

## MEETING OF THE BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB) – THURSDAY 13 JULY 2023

**CONTACT OFFICER: Stephen Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Slough Borough Council**

### **Item 7: Five Year and One Year Evaluation Reports**

#### ***Purpose of Report***

1. At your meeting in July 2022, you approved a less intensive approach towards the impact reports being considered at this meeting to reflect the reduction in reporting requirements from government whilst still demonstrating the value of investment in infrastructure.
2. This report introduces the five-year impact report for the following scheme.
  - Scheme 2.07 – Bracknell: Coral Reef Roundaboutand the one-year impact report for the following scheme
  - Scheme 2.37 – Bracknell: A322 A329 Corridor Improvements
    - Sports Centre Roundabout
    - Birch Hill Junction Upgrade
3. In addition, one-year impact reports were also due for the following schemes, but have not yet been prepared:
  - Scheme 2.36 – Wokingham: Coppid Beech Park and Ride
  - Scheme 2.42 – South Wokingham Distributor Road – Eastern Gateway

#### ***Recommendation***

4. You are recommended to note the reports from the scheme promoter and the LEP conclusions together for the schemes in Bracknell and the deferred status of the two schemes in Wokingham.

#### ***Supporting Information***

5. The LEP has a well-established and agreed process for the monitoring and evaluation of BLTB funded local transport schemes, which requires scheme promoters to produce one- and five-year-on post completion monitoring reports for each of their schemes. It has been agreed that the LEP will continue to carry out reviewing these evaluations, utilising a small amount of the funding from within the capital programme for monitoring and evaluation purposes. However, given the limited amount of funding, these reviews will continue to be light touch and proportionate and fit for purpose, whilst continuing to demonstrate the value of our investment and to inform future priorities.
6. With the reduction in reporting requirements from Central Government, the format and detail of the reports are now less prescriptive and enable the scheme promoter to tailor the reports to their own needs and make them directly relevant to supporting investment decisions going forwards.
7. The reports submitted by each of the scheme promoters continue to summarise the outcomes of the monitoring and evaluation undertaken following the completion of the schemes. The analysis gives an initial indication whether a scheme has been successful in achieving the related aims and objectives set and agreed at the start of the scheme development. It also seeks to demonstrate

that the funding obtained has provided value for money and that any lessons learnt are captured as evidence to inform future decision making. In particular the assessments focus on:

- Scheme build;
- Delivered scheme;
- Costs;
- Scheme objectives; and
- Impacts on the economy

***Bracknell: Coral Reef Roundabout***

8. Bracknell Forest Council received £2.1m in DfT grant towards the cost of this £3m scheme, which was completed in 2016. BLTB received the 1-year evaluation report for the scheme in November 2017; this evaluation focussing on whether the scheme was delivered to time and budget and highlighting any lessons learned. There was also an initial assessment of the impact of the scheme on traffic flows and travel times, whilst acknowledging that the scheme was still bedding in and there were also a number of other infrastructure schemes in the area that were having a wider impact upon traffic flows.
9. The Coral Reef junction is located on the busy A322 / A329 corridor. This route provides a key strategic link between the M3 and M4 motorways, and its efficient operation is therefore very important to the Berkshire economy. The scheme focused on improving capacity at this junction together with the application of Intelligent Transport Systems. It involved the complete removal of a large roundabout and replacing it with a signalised 4-way junction.
10. The 5-year evaluation focusses on traffic flows, travel time and congestion and is able to consider the longer-term impact of the scheme. It should be noted that the report and evaluation has been slightly delayed because of the residual impacts of COVID on travel demand during 2021 and 2022 and wanting to ensure the assessment was based on traffic conditions once they had returned to normal.
11. In the 1-year evaluation report whilst it was too early to report on the real impact of the scheme, but it was clear that whilst the overall junction was carrying similar levels of traffic, there had been improvements in terms of queuing and delay. The 5-year evaluation considers whether there have been further sustained improvements and encompass improvements along the length of the A329 corridor.
12. Looking at journey time there have been significant improvement because of the scheme, with southbound journey times reducing by up to 7.7% in the morning peak and 31.4% in the evening peak. Whilst the traffic flows are marginally lower in 2023, they are not low enough to explain the significant improvements in journey time along the corridor.
13. Since the upgrade to the junction, it has operated efficiently, providing resilience to the network. The improvements allowed all movements at the junction to proceed equally with minimal queuing and delay as well as offering route flexibility particularly when improvements were being made to an adjacent corridor that required diversions through this junction.
14. The five-year on impact report of the Coral Reef Roundabout project is attached at Appendix 1.

### ***Bracknell: A322 A329 Corridor Improvements***

15. The A322 A329 project consisted of a number of significant linked improvements to one of the key highway corridors in Thames Valley Berkshire. This report covers the evaluation of two elements of the overall programme.
16. The first element was a scheme which built on previous improvements at the Sports Centre, increasing the number of circulatory lanes to enhance capacity and reduce queuing and delay.
17. Construction was programmed to commence at the end of June 2021 and to run for four months to the end of October 2021. There were minor delays on one section due to encountering unexpected utilities, which resulted in the works being delayed until mid-November.
18. In terms of funding Bracknell Forest Council received £400,000 LEP funding through the Local Growth Fund towards the cost of this £518,000 scheme. The remaining £118,000 coming from a local contribution, including developer funding of £59,000. Modifications to the design and unforeseen additional requirements resulted in an increased cost estimate of £667,763. Upon completion, the final cost of the project totalled £738,602. The additional costs were due to upgrading the CCTV at the junction along with additional statutory undertakers and traffic management costs due to the unexpected presence of a utility through the works area. All additional costs were covered by Bracknell Forest Council.
19. The one-year on impact report of the Sports Centre Roundabout project is attached at Appendix 2.
20. The intersection at Birch Hill was the last major junction along the corridor within Bracknell that required refurbishment and improvement, with the specific works consisting of replacing obsolete, and failing, signalling technology at the junction, to ensure greater resilience to this strategically important corridor, as well as provide day-to-day operational benefits. The project was delivered over a three-and-a-half-month period December 2021 and March 2022 and was delivered on time with an extension of only 2 days for the commissioning of the signals.
21. In terms of funding Bracknell Forest Council received £400,000 LEP funding through the Local Growth Fund towards the cost of this £450,000 scheme. The remaining £50,000 coming from a local contribution. The final cost of the scheme was £454,000, with a small overspend, incurred by the need to clear blocked ducts, being covered by Bracknell Forest Council.
22. The one-year on impact report of the Birch Hill Junction project is attached at Appendix 3.
23. For both projects, the upgraded signal infrastructure has been proven to operate well and has provided resilience for any fault or collision occurring. This resilience has provided improved safety through the lights continuing to operate in the event of an incident.
24. Overall, the projects have been successful in accommodating additional traffic movements and reducing congestion between the M4 and M3 and between Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell, Bagshot and beyond, as well as improving North-South links between the M3 and M4. A full assessment of the traffic impacts will be carried out as part of the 5-year evaluation in due course.

***Wokingham: Coppid Beech Park and Ride***

***South Wokingham Distributor Road – Eastern Gateway***

25. It is proposed to defer the production of the one-year evaluation report for the Coppid Beech Park and Ride in Wokingham. Whilst construction was complete in March 2022 the site is not yet open. There was a drastic decline in the demand for Park and Ride bus services during the Covid-19 pandemic, both nationally and locally, and unlike with other bus services, there has not been a significant recovery. By way of comparison the Mere oak Park and Ride is currently operating with around 40% of the pre-pandemic number of passengers. Given this, a decision has been made by the Borough Council not to open the Coppid Beech Park and Ride car park and provide a bus service until the situation improves. It is very difficult to predict when bus usage will recover enough to enable this to happen. However, potential demand is continually monitored but it is considered that the Evaluation Report should be paused until 12-months after the site becomes operational.
26. For the South Wokingham Distributor Road – Eastern Gateway production of the report has been delayed as Wokingham Borough Council is still pulling together a lot of the information that is needed to inform the conclusions. It is therefore that the evaluation will be carried out over the Summer with the final report available for consideration at the next BLTB Meeting in November.