

# BRIEFING NOTE

**TO:** Business Employment and Local Employment Panel  
**DATE:** 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014

**RE: Darlaston and Pleck Major Highways Scheme Update**

## **Purpose**

To provide an update to the Panel on the Darlaston Strategic Development Area Access Project. Construction work has now commenced on site and the report provides a background of the scheme to date and work scheduled to take place over the next 2 years.

## **Overview**

The Darlaston SDA Access Project has a total value of £25,908m and covers 4 key sites across Darlaston and Pleck:

- Bentley Road South
- Bentley Mill Way
- Darlaston Road / Pleck Road Junction (known as 'The Brown Lion')
- Wallows Lane / Bescott Road Junction

The improvements aim to unlock key parcels of Brownfield land across the Black Country Enterprise Zone and Phoenix 10 (IMI). The key components of the scheme are:

- New Canal Bridge – Bentley Road South
- New Railway Bridge – Bentley Mill Way
- Lowering of the carriageway underneath the James Bridge Aqueduct
- New signalised junction with Bentley Mill Way and Darlaston Road

## **Work Completed to date**

Since the scheme received Programme Entry from the DfT in December 2011, there are a number of aspects of the scheme which have been completed. The advanced work has been undertaken to reduce the amount of risk associated with the scheme and to ensure the DfT granted the scheme Full Approval to release the funding to award the contract. Items completed to date:

- Planning Permission for realignment of Bentley Mill Way granted March 2012
- Compulsory Purchase Order for 81 plots of land confirmed February 2014
- Construction of Canal Bridge – April 2010
- Construction of Railway Bridge (structure only) – March 2014

## **Scheme Funding**

The scheme is being funded by Walsall Council, Centro and the Department for Transport. The contribution from each partner is as follows:

Walsall Council - £6.592m

Centro - £5m

Department for Transport - £14.316m

The scheme has been competitively tendered jointly with Birmingham City Council. Birse Civils were originally appointed to deliver the scheme. However due to complications with the land acquisition the framework expired prior the DfT granting the scheme Full Approval. Following a competitive tender process Dawnus have been selected as the preferred contractor to deliver the scheme.

## **Construction**

Once approval had been granted a Letter of Intent was issued to Dawnus Construction Ltd on Monday 22nd September. This allowed Dawnus to start placing orders for construction works in line with the contract. The letter contained a stipulation that the formal contract must be signed prior to exceeding expenditure of £1.5m. This is anticipated to be completed by the end of October.

Since the Letter of Intent was issued Dawnus commenced formal construction works across the scheme on Monday 6th October. It is anticipated to take 3-4 weeks for Dawnus to fully mobilise, have a full site compound setup and for excavation works to take place. The key items to note are as follows:

- Preliminary investigation work is taking place at Beswick House (Brown Lion Junction) with the aim to commence demolition at the start of November
- The main site compound will be based at the Brown Lion Junction with an additional site compound being based adjacent to the railway line on Bentley Road South
- Construction work will commence immediately on Bentley Road South to ensure the road can be opened back up by April 2015.
- Bentley Mill Way will be closed from Sunday 26th October for approximately 13 months

## **Key Dates**

- Contract Award took place on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014
- Construction work commenced on site on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2014

Bentley Road South will continue to be closed up until April 2015, this will be in conjunction with a full closure of Bentley Mill Way from the junction of Darlaston Road up to the Casino exit. The closure will be to both vehicles and pedestrians. A full diversion route will be advertised in advance.

## **Recommendations (if required)**

Note the contents of the report.

## **Author**

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