

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

Following consideration of the Option Selection Report, to select the 'Orange' option for the Wixam's station as the 'preferred single option' for design.

2. Date of decision

12 / 1 / 22

3. Reasons for decision

To enable completion of the Outline Business Case and the Quantitative Risk Assessment together with supporting documentation for the planning application programmed for April 2022.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The Green option has been rejected as being less favoured by railway stakeholders and liable to greater variation in costs. The Purple option has been rejected on cost grounds.

5. How decision is to be funded

Capital borrowing and section 106 funding.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision



Signed M. P. Headley Date 12/1/22 Name of Decision Taker CLL2 M HEADLEY

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:13 January 2022.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:24 January 2022.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL – Executive Decision

DATE 4th November 2021

REPORT BY THE Chief Officer for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Growth

SUBJECT: Wixams Railway Station Development

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following the preparation of an Option Selection Report (OSR) which set out the pros and cons of three options for the Wixams station's layout, this report seeks approval from the Portfolio Holder for Finance to proceed with selection of the 'Orange' option as the preferred single option to allow the project to further progress.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Portfolio Holder for Finance:

- a) **Approves selection of the 'Orange' option for the station as the 'single preferred option' to allow works on the project to continue.**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The OSR considered a number of station layout options and ultimately put forward two for consideration: an Orange and a Green option. The OSR was considered at the Wixams Station Project Board at its meeting on 14th September 2021. The contents of the OSR were received positively by the Board, with stakeholders favouring the 'Orange' option. The selection of a single option will enable the Outline Business Case and Quantitative Risk Assessment to be completed with a further refinement of costs.
- 3.2 The selection of a single option will also facilitate development of designs to support a public consultation in preparation for the detailed planning application submission programmed for early 2022. A 'decision to design' is the programme gateway that moves the project into the Design (stage 3) phase and is programmed for December 2021. Any delay in selection of a single option will delay completion and opening of the station which is currently programmed for June 2024.

4. IMPLICATIONS

(a) Legal

The document which governs the arrangements in respect of the station is the s106 Agreement dated 28th February 2019 between Wixams First Limited, Gallagher Elstow Limited, HSBC Bank PLC, Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council insofar as it amends the original section 106 Agreement of 2nd June 2006. The documents do not govern any arrangements with third parties and do not deal with delivery arrangements in any detail; the Council must therefore ensure that it has all the necessary agreements in place to ensure that the details are agreed in good time with relevant parties and documented accordingly. The 2019 agreement requires the relevant Delivery Body to have let a contract to build the station and obtained all relevant consents for construction of works and operation of a train service by 29th July 2024. Failure to do so by that date has the effect of ending the Owner's obligation not only to reserve the Railway Station Land for railway station purposes but also to pay the agreed contribution of £13.4 million.

(b) Policy

The delivery of Wixams station supports one of the major sustainability elements on which the development of the new settlement was based. A rail station with regular services has the potential to reduce vehicle trips on the A6 which in itself has the potential to reduce local congestion, improve air pollution and provide opportunities for active travel. While additional traffic from the wider area (south of Bedford / Wootton / Marston / north of Flitwick) will be attracted to the new station, the overall impact of introducing commuter rail services at Wixams will introduce more resilience into the transport network and help to deliver travel choices for local residents.

In addition, delivery of Wixams Station conforms to the following national and local policies;

- Transport Decarbonisation Plan (DfT July 2021) which sets out the ambition to increase capacity on the railway to meet growing passenger demand
- England's Economic Heartland's Transport Strategy (July 2021) lists Wixams Station as a facility which will support planned growth by improving north – south connectivity
- Rail Investment Strategy (BBC Dec 2019) sets out that provision of the station is a Rail Strategy Priority
- Policy 90S of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 (Adopted Jan 2020) states that the Council will work with its partners, agencies and developers to deliver Wixams Station
- SEEDS Strategic Priority 2 (BBC) supports the reduction in emissions from transport and encourages sustainable transport in new developments. It also aims to support local communities with sustainable transport choices
- The Council's Growth Plan (2018-2022) under the Enhancing Place aim to Improve Rail Infrastructure in the Borough to enable associated housing and employment growth

(c) Resource

The Council currently has specialist engineering and rail strategy consultants appointed across a wide range of disciplines under a framework agreement, which has enabled the project to reach this key stage. It is proposed that the existing consultants are retained

under the terms of the framework to avoid any potential delays to the project or introduce any risk that milestones will not be achieved. The costs for these appointments are covered under the allocated capital budget for the scheme.

(d) Risk

A single option selection is essential to enable the Outline Business Case (OBC) and the Quantified Risk Assessment (QRA) to be completed along with preparatory works to support the planning application.

Further to negotiations with L&Q Estates agreement has been reached to extend the S106 funding to July 2024 at which point the Council must have entered into a formal contract. Any delay to programme and achievement of key milestones will delay completion of the station beyond July 2024 and risk loss of the S106 funding of £13.4 million.

(e) Environmental implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Council by 2030

The Wixams railway station will be constructed on a land parcel adjacent to the Midland mainline within the wider development of Wixams. The development is a part of the 750-acre brownfield site for the four villages that form Wixams, with a town centre and surrounding amenities and infrastructure. Repurposing of the brownfield site, formerly known as the Elstow Storage Depot, to construct the station will influence social, economic and environmental benefits through reuse of the land and integration with the wider Wixams development.

- Carbon Emissions

The choice of a preferred single option will enable the project to move into the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) stage 3 of outline design stage where a commitment to the use of carbon neutral materials (where feasible), use of renewable energy and supply chain considerations will be captured in the design and tender documents to be scored as part of the tender evaluation process.

- Energy Use

The designer will consider the use of renewable energy sources for heating and lighting of the station building, such as heat pumps and solar panels, though these will need to be supplemented by back-up mains power systems for reasons of safety and resilience. The building will be designed to maximise energy efficiency and avoid excessive heat loss or gain through the optimisation of insulation and glazing solutions.

- Use of Natural Resources

The station building design will be developed to support the principles of sustainable design and consider the use of renewable sources, reclaimed or second hand products, recycled products and responsible sourcing of virgin materials with consideration to mitigation of planned maintenance cycles. The platform and footbridges may have more limited opportunity to use recycled products, but it will be actively considered in the outline design stage.

- Travel and Transport

The delivery of Wixams station supports one of the major sustainability elements on which the development of the new Wixams settlement was based. A rail station with regular services has the potential to reduce vehicle trips on the A6 which in itself has the potential to reduce local congestion, improve air pollution and provide opportunities for active travel. While additional traffic from the wider area (south of Bedford / Wootton / Marston / north of Flitwick) will be attracted to the new station, the overall impact of introducing commuter rail services at Wixams will introduce more resilience into the transport network and help to deliver travel choices for local residents. The station environment will be designed to encourage active travel options through clear pedestrian and cycle path integration with the development, along with secure cycle parking to make non-car travel a viable and attractive option.

The station will be designed to provide good integration with bus services to encourage use of linked public transport options. A Transport Assessment and Statement and Travel Plan will be developed as part of the supporting information for the planning applications and are currently in the process of being commissioned.

- Waste and Recycling

There are stockpiles of surplus spoil from adjacent developments which are earmarked for use in the station development to make up levels, as opposed to the import of materials from off site. It is highly probable that the earthworks will include contaminated material which will be treated and reused on site where practicable.

- Climate Change Adaptation

Development of the outline design will make due consideration to the inclusion of design solutions to mitigate the impact of increased temperatures, changed rainfall patterns and extreme weather events.

- Biodiversity

The proposed site for the new railways station comprises of a section of railway cutting bordered by areas of woodland, scrub and grassland. The proposal to construct a new railway station will require the clearance of some of the on-site vegetation. Areas of the site are also designated as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat, with non-statutory designated (County Wildlife Site) habitat also located on and directly adjacent to the site. A Preliminary Ecological Assessment was undertaken in July 2020 which identified additional survey works to look at protected species, in particular reptiles. The outcome from these additional ecological surveys concluded that whilst there was a suitable habitat for Great Crested newts none were present and that the presence of reptiles could be mitigated and managed via an Ecological watching brief during earthworks. An Environmental Impact Assessment is yet to be completed but will form part of the documentation required to support the planning application currently programmed for April 2022.

- Pollution (Land / Air / Water)

Section 61 of the Control of the Pollution Act 1974 provides for an application to be made for consent to carry out works, which are likely to have a significant impact on the neighbourhood due to the generation of noise and vibration. An application of a section 61 to the local authority demonstrates a pro-active approach to reducing environmental impact by outlining mitigation measures to minimise disruption. It is not anticipated that this scheme will seek to apply for a section 61 consent. However, if required it should be submitted within 28 days before the intended works are to take place. The project will also require development of an EIA as the outline designs are produced.

Although this project doesn't directly contribute to achieving the Council's Net Zero target, the new Wixams station will encourage use of public transport links reducing the number of cars on the road enhancing the local community to align with the priority two of 'Sustainable Development and Environmental Efficiency Strategy thereby reducing air pollution and congestion. The Energy Team has been consulted in writing this report

(f) Equalities Impact

In preparing this report due consideration has been given to the Borough's statutory Equality duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The construction of the Wixams station will have a positive effect on residents who do not have access to a car or who are unable to drive, such as socio-economic and disabled groups, in terms of improving their accessibility to services, facilities, work and education.

5. DETAILS

- 5.1 The Option Selection Report (OSR) has now been produced. The OSR reviewed a number of station layout options and ultimately put forward two for consideration: an Orange and a Green option.
- 5.2 A railway stakeholders' workshop was held to consider and weigh the relative merits and drawbacks of each option against the other without reference to cost. The main focus of the workshop was to choose a primary layout for the station.
- 5.3 The workshop found that, at this stage of the project, there was very little to differentiate between the Orange or Green options in terms of 'sustainability' and 'land and environment'. The report therefore scored the options as undetermined at this point, acknowledging that there remained the opportunity to introduce sustainable design solutions to both options once the project moved to outline design.
- 5.4 As can be seen from the table below, the overall balance was significantly in favour of the Orange option – on the assumption that both were of equal cost.

Category	Comparison	Commentary
Construction safety risk	OO	Orange: fewer possessions for platform; Can build half the scheme in 'high street' conditions, so reduced time/exposure to operational environment; however, flank platform might provide partial obstruction.
Programme delay risk	OO	Orange: Can start Up Slow platform straight away and manage interface so less dependent on possession; Could open even without station building if absolutely necessary to recover programme after footbridge installation; More flexible for 'preferential use' of assets (entry into service before handback); More flexible for possession use - more robust programme Green: 'Both feet in', if you don't get key possessions it has direct impact on programme.
Train operational impacts	X	Orange: Construction site potentially either side of Up Slow Green: Construction between Slow lines Driver distraction levels similar
Maintainability	O	Orange: Platform areas greater for Orange (by 10%), though might be reduced; More M&E / Telecoms / Security; Up Platform accessible from street; Down Slow platform serves as protection for inspection/maintenance of Up Slow platform and vice versa. Green: Fewer assets Overall, more Orange assets, but easier to maintain
Carbon footprint	G	Greater area on Orange suggests greater embodied carbon and more earthworks so more plant movements - work to be done
Sustainability	??	
Land & Environment	??	
Passenger management	OO	Orange: Staff closer to people, Green: Forces staff to be on platform the whole time; Disabled assist / vandalism - staff are far away; conflict of movements if all on platforms; Fire situation, Up Slow platform can evacuate easily
Passenger experience incl Diversity and Inclusion and Threat & vulnerability	OO	Orange: greater benefit and flexibility to move station (perhaps) during design; Not reliant on a lift not failing, at least one way; passengers closer to staff
Future proofing inc. value enhancement	O	Orange: Greater potential to improve locations/width etc. for value enhancements; If future expansion to 4 platforms, could be mirrored; If platform extensions, can extend either way Green: Platform extension would be constrained south
OVERALL	OO	Strong influence of passenger experience/management and programme

- 5.5 Given that the two options were not of equal cost, however (the Orange option being 2.5% more expensive), further work was undertaken to determine whether the selection of the Orange Option would expose BBC to any significant or greater risks than the Green Option.
- 5.6 This work has shown that the Orange Option has programme and cost-risk benefits associated with constructing the Up Slow platform 'offline' during operational hours without requiring possessions. The consistent view from the engineering team is that this will probably offset the likely programme and cost-risks associated with having to raise the height of earthworks in the vicinity of the station building and platform to fit with the Station Road approach.
- 5.7 The other project risks are broadly similar for either option.
- 5.8 On this basis, that the relative costs are similar and that the risk of variation is greater with the Green option, it is therefore recommended that the Orange option be taken forward as the single preferred option.

6. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

- 6.1 The following Council Units or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Director of Environment
Wixams Station Project Board
Finance Services
Legal Services
Energy Team
Manager for Transport Policy, Infrastructure and Development Control.

No adverse comments have been received from any of the consultees.

7. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

- 7.1 Cllr Coombes is a member of the Wixams Station Project Board

Report Contact Officer: Jo Branson-Budd

File Reference: *

Previous Relevant Minutes: Full Council 10th October 2018
Executive 19th September 2018

Appendices:

None