



# HIGHWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

9 July 2013

# REPORT

**Subject Heading:**

**ROMFORD VICTORIA ROAD AND THE  
BATTIS MAJOR SCHEME  
Highway Scheme Application**

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**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Clean, safe and green borough	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Excellence in education and learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for all through economic, social and cultural activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Value and enhance the life of every individual	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
High customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input type="checkbox"/>

## **SUMMARY**

This report provides information on a proposed Transport for London (TfL) funded Major Scheme for Romford Town Centre (Victoria Road and The Battis). The project would involve investment in public realm and highway improvements that would result in a significant improvement in the quality of the public realm for pedestrians, motorists and public transport users. The report summarises design work and consultations that have occurred since the start of the project in 2011.

These consultations have comprised:

- Major Scheme early consultation with Council staff, Cabinet Members and Ward Councillors and regular reports to the Romford Programme Board
- On-going consultation with TfL, London Buses and emergency services
- Three Design for London (DfL)/TfL design reviews
- Presentations at Romford Town Centre Partnership
- Workshops and business consultations

The report describes a number of design options for Victoria Road that have been developed in this time and how the consultation process has enabled the development of a preferred option. It seeks support from the Committee for this preferred design and for this design process to continue, subject to continued Transport for London funding support. It seeks approval for advertisement when required. This report does not cover The Battis where no changes to the highway are required.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Committee notes the design work and consultation that has been carried out so far on the Romford Major Scheme and that it gives support to the design option for Victoria Road as described in paragraph 1.9 of the report and presented at the meeting.
2. The Committee considers that the Heads of StreetCare and the Acting Head of Regeneration should proceed with the detailed design, further consultation and advertisement (where required) of the elements of the Romford Town Centre Major Scheme described in paragraph 1.9 of this report.)

## REPORT DETAIL

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Mayor of London, through Transport for London, is seeking to fund comprehensive transport schemes with multiple objectives through the TfL Major Projects stream.
- 1.2 In 2011 the Council was successful in securing funding for 3 years (2011/12-2013/13) to develop detailed proposals for a major improvement to the street environment in Victoria Road and The Battis Romford with the possibility of some physical works taking place in 2013-14 continuing into 2014/15 if necessary.
- 1.3 Work to date has involved the delivery of a series of design and consultation stages in the delivery of the TfL Step 2 approval process. The scheme will seek to improve the general public realm of Victoria Road and the Battis in Romford two distinct but connected urban areas/streets within Romford, which provide key pedestrian routes to the Romford Station. The scheme is needed in order to provide the appropriate prestigious access/gateway/interchange experience (between Romford and Central London) that is commensurate with the significance of the arrival of Crossrail. The Scheme will provide a much needed upgrade to the public realm infrastructure prior to the arrival of Crossrail becoming operational in 2017.
- 1.4 The scheme is designed to complement current and future initiatives such as; 'Greening the Ring Road' the 'Romford Public Realm Masterplan', The Romford Urban Integration Strategy (Crossrail Public Realm Master Plan), 'Romford Area Action Plan' and 'The Romford Urban Strategy.'
- 1.5 It will make it easier for to walk within the centre, reduce street clutter and unnecessary pedestrian guardrail, widen footways, and improve lighting and smooth traffic flow. It is anticipated that the project will contribute to the regeneration of the town centre, improve the quality of the offer of the town centre, and support local business and jobs. The project would also complement the regeneration activity that has already taken place around the Station area and South Street
- 1.6 The Objectives of the scheme are:
  - The design of a prestigious new gateway experience;
  - The design of a secure and safe pedestrian environment at Romford Station and in the surrounding streets;
  - The development phase will be a precursor and catalyst for adjacent
  - development and urban renewal;

- The design will show an improved transport interchange experience and an attractive and integrated public realm, with consistency in wayfinding, furniture and materials;
- A reduction in perceived severance of Romford Town Centre into north and south by the presence of the railway line;
- Ensure local businesses' in the scheme area are signed up and supportive of the scheme proposals.

1.7 The design process has developed rapidly in recent months and has included extensive workshops and consultations with local people, local and statutory stakeholders and local businesses. The following list illustrates the extent of consultation that has informed the development of the project

- Consultation associated with the development of the Romford Station Crossrail Urban Integration Study Urban strategy in 2011/12 recognised the desire to see improvements in the public realm and accessibility of the town centre in Victoria Road and The Battis as key routes linking Romford Station to residential areas.
- Major Scheme consultation with all local stakeholders, including Council officers, Cabinet Members and local Ward Councillors
- Renting of an empty shop unit in Victoria Road where a wide range of workshops and events were held to engage with local people and businesses.
- Two specific business consultation events where all freeholders and leaseholders were invited to discuss the proposals and have input into the design.
- Follow up mail out to all freeholders and lease holders after the two events with an update on the preferred design
- In depth one to one conversations and meetings with freeholders and lease holders
- Regeneration and StreetCare Staff have consulted with other key stakeholders such as Transport for London, London Buses, Crossrail, Network Rail and the emergency services
- Three UDL/TfL design reviews by (an essential part of the Transport for London Step 2 process)

1.8 The feedback from consultation was that Victoria Road is a difficult environment for pedestrians to use partly because of the poor quality paving surface and partly because vehicles drive over the footway to access forecourts. These issues are

- That it is felt that the poor pedestrian environment makes customers less likely to shop on Victoria Road, and that footfall is lower than expected so close to a large station;
- That because the cars currently need to park in front of the shops, customers have difficulty accessing the shops and aren't able to window

shop, which means that businesses aren't able to attract customers with window displays;

- That the lighting could be improved and that this would make people feel safer, especially in the evening;
- That there are no trees or benches that could make the street more welcoming and pleasant;
- That parking on Victoria Road is difficult and confusing, and that many businesses and customers would benefit from short stay parking;
- That the western end of the road (nearest South Street) has a different character to the eastern end (nearest the ring road) and that any scheme to improve the road should take these different kinds of businesses and uses into account

1.9 This feedback from the consultations has resulted in the proposal that is described below. It contains the best attributes from previous options. Subject to final sign off from TfL in July 2013 the funding is in place to deliver the scheme and TfL have agreed for a two year implementation period 2013-15. The key features of the scheme are:

- To provide an enhanced and integrated public realm experience and approach to the Station, to and from residential hinterlands and streetscapes along Victoria Road. Taking into account the difference between the 'eastern' and 'central' and 'western' zones along the road.
- Rationalised pedestrian crossing points
- An integrated palette of lighting, furniture and paving materials will help link this area to Romford Station. Vehicular and pedestrian conflicts will be reduced by providing clear definition between vehicular and pedestrian areas.
- Repaving and resurfacing including private forecourts.
- De-cluttering of Victoria Road- rationalising signing/lighting onto as few columns as possible, along with the siting of street furniture, trees and lighting into consolidated strips along pavements
- Better bus waiting areas – creation of a fully accessible bus stop on street and removal of the bus layby
- Greening of Victoria the use of street trees throughout the centre along with plants to create a more attractive, pleasant street
- New lighting – renewal of lighting throughout Victoria Road to create a more efficient, elegant, white light for the highway, pavement and building frontages
- Cycling facilities
- Rationalising the current ad-hoc off street parking arrangements to provide short stay customer parking as well as business permit bays
- Reduction in the speed limit to 20mph.
- Provision of loading bays
- A new parking zone in the Western End of Victoria Road to be implemented.

1.10 The final decision on implementation would rest with the Cabinet Member for Community Empowerment.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

### **Financial implications and risks:**

**The main purpose of this report is to secure agreement to consult on the statutory elements of the proposals. Given below, for background information, is the funding position of the scheme.**

#### **Capital Cost**

In December 2010 Transport for London, through the Council's Local Implementation Plan, agreed in principle to fund a Major Scheme for Romford Town Centre, at an indicative value of £2m.

The 2011/12 allocation was £40,000 for submission of a Step One Application. This has been spent.

The 2012-13 allocation was initially £195,000 (later increased by £10,000) for detailed design (Step Two). This £205,000 has been spent. Additionally, for 2013-14, a further Step Two allocation of £100k was agreed.

The indicative amount awarded for implementation from 2013-14 allocation was £2M.

The project team having revised the design and the delivery timetable went back to TfL who have now increased the allocation to £2.2M split over two years as follows:

2013-14 £2,000,000

2014-15 £200,000

Monies will need to be fully spent in the relevant year to secure maximum access to grant.

Additionally, there will need to be a contribution from LBH Lip funding of £200,000 from 2014-15 funding allocation. This would be provided from the general LIP allocation for 2014-'15. This is subject to Cabinet approval in autumn 2013, once LBH's LIP award letter is published; this proposal been agreed in principle by Lead Members and Officers.

#### **Revenue Costs**

The works will be maintained by StreetCare using existing budgets.

**Legal implications and risks:**

Parking management schemes (including restrictions and bays), pedestrian crossings and changes to speed limits require consultation and the advertisement of proposals before a decision can be taken on implementation.

The outcome of the detailed consultation and advertisement of this scheme would be subject to a further report to the Highways Advisory Committee and ultimately, any decision to proceed would be made by the Cabinet Member for Community Empowerment.

There are a number of licence agreements and S38 agreements that need to be entered into with individual freeholders and leaseholders.

**Human Resources implications and risks:**

None

**Equalities Implications and Risks:**

The Council has a general duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that its highway network is accessible to all. Where infrastructure is provided or substantially upgraded, reasonable adjustments should be made to improve access. In considering the impacts and making improvements for people with protected characteristics (mainly, but not limited to disabled people, the young and older people), this will assist the Council in meeting its duty under the Act.

The provision of fully accessible bus stops assists with making public transport more inclusive to all sectors of the community, but most especially disabled people and people using pushchairs. Accessible bus stops will be of benefit to people using wheelchairs, but also people who have walking, balance and dexterity difficulties; and blind and partially-sighted people.

Blue badge-holders are permitted to park for three hours on waiting restrictions, for an unlimited time and without charge in parking bays and are not permitted to park within loading bays or bus stop clearways.

Consultation has taken place with Havering Association for People with Disabilities and Sight Action and their views have been taken into account when developing the design.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**