

Cabinet – 19 November 2008

Route 529 Walsall – Wolverhampton Bus Showcase and A454 Red Route Scheme – Approval to Proposals

Portfolio: Councillor A Harris, Transport

Service: Strategic Regeneration

Wards: Palfrey and Pleck

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to the implementation of joint Red Route and Bus Showcase proposals for the A454 Wolverhampton Road between the Pleck Road junction and M6 Jn10.
- 1.2 The proposals have been developed to balance the needs of route users (drivers, public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians) and residents and businesses based along the corridor. The scheme has been subject to a number of consultation exercises in 2008 and the outcome of the consultation is outlined in the consultation section of this report.
- 1.3 The proposals are shown in plans attached at **Appendices A, B, C & D**.
- 1.4 This scheme will be one of the key schemes for Walsall in contributing towards the delivery of the second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) where two of the key objectives are to reduce congestion and improve public transport reliability and patronage.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the outcomes of the public consultation exercise undertaken in June 2008, demonstrating 87% public support for the scheme and support from operators.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve the proposals as shown in the plans attached at **Appendices A, B, C & D** to be taken forward to detailed design and implementation.

- 2.3 That Cabinet delegate responsibility for resolving any minor scheme amendments to the Executive Director Regeneration & Performance. Specifically this will include: -
- Finalising the location of any loading bays and parking arrangements along the A454 Wolverhampton Road
 - Finalising agreement with adjoining land owners for any environmental mitigation and improvement measures required along the route
- 2.4 That Cabinet approve the undertaking of a tendering exercise for the appointment of a contractor in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contract Rules, to undertake the construction of the Bus Showcase and Red Route proposals
- 2.5 That Cabinet delegate authority for the acceptance of tenders and award of contract to the Executive Director Regeneration & Performance, following an assessment of received tenders for Value for Money and quality, subject to the scheme remaining within identified budget limits

3. Background information

- 3.1 This report details the recommended scheme proposals for implementation for the combined A454 Wolverhampton Road Red Route and Route 529 Bus Showcase Scheme (between Walsall and Wolverhampton). This Scheme will make a significant contribution towards achieving the objectives of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan which intends to reduce congestion, improve public transport, improve road safety and air quality and encourage economic growth.
- 3.2 The A454 Wolverhampton Road is the main arterial route into Walsall Town Centre from the M6 Jn10. This route is heavily used throughout the day. Walsall has a number of proposals for large scale regeneration and redevelopment around the town centre. This includes the office development at Tempus Drive, new proposed housing development on the Old Dairy site along Wolverhampton Road, the Urban Splash development on Wolverhampton Street (just off Wolverhampton Road) and the Gigaport development which is situated along the A4148 (adjoining Wolverhampton Road.)
- 3.3 Walsall Council sees the development of A454 Wolverhampton Road as paramount to improve links in and around Walsall Town Centre. This along with the A4148 Red Route scheme around the borough of Walsall will improve the accessibility of the town centre.
- 3.4 The benefits of the scheme include:
- Less traffic queuing on our roads means better air quality and reduced noise and pollution.
 - Bus passengers benefit from shorter journey times and more reliable services.
 - Pedestrians and cyclists benefit with better crossing facilities and cycle routes.

- Businesses benefit from improved, more reliable journey times, both in terms of deliveries and improved access to the hub of the nation's motorway network.
 - Fewer road traffic accidents are good news for everyone and are a key objective of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan.
- 3.5 Part of the bus showcase scheme is to improve the journey time of public transport along 'key corridors' of the West Midlands. Starting the bus lane further down the Wolverhampton Road will enable this to happen. It has been identified that this route carries a large volume of HGVs through the day. The introduction of a shared bus and HGV lane will alleviate the amount of HGVs sitting in congestion along the route during peak times.
- 3.6 Walsall Council is proposing to remove the grass verges along the left hand side of Primley Avenue from Reservoir Street. This minor project is a result of issues and concerns raised at the Red Route public consultation for the A454 Wolverhampton Road in June 2008. The new parking restrictions along Primley Avenue will be implemented to tackle the problem of illegal parking and relieving the congestion outside the school entrances. The removal of the grass verges along Primley Avenue would create 'legal and safer' parking for parents collecting and dropping off their children. The proposals are attached at **Appendices C & D**.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Full public consultation was undertaken on the joint Showcase and Red Route proposals between June and July 2008. The consultation exercise included:-
- Delivery of literature and questionnaires outlining the proposals to more than 2000 properties along the route
 - Publishing the proposals on the Council's website
 - Holding three public exhibitions, attended by more than 140 people
 - Press adverts and posters promoting the proposals, exhibitions and web site.
 - Presentations to local resident and traders forums
- 4.2 The consultation responses revealed in excess of 87% support for the proposals. When asked to evaluate the importance of various scheme objectives, all objectives were classed as important or very important by more than 65% of respondents. Scheme objectives that received more than 70% support from respondents included improvements to safety and improved public transport reliability.

- 4.3 The proposals have been subject to consultation with all bus operators who operate services along the route and all operators have registered support for the proposals. Centro have also been consulted on the proposals and the costs for the scheme include for the provision of three new shelters along the route. As the route is an existing Showcase route it is envisaged that Timeline shelters already in use will be re-used in isolated locations where bus stop layouts are to be reconfigured.

5. Resource considerations

- 5.1 **Financial:** The proposals for this joint Red Route and Bus Showcase scheme are outlined in plans attached at **Appendices A, B, C & D**. The total cost of the works is estimated to be £2.5m; this figure is subject to confirmation following the completion of the detailed design and tender stages of the project, and obtainment of all information and costs regarding any diversions of utility company equipment in the areas of affected highway.

- 5.1.1 The funding for this scheme is made up of several sources: -

- a) DfT Major Scheme funding for the delivery of the first phase of the Red Routes network in the West Midlands. Walsall has been allocated £5.6m for its proportion of the Phase 1 network, at present £1.5m of Red Route funding has been allocated to the A454 Wolverhampton project.
- b) Bus Showcase funding – a report is to be considered by the West Midlands Planning and Transportation Sub Committee for £765k of Bus Showcase funding in 2009/10 to fund the delivery of the Bus Showcase elements of the proposals.
- c) £150k of capital funding from the Council's Transport Capital Programme

- 5.1.2 The expenditure profile for the scheme is outlined in table 1 below: -

	2008/ 09 (£k)	2009/ 10 (£k)	2010/ 11 (£k)	Total (£k)
<i>Red Routes Package 1 Funding – A454 Red Route</i>	15	800	700	1,515
<i>Bus Showcase Funding Allocation (Walsall Council)</i>	465	300	0	765
<i>Walsall Council Integrated Transport Allocation</i>	0	150	0	150
TOTAL	480	1,250	700	2,430

- 5.1.3 The approval of this scheme does not expose the Council to significant financial risk, as the scheme will only be progressed to implementation stage if the scheme remains within budget limits following tender assessment.

- 5.1.4 In the Transport Capital Programme report, Cabinet are 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.
- 5.1.5 The enforcement of the Red Route Orders will be complemented by the Council's adoption of Civil Parking Enforcement powers from autumn 2008. It is intended that the Council will apply for the statutory powers to enforce moving vehicle offences, such as illegal driving in bus lanes, in 2009/10. Adoption of these powers will enable the Council to appropriately control and manage the enforcement of moving vehicle infringements to ensure that the highway and bus priority measures operate as effectively and safely as possible.

5.2 Legal:

- 5.2.1 To deliver the project the Council will be required to go out to tender for a contractor to construct the scheme; the associated procurement exercise to select a preferred contractor will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contract Procedure Rules.
- 5.2.2 Implementation of the proposals will require the advertisement of new Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) relating to the Red Route restrictions and bus lanes. 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 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 these where operational experience reveals alterations are necessary in order to deliver a scheme of maximum benefit to route users and residents/ businesses along the A454 corridor. Any responses or objections to the TROs will be handled in accordance with the Council's constitution.

5.3 Staffing:

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

6. Citizen impact

- 6.1 Improvements to the A454 Wolverhampton Road and Route 529 bus showcase service will provide benefits for all route users - motorists, public transport users, pedestrians, local residents/ businesses and freight. The proposals will have a negative impact on a limited number of citizens along the route; this is in relation to changes to the highway, such as junction improvements and revisions to on-

street parking immediately outside a limited number of properties. The proposals have been developed to minimise this impact and public consultation has demonstrated substantial support for these proposals, as outlined in Appendix 2. Before and after traffic surveys will be conducted to ensure that the proposals achieve the scheme benefits. The proposals have been developed so that they do not encourage increased levels or inappropriate use of residential roads by through traffic.

7. Community safety

7.1 The Red Route and Bus Showcase proposals for the A454 Wolverhampton Road include the following improvements: -

- Improved Lining and Signing around M6 Junction 10
- Bloxwich Road Improvements
- Primley Avenue/Lane Avenue Junction
- Alumwell Road Junction
- Removal of Grass Verges for Parking Bays on Primley Avenue
- Secure residents car park on Walsall Housing Group site
- Extension of Bus Lane and Combined HGV Lane into Walsall

7.2 All of these improvements will improve safety for vehicles and pedestrians. New junction arrangements will be implemented at Primley Avenue and Alumwell Road, which will feature improved pedestrian crossing facilities. An additional pedestrian crossing will also be introduced on the Wolverhampton Rd which will seek to link two areas that have been cut off by a busy dual carriageway. 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.

7.3 The Bus Showcase proposals involve the upgrading of all bus stops along the route; where bus shelters are to be provided they will be lit to improve passenger safety.

8. Environmental impact

8.1 Environmental and safety factors are considered in the development and delivery of transport schemes. With this scheme we are seeking to improve Walsall Housing Group's car park on Bentley Drive, which will see the existing trees remain, but we will also seek to undertake further landscaping of the area to improve the overall image of the car park. Where possible we plan to place several semi mature trees in the central reserve along the Wolverhampton Road to enhance one of the main gateways into Walsall Town Centre.

8.2 The proposals for the overall scheme have been developed to take account of the wider street-scene and environment. The scheme will also be using the Council's new standard details for street furniture which specify all new street furniture as being black in colour, as black is recognised as being a less conspicuous colour for street furniture and equipment.

9. Performance and Risk Management issues

9.1 Risk:

- 9.1.2 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.
- 9.1.3 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.
- 9.1.4 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.

9.2 Performance Management:

- 9.2.1 The delivery of the Red Route and Bus Showcase 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.
- 9.2.2 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.
- 9.2.3 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 has been prepared for the scheme which was considered by the West Midlands Bus Showcase Group as part of the funding approval. The risk register is 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 small areas 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. The elements of the scheme requiring private

land acquisition will only be progressed if they can be achieved within existing budget limits and without significant impact on the overall scheme programme.

10. Equality implications

The proposals have been designed to maximise benefit for as many users of the route as possible. In particular, the upgrade to the Route 529 bus service will improve transport service provision and access to Walsall and Wolverhampton, for all public transport users, being especially beneficial to residents without access to a car who are more likely to be senior citizens, disabled, ethnic minority groups or parents with young children. All bus stops along the route will be upgraded to facilitate the use of level boarding facilities to improve public transport access for the mobility impaired.

Background papers

None

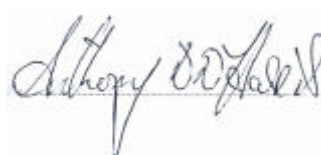
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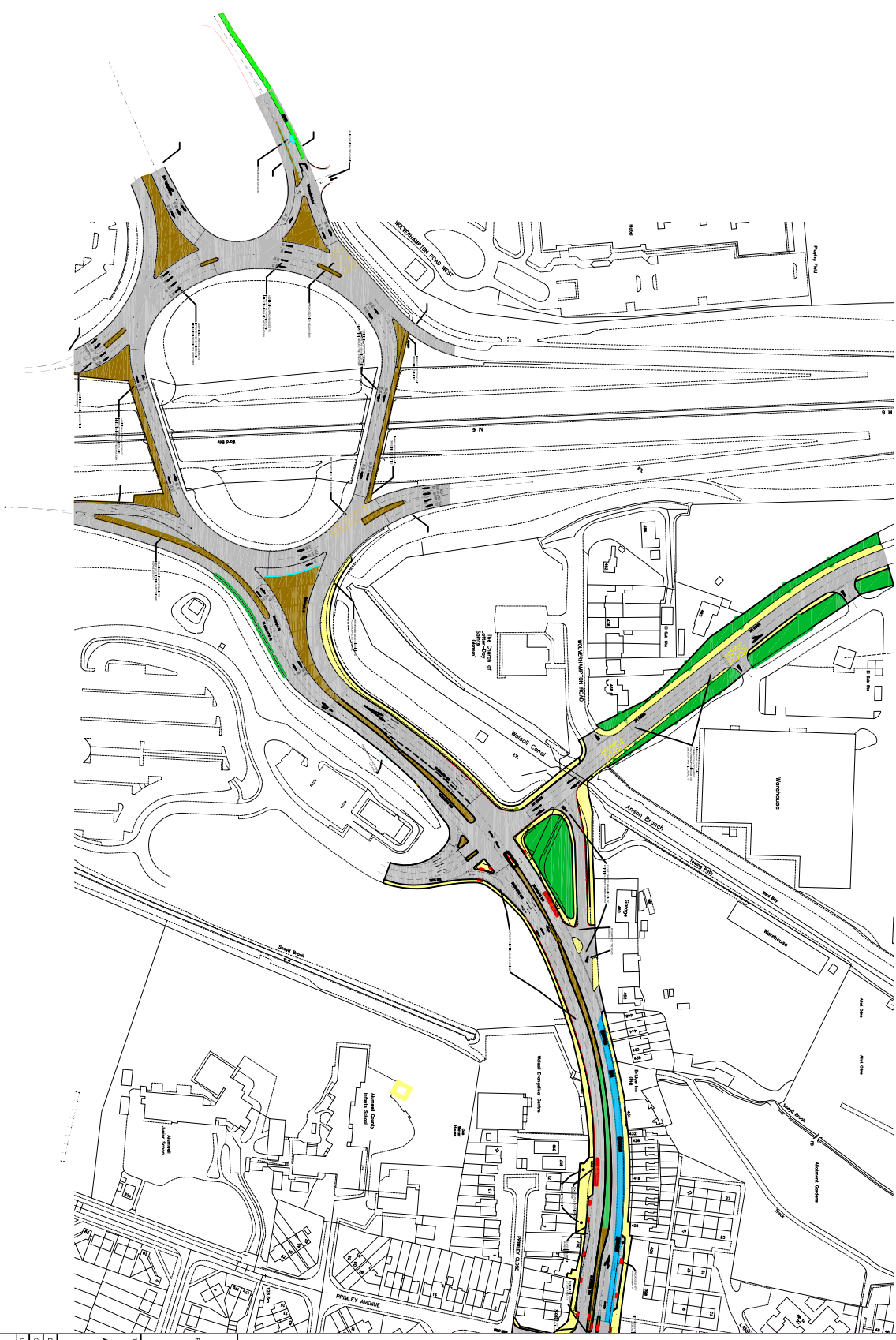
Tim Johnson
Executive Director

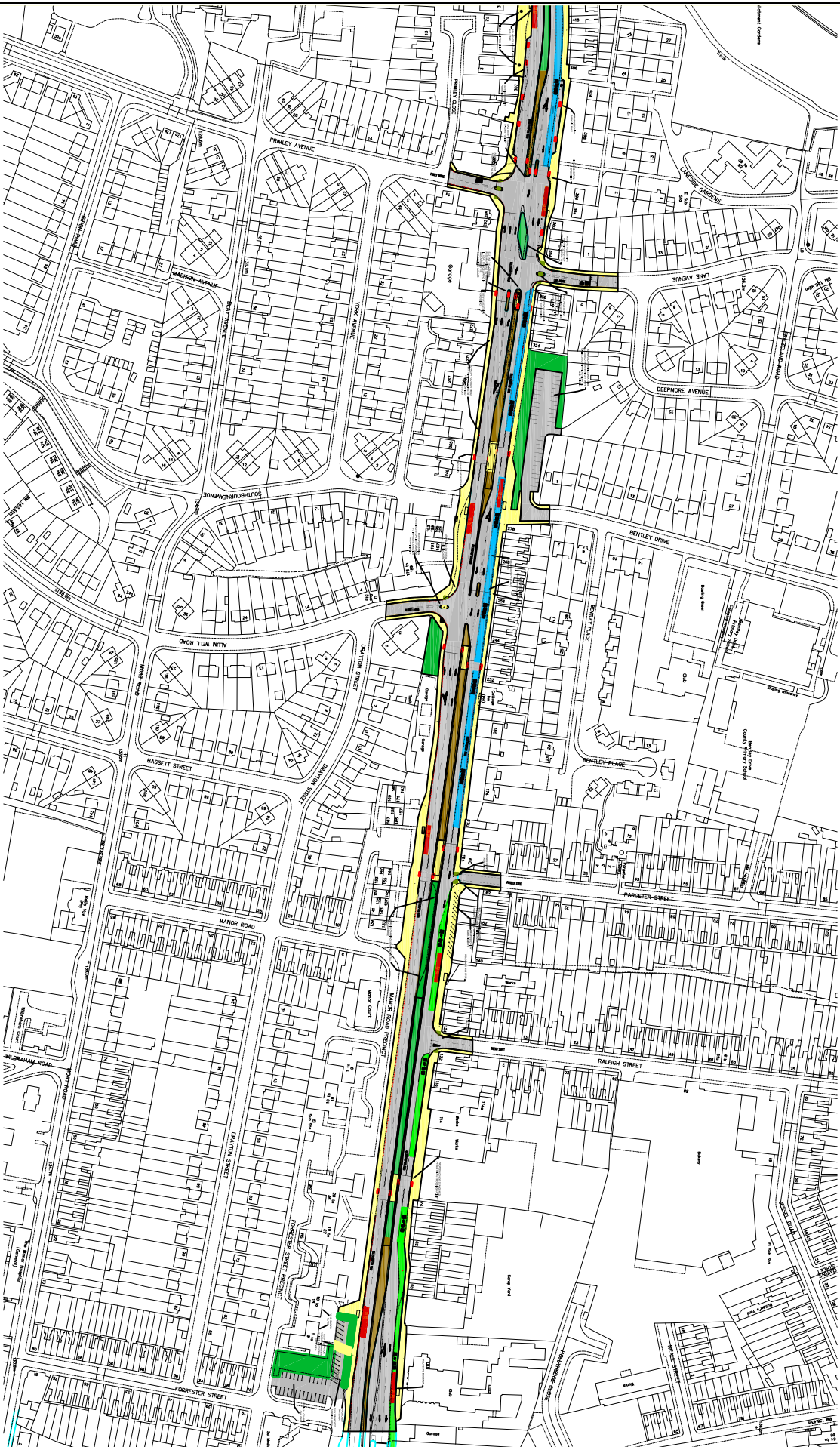
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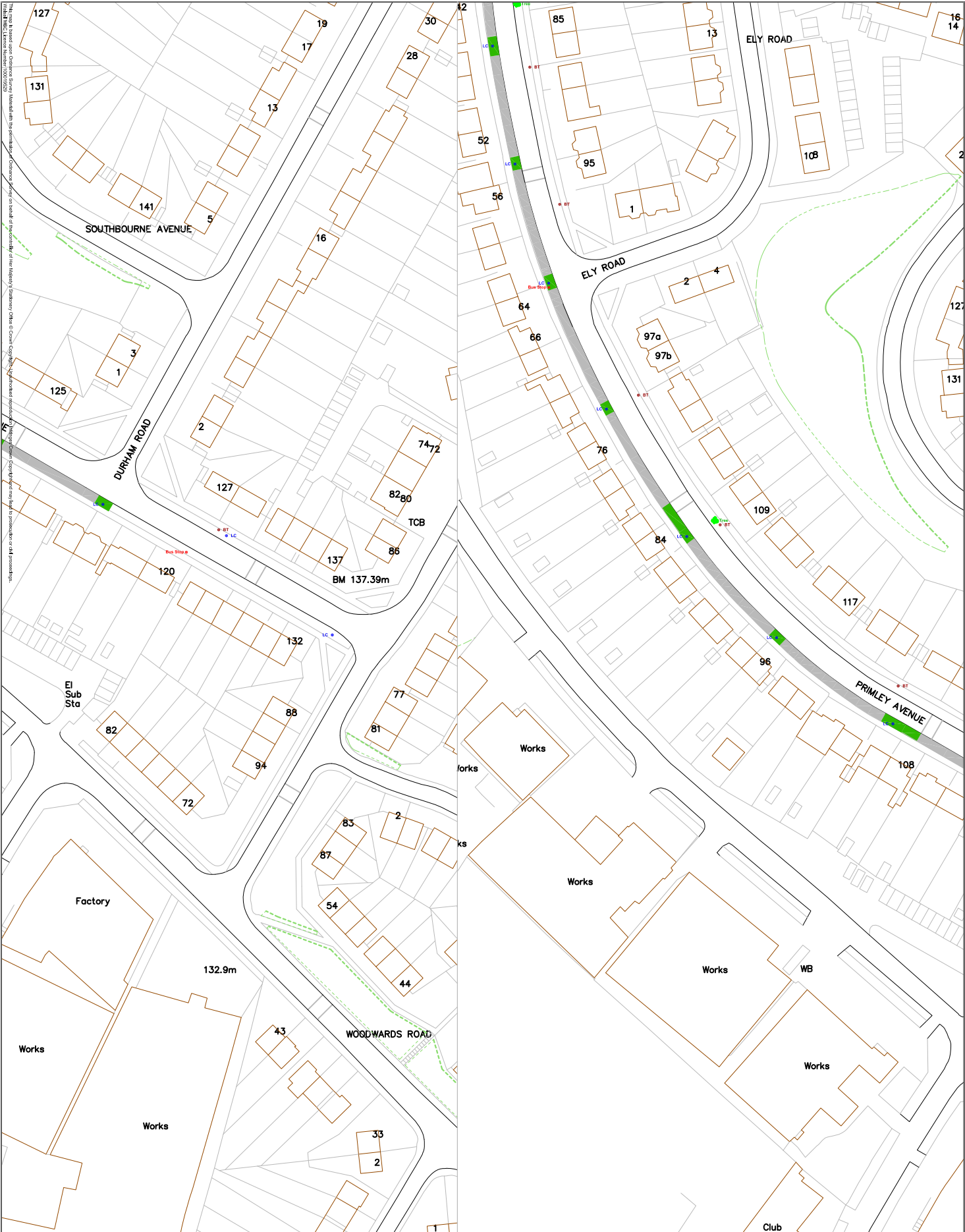


Councillor Anthony Harris
Portfolio holder

19 November 2008







No.		Walsall Council		Appendix D PRIMLEY AVENUE		Project:		Title:	
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