



TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No: 2.2
6 MARCH 2020	PUBLIC REPORT

WISBECH RAIL PROGRESS REPORT

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1. To summarise progress on the Wisbech Rail project to date and outline next steps.
- 1.2. To consider recommendations to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board.

<u>DECISION REQUIRED</u>	
Lead Member:	James Palmer, Mayor
Lead Officer:	Paul Raynes, Director of Delivery and Strategy
Forward Plan Ref: Insert ref no on FP	Key Decision: No
The Transport and Infrastructure Committee is recommended to: (a) Note the content of this report and proposed next steps (b) Identify any issues which the Committee would wish to escalate to the Combined Authority Board.	Voting arrangements A simple majority of members

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Combined Authority and its partners aim to achieve sustainable growth by addressing the inadequate transport connectivity between Cambridge and North Cambridgeshire. While Cambridge is one of the fastest growing and most highly skilled economies in the UK, Wisbech, and the wider north Cambridgeshire area experiences high levels of socioeconomic deprivation.

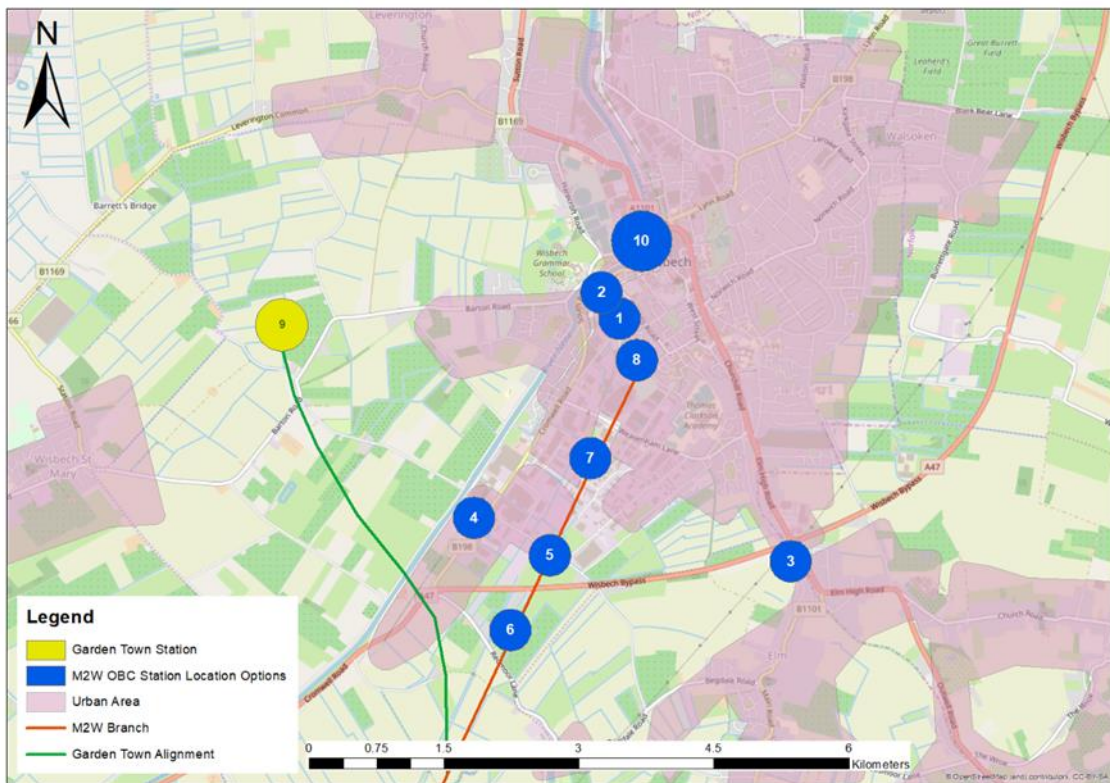
- 2.2. Improving connectivity to Cambridge offers the opportunity to transform Wisbech as a place for inward investment and provide much enhanced accessibility to key services and employment opportunities for its residents.
- 2.3. Additionally, improved connectivity would ease the pressure on housing in Cambridge, with a reinstated rail link direct from Wisbech to Cambridge supporting the development of the Wisbech Garden Town.
- 2.4. At its meeting on 28 November 2018 the Combined Authority Board approved the budget of £1.5m for the GRIP3B Study for Wisbech to March rail and potential onward connections to Cambridge and Peterborough.
- 2.5. The GRIP 3b study objectives were to:
 - (a) Identify a single option solution between Heavy Rail or Non- Heavy Rail
 - (b) To establish a station location option
 - (c) To establish an engineering solution
 - (d) To establish a crossings solution for the 21 crossings between Wisbech and March
 - (e) To identify a direct link to Cambridge solution.
- 2.6. The study activities were to:
 - Review of Previous work – including the GRIP2 work
 - A GRIP3 Options Selection Study
 - Appraisal Specification Report
 - Development Planning and Station location report
 - Scheme Delivery Report
 - Technical Notes on Key issues
 - Full Business Case
- 2.7. Key Drivers for the Project are to:
 - (a) Improve access to employment and education sites
 - (b) Improve connectivity to major centres for inward investment to Wisbech (Cambridge, Peterborough, London, and Stansted Airport)
 - (c) Supports delivery of housing – Fenland Local Plan and Wisbech Garden Town
 - (d) Alternative mode of transport to car travel

3.0 Progress to Date

- 3.1. The Options Assessment Report (OAR) has been completed and the GRIP 3B Full Business Case is anticipated to be completed by the beginning of June. This is later than originally planned due to difficulties in arranging trackside surveys which have now been largely overcome.
- 3.2. The OAR sifted options to two main options for more detailed development:
 - (a) Tram – Train,

- (b) National Rail (Heavy Rail) proposals,
- (c) There was a third low cost option considered in accordance with Department for Transport's TAG guidance, but it represented poor value for money and not progressed further.

- 3.3. The two main options have been developed, resulting in a recommended National Rail option, offering more traditional mode, with established procurement and delivery routes.
- 3.4. The key objective is offering direct passenger transport services between Wisbech and Cambridge, which is currently constrained at Ely, but alternative work is progressing on this issue through the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement study which is the subject of a separate report.
- 3.5. Should direct Wisbech to Cambridge services not be immediately available at opening, the project retains a positive benefit cost ratio of 1.5 to 2.0.
- 3.6. A direct Wisbech to Cambridge service from opening would deliver a BCR of 2.0 to 2.5.
- 3.7. The preferred Wisbech Station location should be as close to the town centre as possible and land south of the Purina site has been identified but is subject to further assessment, design and consultation. The map below shows the other options considered for the Wisbech Station location and the preferred option is labelled 10,
- 3.8. Station Options considered for Wisbech



- 3.9. Further to the Options Assessment Report the Full Business Case includes analysis of railway operations. Network Rail have highlighted that the current restricted track layout at Ely, means there is not currently direct Wisbech to Cambridge availability, but 1 to 2 train paths per hour are potentially available once improvements are implemented at Ely North and Ely Station.
- 3.10. The capacity upgrade proposals for the Ely area are therefore a key dependency for any proposed Wisbech to Cambridge rail service.
- 3.11. To deliver an interim solution, based on initial 2 train paths per hour service between Wisbech and March, with one service operating through to Cambridge (subject to available capacity through Ely) and one reversing at March, the following infrastructure is required:
- (a) At March Station a new operational platform at the West End of the old platform 3 should be re-instated
 - (b) A revised track layout at March is required to serve a reinstated platform 3.
 - (c) To accommodate a resilient 2 train paths per hour operation on the single line between Whitemoor Jn and Wisbech, a passing loop will be required at Coldham.
 - (d) A single platform is required at the new Wisbech Station. The new platform should be designed to accommodate a 2-car train, with passive provision for future extension to accommodate a 4-car train.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The Delivery Strategy is being developed as part of the Full Business Case and considers funding mechanisms, procurement and the structure of delivery.
- 4.2 Negotiations with Network Rail and Department for Transport will determine whether this is developed as a Network Rail or Third Party Deliver scheme.
- 4.3 Furthermore, the Department of Transport has recently published information inviting MPs, local councils and community groups across England and Wales to propose how funding could be used to reinstate axed local services and restore closed stations.
- 4.4 The Combined Authority is working with DfT to ensure that the Wisbech Rail project is considered for the restoring railways funding.
- 4.5 An indicative programme for developing the scheme has been produced by Mott McDonald and is set out in the table below,

Stage	Design and construction - Indicative duration	Statutory Process – Indicative duration
GRIP 3 - Option Selection & Full Business Case	12-15 months	
GRIP 4 – Single Option Development	6 months + 4 weeks NR approval	Prepare order documents and submit at end of Grip 4
GRIP 5 study – Detailed Design	9 months + 4 weeks NR approval	6-9 months Objection management and prep for Public Inquiry
Land Acquisition	-	9-12 months Public Inquiry and decision
GRIP 6 – Construction, Test and Commissioning	15 months construction 3 months route learning, rolling stock introduction, test & commission	

4.6 The Full Business Case is anticipated to be completed at the beginning of June 2020.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The current 2019/20 financial year approved budget is £1,480,000 and the forecast cost for completing the full business case is £1,445,376 – split between 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years.

5.2 Next financial year an indicative budget in the Mid Term Financial Plan is £987,606 but this is subject to approval.

5.3 Current estimate of construction is £200.4m this includes a 20% risk allowance and based on 2019 prices. It does not include optimum bias or land acquisition costs. This figure will continue to be refined as the project develops.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct legal implications at this stage. However, for the proposals to proceed to construction would require either a Transport Works Act Order or Development Consent Order.

7.0 OTHER SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 No significant implications at this stage.

8.0 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1 – Options Assessment Report

8.2 Appendix 2 – Interim Report by Mott McDonald

<u>Background Papers</u>	<u>Location</u>
List background papers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options Assessment Report by Mott McDonald Interim Report by Mott McDonald 	