

# Report to Cabinet

**6 December 2023**

<b>Subject:</b>	A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor – Initial scheme approval
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, Councillor Peter Hughes
<b>Director:</b>	Director- Regeneration & Growth, Tony McGovern
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Andy Miller Strategic Planning & Transportation Manager <a href="mailto:andy_miller@sandwell.gov.uk">andy_miller@sandwell.gov.uk</a> Talvinder Sandhu Transportation Team Leader <a href="mailto:talvinder_sandhu@sandwell.gov.uk">talvinder_sandhu@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

1.1 That Cabinet be recommended to:

1.1.1 Approve in principle the proposed sustainable transport and highway improvements that make up the A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor as shown on Drawing nos;

70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00101  
70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00102  
70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00103  
70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00104  
70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00105  
70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00152  
70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00155  
(attached at Appendix A).



- 1.1.2 Authorise the Director of Regeneration & Growth, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA, to carry out public consultation on the proposed sustainable transport and highway improvements that make up the A461 Bus, Cycle & Walking Corridor.
- 1.1.3 In connection with 1.12 above, the Cabinet Member for Environment & Highways in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration & WMCA, be authorised to consider and determine any objections received at a future Decision Making Session.
- 1.1.4 Authorise the Director Regeneration & Growth to approve the submission an Outline Business Case to the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- 1.1.5 Authorise the Assistant Director - Legal & Assurance in conjunction with Assistant Director - Highways to enter into an agreement with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council under section 8 of the Highways Act 1980 in connection with 1.1.
- 1.1.6 That the Scheme of Delegation to Officers (Executive side) be amended to include authority to the Assistant Director - Legal & Assurance in conjunction with Assistant Director - Highways to enter into agreements under section 8 of the Highways Act 1980 for future schemes as required.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The A461 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor forms part of the West Midlands City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Programme approved by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2022. The Sandwell elements of this programme were approved by Cabinet in July 2022.
- 2.2 The project is now at the stage where specific approvals are required to enable it to progress through the WMCA Single Assurance Framework Process, be consulted on with the public and stakeholders, and then be taken to the next stages of design and business case preparation.



2.3 The project is likely to include works within highways for which Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council is the Local Highway Authority (LHA) as well as those within Sandwell's jurisdiction. An agreement under section 8 of the Highways Act 1980 will enable these works to be carried out by one LHA on behalf of the other. The precise details of these works, and which LHA will carry them out, is dependent on detailed design.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p><i>People live well and age well:</i> The A461 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor includes extensive measures designed to encourage walking and cycling thus contributing to the health benefits of sustainable active travel.</p>
	<p><i>Strong resilient communities:</i> Successful communities need access to jobs, services and facilities to enable them to remain healthy and vibrant. The transport network is an important enabler of this.</p>
	<p><i>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods:</i> New and existing residential developments rely on good quality access and links to shops, services and leisure facilities in order for them to be successful. The proposals will make a significant contribution to this objective.</p>
	<p><i>A strong and inclusive economy:</i> The provision of a high-quality transport network will reduce journey times and improve journey reliability for Sandwell business who rely on it to connect to their suppliers and customers.</p>
	<p><i>A connected and accessible Sandwell:</i> The provision of a high-quality, sustainable transport network catering for all modes is vital to enable Sandwell residents to access jobs, education and services both within and beyond the Borough's boundaries.</p>



## 4 Context and Key Issues

### Background

4.1 The A461 Walk, Cycle and Bus Corridor – Sandwell is a scheme that aims to support all users along the A461 between the A41 (Great Bridge) and Dudley. This is a Sandwell Borough Council scheme, however its scope extends partially into Dudley borough, to Castle Gate Island, to ensure continuity of development along this whole stretch of the corridor. The scheme is being developed in collaboration with Dudley MBC officers.

The scheme is designed to meet the following objectives:

- Increased safety, convenience and attraction of active travel trips along the corridor and to key trip generators, increasing active travel mode share on the corridor to up to 5% by 2030
- Reduced bus journey time variability, increasing bus passenger mode share on the corridor to up to 3% by 2030
- Improved accessibility for those without access to a private vehicle, particularly those with visual/mobility impairments
- Support economic growth through improved sustainable accessibility to future development sites
- Improve highway network conditions at key locations along the corridor, e.g. Great Bridge

4.2 The scheme that has been designed includes a uni-directional cycle route on each side of the A461 between Great Bridge Market Place and Burnt Tree junction (a section of which between Great Bridge and Dudley Port has been prioritised for delivery through the Active Travel Fund (3) to be delivered by June 2024). The cycle track from Burnt Tree continues as a bi-directional track along the northern kerbline to Castle Gate Island in Dudley. The scheme also looks at continuing cycling along Market Place via shared use surface, and then utilises Brickhouse Lane South, which will be converted to a quiet way by removing access from the retail park entrance to facilitate cycling to the existing crossings over the A41 over to George Henry Road and the nearby residential area.



- 4.3 Alongside the cycle track, there are proposed lengths of bus lane measuring 820m, made up of 460m bus lane (towards Dudley) between Anchor Drive and Bradley Street, and 360m between Peake Drive and Sedgley Road (towards Dudley). This direction has been identified as exhibiting more congested conditions and therefore having a bus lane in this direction will generate the most reliability for bus passengers. To fit in the bus lane, we have had to remove sections of central hatching and right-turn waiting pockets for general traffic, however, have not removed any running lanes for motorists.
- 4.4 For bus lanes travelling towards great bridge, we have planned for a right-turn bus gate for buses to turn into Market Place, avoiding Great Bridge roundabout where they suffer the most delays. This does not remove any current available driving areas for drivers, however the right-turn would require enforcement to ensure private vehicles do not also make this manoeuvre.
- 4.5 Great Bridge island itself is proposed for improvement by adding an extra exit lane from the roundabout onto New Road which should ease blocking back onto the roundabout which causing delays for vehicles entering from other arms.
- 4.6 Options for further improvements at Great Bridge island are being evaluated and, if appropriate, these will be reported to Cabinet separately.

### **Funding and timescales**

- 4.7 This scheme has £12.5 million City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding to deliver phase 2 of the corridor by 2027. Phase 1 is being delivered by Active Travel Fund (3) (ATF3) by summer 2024. This Phase 1 is an entire scheme in its own right, that connects Dudley Port to Great Bridge by a high quality cycle route, that will eventually form part of the wider corridor scheme.



4.8 The entire corridor is expected to cost in excess of the £12.5 million allocated. A prioritisation exercise will take place to ascertain which section of the scheme will be delivered in this CRSTS period however it is requested that approval in principal is given for the entire scheme so that delivery can subsequently happen in sections according to funding allocations. The remaining scheme will be delivered using additional funding to be sought through a subsequent round of CRSTS or other Government Funding.

### **Consultation**

4.9 The scheme in full has not yet been subject to public consultation. A comprehensive public consultation exercise is planned early 2024 to ascertain local sentiment around the proposed interventions.

4.10 Stakeholder agreement to the scheme has been sought previously through the assurance and appraisal process at the WMCA who have approved the Strategic Outline Business Case. Following this Cabinet review, the Outline Business Case will be submitted to the WMCA for approval, allowing for the release of funding for the final development stage, and for some funding for early delivery of some elements of the scheme.

## **5 Alternative Options**

5.1 One alternative option is to not continue with the scheme and reallocate the funding back to the WMCA for spending on a different scheme. This is not recommended, as it would leave the WBHE without essential connections to nearby communities and amenities. There is no guarantee that Sandwell Council would be able to retain the funding for a different scheme, and therefore Sandwell residents may be disadvantaged against other areas in the region.

5.2 Another alternative is to make significant changes to the scheme as it is drawn currently. This is not recommended as it would make it difficult to deliver by 2027 and would risk the funding being reclaimed.



## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The project will be funded through devolved allocations to the West Midlands Combined Authority as part of its City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. All fees, including SMBC staff time recharges, are including the estimated scheme cost.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	The scheme involves the Council carrying out works in its capacity as Local Highway Authority.  The delegations described in this report are in accordance with paragraph 1.3 of Part 4 (Executive Procedure Rules) of the Constitution.
<b>Risk:</b>	A full Risk Assessment will accompany the Outline Business Case. This is a precondition of funding.
<b>Equality:</b>	An Equality impact Assessment will accompany the Outline Business Case. This is a precondition of funding.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The project includes measures aimed to encourage the use of sustainable, non-car, modes. This will contribute towards improved air quality. In addition, the emphasis on active travel will have direct benefits for the health and wellbeing of residents using the facilities.
<b>Social Value:</b>	There are no social value implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.  When the scheme moves to the delivery stage, the appointed contractor(s) will be required to adhere to the Council's Social Value policies.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	Decarbonisation of the transport system is central to the government's aims and objectives for CRSTS. It is also a principle theme within the West Midlands Local Transport Plan. All projects within the programme need to demonstrate how they address climate change and contribute to decarbonisation through their business cases. The project includes measures aimed to encourage the use of sustainable, non-car, modes.



<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	There are no implications for Corporate Parenting responsibilities arising from the recommendations contained in this report.
-----------------------------	---

## 7. Appendices

Appendix A – Drg. No. 70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00101  
Drg. No. 70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00102  
Drg. No. 70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00103  
Drg. No. 70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00104  
Drg. No. 70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00105  
Drg. No. 70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00152  
Drg. No. 70102124-WSP-HGN-SAN-DR-CH-00155

## 8. Background Papers

West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan: Movement for Growth (2016)  
Report to WMCA Board 14:01:22  
Report to WMCA Board 18:03:22  
Report to Cabinet 23:03:22  
Report to WMCA Board 13:01:23  
Report to Cabinet 15:02:23

