

# The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund

**Cabinet**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

---

Author:	Cabinet Member for Town Centre Development Cabinet Member for Highways and the Environment
Wards:	Central
Parishes Affected:	Swindon Central South

---

## **1. Purpose and Reasons**

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet support to approve an outline strategy for how the Swindon should approach the challenges and future of the town centre's High Street, and approve an application for £25m funding through the Future High Streets Fund for the Bus Boulevard public transport interchange at Fleming Way, Kimmerfields. In addition, it recommends that the emerging Town Centre Movement Strategy, test the Whalebridge Junction north south movement to offer greater permeability of traffic movements at this junction.
- 1.2 The Bus Boulevard and Kimmerfields are key developments in the town centre and are linked to Pledge 3 "Refresh and implement the Masterplan for Swindon Town Centre, supporting our vision that Swindon is a vibrant, modern place". These decisions will help us to deliver the Bus Boulevard and bring forward a market-led Masterplan for the wider Kimmerfields site.

## **2. Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Endorse the themes set out at paragraph 3.12 to 3.19 that will inform the development of a vision for Swindon Town Centre which will accompany the capital bid for the Bus Boulevard to the Future High Street Fund
- 2.2 Approve the concept design for the Bus Boulevard scheme attached at Appendix 1 along with the accompanying artistic impressions at Appendix 2.
- 2.3 Authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation the Cabinet Member for Finance, to apply for external funding to deliver the Bus Boulevard scheme.
- 2.4 Authorise the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and Cabinet Member for Town Centre to identify available funding as detailed at paragraph 3.21 to the Bus Boulevard scheme as a match element of the Future High Street Fund bid and bring the detailed allocation to a future Cabinet meeting for approval prior to the submission of a Phase 2 bid
- 2.5 Support improvements to the Whalebridge Junction and authorise the Head of Highways, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and the

# The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund

Cabinet

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019

---

Environment, to undertake detailed modelling linked with the emerging Town Centre Movement Strategy outlined in more detail at 3.42-3.45.

- 2.6 Authorise the Head of Town Centre Development, in consultation with the Head of Property Assets and Director of Finance to settle compensation claims pursuant to the issue of a General Vesting Declaration relating to the compulsory purchase of land to facilitate the Kimmerfields development, utilising budgets previously authorised by Cabinet (Cabinet minutes 22, 2013/14 and 37, 2017/18 refer).

### 3. Detail

#### Changing nature of the High Street

- 3.1 In the last 5 years we have witnessed dramatic changes to the retail industry brought about by changing consumer behaviour driven by on-line shopping, growth in out of town shopping destinations and out-dated business rates valuations which increasingly make bricks and mortar retail less affordable. Furthermore, there is a trend towards spending money on experiences rather than material possessions.
- 3.2 Wider economic conditions are serving to exacerbate problems with a weaker pound and a corresponding pressure on retail prices. These factors have contributed to the failure of high profile businesses such as Woolworths and BHS, the closure of high street shops and uncertainty about the future of department store giants Debenhams and House of Fraser, both of which are represented in Swindon town centre.
- 3.3 These factors all impact on the number of people on our high streets and the amount of money they spend. Under these conditions the town centre must evolve to tempt people back.
- 3.4 The High Street Report (Sir John Timpson, 2018)<sup>1</sup> highlights the changing role of the 'town centre', noting that the town centre performs a wider role than the 'high street' which is concerned mainly with shops and shopping. As noted in the Portas Review<sup>2</sup> and Grimsey Review,<sup>3</sup> town centres need to diversify to attract consumers.
- 3.5 The recommendations from the Grimsey Review include;

---

<sup>1</sup> The evidence base for the Future High Streets Fund

<sup>2</sup> The Portas Review "An independent review into the future of our high streets" (2011)

<sup>3</sup> The Grimsey Review, an alternative Future for the High Street (2018)

# **The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

- 
- 3.5.1 Long term plan: Establish an empowered organisation or Town Centre Commission under strong, established leadership through the local authority for each town centre, with a defined remit to build a 20-year vision/strategy for their unique place. Ensure that this vision is underpinned by a comprehensive business/place plan
  - 3.5.2 There is already too much retail space in the UK and bricks and mortar retailing can no longer be the anchor for thriving high streets and town centres. They need to be repopulated and re-fashioned as community hubs, including housing, health and leisure, entertainment, education, arts, business/office space and some shops.
  - 3.5.3 Embed libraries and public spaces at the heart of each community as digital and health hubs that embrace smart technology.
  - 3.5.4 Establish events teams to manage a comprehensive programme of activities that complement the town centre.
  - 3.5.5 Introduce clear high street assets ownership accountability by establishing a landlord register for each town to be able to trace the owner of every single property and engage them in the health and wellbeing of the place.
  - 3.5.6 Enable the change of use process through new legislation to be used to convert entire sub-high streets to residential or other uses within the agreed town plan and relocate successful independent businesses to the main commercial centre.
  - 3.5.7 Review and evaluate future use and relevance of out of town shopping parks, prepare a plan to bring unwanted space back into use to benefit the community in line with the Town Centre Commission Plan, while applying a Town Centre First policy and calling for no further out of town development.
  - 3.5.8 Section 106 income or any planning gains should be used to support the delivery of the Town Centre Plan.
  - 3.6 The Council and its partners are carrying out many of these recommendations already but as individual activities rather than under the umbrella of a single plan or call to action.
  - 3.7 The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 is currently in the process of being reviewed to extend its time horizon to 2036. The review of the Local Plan will update the Council's policy on retail frontages and land uses in Swindon's town centre. It is proposed to adopt a more flexible approach to change of use within the centre to encourage diversification to support the centre's
- 

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Emma Gee, Mobile Telephone Number 07717578092, [EGee@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:EGee@swindon.gov.uk).

# The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund

Cabinet

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019

---

attractiveness. Additionally, the Local Plan is proposed to offer a more supportive policy for residential uses in the centre. The Local Plan review will replace the Swindon Central Area Action Plan (2009) and will propose new site allocation policies which will set out the council's aspirations for some of the major town centre development sites, including Kimmerfields.

- 3.8 The InSwindon Business Improvement District (BID) have an important role to play in working with a wide range of stakeholders, including retailers, business owners and the community to develop and implement a strategic plan for the town centre with strong leadership and vision.
- 3.9 The BID's programme of work for 2017-22 includes a range of initiatives including an exciting events programme, Street Team BID ambassadors and a coordinated marketing strategy for the town centre.

## A Vision for Swindon Town Centre

- 3.10 Residents view town centres as representing the health and prospects of their community. People's everyday experience of our town centre need to match the statistics which show Swindon performing well economically.
- 3.11 In Swindon there is pressure on both House of Fraser in the Brunel, which has only recently secured a one year lease and Debenhams who are yet to make public the name of the stores which will be subject to closure over the next 5 years. The Council and its partners know how much the town centre matters and we recognise the need to take a collaborative and coordinated approach to the future of our town centre, looking beyond retail to expand on urban living, provide more experience led activities and ensure it is safe, clean and attractive to residents, business, visitors and investors.
- 3.12 Town centres need housing, workplaces and public services to make them thrive. Swindon town centre will be a destination for socialising, culture, health and wellbeing, creativity and learning. A place to set up home and business, where people stay longer, spend more and keep coming back'.
- 3.13 Our approach will focus on 7 key themes and are set out in more detail at Appendix 3. The Vision will continue to evolve in consultation with partners and stakeholders.
- 3.14 **Easy to get to** – our town centre is accessible and easy to move around by walking, cycling, rail and bus.
- 3.15 **More than shopping** – our town centre responds to people's needs and offers positive, social, face to face experiences in a digital age.

# The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund

Cabinet

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019

---

- 3.16 **Town Centre Living** – our town centre offers urban living where people can walk to work and play.
- 3.17 **Safe, Clean and Green** - our town centre is a place where people enjoy being,
- 3.18 **Heritage** – our town centre is brimming with local character, a place where our proud Great Western Railway engineering heritage meets our innovative future.
- 3.19 **Driving our economy** - our town centre is a high performing centre where shops, leisure and entertainment trade well.
- 3.20 **Civic Leadership and Cooperation** – our town centre is a hub for the community, sponsored by the community and supported by strong civic leadership.

## The Bus Boulevard

- 3.21 The proposals for a new central public transport interchange at Fleming Way, now commonly referred to as the Bus Boulevard, are an integral part of the outline planning consent for Kimmerfields, a new mixed use development located on the prime route from the railway station to the town centre.
- 3.22 The Bus Boulevard would directly contribute to the town centre vision by delivering against the easy to get to, more than shopping, safe, clean and green and town centre living themes, while also contributing to prosperity. The bid to government will represent collaboration and cooperation amongst key town centre agencies and strong civic leadership. It will be the destination for the rapid transit routes from our urban extensions at Wichelstowe and the New Eastern Villages and will bring together both local urban and rural buses as well as national services.
- 3.23 The Bus Boulevard is a place making initiative which will create a thriving, attractive and accessible public and civic facility surrounded by high quality public realm.
- 3.24 The scheme will remove the severance caused by Fleming Way, reuniting the Central Business District with the town centre retail core. Businesses on the northern side of Fleming Way have reintroduced canteen facilities in recent years which further discourages movement by the 1000's of office workers into the town centre at lunchtimes and after work. This 'workday wallet' has considerable potential to boost footfall and trade in the town centre.

# **The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

- 
- 3.25 In addition, it will offer excellent support for cycling and walking, improving the pedestrian and cycle experience of users, completing the 'missing link' for the Eastern and Western Flyer cycle routes and promoting healthy lifestyles.
  - 3.26 Delivery of the Bus Boulevard will also free up land at the existing bus station which increases the developable area of Kimmerfields by circa 20%.
  - 3.27 There is value in investing in place. Triggers for value uplift are generally associated with an increase in footfall to an area and include opening of new and improved public transport links. Investment in infrastructure will raise residential values across Kimmerfields, as evidenced by a National Agency commission carried out by Savills. This will also translate into a better quality product.
  - 3.28 Town centres play an important role in the community. As set out in earlier paragraphs, an emphasis on experience and wellbeing will be essential to ensure Swindon town centre remains a desirable destination for residents and visitors as the role of town centres, and the future of retail in particular, changes. We have the opportunity to deliver a once in a lifetime scheme with government support which achieves this aim and also attracts inward investment to further strengthen and diversify the town centre offer.
  - 3.29 The Bus Boulevard will deliver a number of objectives which are set out at Appendix 4.

## Future High Streets Fund

- 3.30 Announced in the Autumn budget, the Fund is the government's attempt to help reinvigorate town centres facing challenges. The government views the Fund as the central part of their plan for the high street and the total value of the fund is £675m. The clear direction from government is that the fund should be used for projects that improve transport and access into town centres, and fit with the broader strategy of improving town centre vitality. More detail on the process and requirements of the bid are set out at Appendix 5.
- 3.31 There is the potential to develop a further bid for round 2 in 2020.

## SWLEP Local Growth Fund - Progress towards a 'shovel ready' scheme

- 3.32 In July 2018 (Cabinet Minute 24, 2018/19 refers), Cabinet approved the preferred concept design for the Bus Boulevard alongside the allocation of funds from the £3 million Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) grant funding. This was secured to work up a technical solution for a temporary bus facility on Princes St car park and for further detailed design work for the Bus Boulevard.



# **The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

---

- 3.33 To date, the scheme has progressed to meet SWLEP expectations. Expenditure in this financial year (18/19) comprised preparatory surveys, enabling works for the temporary bus facility, the construction of a new surface car park at the site of the old Wyvern Multi Storey Car Park, design fees to arrive at a fixed concept design including visualisations of a newly regraded Fleming Way, and an Outline Business Case for the SWLEP which will also serve to support the bid.
- 3.34 BT have advised on options to move the substantial fibre optic and copper cable network in the centre of Fleming Way and an order to BT for the 'southern bypass' has been placed which will accommodate all new business on the cable network and reduce the likelihood that the costs associated with the diversion of the main BT cable along Fleming Way will increase.
- 3.35 Next year (19/20) expenditure is forecast for enabling works for the temporary bus station on Princes Street Car Park, Transport Assessment including Micro Simulation traffic modelling works to better understand the impact on the town centre transport movements, additional survey work including asbestos surveys on Fleming Way and the continuation of the BT cable diversions.
- 3.36 Designs for the temporary bus station have been produced and agreed in principle with bus operators. A programme is being developed which indicates approximately a 36 month build for the Bus Boulevard.
- 3.37 Artistic impressions of the Bus Boulevard have been produced alongside the concept plan to give a sense of how the space will look and feel once the subway is removed and the route across Fleming Way is opened out (see Appendix 2)

## Capital Funding

- 3.38 The concept design for the Bus Boulevard is estimated to cost £30 million, £3 million of which has already been secured from SWLEP. This cost includes a provisional sum of £3m associated with highways improvements to the network which will be required as a result of the scheme.
- 3.39 The prospectus clearly states that it expects projects to be co-funded by public and private sector additions and this will be taken into consideration as part of the assessment of projects. Public co-funding is defined as being from a local area's own budgets which would include s106 funding.
- 3.40 The Future High Street bid will require approximately £5m of additional funding should a bid of £25m be successful. Cabinet is asked to support submission of the bid with a commitment from the Council for £5m of match funding within the expression of interest. Officers will look to identify sources of funding in advance of phase 2 application process. .
- 

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Emma Gee, Mobile Telephone Number 07717578092, EGee@swindon.gov.uk.

# The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund

Cabinet

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019

---

Estimated Scheme cost	£33m	
Funded by:		
SBC		£5m
SWLEP grant		£3m
High Street Fund		£25m

- 3.41 The Council will engage with significant town centre landowners as to whether they may be willing to invest in public realm in the town centre which could also be attributed as match funding leveraged from the private sector.
- 3.42 The Council entered into an agreement for lease with the Bus Operators in 2015. This covered the terms of the relocation from the bus station and current Fleming Way set up. Funding for future maintenance costs would need to be identified.

## Whalebridge Junction

- 3.43 The Kimmerfields Transport Assessment and Bus Boulevard transport impacts are being developed with the Town Centre Movement Strategy and results are expected in summer 2019. At this point, detailed knowledge about the impact of the Kimmerfields and Bus Boulevard schemes on the town centre traffic network will be known.
- 3.44 It is proposed to model changes to the Whalebridge junction. The current road layout does not provide permeability for traffic for all movements. While previous surveys and modelling have suggested that there is no evidence of significant demand for this north south route, now is the right time to explore whether there are better alternatives to the current layout which may impact positively on traffic movements and any associated impacts on journey times.
- 3.45 Specifically this will involve testing alteration of the junction layout and signal staging to allow direct turning movement from Corporation Street to Princes Street. The modelling and design work will consider delivery issues alongside the Bus Boulevard programme, land take requirements to retain bus priority, whether any changes would delay bus access to Fleming Way. This would demonstrate whether this north south movement would result in congestion or queuing elsewhere that would negatively impact on journey times into and out of the town centre.



# **The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

- 
- 3.46 In addition, modelling will be carried out on the Gordon Road, Princes Street junction to determine traffic flows and movements during the period where the temporary bus facility at Princes Street is in operation and after. It will also model the impact of the removal of access on to Fleming Way from Islington Street.

## Compulsory Purchase Update

- 3.47 In January 2019 the Council vested all land associated with the CPO decision by Secretary of State in February 2016. The land necessary to deliver the Bus Boulevard or Bus Exchange as it was then and which is subject to compulsory purchase is shown at Appendix 6.
- 3.48 A settlement has been reached with one of two main claimants and officers are in active negotiations with the remainder which should be concluded soon, without recourse to Lands Tribunal where possible.

## **4. Alternative Options**

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to bid for Future High Street funding to deliver the Bus Boulevard scheme. This would result in a significant funding shortfall of £22m, and alternative funding sources would need to be identified which could put the delivery of the scheme at risk.
- 4.2 If the scheme were not to proceed the advanced funding from the SWLEP could be at risk.

## **5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management**

### Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Should a bid of £25m be successful, the Council will need to identify match funding of £5m.
- 5.2 All infrastructure works will be procured through competitive tender. Modelling work will be funded from the £3m SWLEP funding. The new infrastructure would require annual maintenance funding and budget would need to be identified for this.

### Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.3 The Director of Law and Democratic Services would oversee the preparation of the required legal documentation for the proposed transactions.
- 5.4 All legal and human rights considerations have been taken into account in preparing this report and it is considered that the proposals within this report are compatible with Convention Rights.

# The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund

Cabinet

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019

---

## All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.5 There are no such direct implications.

## Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.6 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) was not completed at this time given the report does not propose any changes to service levels. DIAs will be carried out as appropriate to ensure that any temporary bus facility, the proposed Bus Boulevard and any highway alterations meet the required level of accessibility for all.

## Risk Management

- 5.7 Economic development, to which this report contributes, is included in the corporate risk management plan. A risk register for the Bus Boulevard is maintained by officers.
6. Risks associated with the physical construction of the Bus Boulevard will be covered through robust project management of the scheme from inception to completion.

## **7. Consultees**

- 7.1 The Director of Finance - Section 151 Officer and Interim Director of Law (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

## **8. Background Papers**

- 8.1 None

## **9. Appendices**

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Latest Bus Boulevard concept design
- 9.2 Appendix 2 – Bus Boulevard artistic impressions
- 9.3 Appendix 3 – Town Centre Vision and Themes
- 9.4 Appendix 4 – Bus Boulevard Objectives
- 9.5 Appendix 5 – Future High Streets Fund Bidding Guidance
- 9.6 Appendix 6 – CPO land map

# **The Bus Boulevard at Fleming Way. Bid to the Future High Street Fund**

**Cabinet**

**Date: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

---

## **10. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme**

- 10.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme for March 2019.