

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet

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**Date of Meeting:** 9 February 2016

**Report of:** Caroline Simpson,  
Executive Director for Economic Growth & Prosperity

**Subject/Title:** Crewe Town Centre Bus Interchange Facility

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Don Stockton – Regeneration and Assets  
Cllr David Brown – Highways

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### 1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1. The provision of excellent public transport facilities in our towns which provide residents with access to our town centres and the wide range of local services, is recognised by the Council as a key priority.
- 1.2. In April 2015, Cabinet considered the requirement to provide an alternative to the current bus station in Crewe town centre, given that the current operators lease expires in May 2016. Whilst no specific locations were agreed at that time, Cabinet agreed to widen the scope of the options appraisal for a new town centre bus interchange facility to include the Royal Arcade site which the Council was in the process of acquiring. It also agreed to consult with local stakeholders, which was subsequently undertaken as part of the successful 'Your Town, Your Choice' consultation over the summer.
- 1.3. The final options appraisal evaluated 11 potential locations, both on-street and off-street, within Crewe Town Centre, where the footprint for a bus interchange facility could be accommodated. The highest scoring site was an off-street option on the western side of the Royal Arcade site. This location is also supported through the findings of the 'Your Town, Your Choice' consultation, with 61% wanting an improved or new town centre bus interchange included within the Royal Arcade site.
- 1.4. Incorporating a bus interchange within the Royal Arcade site also presents a number of advantages over other options, including:
  - i) it is the most effective option to address requirements for the flow of bus traffic through the town centre, and also represents the best outcome in terms of impact on the town centre highway network; other options would require flow immediately through/past the site, creating a significant degree of severance – incorporating it within a new larger development scheme for the town centre is the most effective approach.
  - ii) it is the least impactful of the other shortlisted options in terms of negative effects on neighbours, including residential areas.
  - iii) it represents the best opportunity for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Royal Arcade site, securing a 'guaranteed' level of footfall and pedestrian flow through the new development, which is important to occupiers and

developers/funders, as well as allowing for greater economies of scale both in terms of the costs of construction and ongoing management.

- iv) it is the best site which offers potential for the growth of bus service provision in Crewe, taking into account the increasing population of the town and plans for future growth.

1.5. The inclusion of a town centre bus interchange facility within the Royal Arcade redevelopment masterplan would be in line with the strategic priorities of the Council's Local Transport Plan to "create conditions for business growth" and "ensure a sustainable future". The LTP includes a priority policy relating to public transport integration and facilities (Policy S3) and public transport service levels and reliability (Policy S4).

1.6. It also aligns strongly the vision and objectives of the Council's 'Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework for Growth' that was developed and approved in December 2015.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agrees to:

- i) to the selection of the Royal Arcade site as the location for a replacement town centre bus interchange facility for Crewe.
- ii) the proposed specification for the replacement town centre bus interchange, detailed in Appendix 2, which meets the requirement to provide a safe, accessible, managed environment as a central hub for waiting and interchange for bus passengers in the town centre.
- iii) to re-vire the current budget allocated towards the cost of the "Crewe Replacement Bus Interchange Facility" in the Council's Capital Programme 2015/16-2017/2018 to the "Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Programme" capital budget, from which this project will be funded and managed. The final contribution the Council makes towards the cost of the bus interchange, to be delivered by the appointed developer, will be based upon quality and viability, rather than cost alone.
- iv) this approach being taken forward as part of the process of procuring a development partner for the overall Royal Arcade site, to ensure effective integration within a comprehensive new development, and demonstrate best value in terms of securing competitive proposals from potential developers for the bus interchange element of the development.
- v) note that a final decision on the appointment of a development partner and scheme, including a town centre bus interchange facility, is brought back to Cabinet prior to any contractual commitments being made.

## **3.0 Other Options Considered**

3.1 A comprehensive technical options appraisal study has been undertaken to consider 11 locations, both on street and off street, within Crewe Town Centre where the footprint for a town centre bus interchange facility could be accommodated. The study considered 39 evaluation criteria under 8 overarching topics of size, location and passenger implications; safety and security; accessibility and operability;

integration; strategic implications; practicality and public acceptability; stakeholder impacts and risks, costs and timetable. Each site was scored using 39 criteria, a maximum score of 117 being available. The three highest scoring sites were progressed to a concept design stage using the premise of 'does it fit and work as a bus interchange facility?'

3.2 The top three ranked sites were:

- i) Off-Street on the Royal Arcade Site (to the Western boundary) scoring 107 (91%).
- ii) Delamere Street Off-Street (using Delamere St Car park) scoring 100 (85%); and
- iii) Delamere Street On-Street scoring 88 (75%), which was originally included in the options appraisal as a shorter-term solution.

3.3 The strengths for these sites are: optimum locations to serve the bus route corridors and secure the stability of the town centre network; proximity to the shopping areas of the town centre – addressing bus operators core business and supporting the retail economy; location familiarity for passengers; minimising walking distances for passengers, and; the shortlisted sites are within CEC ownership.

3.4 The 'Do-Minimum' option scenario assumes that the current bus station will be closed forcing services to call at available locations on streets around the town centre. There would be significant disbenefits for interchanging passengers and a high risk of increased traffic congestion within the Town Centre, and as far as the strategic highway network in peak periods. These impacts are likely to lead to poor reliability of bus services and – coupled with increased walk distances for interchanging bus passengers - a negative impact on bus mode shares which would impact on the local economy, and would make the town centre a less attractive destination for all types of users/visitors.

#### **4.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

4.1 The option appraisal study identified three sites which scored the highest from amongst the 11 sites considered, with the Royal Arcade site scoring the highest at 107 out of a possible 117.

4.2 The key advantages of this site are:

- it offers high quality integrated facility with short distance and time for interchanging passengers.
- location familiarity for passengers
- 61% of Your Town Your Choice respondents support a new bus station at this location
- limited changes to highway network.
- less traffic impacts on Delamere Street and Chester Street
- no loss of car parking income.
- minimises the land value required, compared to other off-street options
- income from bus operator departure charges to pay for management and maintenance of the town centre bus interchange.
- can provide for the current 1.6million person movements, and can accommodate growth in service provision and allows for layover.

- it represents the best opportunity for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Royal Arcade site, ensuring the best integrated design from a user and aesthetic perspective, as well as securing a 'guaranteed' level of footfall and pedestrian flow through the new development.
- the cost of facility could be reduced if the driver and passenger waiting facilities are integrated within the wider Royal Arcade development.

4.3 The Off-street Delamere Street car park site, the second highest ranked option, would not provide the benefit of passenger footfall through the Royal Arcade site due to the bi-section by Delamere Street. It would also remove important town centre car parking spaces and the associated income of around £125,500 per annum (and an asset valued in the region of £0.95m). Additionally, to support the Southern town service bias provision the routing for buses would need to be via Chester St close to a conservation area and residential properties. This site also potentially requires additional network modifications to resolve bus / traffic conflicts as a result of the loss of the north-south route through the existing bus station or would require a north-south linkage route through the Royal Arcade site which would erode potential redevelopment land although this would open the opportunity to provide bus stops within the site.

4.4 The On-street option, whilst likely to be the cheapest of the short-listed options, does not include space for layover and has limited capacity for growth within the suggested Delamere Street / Chester Street hub. There would also be a need to create a 1 way gyratory flow around Delamere Street / Chester Street to accommodate the bus stops on Delamere Street and has the associated disbenefits of severance from the prime shopping area, increased bus / passenger conflicts, routing close to the Conservation area and need for highway modifications to accommodate turning movements. It was not well supported through the Your Town Your Choice consultation with only 9% of either current users or non-users supporting this.

## **5.0 Background / Chronology**

5.1 In April 2015, Cabinet considered the requirement to provide an alternative to the current bus station in Crewe town centre, given that the current operators lease expires in May 2016.

5.2 At the same Cabinet meeting, under Cabinet Procedure Rule No 53 of the Council's Constitution, the Council decided to acquire the Royal Arcade site in Crewe town centre.

5.3 Cabinet agreed to widen the scope of the options appraisal for a new bus interchange facility to include the Royal Arcade site. It also agreed to consult with local stakeholders, which was subsequently undertaken as part of the successful 'Your Town, Your Choice' consultation over the summer.

5.4 The final options appraisal evaluated 11 potential locations, both on-street and off-street, within Crewe Town Centre, where the footprint for a town centre bus interchange facility could be accommodated. Stakeholders were also consulted on the subject of a new bus interchange, through the Council's 'Your Town, Your Choice' consultation.

5.5 Further to the acquisition of the Royal Arcade site, the Council commenced the first stages of its delivery plan for the site's redevelopment. Cabinet approval was

subsequently given in September 2015, to commence the procurement of a development partner for the redevelopment of all or part of the Royal Arcade site.

- 5.6 The current bus station will continue to operate until redevelopment commences. Arriva's lease ceases at the end of April 2016, but an interim management plan is being developed and will be determined with relevant inputs and decisions by Portfolio Holders and/or the Executive Director for Growth & Prosperity.

## **6.0 Wards Affected and Local Ward Members**

- 6.1 All Crewe wards and all Crewe Local Members.

## **7.0 Implications of Recommendations**

### ***Policy Implications***

- 7.1 The proposal in this report relates directly to three key outcomes identified in the Council's Three Year Plan:

**Outcome 2: Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy.** Cheshire East is known as a good place to do business – we attract inward investment, there is access to a high quality workforce and our businesses and visitor economy grow, to create prosperity for all.

**Outcome 4: Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place.** Cheshire East's rural and urban character is protected and enhanced through sensitive development, environmental management, transport and waste disposal policies.

**Outcome 5: People live well and for longer.** Local people have healthy lifestyles and access to good cultural, leisure and recreational facilities. Care services focus on prevention, early intervention and physical and mental wellbeing.

- 7.2 The proposals to provide a replacement town centre bus interchange facility are in line with the strategic priorities of the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) to "create conditions for business growth" and "ensure a sustainable future". The LTP includes priority policies relating to public transport integration and facilities (Policy S3) and public transport service levels and reliability (Policy S4).
- 7.3 The project is also aligned with the policies in the Local Plan Strategy Submission Version, including Policy CO1 to improve public transport integration, facilities, services levels and access for all users, including bus infrastructure where Crewe Bus Station is listed as an improvement scheme.
- 7.4 This report aligns strongly to the Council's Economic Development Strategy and its more recently created Vision and Strategy for Economic Growth: East Cheshire Engine of the North, which articulates the need to increase investment in our town centres, by ensuring they offer themselves as attractive locations for retail and leisure operators.
- 7.5 In December, the Council published the 'Crewe Town Centre Regeneration Delivery Framework for Growth', which sets out a strong vision for the future of Crewe town centre with supporting objectives. Within the Framework, the Royal Arcade site was identified as a key 'opportunity site', which supported both the rationale for its

acquisition and for the promotion of redevelopment of all or part of it, to act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the whole town centre, and has the potential to meet the requirement to provide a replacement town centre bus interchange facility.

***Legal Implications (authorised by the Head of Legal Services)***

- 7.6 A decision is required on whether a town centre bus interchange is included within the Royal Arcade redevelopment to comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). Contracting Authorities are required to publish all procurement documentation at the start of the procurement process. The purpose of the requirement is to ensure that potential bidders have sufficient information to make an informed decision about whether to bid, and to ensure that the procurement is conducted transparently. The award criteria, and various important details about the scheme are dependent on whether it includes a town centre bus interchange and a decision is required now to allow the procurement process to begin.
- 7.7 When conducting its consultation the Council should have adhered to the following:
- (a) the consultation must take place at a time when the proposals are still at a formative stage;
  - (b) the proposer must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit of intelligent consideration and response;
  - (c) adequate time must be given for consideration and response;
  - (d) the product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the proposals.
- 7.8 The Council will commit to taking management responsibility for the operation of the town centre bus interchange, rather than obligating a developer, or subsequent owner, to do this. The Council will subsequently need to consider options; these could include: in-house management; management through Transport Service Solutions (the Council-owned Alternative Service Delivery Vehicle), and other leased or service procurement alternatives, to be determined at a later date.
- 7.9 Through the procurement process, the Council is committing to bidders that the bus interchange will be within the boundary of the Royal Arcade development site. However, it is not defining its precise location within the site, nor specifying the basis of the proprietorial aspects of the arrangement at this stage; the Council will consider alternative approaches for the part of the site the bus interchange is located. The Council may retain the freehold but grant rights to enable the development of the town centre bus interchange to take place or transfer the freehold to the developer and take back a long lease of the bus interchange site. The town centre bus interchange will form part of any planning application and the Council will in its capacity as Local Planning Authority have to consider the layout and positioning of the bus interchange.

***Financial implications (authorised)***

- 7.10 The 'Crewe Bus Interchange Facility' is a named scheme within the 2015-18 Capital Programme approved by Council on 26 February 2015. Additionally, given that the proposed approach forms part of an integrated development on the Royal Arcade site, further resources could be made available, if required, from the Council's 'Crewe Town Centre Regeneration' budget, also approved by Council.

- 7.11 By setting out the preference to include the Interchange Facility within the development at the outset of procurement with Developer Partners, this increases the opportunity to negotiate with developers to deliver the most cost-effective solutions and minimise the Council's financial contribution.
- 7.12 It should be noted that alternative public sector funding may be available to support these costs, including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the Cheshire & Warrington Economic Partnership's Local Growth Fund, and any infrastructure funding arising from HS2 and/or the emerging Northern Gateway Development Zone Growth Deal.

### ***Equality Implications***

- 7.13 The current bus station provides 1.6 million passenger movements annually. Over half (54%) of users are aged 60+ and 10% are people with a disability who rely on bus access to the town centre. The bus station plays an important role in providing residents with access to key services, such as education, employment and shopping facilities, as well as supporting the local economy.
- 7.14 Account also needs to be taken of the World Health Organisation 'Age Friendly Cities', which seeks to ensure that the towns are positioned to tap into the potential and needs of older people as residents and users of town centres
- 7.15 Results from the July Crewe - Your Town Your Choice consultation demonstrates the strength of opinion from residents and other stakeholders, that the bus interchange facility should be retained with the Royal Arcade Development site.

### ***Rural Community Implications***

- 7.16 The regeneration of Crewe town centre promotes the economic prosperity of Crewe. This has a direct relationship with residents and businesses across the wider South Cheshire area, including rural communities that shop, visit or work in Crewe. A new town centre bus interchange facility will enable and encourage residents in rural communities to travel into Crewe town centre and access the services and facilities it offers.

### ***Human Resources Implications***

- 7.17 None

### ***Public Health Implications***

- 7.18 A town centre bus interchange which comprises a protected weather-proof environment and appropriate facilities for users will provide the best solution in terms of public health.

## **8.0 Risk Management**

- 8.1 The principle risks in relation to these proposals are:
- i) Not identifying a long-term solution for a bus interchange facility in Crewe town centre. The implications of this are explained further in paragraph 3.4 (Do-minimum option).

- ii) Not selecting a location prior to commencing the procurement of a development partner, as recommended in this report. The risks of this are principally commercial in nature, as adding the bus interchange as a 'variant' to the procurement would be likely to reduce developer interest in the scheme.
- iii) That the final costs of a town centre bus interchange facility are not known, and are unlikely to become clearer until a more advanced stage of the procurement process when proposed scheme details are being negotiated. As referred elsewhere in the report, this risk will be offset through developer dialogue itself, and through seeking funding through other public funding sources.

8.2 The identification, evaluation and mitigation of risks is a core aspect in the process of procuring a development partner, and are being evaluated under the appropriate delegations by the Project Board and the Portfolio Holders for Regeneration & Assets. The management of this project is being undertaken in accordance with the Council's corporate assurance and control processes.

## 9.0 Access to Information / Bibliography

*Appendix 1:* Indicative plan of possible location and layout of town centre bus interchange facility within the Royal Arcade Site

*Appendix 2:* Draft specification for replacement Crewe Town Centre Bus Interchange Facility.

## 10.0 Contact Information

10.1 Contact details for this report are as follows:

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