

TITLE	Thames Valley Park - Park and Ride Bus Service
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Wednesday 22 April 2020
WARD	Bulmershe and Whitegates;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Sarah Hollamby
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Highways and Transport - Pauline Jorgensen

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

This report is required to ensure that a bus service can be provided to serve the new Park and Ride site. The new site has been part funded by the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and this funding was awarded on the basis that the site would have a bus service. It contributes to the Council's Climate Emergency agenda through a reduction of carbon emissions through reducing total mileage driven in private cars.

A park and ride service would allow Wokingham residents to transfer to public transport services for those elements of their journey where a more sustainable mode is advantageous. It will help to reduce congestion and emissions in and around the Borough, particularly on the A4 corridor.

Officers have undertaken discussions with bus operators and there is interest from other parties in operating the bus service. Given the likely value of the contract, a tender process needs to be completed to secure a bus service for the site.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive:

- 1) agrees to the commencement of the tender process in accordance with the Business Case; and
- 2) notes that any further financial implications arising from the tender process will be brought back to Executive for consideration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Discussions had been ongoing with TVP business park (TVPBP) management around the use of their shuttle bus to serve the new car park at the end of the A329M in Thames Valley Park. Within the planning application for the site, there was agreement in principle and Heads of Terms drafted for the TVP shuttle buses to call in to the park and ride site on its return journeys to Reading in the morning and on its outbound journeys from Reading in the evening. The Council would have provided a 50% share of car park revenue to contribute towards the upkeep of the service.

On commencement of the construction of the park and ride site, discussions recommenced between TVPBP and the Council around the implementation of the shuttle bus and timescales for achieving this. It was established that TVPBP were now

reluctant to divert their bus without a significantly higher financial contribution, the impact of which has had implications for delivery of a bus service, the marketing of the site and the cost of achieving an operational park and ride.

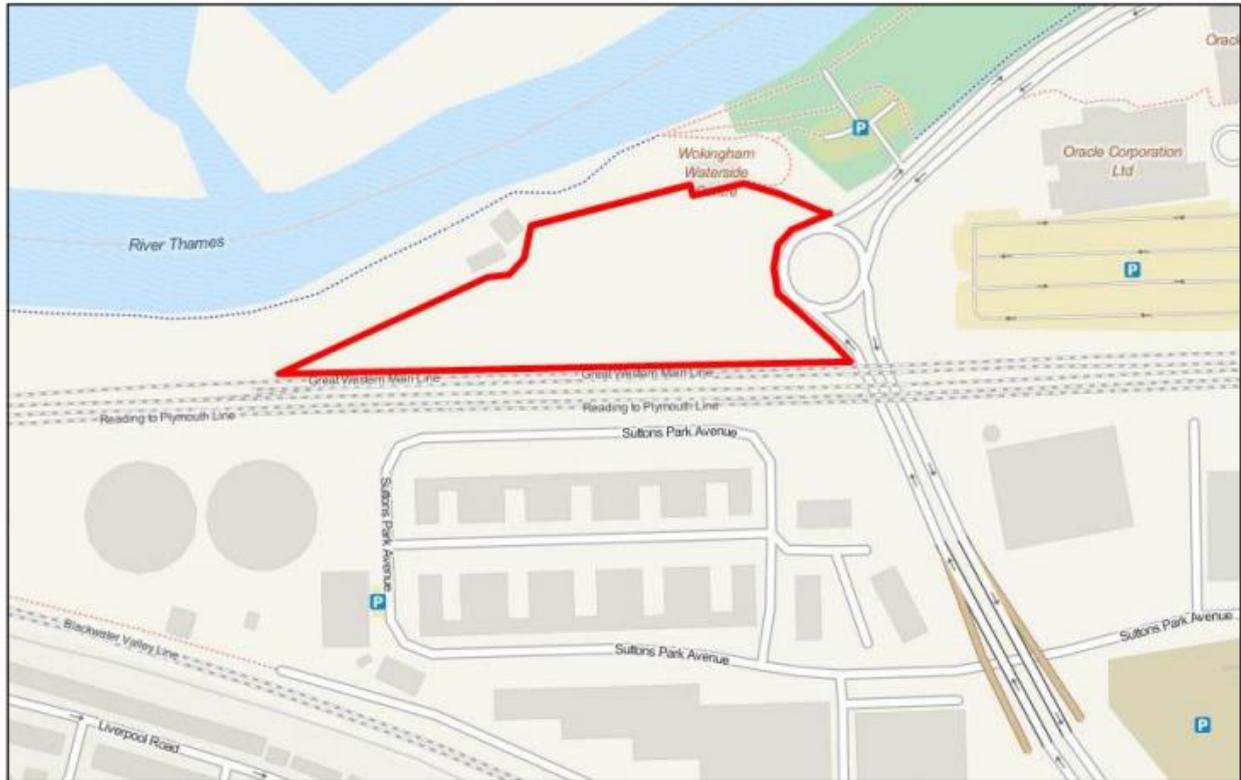
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BACKGROUND

Wokingham Borough Council has constructed a new park and ride site at the end of the A3290 in Thames Valley Park (see Figure 1). A total of 258 spaces have been constructed on the park and ride site for use by park and ride customers.

The site has been constructed primarily using funding from the Local Growth Fund, allocated by the Berkshire Local Transport Body (administered by the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)) and is due to open in summer 2020.

Figure 1: Location of new Thames Valley Park – Park and Ride Site.



Access to the site can be achieved from a newly constructed third arm to the A3290/Thames Valley Park Drive roundabout. An access road for both park and ride users and buses runs parallel to the railway line. At the end of the new access road is a newly constructed roundabout. An eastbound bus stop is available for passengers to board and alight.

The primary aim of the park and ride site is to attract Wokingham based commuter trips, which would otherwise continue into Reading by car.

The benefits from the park and ride service include aiding our Climate Emergency efforts. Key benefits to Wokingham are:

- Making it easier for our residents to complete their journey to Reading for onward travel and employment purposes
- reducing CO2 emissions and improving air quality, in particular on roads leading into and within town centres and urban areas
- reducing congestion on the highway network,
- increasing effective parking provision by providing additional spaces
- stimulating activity and growth in the local economy by offering an attractive alternative for accessing employment opportunities

Shuttle Bus Service Provision

Discussions have been ongoing with TVP business park management (referred to as TVPBP hereafter) around the use of their shuttle bus to serve the car park, prior to the submission of the planning application for the site. For the planning application, there was agreement in principle and drafted Heads of Terms for the shuttle buses to call in to the park and ride site on its return journeys to Reading in the morning and on its outbound journeys from Reading in the evening.

However, TVPBP are now reluctant to divert their bus without a significantly higher financial contribution from WBC.

The impact of this has had implications for delivery of a bus service, the marketing of the site and the cost of achieving an operational park and ride. Without certainty over the bus service, it has not been possible to advertise the opening of the park and ride. In addition, the higher value of the agreement meant that a full tender would be required under procurement rules.

PROPOSED TENDER

Discussions have been undertaken with bus operators and there is interest from other parties in operating the bus service. Given the likely value of the contract, a tender process needs to be completed to secure a bus service for the site.

As a minimum the Council would like to secure a bus service which operates between the hours of 07:00 and 19:00 Monday to Friday.

Costs

A £6 all day parking fee will be charged for each car parked on the site Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays, regardless of duration of stay. At weekends and bank holidays parking charges will be £1.50 per hour (up to a maximum of four hours) and then a maximum of £6 for more than four hours.

It is intended that the bus service will be funded by the Council using revenue collected from on-site parking. The actual cost for the service will be established from the tender process.

Next Steps

Given the procurement timescales, it is likely that an April 2020 start date aligning with the opening of the car park is not an achievable timeframe to operate the park and ride with a new bus operator. However, the car park is to be opened on completion to gauge the level of use by non-bus service users and this will enable Wokingham Borough Council to build up a small fund which will help to cover the cost of the bus service when it commences.

The tender prices will establish the full cost of the operation of the park and ride more accurately and will allow the Council to consider any financial implication arising, these will be brought back to Executive at a later date.

Recommendation

That the Executive agrees to the commencement of the tender process in accordance with the Business Case.

Any further financial implications arising from the tender process be brought back to Executive for consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	TBC	n/a	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	TBC	n/a	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	TBC	n/a	Revenue

Other Financial Information

Costs are anticipated to be zero based on good usage and competitive tender prices, this will be further clarified on assessment of the tenders.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

n/a

Public Sector Equality Duty

An EqIA was completed as part of the original inception of the scheme at the design stage so that we could account for the outcome in the design. At this stage we are seeking to deliver the original scheme by ensuring there is a bus service. The report does not seek any change from the original decision to construct a Park and Ride therefore a further EqIA is not required.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

This is an important scheme for reducing car use and so contributing to reducing our carbon emissions from transport.

List of Background Papers

None

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