

Town Centre Movement Strategy

Cabinet

Date: 22nd April 2020

Author: Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment
Service Manager Transport Planning, Development and Street Works Management

Wards: Central, Eastcott, Rodbourne Cheney, Mannington & Western

Parishes Affected: Central Swindon North, Central Swindon South

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The Town Centre Movement Strategy (TCMS) sets out a package of interventions (schemes) that between them will deliver improvements to movement into and within the Town Centre. The Strategy is evidence based and objectives led and contributes towards delivery of the Council Plan 2019-2020.
- 1.2 This report seeks Cabinet approval of the revised draft document following Consultation and authorisation to finalise the documents for adoption.
- 1.3 The recommendations relate in particular to Pledge 3 of the Council's Vision - to 'Refresh and implement the Masterplan for Swindon Town Centre, supporting our vision that Swindon is a vibrant, modern place'.
- 1.4 The Movement Strategy forms an element of the Town Centre Masterplan and responds directly to Pledge 3. *c) Delivering improvements to the strategic town centre transport network.*

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Notes the responses to the consultation as summarised in the body of the text and attached at Appendix 1, along with the significant amendments to the proposed strategy as a consequence of that consultation.
- 2.2 Agrees the form and content of the Town Centre Movement Strategy as attached at Appendix 2 and adopts it as a strategy.
- 2.3 Authorises the Head of Planning, Regulatory Services and Heritage to make any minor or typographical changes as may be necessary prior to publication.

3. Detail

Background

- 3.1 In July 2019, Cabinet authorised Officers to undertake a Consultation exercise, inviting comment from a wide range of stakeholders on a draft of the Movement Strategy document (Cabinet Minute 20, 2019/20 refers). That Consultation ended in September 2019.

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Gerry Prodöhl, 07976 601395, gprodohl@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 3.2 In the intervening period, the responses to the draft document have been collated and with the support of Cabinet Members, a revised document has been prepared. The revised document is attached at Appendix 2.

Movement Strategy (Draft June 2019)

- 3.3 The draft of TCMS that was approved by Cabinet for the purpose of Consultation describes existing movement issues, a resultant set of objectives and 13 interventions (indicative schemes) to achieve the stated objectives. The document is supported by two appendices: an 'Option Identification & Assessment Technical Annex' and an 'Evidence Base Technical Annex', although these were not published as part of the consultation.

Consultation Process

- 3.4 The Consultation process extended between mid-July and mid-September 2019. The process involved an online questionnaire; in parallel, a dedicated email address was created to receive comment. In addition, presentations were made to Borough and Parish Councillors, who were invited to two events held in the Council Chamber.
- 3.5 The online questionnaire attracted 25 public responses and the dedicated e-mail address was used by a wide range of stakeholders to make more general comment. The response to the Consultation is set out in the Consultation Report attached as Appendix 1. As well as responses to the questionnaire and the comments of Councillors, representations were made by Historic England, Swindon Bus, Stagecoach Buses, Swindon Cycling Campaign, Swindon Civic Voice, The Canal Trust, the Taxi Forum and the Motorcycle Action Group.
- 3.6 A wide range of comments were made by stakeholders, reflecting particular areas of interest. In general, there was support for the principles of a multi-modal transport strategy but concern that the strategy is car-based and not well aligned to either evidence or policy. The comments that were most widely repeated are:
- 3.6.1 The strategy appears to focus on road traffic and ignores a wider sustainability agenda;
 - 3.6.2 More needs to be done to support bus travel, walking and cycling;
 - 3.6.3 Place making is given little consideration;
 - 3.6.4 The concept of 'balanced streets' is supported in principle but not to the extent of a Ring Street; and
 - 3.6.5 Strengthening the car parking offer appears contrary to sustainable transport principles;
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- 3.7 Whilst it is difficult to summarise the outcome of the Consultation, it is clear that the draft of June 2019 has drawn little support from any interested parties or from the public. A significant re-draft has therefore been necessary.

Movement Strategy (Draft February 2020)

- 3.8 Responding to comments made during the Consultation process, TCMS has been significantly redrafted, drawing on comments made as part of the Consultation and the new draft is attached at Appendix 2. The document now sets out 25 proposed interventions that would respond to a wider transport agenda. The opportunity has been taken in parallel to refine and update the evidence base and to simplify the strategy objectives. The current draft retains the spirit of the earlier objectives but simplifies the wording. Data contained in the original two technical appendices has, where relevant, been incorporated into the document text, removing the need for the technical appendices and making the document self-contained.
- 3.9 Central to the Strategy are the 25 proposed interventions. The 13 interventions included within the 2019 draft are retained but simplified, clarified and supplemented with a range of other interventions that reflect suggestions made by Consultees. The interventions and the supporting text more appropriately responds to a wider sustainable mobility agenda.
- 3.10 The interventions remain sufficiently flexible in their detail that they can respond to changes in local circumstances, whilst being more clearly described and justified as part of a multi-modal strategy for movement.
- 3.11 A number of consultation responses suggested a stronger emphasis on the role of transport in wider issues such as air quality, health & wellbeing and social inclusion. As far as possible, the scope to support healthy living and social inclusion is recognised and supported. Air quality in particular is emphasised as an objective that transcends transport and whilst better air quality has been removed as a specific movement objective from the current draft TCMS, it remains a wider objective acknowledged within the Strategy, with a number of the interventions contributing to improvement in air quality.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The alternative to the adoption of TCMS would be to progress with no credible defined movement strategy for the Town Centre, responding reactively to opportunities for investment, whether these come from grant funding or through development contribution.
- 4.2 It would be possible to replace TCMS with a simpler Vision Statement that contains no specific schemes but the value of such a document would be extremely limited. There is an expectation now amongst stakeholders that the

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efforts made to adopt a meaningful and positive plan will be followed through and TCMS completed.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 The Movement Strategy is a guide to future investment and any future investments will be considered in the usual decision making-process. There are no implications for legal or human rights.

Climate Change Impact

- 5.3 The proposals would not bring a change in service delivery and Officers believe that there is no expected effect on the Council's carbon footprint.

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

- 5.4 The adoption of a more up-to-date movement strategy for the Town Centre will support more informed decision making by Officers and by Members. Impacts of individual schemes on Crime and Disorder will be assessed as part of their planning and design.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been undertaken and a copy is available from the report author. The DIA has assessed the implications of the Movement Strategy for all those who might be affected and concluded that the policy document supports diversity by making mobility provisions for all sectors of the community.

Risk Management

- 5.6 The Movement Strategy document is a vision/ambition document more than it is an action plan. As and when specific schemes materialise, their planning and design will include appropriate provision for the assessment of associated risks.
- 5.7 There is currently no budget assigned to the Strategy and a risk therefore that in the absence of other funding sources, the initiatives defined within the strategy will not be delivered.

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6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (s151 officer) and Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Consultation Report (20th February 2020)
8.2 Appendix 2 - Town Centre Movement Strategy (Draft February 2020)

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for March 2020.