

Transport Delivery Committee

Date	6 January 2020
Report title	Petition A435 Alcester Road/Moseley Road and Highgate Middleway Bus Priority Revitalisation
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Report has been considered by	Officer Petition Panel Putting Passengers First Lead Member Reference Group

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

- (i) Note the petition submitted by Birmingham Friends of the Earth raising objections to the A435 Alcester Road/Moseley Road and Highgate Middleway Bus Priority Revitalisation project;
- (ii) Agree to take no further action on the petition based upon the mitigations proposed and findings of the Officer Petition Panel;
- (iii) Note the full implications of the proposals, including consultation responses and the issues raised within the petition, will be considered within a Full Business Case by TfWM Network Programme Board and Birmingham City Council's Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment; and,
- (iv) Note a final decision to proceed with the project will be retained by Birmingham City Council as Local Highway Authority via the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment.
- (v) Agree to submit the petition and TDC's findings & decision to the BCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment as representation in final decision making on the scheme.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To advise Transport Delivery Committee ("TDC") of a petition received on behalf of Birmingham Friends of the Earth (BFoE) objecting to the A435 Alcester Road/Moseley Road and Highgate Middleway Bus Priority Revitalisation project ("the project"). The petition has been submitted following a public consultation exercise for the project completed in October & November 2019.

- 1.2 Consideration of the petition follows new protocol agreed at September Transport Delivery Committee (TDC) whereby petitions receiving over 250 signatures are referred to TDC via Putting Passengers First Lead Member Reference Group.

2. Background

The petition

- 2.1 As well as submitting formal representation to the scheme, BFoE has submitted a petition objecting to the project. The petition has been signed by 760 people and specifically objects to the proposed carriageway widening along Moseley Road through Balsall Heath. The petition states:

Birmingham City Council is planning to widen stretches of the Moseley Road through Balsall Heath requiring the destruction of trees and the narrowing of footways. This will lead to heavier traffic and a worse environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Yes we want less delay to bus journeys, but this can be achieved by using the road more efficiently rather than widening it.

We [the undersigned] ask Birmingham City Council to halt plans to widen parts of the Moseley Road in Balsall Heath.

- 2.2 The petition has been submitted to Birmingham City Council's (BCC) Chair of the Sustainability & Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, whilst BCC is a delivery partner and will make the final decision on the scheme, TfWM remains project owner with overall scheme responsibility. BCC has therefore forwarded on the petition for TfWM action on behalf of the Council.

What are the issues?

- 2.3 The project comprises a package of route improvements largely along the A435 Alcester Road & Moseley Road between Reddings Close (Moseley) and Moseley Road (north of Camp Hill Middleway) and Highgate Middleway. Through Balsall Heath local centre (which is the subject of the petition) the scheme provides an additional inbound (into city centre) bus lane, public realm improvements, changes to traffic signals, improved surfacing and pedestrian crossing improvements.
- 2.4 To provide the inbound bus lane through Balsall Heath, some localised carriageway widening is required with a consequent reduction in footway widths (varying between 200mm and 900mm) on both sides of the carriageway. Based upon the design consulted upon, the project would additionally require the removal of six mature trees. In mitigating the impact to footways and trees, the consultation scheme also includes a comprehensive public realm scheme through Balsall Heath.

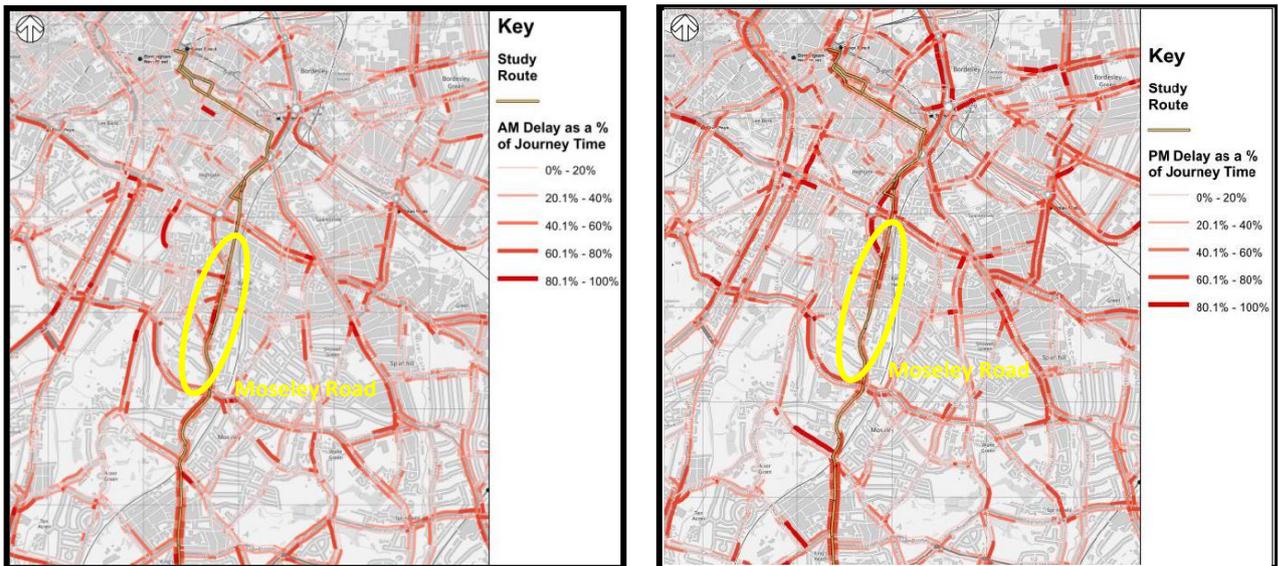
- 2.5 **Appendix A** provides the scheme drawings consulted upon; drawing number TFWM-ATK-HGN-ALC-DR-D-400 shows the segment through Balsall Heath where some changes to footways are proposed. **Appendix B** outlines the public realm mitigation concept scheme consulted upon.
- 2.6 From the petition, four issues have been raised by BFoE:
- Impact of tree removal
 - Impact of footway narrowing
 - Road widening increasing traffic
 - Worsening environment for active travel modes
- 2.7 Detailed responses to the issues raised are covered from paragraphs 2.26 – 2.56 below.

Context

What is the project and why has it been proposed?

- 2.8 The A435 Alcester Road/Moseley Road carries c.20,000 vehicles daily forming part of the wider Key Route Network (KRN) comprising the principal routes within the region. The corridor is the busiest radial route in Birmingham, providing buses on 4-minute headways and generating almost 7 million bus passenger trips annually. It competes with some of Birmingham's busiest commuter heavy rail lanes for patronage. During the AM peak, the corridor also generates more bus trips than car trips into the city centre.
- 2.9 The corridor experiences severe congestion at peak times, which has a severe effect on bus reliability and journey times. The corridor was identified in the TfWM 2018 KRN Report¹ as one of the most congested locations on the West Midlands KRN in the AM peak period.
- 2.10 Congestion through Balsall Heath is particularly pronounced. The figures below show the percentage of journey times by link along the corridor in the AM peak (07:30 – 09:30) and PM peak (16:00 – 18:00). During the AM peak, Moseley Road inbound experiences the highest delay points as a percentage of link time. During the PM peak, the majority of the congestion is in the outbound direction, with delay making 60-80% of journey time through Balsall Heath.

¹ <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/strategy/movement-for-growth/krn-reports-and-congestion-plan/>



- 2.11 Birmingham needs to deliver 51,000 additional homes and 150,000 new jobs by 2031². The city centre is the engine for this growth; it is already home to 21,000 companies employing around 220,000 people and with the potential to grow even more. By 2031 the city centre could be 25% bigger, accommodating a further 50,000 jobs and 10,000 new homes to boost the city centre's economy by £2.1 billion each year. However, in the background of a transport network already exhibiting peak hour congestion, this growth would result in 200,000 additional trips on the transport network each day.
- 2.12 Transport's role in growth cannot be underestimated; improved connectivity can widen labour markets, ensuring people are better connected to work catchments and skills. But current levels of delay and unreliability on the transport network are creating barriers; congestion constricts the effective size of the city, reducing agglomeration potential and hampering productivity. Delay and unreliability also hits the bus network the hardest with a stark impact on productivity; £200 million of time is lost each year due to buses not running to timetable, equating to £300 million of lost GVA to the region each year³.
- 2.13 Birmingham is also getting Clean Air Zone ("CAZ") ready where, within the city centre ring-road, the most polluting vehicles will be discouraged. The behavioural model used in forecasting the CAZ impacts predicts that 20%⁴ of personal journeys impacted by the introduction of the CAZ would be shifted to other modes. The CAZ Full Business Case ("FBC") states that capacity on local public transport is currently constrained and will require investment to increase capacity and reduce journey times.

² https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20054/planning_strategies_and_policies/78/birmingham_development_plan

³ TfWM / ODI Leeds / Jacobs 2019 real journey time v timetable research

⁴ 2.6.2 of CAZ FBC -

https://birmingham.cmis.uk.com/birmingham/Decisions/tabid/67/ctl/ViewCMIS_DecisionDetails/mid/391/Id/dbb0a2ee-0e5c-4c26-bb25-5e8ffacbb8066/Default.aspx

- 2.14 The project seeks to address some of these challenges by tackling congestion to make bus journeys quicker, specifically supporting connectivity into Birmingham city centre along the A435 corridor. In turn, this will make the bus a more attractive proposition, promoting modal shift and releasing capacity on the transport network to accommodate increased travel demand from growth whilst also supporting delivery of the CAZ.
- 2.15 The project aligns and cross cuts a number of regional strategic transport objectives; as well as supporting the overarching objectives of the region's Strategic Vision for Bus⁵, the need for bus improvements along the A435 corridor is identified within the Congestion Management Plan⁶, Movement for Growth (and the accompanying 2026 Delivery Plan for Transport⁷) and Birmingham Connected⁸.
- 2.16 More recently, TfWM and BCC are working together with bus operators to realise a Cross City bus network for Birmingham. Cross City has the potential to deliver a genuine step change in intra-city bus connectivity, opening new and direct bus links to trip attractors across all parts of the city and, crucially, the city centre. Delivering Cross City represents one of the biggest opportunities for the bus network in recent years.
- 2.17 However, the extent, reach and length of new cross city routes require bus journey times that are stable and efficient; this can only be achieved through a supporting package of bus priority to create high levels of reliability and reduced journey times along radial corridors.
- 2.18 The project will deliver the first leg of cross city bringing together bus services 50 and 82/87. This would create direct links between Druids Heath, Kings Heath, Moseley and Balsall Heath in south Birmingham to the Jewellery Quarter, City Hospital, Bearwood, Smethwick, Oldbury and Dudley in the north and west. Through the city centre, the project will help unlock new connections from south Birmingham to the Colmore Business District, Birmingham Children's Hospital and further education at Birmingham Eastside.

Has the project been consulted upon?

- 2.19 A public consultation for the project was carried out between 2 October and 8 November; the consultation period was extended by two weeks to 22 November 2019. Two public consultation events were held on 15 & 24 October at Joseph Chamberlain College and Balsall Heath Library, respectively. 'Birmingham BeHeard' was used as an online portal to coordinate consultation responses.
- 2.20 As well as the consultation events, officers from TfWM attended a public meeting for the scheme on 22 October and the joint Sparkbrook, Balsall Heath East & Balsall Heath West Ward Forum

⁵ <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/media/38969/final-strategic-vision-for-bus.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/media/2917/congestion-management-plan.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/media/3204/wbhe-e22-movement-for-growth-2026-delivery-plan-for-transport-sept-2017.pdf>

⁸ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/download/552/birmingham_connected

meeting on 13 November. Overall, 862 responses to the consultation were received with 17 responses from stakeholders.

2.21 Analysis of the consultation responses showed a generally positive views about the project:

- 71% of respondents were broadly supportive of the proposals for the bus priority measures (giving them a score of 3 or above) – with a third giving the proposals the highest score of 5 indicating they *really like them*.
- Nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) were less supportive (a score of 2 or below). 11% gave the proposals the lowest possible score of 0 indicating they *really dislike them*.
- It should be noted that 87% of respondents felt that there was enough information available to them to make an informed comment.

2.22 It was, however, clear that some of the community and stakeholders within Balsall Heath were concerned about the impact of the scheme through Balsall Heath, particularly around the loss of trees and changes to footways.

What is the status of the project?

2.23 An outline Business Case for project was approved at 17 September TfWM Network Programme Board, 19 September BCC Transport and Highway Board and the BCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment pursuant to public consultation.

2.24 Responses to the consultation have been collated and the scheme design is being reviewed to address some of the issues raised. It is anticipated that an FBC for the project would be presented to TfWM Key Networks Board and BCC's Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment in early 2020. The FBC will include a detailed consultation report, providing a full & detailed analysis of the consultation responses received to date and the action to be taken. This will include the petition submitted by BFoE (and the outcome of TDC's considerations).

2.25 A final decision on the scheme would be made by BCC, as Local Highway Authority, through the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment.

Addressing the petition issues

2.26 The petition was considered by the Officer Petition Panel (OPP) on 20 December in line with the WMCA Petition Protocol approved at 9 September TDC. OPP considered the specific issues raised within the petition, taking account of the emerging scheme changes (since the consultation) and the wider supporting evidence base for the project. A response to the issues is set out below along with OPP conclusions.

Impact on tree removal

2.27 The scheme consulted upon proposed the removal of six mature trees through Balsall Heath. A plan showing the original trees to be removed can be found in **Appendix C** (which should

reviewed in conjunction with the general arrangement drawing number TFWM-ATK-HGN-ALC-DR-D-400).

- 2.28 Following consultation and further design review, it is now considered possible to retain three trees meaning that only three trees would require removal. The trees to be retained are; two trees opposite Moseley Road Baths/Balsall Heath Library (trees 4 & 5 in appendix C) and a further tree on the corner of A435 Moseley Road and [Old] Moseley Road (tree 6 in appendix C).
- 2.29 Following detailed site investigations to identify tree pit locations, it will be possible to replant 16 trees through Balsall Heath local centre (as well as further tree planting along Highgate Middleway) to mitigate the impact of tree loss. This would be complemented by further soft landscaping features incorporating greenery as part of the wider public realm scheme. The replacement trees will be semi-mature; whilst clearly not at the level of maturity of the three existing trees to be removed, they would provide a significant green addition to the streetscene.
- 2.30 OPP was satisfied that the proposed reduction in tree removal and replacement tree strategy would, in principle, address the issues set out within the petition around tree impact. This would be subject to final confirmation of the tree/landscaping scheme to be taken to, and considered by, TfWM Key Network Board and the BCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment as part of the FBC.

Impact of footway changes through Balsall Heath

- 2.31 The project would result in changes to footway widths through Balsall Heath local centre. These changes are indicated on the consultation plans contained within Appendix A. Minimum residual footway widths of 2.1m would be maintained along the narrowest segments but, for the most part, footway widths would be far greater. These widths also do not take into account of private forecourt areas in existence on both sides of the road through Balsall Heath which form part of the public realm and used by pedestrians albeit in private ownership.
- 2.32 In developing the preliminary design, a number of different options were assessed to minimise footway impact through Balsall Heath. The options considered were principally variants of the design consulted upon as providing an inbound bus lane through Balsall Heath forms a crucial element of the wider project. Three primary options were considered (including the current option):
- Option 1 – Current option
 - Variants 1 and 2 of the current option including
 - Elimination of on street parking
 - Reduction of carriageway widths
 - Option 2 – a variant of Option 1 but with widening on the eastern side of the footway, as the lesser active frontage
 - Option 3 – Tidal bus lane in the centre of the road with gantries along the extent of Balsall Heath local centre.

- 2.33 Based on these tests, Option 1 was concluded to be the preferred option. This is because the removal of any car parking (option 1 variant) would have severe impacts upon the operation and viability of local businesses within the local centre (considering existing levels of parking demand), rationalising narrowing to one side of the road would create footway widths well below acceptable standards. The tidal bus lane option would come with significant gantry requirements which are likely to create significant obstructions within the footway and be highly intrusive visually.
- 2.34 To understand the impact of the preferred option on the pedestrian environment through Balsall Heath, three objective assessments have been undertaken
- Pedestrian Environment Review Factsheet (PERS);
 - Public Realm Audit; and,
 - Transport Space Allocation (TSA) Assessment

PERS

- 2.35 This is a quantitative, industry standard walking audit of a specified area, which assesses the quality and composition of a range of pedestrian environments to understand how they may impact on walking and movement.
- 2.36 A baseline PERS audit was conducted in Balsall Heath on 18 July 2019 by an independent transport planning practice. The audit assessed the existing pedestrian environment and scored infrastructure using a standardised assessment. A do-something PERS assessment was then completed, taking account of the footway width reductions and the proposed public realm concept scheme consulted upon.
- 2.37 The baseline PERS total weighted score was 126. The PERS do-something, taking account of the proposed footway reductions and public realm improvements, and a total weighted score of 720 was achieved.
- 2.38 The project score uplift was achieved by the improved surface quality and the removal of trip hazards as a result of resurfacing/re-paving works across all sections. Combined with the proposed de-cluttering, user conflict was also reduced and pedestrian congestion eased notwithstanding the proposed footway reductions. Resurfacing also enhances aesthetic value and results in a more pleasant environment, particularly with the incorporation of trees and soft landscaping.

Urban design audit

- 2.39 An urban design audit was completed through Balsall Heath, which, together with the PERS audit, provides a comprehensive understanding of the corridor and how it operates for pedestrians. It also provides a thorough analysis of the existing urban context and how pedestrian links, crossings, and public transport facilities respond to users' needs. The urban

design audit was completed and contextualised within the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Plan⁹ to assess the relative impact of the project against locally adopted policy.

2.40 It is clear from the audit that the environment through Balsall Heath local centre has some significant challenges, both in terms of its place function performance but also the quality and attractiveness of the streetscene. In particular, a number of issues were identified within the audit which have explicit impacts on pedestrians' experience & utility:

- *Safety* due to lack of adequate crossing facilities, particularly at the junction of Haden Way with Moseley Road located to the north and the junction of Moseley road with Cromer Road and Brighton Road;
- *Clutter* distributed on either side of the road, reducing effective footway widths and causing explicit obstructions for pedestrians' movement including disabled and impaired people;
- *Poor pavement* condition overall including the use of different and inconsistent materials causing visual and physical impacts;
- *Accessibility* issues across the road affecting the movement of people, particularly disabled and impaired people;
- *Cleansing* and maintenance are real issues observed on site;
- *Illegal parking* on footways which cause major obstruction to the movement of people including disabled and impaired people, and,
- Lack of green spaces/pocket parks

Transport Space Allocation

2.41 BCC has developed detailed guidance for the use of corridor space when developing highway schemes, known as Transport Space Allocation (TSA). The key objective is to ensure the effective use and allocation of limited space to provide for the disparate and competing needs of alternative users within the highway. Although the guidance remains in detailed draft format, its use has been accepted to guide principles on emerging schemes.

2.42 The TSA assessment established baseline Road User Hierarchy (RUH) for all key routes in the city including the A435 Alcester Road and Moseley Road. A scheme specific TSA assessment has been completed to evaluate the relative change in Level of Service (LoS) arising from the footway changes through Balsall Heath. This was completed using data including full pedestrian volume and crossing surveys, turning counts and real bus journey time data. The TSA assessment concluded there would not be a reduction in pedestrian LoS as a result of the proposed footway changes. This is because, based on pedestrian surveys, residual footway widths are appropriate for prevailing demand.

Summary of impact on footway

- 2.43 The PERS scoring and urban design audit outlined the significant constraints on the pedestrian environment within Balsall Heath local centre. But they also identified the opportunities and measures which can tangibly make a difference to its setting as a vibrant place, enhancing its local distinctiveness.
- 2.44 Whilst the project would narrow footways at some locations, the urban design and PERS audit both identify that the effective width through Balsall Heath local centre – that is the width that is actually useable by pedestrians – is de-facto narrowed through the persistent and habitual presence of obstructions from street furniture and bus stops. By removing obstructions and clutter the effective footway width could be maintained despite the proposed narrowing. Moreover, good quality, well designed places are defined not only by footway widths alone but a plethora of other elements that contribute to local distinctiveness, including crossing facilities, permeability, visual quality, lighting, seating, general clutter and propensity to encourage social activity.
- 2.45 The project includes a significant investment and commitment to improve the public realm through Balsall Heath local centre. These improvements have the primary objective of maintaining the effective footway width and compensating the impact of tree loss. The improvements also seek to enhance the local setting of the heritage assets (Moseley Road Baths, the Old Print Works etc) to the north of the local centre through enhanced paving, replacing incongruous bus stops with sleeker modern cantilever shelters, de-cluttering, rationalisation of street furniture and side road entry treatments.
- 2.46 OPP was satisfied that the concept and principle of public realm improvements through Balsall Heath will address the issues set out within the petition around footway impact.
- 2.47 It was recognised that the final public realm scheme is still to be finalised and will be subject to final confirmation as part of an FBC to be taken to, and considered by, TfWM Key Network Board and the BCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment.

Road widening increasing traffic through Balsall Heath

- 2.48 The primary objective of the scheme is to increase capacity for buses through bus priority intervention. The scheme would not increase link capacity through Balsall Heath for general traffic. The bus lanes would be part-time only (AM peak inbound and PM peak outbound), specifically to allow on-street parking to take place during daytimes and evenings. This is because parking surveys completed show high levels of prevailing on-street parking demand for the local centre. Therefore, outside of bus lane restrictions, the additional lane created would be used for parking and not for general traffic flow.
- 2.49 OPP was satisfied the project would not result in increased general traffic through Balsall Heath, given the purposes of the carriageway widening is to provide a bus lane. OPP also noted that, outside of bus lane operation hours, the bus lanes would accommodate the prevailing level of on-street parking demand.

Worsening environment for active travel modes

- 2.50 As outlined above, a TSA assessment has been completed to evaluate the relative change in Level of Service (LoS) arising from the scheme along its extent. This has demonstrated that the scheme would not worsen the LoS for pedestrians at any location. The TSA also concludes that, during peak periods, the scheme would improve the LoS for cycling by virtue of cyclists being permitted to use bus lanes along Alcester Road, Moseley Road and [Old] Mosley Road. Along Highgate Middleway, a new dedicated shared use cycleway would be created again improving the LoS for cyclists.
- 2.51 OPP was satisfied the project would not result in a worsening environment for active travel modes based upon the outcome of the TSA assessment. OPP was also satisfied that options to minimise footway impact have been considered and the current design represents the most efficient option in terms of minimising footway impact whilst still providing an inbound bus lane which is a crucial scheme output.

Recommended Action on Petition

- 2.52 Based on the issues identified with the petition and the responses set out above, TDC is recommended to take no further action on the petition.
- 2.53 The BFoE petition will form part of, and reported within, the FBC to be considered by TfWM Network Programme Board and BCC's Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment. As outlined above, the BCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment will make the final decision on the scheme.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications as a direct consequence of this report. The full financial implications of the project would be covered within the FBC

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications as a direct consequent of this report. The full legal implications would be covered within the FBC.

5. Impact on Delivery of Strategic Transport Plan

- 5.1 The project is being brought forward to deliver on the objectives of the Strategic Transport Plan. The scheme is a specific output of the 2026 Delivery Plan.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 An equality assessment has been completed and would be included within the Full Business Case. The assessment does, however, conclude that there are no aspects of the scheme which

could contribute to inequality. The facilities and measures proposed are for all users and non are excluded.

7. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 7.1 There are no inclusive growth implications as a direct consequent of this report. The full inclusive growth implications would be covered within the FBC.

8. Geographical Area of Report's Implications

- 8.1 The petition relates to the project's impact through Balsall Heath, covering the wards of Balsall Heath West.