

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 15 November 2018

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment & Transport

SUBJECT: Runcorn Station Quarter & Masterplan

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Members for approval, the Masterplan for the Runcorn Station Quarter.
- 1.2 The Masterplan sets out a wide range of proposals and options for the regeneration of the area, but it is for the Council to determine whether it chooses to accept some or all of the recommendations made in the document.
- 1.3 The report also provides an update on work being undertaken on the delinking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) and construction of a new junction to serve Runcorn Station and the surrounding area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) the Runcorn Station Quarter Masterplan Guiding Principles and methodology and approach as outlined in sections 3.10-3.12 of the report be approved and adopted;**
- 2) the Board formally endorses the preferred road scheme for the station quarter as outlined in the recent planning application (October 2018) and as set out in section 3.15 of the report; and**
- 3) a further report be brought to the Board, following the completion of the exercise to identify a development partner.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In October 2017, the Executive Board (Minute 59/17) agreed to the commissioning of a Runcorn Station Quarter Masterplan. However,

at the time, it was noted that the Masterplan would need to be sympathetic to the development of a preferred design option for the delinking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge, as well as, the creation of a new junction to serve the area in and around Runcorn Station.

- 3.2 The approval to fund a preferred design option was given by the Executive Board in December 2017 and the company, “We Made That”, was appointed in January 2018 to produce the Masterplan.
- 3.3 The Masterplan is complete and is now presented to the Executive Board for consideration.
- 3.4 The aim of the Masterplan and accompanying delivery strategy is to enable the regeneration of the Runcorn Station Quarter area to be realised as quickly as possible, although recognising that the overall project has a number of complexities attached to it. The Masterplan recognises the importance of a rejuvenated Runcorn Station as a way of providing a new gateway into Runcorn, the Liverpool City Region and beyond.
- 3.5 It also takes account of and complements the forthcoming HS2 and West Coast Mainline Improvements.
- 3.6 The Masterplan proposes a mix of land uses, including quality public realm, and the proposals contained in the Masterplan are considered to be achievable and deliverable because they are supported by a detailed evidence base.
- 3.7 The evidence base has provided an analysis of spatial constraints (e.g. levels and services) opportunities in the area. It has also looked at socio-economic factors impacting on the regeneration of the area, the housing and commercial market and the relationship between Runcorn Town Centre and Runcorn station.
- 3.8 In developing the Masterplan, key stakeholders have been advised on the emerging proposals. These include bus operators, the Taxi Forum, land owners, West Coast Mainline franchise bidders and Network Rail. Responses to date have been extremely positive. It is proposed that further engagement with the local community will be commenced through the Runcorn Town Team.
- 3.9 The Masterplan will play an important role in developing a business case for securing external funding from, for example, the Combined Authority Strategic Investment Fund.
- 3.10 There are some guiding principles around the redevelopment of the Station Quarter which have informed the production of the Masterplan document. These are:

‘a clear and accessible movement network’ – aimed at promoting

a positive environment for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians and improving links to the town centre;

'a public realm led Masterplan' – using the delinking of the SJB as a catalyst for addressing poor connectivity and improving the public realm in and around the station.

'a welcoming station hub' - a key aspiration is to provide a welcoming gateway into Runcorn by introducing a new civic square into the heart of the Station Quarter, along with transport interchange elements which are in clear sight and easy walking distance to the station, but also promote better signage to and from the town centre.

'a rich mix of complementary uses for Runcorn' – creating a positive gateway into Runcorn but ensuring that end uses within the Station Quarter are complementary to the wider Runcorn Town Centre offer.

'addressing complex ownerships' – the Masterplan recognises there are some complex ownerships in the area and also recognises the role of Network Rail as a key landowner in supporting the development of the area.

'working towards a viable Masterplan' – five development zones have been identified. A delivery strategy has been produced which identifies potential uses and sets out a strategy for land assembly; with a viability analysis as well as potential delivery approaches and potential funding opportunities.

- 3.11 The Masterplan presents options for the incremental and phased development of the Runcorn Station Quarter. There is enough flexibility contained within the document to allow for a short, medium and long-term programme of change within the area. There are also some catalyst stages identified which will help to provide some 'quick wins', thereby helping to unlock further opportunities within the station quarter and beyond.
- 3.12 The Masterplan is also reflective of the fact that there are existing assets or uses in the area, which are complementary to the wider development and the Masterplan works on the principle of where possible, maintaining or improving rather than removing these assets from the Masterplan study area.
- 3.13 A presentation for Board Members will be provided at the meeting which will outline a summary of the Masterplan. The briefing will include some 'before' and 'after' Computer Generated Images (CGIs) which will hopefully bring to life the proposed transformation of the Runcorn Station Quarter area.

- 3.14 During the preparation of the Masterplan, “We Made That” have worked closely with the Council’s Highways and Transportation Team to ensure that the emerging Masterplan complements design proposals for the new junction and delinking of the SJB. Whilst the Masterplan presents options for potential road layouts , there is clearly a need to both maximise the opportunity to deliver a road scheme during the period in which the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge is closed to traffic and a scheme that provides for the greatest amount of future development opportunities.
- 3.15 The transport scheme that is represented in the recent planning application does both those things, as well as reflecting the guiding principles of the Masterplan as set out above.

Further details are set out below

- Revised access onto the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) via the spur that carried traffic off the SJB towards Runcorn Old Town in an easterly direction. In the future this spur will be open to two way traffic as per the original configuration in 1961. The works consist of repairs, reconfiguration, and parapet upgrades.
- ‘Delinking’ and complete deconstruction of the structures carrying traffic from the SJB around ‘Trumpet Loop’ leading to the Weston Point Expressway.
- Construction of a new roundabout to link the Daresbury Expressway with the Weston Expressway. This will require a closure of the expressways between Picow farm and Bridge Retail Park during the construction period.
- The permanent stopping up of some public highway used under the old SJB arrangement, together with the construction of some new sections of road.

- 3.16 The overall project is very complex, with particular challenges around site levels and land ownership, which will require the efficient sequencing and coordination of works across a large area to deliver the works as quickly as possible.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Runcorn Station Quarter is a key priority for the Council and is one of eight Key Impact Areas contained within the Council’s Mersey Gateway Regeneration Programme. That programme aims to:
- seek to maximise the long-term economic benefits from the new crossing for Halton and represents a new chapter in our continued economic transformation.
 - provide the strategic context for growth and recognises the Mersey Gateway as a catalyst for change.

- set out a cohesive package of development and investment opportunities and identifies the key infrastructure and enabling projects that we are looking to bring forward to complement and support economic growth.
- The eight Key Impact areas are places where the new crossing and the reconfigured road network will unlock land for new development opportunities and reposition the area for further growth.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council has already made a significant financial commitment to the project to finance the delivery of the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the construction of the new roundabout. However, further investment will be required to realise all of the objectives of the Masterplan.

5.2 In order to progress the Masterplan it has always been recognised that the Council will need to work in partnership with a developer. In order to identify an appropriate development partner a brief has been produced and expressions of interest are being sought. A further report will be brought to the Board with the result of that exercise.

5.3 Whilst recognising that additional funding will be required to deliver the totality of the plan the Masterplan identifies potential sources of that funding.

The funding required to deliver the new improvements identified in the Masterplan will need to be supported and secured through a variety of public sector and private funding pots. These include:

The **Combined Authority Strategic Investment Fund**. Runcorn Station Quarter appears to accord with the criteria in that investment can be provided for the development of infrastructure to facilitate future growth and prioritises existing and future demand led physical expansion (land and premises), and supports transport infrastructure to enable routes to servicing new and existing markets.

The SIF also supports the Visitor Economy and investments that promote the Liverpool City Region by supporting improvements to transport connectivity and infrastructure development associated with growing identified visitor markets.

Two current funds available for local authorities to support unlocking housing developments are the **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)** and the **Growth and Housing Fund (GHF)** by Highways England.

The £5 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund is a government capital grant programme to help unlock new homes in areas with the greatest housing demand. Funding is awarded to local authorities on a highly competitive basis. The fund is divided into two streams, with the Marginal Viability Fund the only one available to Halton Borough Council. The fund is used to fund infrastructure to get additional sites allocated, or existing sites unblocked quickly.

There is a strong argument that can be made to **Network Rail** that the Council is seeking to enhance the rail network, by seeking to invest directly in the station environment.

Network Rail has recently released guidance on investing in stations and the network and has entered a period of being directed to engage actively to this end, with sponsors, promoters, developers and funders wishing to invest directly in the station environment.

To support the conversation with Network Rail, HBC must be able to demonstrate it is able to bring its own land holdings to the table and to explore the opportunity to merge its land with Network Rail's; in order to provide the land required to deliver the station-led development.

Another funding avenue to explore would be if the Council considered entering into a forward commitment to occupy a new building; whether this is with existing or future property owners in the study area is yet to be determined. However, the Council would be able to lever the strength of its Public Sector Guarantee to attract third party funds to forward fund the delivery of the Masterplan, as well as leveraging third party funding for the wider infrastructure improvements.

Investment capital is readily available in the market for long dated government-backed leases and there are examples in the market where Local Authorities are entering similar deal structures; offering their long-term commitments to a lease structure in exchange for annuity / pension fund-type funding, which provides the up-front capital to deliver the scheme.

Capital land Receipts – it is anticipated that following the redesign of the road infrastructure, along with the Council's existing property holdings, additional land will become available for development and or disposal. This could again serve to fund some elements of the Masterplan.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

It is anticipated that new jobs will be created through the undertaking of the works within the Masterplan, but in the long-term it is hoped that new jobs will be created as a result of an enhanced leisure, business, retail and cultural offer in Runcorn town centre.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

6.4 A Safer Halton

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The proposals present a number of Urban Renewal opportunities:

- The creation of a new gateway into Runcorn
- A high quality arrival and destination point, in the town
- The improvement of links to Runcorn Town Centre
- The release of development land and improvement of existing sites.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The main risk associated with the delivery of the Masterplan relates to the state of the commercial and property market. However, the Masterplan sets out a longer term vision for Runcorn. A realistic market appraisal has informed the proposed development options in the area. Given the phased approach being taken, it is anticipated that this will address this.

7.2 The other major risk is the ability to attract the further investment, from whichever sector, to realise the development. This has been mitigated in part by the production of the Masterplan and the research behind it. It is also hoped that the identification of a development partner will further mitigate this risk.

7.3 The Council's investment in the delinking works is clearly necessary, irrespective of the further development opportunities that are envisaged.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no Equality and Diversity issues highlighted in this report.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Masterplan Document	5 th Floor, Municipal Building	Wesley Rourke