

APPENDIX H

DIGBETH HIGH STREET PUBLIC REALM DEPENDENCY

BACKGROUND

The Digbeth High Street (DHS) Public Realm project is part of the wider £227.2m Metro Birmingham Eastside Extension (BEE), from the Meriden Street junction to the Adderley Street junction of High Street Deritend in Digbeth. It would be delivered by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) as part of, what is referred to as, Section 5 of the Metro works. Section 5 equates to approximately a quarter of the overall BEE route length.

Original BEE preliminary designs for the Digbeth section proposed a centrally-running tram alignment through the Digbeth / Deritend area with two traffic lanes retained in each direction with limited public realm enhancements. This proposal was contrary to the City Council's vision for Digbeth as set out in the Curzon and HS2 Masterplan which highlights the importance of the High Street and its potential to become an environment that is more pedestrian focused and acts as a link between the Curzon area, City Centre, and the Smithfield development.

In 2018 a series of alternative design options were considered, exploring the potential to deliver the Curzon HS2 Masterplan vision for Digbeth through the coordination of the BEE Metro with public realm improvements. Further information on the options is summarised within Appendix A. From this work a preferred option has been selected including trams running on the **southern side** of Digbeth, a reduction to traffic lanes, with a wider public realm on the northern side. The narrower highway will support a public transport corridor for both SPRINT and other bus services and allow interchange with the tram and coach station.

Improvements will transform the urban realm of Digbeth High Street into an attractive, vibrant and pedestrian friendly destination, enhancing connectivity to the city core and wider Curzon area, creating an individual identity that supports and protects the creative community and provides a catalyst for future investment. The project is also timely in that it presents an opportunity to take a positive step in tackling climate change and to contribute to the Route to Zero and clean air agendas.

NEXT STEPS

Birmingham City Council will be preparing a separate Full Business Case (FBC) to the Greater Birmingham Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) to support the development and delivery of a programme of transformational public realm improvements of the High Street. Securing GBSLEP funding will ensure that an enhanced public realm treatment is achieved, over and above the work that will be delivered through BEE programme, including the Metro's own public realm works along the route.

For FBC stage, the GBSLEP require the further development of Outline Business Case (OBC) proposals to ensure the project is;

- *Feasible* – cost certainty is essential for the GBSLEP, there is a need for costs to be robust and to provide a sufficient level of detail which gives confidence that the scheme is deliverable within the capped budget.
- *Clearly defined* - there is need to provide clarity re. the public realm enhancements that are additional to the reference case (central alignment)
- *Meeting aspirations* – Proposals must deliver more than a public transport scheme. The outcomes must meet the GBSLEP's aspirations for an enhanced environment and the wider vision for Digbeth High Street

The GBSLEP will assess the proposals based on the following criteria such as:

- *Street furniture elements* – overall strategy for street furniture including a rationale for locations and placement e.g. seating cycle racks, bins, bollards, lighting etc.;
- *Trees* – strategy for tree planting - species and sizes, below ground infrastructure / tree pit designs, grilles and guards;
- *Planters* – indicative planter construction, and indicative planting palette for soft landscape.
- *Lighting* – images and text indicating design / strategy for lighting columns and any additional lighting features;
- *Wayfinding* – images and text indicating overall strategy and designs for any bespoke wayfinding signage;
- *Paving* – strategy for final paving choices i.e. high-quality paving in certain locations;
- *Graffiti & Flyposting* – details of strategy for removal and strategy to continue to keep the area graffiti / flyposting free;
- *Improved environment for pedestrians* – changes to the character of the street, demonstrating environmental and safety improvements for pedestrians;
- *Crossing facilities* – improvements to road crossing facilities to reduce severance for pedestrians and cyclists;
- *Public Art* – indication of approach to public art, use of precedent images etc.

TIMESCALES / GOVERNANCE

The BEE and DHS Public Realm proposals were originally presented to Cabinet in a Project Definition Document report, on the 26th June 2018.

These preliminary proposals were developed further, and then consulted upon between 2nd March and 9th April 2020. The feedback will be assessed and summarised in the forthcoming FBC.

The revised OBC was approved by the GBSLEP Programme Delivery Board on the 24th June 2020.

The FBC will be presented to GBSLEP (and Cabinet) in autumn 2020, following more detailed design and cost assessment by WMCA/TfWM's contractor.

The current intention is that these Metro Section 5 works would commence in spring 2021 and be completed by April 2022; to ensure that the urban realm and associated SPRINT/bus infrastructure will be in place for the Commonwealth Games.

FUNDING AND RISKS

The DHS OBC and FBC will look to obtain a £15.000m GBSLEP contribution towards the detailed design and construction of Section 5. Any failure to obtain this funding, or an alternative source, would reduce the WMCA/TfWM budget to £212.200m (£196.700m plus £15.500m contingency). This would require a reconsideration of how to construct an operational tram layout within this remaining budget. As well as enhanced public realm, the £15.000m DHS contribution is expected to cover the additional costs over and above the original centrally-running tram design e.g. additional track length, additional traffic signal equipment where the tram crosses side road junctions, changes to side road traffic operation, earthworks/drainage amendments etc.

WMCA/TfWM have committed to the development of the southern running tram alignment and are progressing the detailed design on this premise. However, they would not be able to provide the public realm enhancements proposed by the City Council if the FBC was not approved. Any revised proposals, to fit within the remaining budget, would be agreed with the City Council. As the Public Realm OBC was approved in June 2020, this is not expected to be an issue.