

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
24 JULY 2023

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| REPORT TITLE | BIRKENHEAD TOWN CENTRE MOVEMENT SCHEMES (CONWAY STREET/EUROPA BOULEVARD & CHARING CROSS/GRANGE RD/GRANGE RD WEST) BIRKENHEAD AND TRANMERE WARD |
| REPORT OF | DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE |

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the Phase 1 consultation undertaken regarding the town centre movement schemes at Conway Street/Europa Boulevard and Grange Road Charing Cross/Grange Road West and seeks approval to delegate authorisation to the Director of Neighbourhoods to consider the outcome of the Phase 2 consultation and make the decision regarding the implementation of the schemes. The report also seeks approval for the acceptance of a further allocation of £1,625,000 of Active Travel Tranche 3 funding to support the delivery of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme.

The Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme and the Grange Road/ Charing Cross/Grange Road West projects are part of the council's Future High Street Fund (FHSF) programme. The Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme also has an allocation of Active Travel Tranche 3 Funding. The projects are both critical components of the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre, aiming to make the town centre more attractive through supporting improved accessibility and increasing active and sustainable travel movements.

The Wirral Plan 2021-2026 sets out the Council's vision to secure the best possible future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. This proposal directly supports the following key themes within that plan:

- A clean-energy, sustainable borough that leads the way in its response to the climate emergency and is environmentally friendly.
- A prosperous inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations; and
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families.

These infrastructure improvements will be a critical pump priming element to the ongoing regeneration plans for Birkenhead and will contribute significantly to creating a platform for further investment.

This matter affects the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward.

This matter is a Key Decision given that its value is more than £500,000.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee is requested to:

1. Note the outcome of the Phase 1 consultation regarding the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard and the Charing Cross/Grange Road/Grange Road West scheme and associated officer comments which are included with Appendix 1 – 4 of this report;
2. Delegate authority regarding the implementation of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme and the Grange Road/ Charing Cross/Grange Road West scheme to the Director of Neighbourhoods, following consultation with the Ward Members, Chair and Spokespersons of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and the Environment, Transport and Climate Emergency Committee regarding the objections and expressions of support received during the Phase 2 consultation;
3. Accept £1,625,000 of additional Active Travel Tranche 3 Funding to support the delivery of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 A two stage consultation has been undertaken regarding the schemes, with the outcome of Phase 1 considered to be generally favourable. 88 people responded to the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard project and between 62.1% and 71.6% were in support of the various elements of the scheme. 154 people responded to the Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West and between 73.9% and 81.2% were in support of the various elements of the scheme.
- 1.2 Phase 2 statutory consultation for both schemes ran between 28 June 2023 and 19 July 2023. Given the time required to analyse the consultation responses and discuss with relevant Ward Councillors, Chairs and Spokespersons it has not been possible to present the outcome to the meeting of this committee at its July meeting. The next meeting of this Committee is 20 September 2023.
- 1.3 The deadline for the Future High Streets Funding and the Active Travel Tranche 3 funding is 31 March 2024 and therefore time is of the essence regarding the decision regarding the implementation of the scheme. Delegating authority to the Director of Neighbourhoods enables expedient decision making to support the projects to remain on programme.
- 1.4 In January 2023, the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee granted delegated powers to the Director of Regeneration and Place to approve the commencement of a procurement exercise (a mini tendering process) via the Procure Partnerships Framework for the appointment of a main contractor and subsequent appointment of a main contractor under a pre-construction services agreement following completion of a tender submission for various regeneration infrastructure projects, including the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard and the Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West. This tendering exercise has commenced and delegating authority to the Director of Neighbourhoods to consider the Phase 2 consultation outcome will, subject to implementation being approved, enable contractor appointment to be undertaken to support the projects to remain on programme.
- 1.5 The schemes are designed in accordance with the latest cycling design guidance to create an environment that is safe for both walking and cycling and to help embed walking and cycling as part of new long-term commuting habits and are funded via the Future High Streets Fund and Active Travel Tranche 3 Funding. The funding cannot be used for any other purpose.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The results of the Phase 2 consultation could be considered by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee at its meeting on 20 September 2023. This is not considered appropriate as this would add delay into the programme where funding is required to be spent by March 2024. Should the schemes be approved for delivery award of contract to a contractor is required to be undertaken without delay in order to ensure funding deadlines are met.

- 2.2 A special meeting of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee could be arranged however given this would be over the summer holiday period availability of members may be limited, therefore this is not considered an appropriate option.
- 2.3 The Active Travel Funding Tranche 3 could not be accepted. This is not considered an appropriate option as the funding is required to mitigate against increasing costs in the construction industry since the original Future High Streets funding bid was submitted.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Scheme

- 3.1 The Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme is part of the council's Future High Street Fund programme and supported with funding from the Active Travel Tranche 3 programme. In total £8.9 million of capital funding has been awarded to the council to deliver the project. The project is a key component of the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre, aiming to make the town centre more attractive and support increasing active and sustainable travel movements.
- 3.2 The three elements of the proposed scheme are:

Scheme 1 – Conway Street

This aims to improve the look and feel of Conway Street from its junction with Hemingford Street to the roundabout at Argyle Street, and to improve accessibility for all. The scheme includes the full replacement of paving materials on the north side, new trees complementing the existing ones. A fully segregated cycleway will be introduced on the north side of the road with better pedestrian and cycle crossing points along Conway Street. Existing access points along this section of Conway Street will either be closed or made one way and made safer for pedestrians by raising the footway levels at each junction.

Scheme 2 – Europa Boulevard

This aims to reduce the overly wide dual carriageway and share the available space more evenly. It includes the introduction of a fully segregated cycleway on the west side of the Boulevard, with northbound and southbound vehicular traffic using the east side of the boulevard. The scheme also includes the replacement of the current pavement with quality surfacing to improve the look and accessibility of the street environment.

Scheme 3 – Europa Car Park

This aims to remove part of the Europa Car Park nearest to the bus station to allow public realm improvements, allowing better connection between Conway Park Station and Birkenhead Town Centre. A short section of Claughton Road near the bus station will operate as a shared surface i.e. for all users not just traffic. This element will result in the loss of approximately 50 car spaces.

Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West

- 3.3 The Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West scheme is part of the council's Future High Street Fund (FHSF) programme. £2.97 million of capital funding has been awarded to the council to deliver the project. The project is a key component of the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre, aiming to make the town centre more attractive and support increasing active and sustainable travel movements.

- 3.4 The three schemes proposed are:

Scheme 1 – Grange Road

This scheme aims to improve the look and feel of Grange Road, and to improve accessibility for all. The scheme includes the full replacement of paving materials, new trees complementing the existing ones, and upgrade of the street furniture. Another element of the proposal is the implementation of timed vehicular access restrictions, using electric bollards at the junction of Grange Road & Charing Cross, to reduce fly-parking on the street. This will improve the enforcement of the existing No Vehicular Access restriction between core shopping hours.

Scheme 2 – Charing Cross

This scheme aims to improve road safety at the Charing Cross junction. It includes the replacement of the existing crossings with wide, straight crossings allowing pedestrians to cross the road quickly and easily. The scheme also includes the replacement of the current pavement with quality surfacing to improve the look and accessibility of the street environment.

Scheme 3 – Grange Road West

The third scheme is a trial as a 'Low Traffic Neighbourhood' along part of Grange Road West between the Charing Cross junction and Clayton Street. The Low Traffic Neighbourhood approach will mean traffic will only be allowed to travel in a westbound direction. Coloured surfacing and planters will be used to identify the boundary between the pedestrian area and one way traffic from Charing Cross – encouraging more people to visit and dwell along Grange Road West.

Phase 1 Consultation

- 3.5 In May 2022, Mott Macdonald were appointed to support the council to develop the outline and detailed designs for both projects to RIBA 4 stage and in October 2022 the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee received an update regarding the projects, which at that point were at RIBA 2 stage, and authorised the Director of Regeneration and Place to undertake public and stakeholder consultation regarding the proposed schemes.
- 3.6 Regular updates on the development of both schemes were provided to the Members Active Travel Working Group and in May 2023 the working group received a written briefing regarding the outcome of the consultation for both

schemes and outlining the next steps will be to undertake the further statutory consultation.

3.7 Public consultation (non-statutory) was held on the Conway Street and Europa Boulevard Active Travel Scheme from 6 February to 19 March 2023 allowing people to provide their views. Consultation was undertaken using the following methods;

- Public engagement via BirkenEds place – including display of plans and 3D images.
- Social Media and press releases
- Engagement with Ward Members and Chairs and Spokespersons of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and Environment, Transport and Climate Change Committee;
- Email engagement and online meetings with the Members Active Travel Working Group;
- Email engagement and online meetings with the Wirral Active Travel Forum including design review workshop;
- Use of the Council's 'Have Your Say' consultation portal
- Consultation with statutory agencies including Merseyside Police and Emergency Services.

3.8 The Have your Say site can be viewed at <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/conway-street-and-europa-boulevard-active-travel-scheme>

3.9 The results of the Phase 1 consultation for Conway Street/Europa Boulevard are summarised below with the Have Your Say report, which provides further detail, at Appendix 1.

- 71.6% support the proposals to Conway Street.
- 70.5% support the proposals to Europa Boulevard.
- 62.1% support the proposals to Europa Car Park.

3.10 Officer responses to the Phase 1 consultation for Conway Street/Europa Boulevard are included at Appendix 2.

3.11 Public consultation (non-statutory) was held on Charing Cross and Grange Road Active Travel Scheme from 28 November 2022 to 22 January 2023 allowing people to provide their view. Consultation was undertaken using the following methods;

- Public engagement via BirkenEds place – including display of plans and 3D images.
- Social Media and press releases
- Engagement with Ward Members and Chairs and Spokespersons of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and Environment, Transport and Climate Change Committee;
- Email engagement and online meetings with the Members Active Travel Working Group;

- Email engagement and online meetings with the Wirral Active Travel Forum including design review workshop;
- Use of the Council's 'Have Your Say' consultation portal
- Consultation with statutory agencies including Merseyside Police and Emergency Services.

3.12 The Have your Say site can be viewed at <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/charing-cross-and-grange-road-active-travel-scheme>

3.13 The results of the Phase 1 consultation for Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West are set out below with the Have Your Say report which provides further detail at Appendix 3.

- 81% of 154 respondents supported the proposals for Grange Road.
- 81.2% of 154 respondents supported the proposals for Charing Cross.
- 73.9% of 154 respondents supported the proposals for Grange Road West.

3.14 Officer responses to the Phase 1 consultation for Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West are included at Appendix 4.

Phase 2 Consultation

3.15 Phase 2 statutory consultation has been undertaken between 28 June 2023 and 19 July 2023. The feedback from this consultation is currently being reviewed. Phase 2 of consultation is to give notice and specific detail of the Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) that would be required to make the proposals effective should the schemes be approved for implementation. The consultation process enables objections and expressions of support to be considered and detailed officer responses will be provided for consideration.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West scheme is funded via Future High Streets Fund. £2,969,245 of funding has been allocated.

4.2 The Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme has allocated funding totalling £8,924,059 as follows;

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|-----------------------------------------|-----------|
| Future High Streets Fund | 3,904,059 |
| Active Travel Tranche 3- initial award | 2,225,000 |
| Active Travel Tranche 3 – further award | 1,625,000 |
| Wirral Growth Company contribution | 1,170,000 |

4.3 The ongoing maintenance costs would be included within existing highway maintenance programme. A 20 year life cycle plan for the maintenance of the schemes is currently being developed and discussions are continuing to take place with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority regarding future

highway maintenance funding allocations from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

- 4.4 Wirral Growth Company's Birkenhead Commercial District scheme budget includes a contribution to Wirral Council in respect of public works of £1,170,000. These are for works to be undertaken by the Council as outlined above in the report in proximity to the Birkenhead Commercial District.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has statutory duties as defined by the Highways Act 1980, Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, Road Traffic Act 1988, Local Government Act 1972 and the Traffic Management Act 2004.
- 5.2 Under the Neighbourhoods Scheme of Delegation the Director of Neighbourhoods has delegated approval to consider schemes for implementation where 15 or less objections are received.
- 5.3 In order to accept the further allocation of £1,625,000 of Active Travel Tranche 3 funding the Director of Law and Governance is required to enter in to a Grant Funding Agreement with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The schemes have been added to the Council's Capital Programme. Existing staff resources, supplemented with external consultation support as appropriate has been used for development of the scheme.
- 6.2 The Council public car park at Europa Square is proposed to be reduced in size by approximately 50 spaces to support the improved public realm and active travel links required as part of the scheme.
- 6.3 There are no ICT implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failure to deliver the Birkenhead Movement Schemes would be viewed negatively by the DHLUC, the LCRCA, the Department for Transport and Active Travel England, and may impact future funding allocations.
- 7.2 The deadline for spending the Future High Streets Funding and the Active Travel Funding is the end of March 2024. As with all highway schemes there is the risk that due to unforeseen circumstances once works commence on site. The current programme for Conway Street identified that the works may exceed the required timescales, however it is intended that expenditure past March 2024 can be the non-grant funded elements of the budget which has no expiry date.
- 7.3 There is a risk of loss of car parking revenue however it is estimated the current car parking facilities in the area will accommodate any displaced vehicles.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Ward Councillors, Chairs and Vice-Chairs and Spokespersons of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee and Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and the Active Travel Working Group have been engaged during the programme development and public engagement. Birkenhead and Tranmere Ward members have attended briefing sessions where regular updates on the schemes were provided.
- 8.2 Public and stakeholder consultation on both schemes has been undertaken as outlined in section 3 and consultation has also been undertaken with the Emergency Services, Freight Transport Association, Road Haulage Association, Merseytravel and Wirral's Active Travel Forum including the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). Letters with plans were delivered to residents and businesses found within the vicinity of the scheme, informing them of the proposals.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The Council has an obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality duty (Sect 149 2011) to show due regard to the duty and show due regard to mitigate any negative impacts that may affect people with protected characteristics under the Act.
- 9.3 Whilst there are no equality implications arising from this report, the associated actions arising from any future decision making regarding the implementation of the scheme may further need to assess any equality issues and mitigate any negative impact that may emerge.
- 9.4 An Equality Impact Assessment for both schemes has previously been completed. These are published on the Council's website <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-andneighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Delivery of active travel projects will enable increased numbers of journeys to be undertaken by sustainable modes, especially for local journeys, therefore reducing residents' reliance on the private car and reducing carbon emissions. Increasing cycling and walking will help combat climate change. By encouraging and enabling people to travel more on foot and by cycle instead of private car harmful emissions will be reduced. Promoting active travel can result in reduced emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide, particulate matter and Carbon Dioxide helping to tackle climate change and improve air quality.

- 10.2 Gear Change Cycling Strategy produced by Government in Summer 2020 identifies that mode shift to active transport is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing transport emissions and that meeting the targets to double cycling and increasing walking would lead to savings of £567million annually from air quality alone and prevent 8,300 premature deaths each year in England and provide opportunity to improve green spaces and biodiversity.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Sustainable travel is at the heart of the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and emerging Local Plan. In this context that this scheme it is part of a wider programme to deliver a prosperous, inclusive economy to benefit local residents. The proposed improvements to Birkenhead Road will have a positive impact on removing barriers to active travel and encouraging a switch from motorised for short journeys.
- 11.2 The project supports the reduction in energy consumption as it will support the Cool 2 target of 'a complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030'.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1:** Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Have your Say Consultation Report
- Appendix 2:** Conway Street/Europa Boulevard Objections and Expressions of Support – Officer Comments
- Appendix 3:** Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West Have your Say Consultation Report
- Appendix 4:** Grange Road/Charing Cross/Grange Road West Objections and Expressions of Support – Officer Comments

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in accordance with section b and c) of its Terms of Reference

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

(b) in relation to all highways matters and as highway authority, street authority, bridge authority, including but not limited to public open spaces, street furniture on the highway and open spaces or parts of open spaces immediately adjacent to the highway;

(c) in relation to traffic management and transport and as traffic authority, including but not limited to public passenger transport and the co-ordination of transport for service users, traffic orders and rights of way issues;

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Gear Change Plan for Cycling and Walking – Department for Transport July 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>

Gear Change Plan One Year One– Department for Transport July 2021
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1007815/gear-change-one-year-on.pdf

Cycling Infrastructure Design Local Transport Note 1/20
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| TOWN / HIGH STREET FUNDS: FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND Policy & Resources Committee | 17 March 2021 |
| TOWN / HIGH STREET FUND: FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND Economy Regeneration & Development Committee | 4 March 2021 |
| FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND MOVEMENT SCHEMES Economy Regeneration & Development Committee | 19 October 2022 |
| ACTIVE TRAVEL FUNDING - TRANCHE 3 Economy Regeneration & Development Committee | 19 October 2022 |

**UTILISATION OF PROCURE PARTNERSHIPS
FRAMEWORK**
Economy Regeneration & Development Committee

26 January 2023