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**CABINET: 9 March 2021**

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**Report of: Corporate Director of Place and Community**

**Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Evans**

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**SUBJECT: ORMSKIRK EASTERN GATEWAY CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**

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Wards affected: Derby, Knowsley and Scott wards

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To report to Cabinet the views of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the outcome of the public consultation exercise on the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway project and to request conditional approval to enter into a Collaboration Agreement with Lancashire County Council to procure the works.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the agreed comments of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Appendix 5) be noted.
- 2.2 That the feedback from the public consultation exercise (Appendices 1 and 2) be noted.
- 2.3 That, subject to securing funding from Lancashire County Council's Economic Recovery and Growth Fund and minor adjustments to the proposed works based on the feedback from the public consultation, delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director Place and Community, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Planning and Economic Regeneration, to negotiate and enter into a Collaboration Agreement with Lancashire County Council to undertake the works, as set out section 4 of this report, on a collaborative basis and to negotiate and enter into all other agreements as necessary for the scheme to proceed.
- 2.4 Should the funding from the Lancashire County Council's Economic Recovery and Growth Fund not be secured, delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director Place and Community, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Planning and Economic Regeneration, to agree suitable changes to the scheme

to meet the budget available and to enter into all appropriate agreements as necessary for the revised scheme to proceed.

- 2.5 That concerns regarding the manoeuvrability of buses and coaches entering, exiting and travelling through the bus station be raised with Lancashire County Council for consideration as they finalise the detailed plans for the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway works.

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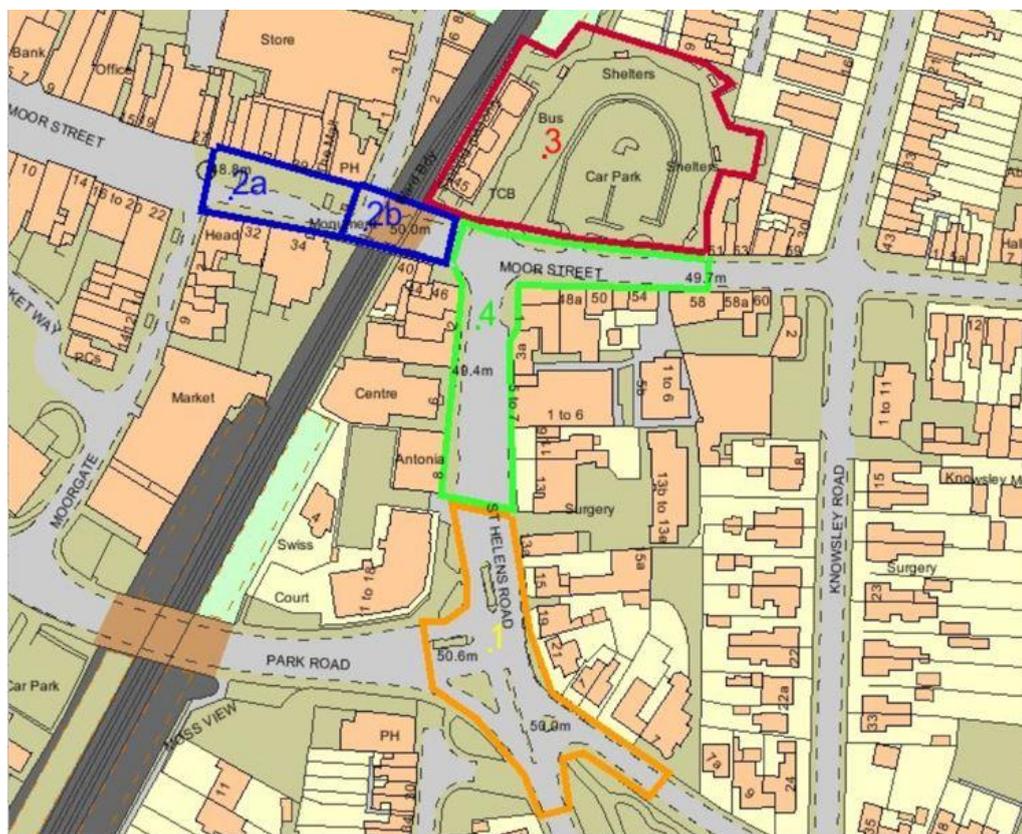
### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 12th January 2021, Cabinet considered plans for the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway project, and resolved that the proposals set out within the report be publicly consulted upon, jointly with Lancashire County Council (LCC), and that the report be taken to Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 28th January 2021 to seek their views on the proposals.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 28th January 2021, the Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee resolved to fully support the proposals to Cabinet and encourage the public to take part in the Council's Consultation and also thank LCC for their participation and partnership in the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway Scheme (see minute at Appendix 5).
- 3.3 An on-line public consultation exercise, joint with LCC, was held from 25<sup>th</sup> January to 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021. Although the works will be delivered in four phases as described in paras 4.1 - 4.5 below, the consultation exercise was structured around three objectives:
- To create a more attractive and visually appealing town centre
  - To encourage walking and cycling
  - To improve and modernise the bus station
- 3.4 A description of the associated works, plans and artist's impressions were included under each Objective, and respondents were invited to "score" how satisfied they were that the proposals would help achieve the objectives.
- 3.5 A total 96 responses were received, 94 of which were "on-line" responses and 2 written submissions. The consultation results summary (how the proposals were rated against the objectives set for the project) and additional comments submitted by the public through the consultation are included as Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. An officer analysis of the additional comments submitted as part of the consultation responses is provided at Appendix 3.
- 3.6 For the programme of works currently proposed, there is a budget shortfall of just under £700,000. A table showing the costs and funding sources is shown in Appendix 4. LCC has invited the Council to submit a detailed bid for support for this project from its Economic Recovery and Growth Fund. A bid for £700,000 is being prepared and will be submitted by the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021 deadline.
- 3.7 If the funding bid is successful, and all necessary approvals are secured, it is proposed that all of the works within the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway project would be delivered between 2021 and 2024.

## 4.0 ORMSKIRK EASTERN GATEWAY PROPOSALS

4.1 As described in the report to Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021, the Programme for the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway can be split into the following phases, as show in the plan below:

- Phase 1 - Ruff Lane/St Helens Road/Park Road junction (the improvements already agreed and planned for Spring 2021)
- Phase 2a – pedestrianised section of Moor Street from Moorgate to Railway Road
- Phase 2b – Moor Street from end of pedestrianised section to Bus Station
- Phase 3 – Bus Station site (including bus station car park)
- Phase 4 – Moor Street / St Helens Road junction



4.2 Phase 1 was agreed by Cabinet in September (in allocating S106 monies to it), but in relation to the remaining phases, in summary, the proposals are:

### Phase 2a

4.3 This Council consulted on proposals for public realm improvements on this pedestrianised section of Moor Street in August 2019. These proposals, and the feedback received from the public, has been shared with LCC, who will now

work-up and deliver the proposals for Moor Street, seeking to match the public realm created on the rest of the pedestrianised section of Moor Street a few years ago.

#### Phase 2b

- 4.4 The proposals for this small section of Moor Street, over the rail bridge, are seeking to de-clutter the public realm in this area and narrow the carriageway to force cars to slow down as they enter this part of the road and then turn right onto Railway Road. The entrance to this area from the St Helens Road junction will involve a segregated cycle path crossing from the bus station to travel down St Helens Road and an uncontrolled pedestrian/cycle crossing, and there will be removable bollards to enable access westwards onto Moor Street from the St Helens Road junction to be closed off for events and potentially for an extended Market. There will also be an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing of Railway Road for movement between the bus station and the pedestrianised part of Moor Street. Surface and public realm materials used in this phase will complement that provided in other phases and be in-keeping with the Conservation Area.

#### Phase 3

- 4.5 In relation to the bus station site, the proposals involve the retention of the horse-shoe shaped road for buses and coaches using the bus station, with the car park sitting within the horse-shoe and fronting Moor Street. However, on that same basic layout, the proposals do involve quite significant changes to the bus station, including:

- The demolition of the existing bus station building;
- The creation of segregated cycle path north-south across the western side of the bus station (where the building currently is) to connect from the station-to station path in the north down to the new cycle path on St Helens Road;
- A new "Cycle Hub" for secure, sheltered cycle parking;
- The creation of a new, smaller building on the eastern side of the bus station to accommodate public toilets and facilities for bus drivers;
- A change to the exit from the car park;
- A redistribution of the bus stands (although there will still be five stands, with new bus shelters, for regular bus services and a drop-off/pick-up stand specifically for coaches); and
- New surfacing (in keeping with the Conservation Area) throughout the pedestrian areas of the bus station.

- 4.6 If the Economic Recovery and Growth Fund bid is successful new toilets, market office and storage room will be provided on-site.

#### Phase 4

- 4.7 This last phase of works will involve the completion of the cycle lanes and new crossings on St Helens Road / Moor Street, to link the sections already provided through Phase 1 and Phases 2b / 3. In addition, the proposals see a reconfiguration of the junction of St Helens Road and Moor Street to remove traffic signals from the junction itself and replace it with a mini-roundabout, and

create a toucan crossing of St Helens Road just south of the junction to enable safe crossing by cyclists and pedestrians. This phase will follow-on from the completion of Phase 3, as temporary bus stops will need to be located on St Helens Road while the bus station is closed for the implementation of Phase 3. Surface and public realm materials used in this phase will complement that provided in other phases and be in-keeping with the Conservation Area.

## 5.0 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

5.1 As referenced above, a total 94 responses were received. The consultation results summary and the additional comments from the consultation are included in Appendices 1 and 2. An analysis of the additional consultation responses is at Appendix 3.

The headline outcome can be summarised as follows:

OBJECTIVE	% strongly agree or agree	% strongly disagree or disagree
To create a more attractive and visually appealing town centre	55.32	19.15
To encourage walking and cycling to improve the health of residents and to improve air quality	44.68	35.11
To improve and modernise the bus station	54.25	31.92
Overall are you happy with the objectives of the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway?	46.81	29.79

5.2 A brief summary of the key "additional comments" and the Council's initial response to them is at Appendix 3. The most common issues are: the need for a replacement shelter if the existing bus station building is demolished; mixed views on additional cycling infrastructure; the merits of replacing the traffic lights with a mini-roundabout at the St Helens Road/Moor Street/ Wigan Road junction; and value for money.

5.3 Given that more respondents agreed that the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway proposals met the objectives for the project than disagreed, and that more were happy with the objectives than were unhappy with them, it is recommended that the project is taken forward and delivered, with the Council entering into a Collaboration Agreement to procure the works. Where possible within the available budget and in ensuring LCC's standards for highways, cycle routes and bus stations are met, the precise details of some aspects of the works may be amended to address suggestions and concerns raised through the additional comments made to the public consultation.

## 6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The delivery of the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway proposals will bring various positive benefits for sustainability and the community, including:

- improving the public realm in the area, to enhance the historic character;
- making walking and cycling easier and safer between the town centre and Edge Hill University and Ormskirk Hospital, via Ruff Lane entrances; and
- making the town centre more attractive as a visitor destination, and so supporting the town centre economy.

6.2 Furthermore, the traffic modelling undertaken by LCC suggests that the improvements will not significantly increase journey times for cars around the gyratory or create congestion, but will provide much better public transport facilities in the Bus Station.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The budget currently available for the Ormskirk Eastern Gateway proposals comes to a total of nearly £2.4m. The cost of the various elements of the proposals comes to a total of approximately £2.9m, and this would rise to nearly £3.1m if a building is developed on the eastern side of the bus station, to accommodate the small market office and storage room, as well as the toilet and bus driver facilities.

7.2 As such, there is currently a budget gap of between £500,000 and £700,000 on the project. LCC has invited the Council to submit a detailed bid for support for this project from its Economic Recovery and Growth Fund. A bid for £700,000 is being prepared and will be submitted by the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021 deadline.

7.3 Cabinet has already agreed to the allocation of S106 funding collected from developments at Edge Hill University in order to commit the funds to the provision of improved walking and cycling infrastructure between Ormskirk town centre and the university campus.

## **8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.1 Some respondents to the consultation do not like all aspects of the proposals, and this can bring a risk of reputational damage to the Council. However, the project will help the implementation of the Council's green agenda as per the climate emergency declaration and climate change strategy, as well as the Council's health and wellbeing strategy through encouragement of walking and cycling and improvement to air quality. The project will also deliver improvements to walking and cycling that enhance the economy of the borough through improved connectivity.

8.2 Were the Council not to bring forward these proposals (or a replacement set of proposals) in a timely fashion, there is the risk that:

- the S106 funding would be lost (as it would have to be returned to Edge Hill University if it is not planned to spend the funding in accordance with the S106 Agreement);
- the investment from Historic England through the Heritage Action Zone Programme would be withdrawn; and
- LCC may choose to invest their funds in other projects elsewhere in the county if there is no progress made on the proposals.

- 8.3 There is a risk that monies from the Economic Recovery and Growth Fund cannot be secured to meet the budget gap. If this risk is realised, a review of the bus station element of the proposals would need to be undertaken to agree an acceptable scheme within the funding parameters or an alternative source of funding identified. If the scheme has to be revised, it is unlikely to have a material impact on the timescale for delivery.
- 8.4 In relation to a Collaboration Agreement with LCC for the agreed works, while this cannot ensure that the works to which it relates will, for certain, be carried out, and so entirely remove that risk, it forms a contractual basis between LCC and WLBC to proceed with an agreed plan of works and so reduces the risk of one partner in the agreement from withdrawing and not delivering the agreed works.

## **9.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Ormskirk Eastern Gateway proposals will have health and wellbeing benefits as they will make it easier to cycle and walk through this part of the town centre and to the south-eastern side of Ormskirk. They will also create a more pleasant environment in this part of the town centre (which can benefit mental health), and improve safety at the Moor Street/St Helens Road/Railway Road junctions.

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### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

The Ormskirk Eastern Gateway proposals are likely to have a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders and so an Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared (see Appendix 6).

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Summary of Consultation Responses

Appendix 2a – Additional Comments, on-line responses

Appendix 2b – Additional Comment, written submission

Appendix 2c – Additional Comment, written submission (New Ormskirk Residents Group)

Appendix 3 – Analysis of Additional Comments

Appendix 4 – Cost and Funding Sources

Appendix 5 – Minute of Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee of 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Appendix 6 – Equality Impact Assessment