. Work on the Access Plan therefore links directly to the Vision for Winchester document that was approved by the Town Forum in 2006. In the Vision, the City Council set out a series of transport and access related objectives which the Access Plan seeks to take forward. There is also a direct link to the choices presented by the preparation of the Local Development Framework which is currently subject to consultation. The future economic direction of the area will be shaped by the growth options under discussion and the Access Plan will both reflect and shape these as they develop.
- 1.3 Preparation of the Access Plan must also reflect other priorities, such as the need to address climate change and promote a reduction in carbon emissions – in which transport measures have a significant part to play. A reduction in congestion and an associated improvement in air quality are therefore important objectives for both the City Council and the County Council.
- 1.4 All these have to be reconciled with the vital importance of maintaining and enhancing Winchester's economic vitality and historic setting. Good transport is essential for successful employment and retail operations which are in turn essential for social inclusion.

2 Current Position on Access Plan

- 2.1 Progress on the Access Plan to date has included two joint Members' Seminars where Members received presentations on key transport issues and had an opportunity to raise matters of concern. The Winchester Town Forum has also discussed the process and consultation arrangements. A study into the Shared

Space concept has been undertaken by Ben Hamilton-Baillie Associates and surveys into car park usage and traffic movements have been undertaken to inform the work. Community Street Audits were undertaken in the June 2007 and the results will help to inform the cycling and walking elements of the Plan. The Town Forum's Vision for Winchester is being used as a basis for formulating the objectives and vision for WTAP.

- 2.2 By March 2008, work on the issues and options had reached a stage where it was appropriate to consult with local residents, businesses and employers to find out what they thought about what the Access Plan proposals. Therefore a public consultation exercise was held to provide information and receive feedback. This was designed to dovetail with the consultation on the Local Development Framework.
- 2.3 The public consultation was held in the Saxon Suite of the Winchester Guildhall during March 2008. This was a joint consultation with Hampshire County Council and officers from both authorities were in attendance. The exhibition included displays on:
 - Existing conditions/ statistics results of surveys and studies
 - Accessibility issues, cycling, walking and travel plans
 - Traffic management issues including the one-way system and the shared space concept.
 - Car Parking issues including charging, on and off street provision and existing and future park and ride provision.
 - Public transport including bus and rail issues.
 - The High Street Refurbishment Scheme and proposed associated vehicular restrictions.
- 2.4 The consultation was well advertised in Perspectives and on the web sites of the City and County Councils. In addition a promotional leaflet was produced and feedback obtained at the exhibition and through a questionnaire. All City and County Councillors were invited and letters of invitation sent to stakeholders and interest groups.
- 2.5 A full report analysing the responses from the consultation has been available on the Council's website since early autumn 2008.
- 2.6 One of the key issues raised by both Members and the public was the need for a comprehensive review and evaluation of the traffic management system in operation around the town. The need for such a review had initially been identified as one of the Actions within the Air Quality Action Plan, and had been agreed by the County Council as a priority for them to undertake. However lack of resources meant that for some time the County were unable to meet this obligation.

3 Traffic Management Study

- 3.1 In September 2008 the County Council appointed consultants, Mott MacDonald, to undertake a Winchester Town Traffic Study. The consultants are undertaking this study using a two stage approach. The first stage has been to gather information on traffic patterns and existing conditions, utilising results from WTAP consultations, surveys and audits undertaken in order to develop options for the operation of the town centre road network. The aim is to reach agreement on the acceptability of these options, before the second stage of the study which will be to fully test and develop the agreed options further.
- 3.2 Once the first stage of the study is completed it is proposed to convene a Members' seminar to present the consultants' initial findings. After that meeting a report will be brought to the Cabinet (Traffic and Parking) Committee to take forward the proposals as part of the long term strategy for Winchester Town.
- 3.3 It is accepted that the overall approach and development of the Winchester Town Access plan has been somewhat slower than initially hoped and anticipated. However, the importance of the Town Traffic Study should not be understated and other important projects within the Access Plan are being progressed independently including the High Street Refurbishment and the South of Winchester Park & Ride. The County have committed considerable resources to the traffic study and it is important that a coherent strategy for traffic reduction is the precursor to important enhancements that will improve the town centre environment for all users.

4 Park & Ride

- 4.1 The provision for a network of park and ride sites surrounding Winchester was first adopted in the Winchester Movement and Access Plan (WMAP) developed by both the City and County Councils in the early nineties. The first park and ride site was opened in 1993, and was subsequently expanded in 2004. It can now hold a maximum of 785 vehicles. The first site is nearing capacity and the development of a second site is now required.
- 4.2 Upon completion of the new site, the number of parking spaces available to Park & Ride users will increase to over 1600. Whilst there is the potential for additional income from the new site, this must be balanced against the need to operate and financially underwrite the new bus service.
- 4.3 The provision of additional park and ride facilities needs to be made in the context of an up to date and agreed transport policy. Initially this context was the WMAP, which was incorporated into the first Local Transport Plan (LTP), adopted by the County Council in 2000. The second Local Transport Plan, published in 2006, seeks to replace the WMAP with a new 'Access Plan': however, the provision of a second Park and Ride site for Winchester has already been identified as part of the five year capital programme covering the years from 2006 to 2011.

- 4.4 In July 2007 Hampshire County Council's Regulatory Committee approved the planning application for the Itchen Farm site, known locally as the Tarmac site, and in April 2008 the Leader of the County Council gave the final funding approval for the scheme to proceed. The initial site clearance and ecological work has been completed. Advanced archaeological work commenced in autumn 2008 and is due to be completed early in 2009.
- 4.5 Hampshire County Council has agreed for Winchester City Council to undertake the operation of the services (as they currently do for the existing P&R services). It is proposed to report back to Cabinet in due course on the Heads of Terms for the new lease, together with an appraisal of the wider financial implications of running the Park & Ride service. Both authorities will work closely to ensure that the operation of the site, including the choice of route, best serves users and helps the scheme to meet its objectives of reducing traffic in the city centre.
- 4.6 The contractor has been appointed for the main car park works which will start in April 2009. A separate contract for the landscape planting will be let this summer with the planting works starting winter 2009/10 as the main construction works are nearing completion. The total value of the works to which the County Council is now committed exceeds £7 million.
- 4.7 Improvements to Bushfield Roundabout and Hockley Link will also be undertaken within the main contract. These works will enable two lanes of traffic to flow from Badger Farm Road, around Bushfield Roundabout to Hockley Link. The highway works will be the most disruptive element of the work, but are planned to be completed by mid-November 2009 to avoid the Christmas Shopping. The overall aim is for an opening in spring/summer 2010.
- 4.8 The provision of a second park and ride site at Itchen Farm allows for a choice of a number of different bus routes into the town centre. Of the options initially investigated by the County Council two were put forward as part of the consultation process. The first was an 'in and out' route along Romsey Road, the second was 'in' along St Cross Road and 'out' along Romsey Road. These route options can be run as a new Park & Ride service, independent of the existing service, or in combination with existing service to create a shuttle service serving both car parks and all destinations in between.
- 4.9 Initial patronage estimates indicated that the St Cross Road route would probably generate more passenger use than the Romsey Road route, and would consequently require less financial support. However, this evaluation was made without any consideration of possible bus priority measures on the routes selected, nor consideration of possible 'block bookings' from major employers on the Romsey road corridor, who show a preference for the Romsey Road route.
- 4.10 The County Council is investigating a number of different options for bus priority measures to support the 'ride' element of the service, and whilst these are not required for the construction of the 'park' element of the scheme, such facilities

assist in making the park and ride service an attractive alternative to town centre parking.

- 4.11 The cost of operating the new service cannot be specified at this stage and will be dependent upon levels of utilisation, the route chosen and charging. By way of guidance, the operation of the current 'ride' element of the service is fully covered by the revenue received. At similar pricing and usage levels the revenue from the new site may not be able to cover the additional costs of new bus service given the longer bus route involved. This will need to be factored into budgets from 2010/11 which is the first year in which new the site will be operating. The subsidy will need to be provided from the surplus generated from the town centre parking charges; this cross subsidy is undertaken by the majority of towns and cities operating Park & Ride schemes and reflects the need to offer a reasonably priced Park & Ride fee to encourage its use and the additional costs incurred in operating the bus service. This is included as a potential £200k growth bid in the budget for 2010/11 (CAB1786 elsewhere on this agenda refers); the further assessment work planned will clarify the likely financial implications.
- 4.12 A key element of the access plan is likely to be an overarching parking policy for the town. To deliver the optimum benefits in terms of reducing congestion and pollution a park and ride site needs to be implemented in conjunction with a coherent parking and traffic management plan for the town, from the Access Plan and Traffic Study.
- 4.13 Discussions are ongoing with a number of major employers in the Romsey Road area, these are considered to be key potential users of the new Park & Ride service and include the Hospital, the University, the Prison service, the Police Headquarters and the County Council. With approval from the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access, officers have discussed potential discounts in return for a commitment to block book a significant number of spaces. Whilst we are still waiting for confirmation of exact requirements, it is possible that in combination the major employers could be expected to block book in excess of 500 of the 1600+ available tickets. The level of discount for block booking of tickets will ultimately need approval by Cabinet and be backed up by changes to the Parking Order.
- 4.14 In order to ascertain the most cost effective way of running buses to serve all of the town's Park & Ride sites, it would be possible to seek tenders on a number of different bus route options that could be run in combination or isolation. These options have been identified as:
- A service in and out via Romsey Road turning around Upper High St and Sussex St.
 - A service in along St Cross Road and out via Romsey Road, connecting with the current service in Upper High St.
 - A linked service i.e. inverted 'U' serving both sites and all destinations
 - Cost of renewing the current Barfields/ St Catherines service
 - Cost of a truncated Barfields/ St Catherines Service turning at The Broadway and not going up to the Station.

- 4.15 A reasonable level of frequency needs to be provided in order to offer an attractive service to users. In common with the existing scheme, and others around the country, it is envisaged that we will seek tenders on the basis of a minimum peak hour bus frequency of 10 minutes and a minimum off-peak frequency of 15 minutes. However, further evaluation of bus operating conditions is needed to develop and agree with the County Council a likely bus operating timetable, which would be used as a basis for the tendering process.
- 4.16 In summary, there are a considerable number of variables that would affect the cost of the tendered bus service; the route chosen, timetable/frequency of operation, buses used (age/environmental credentials) and most importantly, the likely ticket sales and take up of the new service. It is proposed to report back to Cabinet once a clearer picture of the overall costs to the Council has been established.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

5 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 5.1 These schemes and proposals contribute to the Corporate Priorities for safeguarding our high quality environment and safe & secure communities.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The current contract to run the buses serving the existing Park and Ride has an annual cost to the Council of approximately £350,000. This total is offset from parking receipts of a similar amount, and therefore the Council's obligation is to cover the costs of the operation and maintenance of the car park from other income sources. This has been done through the surplus generated from the city centre car parks.
- 6.2 The City Council will be expected to enter into an agreement to procure an operator for the bus services serving the second park and ride site. Depending on the bus routes chosen and the fares charged, this could require a significant level of subsidy initially, but this could reduce as patronage levels increase. A further report on this matter will be taken to Cabinet in due course.
- 6.3 The City Council's Access and Infrastructure Division will be responsible for the letting and management of any future park and ride contracts.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Hampshire County Council - South Winchester Park and Ride Consultation Reports

Hampshire County Council - Local Transport Plan 2006-2011