

Cabinet – 22 April 2009

Red Routes Package 2 – Walsall Wood Lorry Park, Beechtree Road, Walsall Wood.

Portfolio: Councillor A Harris, Transport
Councillor A Andrew, Deputy Leader and Regeneration

Service: Strategic Regeneration

Wards: Aldridge North and Walsall Wood

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary of report

This report details the recommended scheme proposals for the change of use of the existing Lorry Park at Walsall Wood to a car park only.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the outcome of the public consultation exercise undertaken in June 2008, demonstrating 80% public support for the re-designation to a car park.
- 2.2 That Cabinet authorise the preparation and submission of a planning application for a change of use from a lorry park to a car park based on the indicative layout on the plan attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.3 That Cabinet authorise the advertisement of modifications to the Off-Street Parking Places Order, made under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to re-designate the car park, if planning permission is granted. (June 2009) and delegate authority to the appropriate officer (Head of Legal Services or Head of Engineering & Transportation) to seal the Order after consideration of any objections and expression of support received.

3. Background information

- 3.1 This report seeks approval to the change of use of the site from a Lorry Park to a Car Park.
- 3.2 The proposals have been developed in response to residents' reactions to the Lorry Park taking into account the anti social nature of the activity generated by the Lorry Park and also the existing and future requirement to provide a secure

and official car park for the visitors of Walsall Wood High Street. With the potential implementation of a Red Route within this area there is an increased need to balance the requirement of car parking with the removal of on street parking spaces to give place to loading bays.

- 3.3 Planning permission will be required for the change of use from a lorry park to a car park and Cabinet is requested to approve the preparation and submission of the necessary planning application following the finalisation of the design of the proposed car park. This will be based on the indicative plan attached at Appendix A and will retain access through the car park to the allotments to the rear of Beechtree Road.
- 3.4 The use of public off –street car parks is governed by the Walsall Metropolitan Borough (Off-Street Parking Places) Order under the provisions of the Road Traffic regulation Act 1984. Under the current Order (June 2009), this area is designated as a lorry park and only vehicles with a gross maximum weight exceeding three tonnes are permitted to park on the site. To re-designate the site as a car park and to exclude lorries will require modifications to this Order. Under the regulations, these changes have to be advertised and there is a formal consultation period.
- 3.5 Under Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, authority to approve the sealing of orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 where objections have been received is delegated to the Head of Service – Engineering and Transportation. This authority is limited by four conditions, including that there are not more than two objections received and the objections are based on personal inconvenience or that the number of objectors is matched by an equal number of supporters to the proposed order.
- 3.5 Based on the results of the public consultation, there is overwhelming support for the re-designation to a car park and the exclusion of lorries. The introduction of the Red Route will reduce the extent of on-street parking on the High Street and alternate car parking will be required to encourage visitors to the local centre. However, under the advertisement of proposed changes to orders, the Council is obliged to invite those who wish to object to submit their objections in writing. Supporters are not invited to submit expressions of support and experience has indicated that they do not. The constitution is silent on who has the authority to approve the sealing of orders if the limiting conditions imposed on the head of Service – Engineering and Transportation are not met. Consequently, Cabinet is requested to delegate authority to approve the sealing of the required modifications to the Off-Street Parking Places Order after consideration of any letters of objection or support submitted during the period for objection.
- 3.4 This scheme will be part of the key initiatives for Walsall in contributing towards the delivery of the second Local Transport Plan (LTP2)

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

- 4.1.1 The funding for this scheme is made up of DfT Major Scheme funding for the delivery of the second phase of the Red Routes network in the West Midlands. Allocation is yet to be confirmed.
- 4.1.2 The approval of this scheme does not expose the Council to significant financial risk, as the scheme will only be progressed to the implementation stage if the scheme remains within budget limits following tender assessment.
- 4.1.3 In the Transport Capital Programme report of 18 March 2009 Cabinet were asked to endorse a review of how staff fee elements are utilised in the development and implementation of capital projects to ensure that resources are used as efficiently as possible at a time when the staff time and construction costs required to implement schemes are increasing significantly. Any change in working practices identified as part of that review will need to be utilised as this project is progressed through detailed design and implementation stages, recognising the likely increase in construction costs over the lifetime of this scheme.
- 4.1.4 The enforcement of the Red Route Orders will be complemented by the Council's adoption of Civil Parking Enforcement powers from Spring 2009. Adoption of these powers will enable the Council to appropriately control and manage the enforcement of vehicle infringements to ensure that the highway operates as effectively and as safely as possible.

4.2 Legal:

- 4.2.1 To deliver the project the Council will utilise the Framework Contractor that will be in place by April 2009; the associated procurement exercise to select a preferred contractor will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contractual Procedure Rules.
- 4.2.2 Implementation of the proposals will require the advertisement of new Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) relating to the Red Route restrictions. It is intended to progress the advertising of TROs whilst a contractor is procured for delivery of the proposals, to ensure the works period can be minimised and the scheme is implemented quickly. Given the nature of the concept of Red Routes and the need to maximise flexibility, it is proposed that all Red Route TROs will be implemented as experimental TROs. This will allow the Council to respond rapidly to modify those where operational experience reveals alterations are necessary in order to deliver a scheme of maximum benefit to route users and residents/ businesses along the A4148 corridor. Any responses or objections to the TROs will be handled in accordance with the Council's constitution.

4.3 Staffing:

There are no direct staffing impacts as a result of this report.

5. Citizen impact

Improvements to the A461 with the implementation of Red Routing will provide benefits for all route users - motorists, pedestrians, local residents/ businesses and freight. The proposals have been developed to minimise any negative impact to citizens along the route; this is in relation to changes to the highway, such as junction improvements and revisions to loading immediately outside a limited number of properties. Before and after traffic surveys will be conducted to ensure that the proposals do not encourage increased levels of inappropriate use of residential roads by through traffic. The Lorry Park aspect of the proposal forms part of the development which will allow an increased amount of car parking space away from the public highway.

6. Community safety

6.1 The Red Route proposals for the A461 Lichfield Road include the following improvements: -

- Improved Lining and Signing along the route including Walsall Wood High Street.
- The introduction of loading bays to be used by traders who are directly affected by the 'no stopping at any time' restrictions proposed.
- The introduction of a designated parking bays located along the High Street to replace spaces removed by the introduction of "no stopping at any time" restrictions proposed.
- The introduction and formalisation of safe crossing facilities at all junctions which currently do not include: blister surfaced paving to warn the visually impaired and dropped kerbing for disabled/pram access.

6.2 All proposals have been, and will continue to be subject to Safety Audits, in accordance with guidance set out by the Institute of Highways and Transportation.

7. Environmental impact

Environmental and safety factors are considered in the development and delivery of transport schemes. With this scheme we will seek to retain the existing green spaces including the green space located adjacent to St John's Close. Where any alterations would require the removal of a tree we propose to replace these elsewhere along the route.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk:

- 8.1.1 Failure to deliver Walsall's element of the Phase 1 Red Route network will put at risk Walsall's eligibility to be included in future funding submissions for Red Route funding from DfT; this is likely to be of the order of £20m of investment in the strategic road network over the next seven years based on current projections.
- 8.1.2 The scheme will be managed using the West Midlands Capital Programme Management System and reported to both the West Midlands CEPOG Management Board to track progress and will also be reported on the Regeneration Directorate's project register.
- 8.1.3 The key risks associated with this project are: -
 - a) The performance of statutory undertakers in diverting equipment that is located in the highway to allow the Council's contractor to construct the civil engineering elements of the work.
 - b) The ongoing management and engagement of stakeholders affected by the scheme (residents, businesses, drivers, public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians) to ensure that they are all informed and aware of progress in developing and implementing the scheme. As with all schemes of this nature there will be a degree of disruption during the implementation stage, therefore continued communication through the project development and implementation stage will be used to manage any concerns raised by stakeholders.

8.2 Performance management:

- 8.2.1 The delivery of the Red Route scheme will be a significant step in progress towards achieving the existing objectives and targets specified in the LTP. Future transport funding will be dependent on the level of progress towards achieving the targets which specifically include limiting the increase in congestion, improving public transport usage and reliability and improving accessibility to key West Midlands's town centres, including Walsall.
- 8.2.2 Failure to deliver Phase 1 of the West Midlands Red Route network on budget and within timescale could put future major scheme funding for Red Route schemes at risk.
- 8.2.3 The scheme is managed in accordance with the requirements of the West Midlands Capital Programme Management System, which follows the principles of the Walsall Project Approach. A risk register will be updated as the scheme is progressed to implementation. The significant risks for the scheme are based around the costs of utility company diversion works and the cost of a small area of privately owned land required to deliver the scheme. Initial contact with land-owners indicates that the land can be acquired by negotiation without the need for Compulsory Purchase Orders.

9. Equality implications

The proposals have been designed to maximise the benefit for as many users of the route as possible. In particular, upgrading the existing crossing point located outside St John's Church and the inclusion of an additional crossing point located towards the south end of the High Street.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 A consultation exercise for traders was undertaken on the Red Route proposals between June and July 2008. The consultation exercise included:-
- Delivery of literature and questionnaires outlining the proposals to properties along the route.
 - Invitation to a trader's workshop to discuss and review the proposals.
 - An interactive workshop to provide an opportunity for traders to have their say about the location of parking and loading bays.
 - Presentation of final provisional plan outlining the potential locations for parking and loading bays and an indicative plan of the Lorry Park
 - Information on the existing situation along Walsall Wood High Street including what was currently available and the requirements following the implementation of a Red Route.
- 10.2 The response at the consultation workshop revealed an excess of 80% support for the proposals in particular when posed with the issue of the Lorry Park changing to a car park. When asked to evaluate the importance of various scheme objectives, all objectives were classed as very important by more than 60% of respondents. When asked of the importance/unimportance of improving safety along the route, the majority of the responses stated that this was 'very important.'

Background papers

None

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7 April 2009



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7 April 2009



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7 April 2009