

DIRECTOR DECISION – DD 178

Title: A40/North Acton Gyratory Feasibility Study

Executive summary

This Director's Decision seeks approval of expenditure of up to £50,000 for the development of a feasibility study to identify solutions to address current barriers created by the A40/North Acton Gyratory, and to understand the benefits and disbenefits of the options identified, their impact/deliverability and business case for future investment to the gyratory. The expenditure would be spread across the Planning Directorate's 2023/24 and 2024/25 budgets in line with the services delivered.

Decision

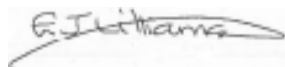
The Director of Planning approves:

- Expenditure of £50,000 on external consultancy services to develop and test the feasibility of alternative configurations of the A40. The study will focus on options that enhance the accessibility for sustainable modes of transport whilst maintaining traffic efficiency through the A40 and improving the public realm; and assess the impact of feasible options with the intention of providing a high-level benefit cost ratio (BCR) for the most favourable options.
- Procuring the services of consultants with the necessary technical expertise through a competitive procurement process.

Authorising Director

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the OPDC business plan and priorities.

Signature:



Date: 19.10.2023

PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

1. Background and context

Strategic Background

- 1.1 The strategic direction and vision for North Acton is set out in OPDC's Local Plan 2022. Development in North Acton is now well underway and Section 106 contributions have been secured from these developments towards public realm enhancements. Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) and London Borough of Ealing (LBE) are currently looking to deliver a series of quick-win projects within a spatial framework for the area to rapidly shape immediate improvements to the public realm, as well as investigate potential longer-term projects that will make a step change to the local environment.
- 1.2 The area is home to recently permitted and completed high density housing, student accommodation, some retail uses, and the existing employment uses at the Victoria Road Industrial Estate and Carphone Warehouse offices. The number of planning applications recently approved or live applications which are currently under consideration by the local planning authority, along with current pre-application proposals, shows that North Acton will continue to experience significant growth in development in the coming years.
- 1.3 North Acton benefits from excellent public transport links but also heavy road severance resulting in poor quality walking and cycling routes within the area and surrounding destinations. This includes limited access to large publicly accessible open spaces and future Elizabeth line services from Acton Mainline Station. The existing open spaces in North Acton are small scale and suffer from a lack of activation and fragmented land ownership.
- 1.4 North Acton has the capacity to deliver a minimum of 5,200 new homes, over 35,000 sqm of non-residential uses providing space for approximately 2,400 jobs across a range of town centre, employment and community and cultural uses. North Acton neighbourhood town centre is an emerging centre designated to provide services to support both the existing and new residential and employee communities. In the longer term, Old Oak major town centre will continue through Acton Wells (to the north of North Acton) connecting to North Acton neighbourhood town centre. LBE is currently seeking to designate North Acton and Park Royal as a Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ).

Traffic and Transport Background

- 1.5 The A40 plays an important function in London's Strategic Road Network, connecting boroughs in London and linking London to destinations along its corridor, as far as Fishguard in Wales. The A40 passes through seven London boroughs: the City of London, Camden, Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, Ealing and Hillingdon, and meets the M40 motorway at Denham in Buckinghamshire. In the North Acton Area, the road is a dual carriageway with three lanes of traffic in both directions.
- 1.6 North Acton is adjacent to the heavily trafficked A40 and Wales Farm Road and is cut across by a busy gyratory connecting these two roads, which forms part of the A4000. These connections have a significant negative impact on the public realm.

- 1.7 Additionally, the high traffic volumes (which include higher than average volumes of Heavy Goods Vehicles) and some poorly designed junctions (in particular Victoria Road/Park Royal Road/Western Avenue) make the area an extremely poor environment for cyclists and pedestrians. Recent consultations have shown that residents have significant concerns about the gyratory and the crossings on the A40 or lack of thereof, making them a barrier to active travel and creates persistent community severance issues.
- 1.8 It is a long-standing ambition of OPDC and LBE to reconfigure the layout and operation of North Acton Gyratory with the aim of reducing the dominance of vehicular traffic and to bring about a better balance between the place and movement function of the streets concerned. OPDC's Strategic Transport Modelling Study (2017) identified serious traffic congestion at junctions along the A40, during peak periods, including Gypsy Corner which forms part of the gyratory. The current layout and operation of the gyratory create several barriers to movement by active modes. For example, severance effects are associated with the section of the A40 Western Avenue due to the lack of frequent and adequate crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 1.9 The A40 corridor experiences considerable peak hour congestion and there has been a long-standing aspiration to improve the A40 corridor along its entire length in London. A previous study (Southern Gateway Options Modelling, "the Steer Study") carried out by Steer Davis Gleave (now the Steer Group) in 2015 concluded that there was not any viable option for making changes to the gyratory, however, one of the major conditions of the study was that no negative impacts on the A40 traffic would be accepted by Transport for London (TfL). Transport policy has moved on in the intervening years, and the Healthy Streets Approach/Healthy Street Indicators are now used to assess roads rather than capacity/traffic flow alone. The options explored included reconfiguring the gyratory to allow Wales Farms Road to operate two-way traffic. Additionally, the study explored options that address the lack of crossing facilities on the A40, including grade-separated crossings such as a footbridge and subway across the A40. In the end, the Steer Study recommended maintaining the existing configuration and operation of the gyratory, but making significant public realm, walking and cycling improvements. This option was considered the most feasible.
- 1.10 OPDC and LBE have begun defining public realm improvements in locations adjacent to and near to the gyratory. Known as the North Acton Public Realm Prospectus, the proposed measures do not impact the flow of traffic around the gyratory but will shape the extent of pavements and cycle lanes in four locations. The draft RIBA Stage 2 report will be shared as part of the inception pack of information.
- 1.11 Previous studies aimed at addressing the severance effects caused by the current configuration of the gyratory and delivering public realm improvements and improved conditions for active modes include the Steer Study, North Acton Prospectus, OPDC Strategic Transport Modelling Study (2017). These studies have all identified traffic congestion, severance, the lack of suitable crossing facilities – all linked issues – as the key issues to be addressed in North Acton.

2. The proposal and how it will be delivered

- 2.1 The study will involve the following stages:

Stage 1 – Review of Evidence and Identification of Problems

- 2.2 Review of relevant evidence such as traffic data gathered by TfL, OPDC, LBE and other publicly available sources together with evidence from previous studies and analysis to form a view as to the scale and nature of the current and future performance of the gyratory.

Stage 2 – Identification of Options

- 2.3 Investigate and develop a long list of design options for roads and junctions that form the gyratory, including but not limited to options which involve changing Wales Farm Road to two-way operation (one of several options considered by the 2015 Study) within the overarching objective of improving conditions for walking and cycling using Healthy Streets indicators.

Stage 3 – Option Development and Analysis

- 2.4 Having identified a long list of options, develop concept plans that enable testing using the industry standard traffic models and assessment methodologies to determine the impact of these designs on the road network.

Stage 4 – Develop Outputs for Strategic Outline Business Case

- 2.5 Work should be completed using the Department for Transport (DfT) transport appraisal guidance to develop a high-level strategic outline business case for the preferred option identified by the study.

Outputs

- 2.6 The output of this work will be a report which summarises the documents reviewed, the evidence gathered, drawing on relevant previous studies and analyses, and setting out the problems and issues, as well as recommendations on the preferred options to be taken forward, accompanied by high-level cost estimates and cost assessments.

Objectives and expected outcomes

- 3.1 This decision is seeking approval to appoint consultants to undertake a feasibility study to explore options that would address the current barriers associated with issues with the North Acton Gyratory in its current configuration and operation, and to support a future business case for investment.
- 3.2 The expected outcome of this work will be a report summarising the documents reviewed, and the evidence gathered, drawing on relevant previous studies and analysis and setting out problems and issues, as well as recommendations on the preferred options to take forward, accompanied by high-level cost estimates and cost assessments.

Strategic fit.

- 4.1 The A40/North Acton Gyratory Feasibility Study will help inform a number of existing and future OPDC workstreams including:

- supporting the delivery of an 'essential' infrastructure in OPDC's Infrastructure Delivery Plan and OPDC Local Plan Place Policy P7.
- supporting the Mayor's Transport Strategy and Mayor's London Plan requirements for priority to be given to walking and cycling and a mode share target for 80% of journeys in London to be made by walking, cycling or public transport.
- supporting OPDC's wider delivery strategy and programmes where public realm and walking and cycling enhancements can play a key role in the new mixed and vibrant neighbourhoods being planned in the OPDC area.

Project governance and assurance

- 5.1 Consultants will be appointed through the competitive procurement, following which OPDC will enter into a contract with the successful tenderer.
- 5.2 The contract will be managed by the Principal Transport Officer (Fred Raphael) with oversight from the Director of Planning (Emma Williamson) and Head of Planning Policy (Tom Cardis).

Risks and issues

- 5.3 Project delays could impact on the timeline for delivery. The consultants will be expected to prepare a clear project plan with milestones, timely delivery of outputs and adequate resourcing. Project management by OPDC will manage risks associated with the delivery of project.
- 5.4 Poor quality outputs will affect OPDC's ability to progress to the next stage of work and eventually develop an Outline Business Case. Project management by OPDC will manage risks associated with quality control. Gateways will be established to ensure quality of outputs are secured before the consultant's reports are signed off and fees are paid.

Equality comments

- 6.1 The A40/North Acton Gyratory improvements aligns with the Corporation's overall vision and objective to remove barriers to movement and to ensure that streets and spaces in Old Oak and Park Royal are accessible to all, in keeping with Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010.
- 6.2 The objective of the study includes addressing community severance and the inequalities resulting from the lack of adequate pedestrian and cycling crossing facilities on the A40 Western Avenue and generally poor-quality environment for active modes. Addressing the existing issues is necessary to meet the mobility needs of low-income groups who are more likely to travel by active modes and public transport and provides access for people with reduced mobility and will support the delivery of planned housing (including affordable housing) in North Acton.
- 6.3 The needs of all users, including protected groups, are an important consideration and will inform the design of options at every stage. For example, the minimum widths of footways and crossings, the gradients needed to accommodate

wheelchair users and prams/pushchairs, as well as the requirements for cyclists and public transport users, will be applied.

- 6.4 In summary, this feasibility study is concerned with understanding and addressing the existing barriers to active modes, created by the North Acton Gyratory, particularly the severance effects resulting from a lack of crossing facilities on A40 Western Avenue, and high volumes of fast-moving traffic. This study will provide evidence to support the case for investment in a necessary infrastructure which will advance the Corporation's objectives for equality and is consistent with requirements of Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010.

Other considerations

- 7.1 Addressing the current issues with the gyratory aligns with OPDC's vision of providing a street network that is safe, attractive and easy to navigate, where people will be encouraged to walk and cycle more. Reducing the dominance of traffic and improving conditions for active modes will have social, economic, environmental and health and wellbeing benefits for people living, working and visiting the area and will support the viability of the development area.

Conflicts of interest

- 8.1 No one involved in the preparation or clearance of this Decision Form, or its substantive proposal, has any conflict of interest.

Financial comments

- 9.1 Expenditure of up to £50,000 for external consultancy services, as detailed in this Decision Form, will be funded by the Planning Directorate Transport Planning budget, which falls within the Planning Policy area. The costs will be funded by the 2023/24 and 2024/25 budgets: present forecasts are that £30,000 will fall in the present year and the remainder in the following year.
- 9.2 Further expenditure and contract variations are subject to the OPDC's decision-making process.

Legal comments

- 10.1 The report above indicates that the decision requested of the Director of Planning falls within OPDC's objective of securing the regeneration of the Old Oak and Park Royal area and its powers to do anything it considers appropriate for the purpose of its objects or purposes incidental to those purposes, as set out in the Localism Act 2011.
- 10.2 In taking the decisions requested, the Director of Planning must have due regards to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the

Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Director of Planning should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

- 10.3 Section 1 of this report indicates that the sought budget will amount to the provision of services. The services required should be procured in accordance with the applicable Contracts and Funding Code. OPDC Officers must ensure that any appropriate contract documentation is put in place and executed by the successful bidders(s) and OPDC before the commencement of the services.

Summary timeline

Activity	Timeline/Date
Procurement of contract /Grant award	October 2023
Announcement	November 2023
Delivery start date	November 2023
Inception Meeting	November 2023
Stage 1 – Review of Evidence and Identification of Problems	November 2023 – January 2024
Stage 2 – Identification of Options	January – February 2024
Stage 3 – Option Development and Analysis	March – May 2024
Stage 4 – Develop Outputs for Strategic Business Case	May – June 2024
Reporting	June – July 2024
Project closure	July 2024

Appendices

- None

Other supporting papers

- None

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information in this Form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). OPDC aims to publish the Form within three working days of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the Decision (for example, impacting a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date (when it will be published). Deferral periods are kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Part 1 – Deferral

Publication of this Part 1 is to be deferred: **No**

The deferral is until: N/A.

This is because: N/A.

Part 2 – Confidential information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in or attached to any separate Part 2 Form, together with the rationale for withholding the information at this time.

There is a separate and confidential Part 2 Form: **No**.

DECLARATIONS

Drafting officer: Fred Raphael has drafted this Form in accordance with OPDC procedures, including for handling conflicts of interests, and confirms that:



Advice: The Finance and legal teams have commented on the proposal.



CONFIRMATIONS

Section 106 funding: This use of S106 to fund the expenditure proposal was approved via a Section 106 spend proposal form on N/A.

SMT review: This Decision was circulated to the **Senior Management Team** for review on 16/10/2023.

Chief Finance Officer

Financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this Form.

Signature:



Date: 20/10/2023