

**To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**Subject: Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan**

## 1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To update the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) on the Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan (CLAQAP).

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considers the content of this report and makes any recommendations that it would wish the Council's Cabinet to consider.

## 3 Information/Background

- 3.1 The Board has previously been briefed on the CLAQAP, most recently in March 2020. This report provides an update on progress with the implementation of the CLAQAP approved by the Council's Cabinet in December 2020, and as subsequently included by Government in the Environment Act 1995 (Coventry City Council) Air Quality Direction 2021, issued in May 2021. The Direction makes it clear that the Council's preferred package of measures, as approved by Cabinet, is to be implemented.
- 3.2 Government has also approved grant funding of £24.5 million for the implementation of the Action Plan. This has been complemented by grant funding secured from the West Midlands Combined Authority towards the Spon End scheme, the Foleshill Transport Package, and towards Liveable Neighbourhoods. The following table summarises the funding sources that have been secured for the CLAQAP package.

Funding Source	Amount	Notes
Air Quality Implementation Grant	£24.5 million	Core funding for the CLAQAP – central Government [JAQU]
Transforming Cities Fund	£5.8 million	For Spon End scheme – WMCA
Active Travel Fund	£0.75 million	For Foleshill Cycle Scheme [J9] and Lower Coundon Liveable Neighbourhood – WMCA
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement	£4.5 million	For Foleshill Transport Package – WMCA
Key Route Network	£0.25 million	For A444 Blue Ribbon Roundabout crossings – WMCA
Developer funding	£0.5 million	For A444 Blue Ribbon Roundabout improvements – S106

- 3.3 The preferred option comprises an engagement programme aimed at reducing the number of local journeys made by car, and encouraging alternative, sustainable, modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport to be used for these journeys. This programme is complemented by significant investment in a segregated cycle route between Coundon and the city centre providing a high-quality route that will provide an attractive alternative to driving along the Holyhead Road corridor. This cycle route has been completed from Norman Place Drive in Coundon as far as Coundon Street, with a connecting route then available via the new path linking Naul's Mill Park with the city centre at ring road junction 9.
- 3.4 There are also a series of highway improvements aimed at reducing the volume of traffic on Holyhead Road, where NO<sub>2</sub> levels are at their greatest. These include the improvements on the B4106 at Spon End and at Junction 7 on the ring road, which will remove capacity constraints on this alternative route into the city centre from the west and which are currently under construction. Improving capacity on this route will provide the flexibility to divert traffic onto this route from Holyhead Road when air quality conditions on Holyhead Road are identified as being poor. Traffic and air quality modelling has been undertaken for the LAQAP strategy, and this indicates that NO<sub>2</sub> levels remain below legal limits in this scenario, demonstrating that this approach does not simply shift the air quality problems onto the parallel routes.
- 3.5 The package approved by Government in 2021 also included the opening-up of Upper Hill Street onto the ring road at Junction 8. This scheme was intended to allow the closure of Barras Lane, and the removal of the Holyhead Road / Barras Lane traffic signals, which are a major factor in the high level of NO<sub>2</sub> on Holyhead Road due to the resulting queuing traffic on Holyhead Road. By removing the signals, traffic flows on Holyhead Road will be smoother and emissions lower as a result. Discussions were held with key stakeholders, including St Osburg's School regarding the impact on their access arrangements with a view to improving these.
- 3.6 Following extensive detailed design work, it has been concluded that the opening-up of Upper Hill Street to the ring road is no longer a viable option, due to the programme and budget risks resulting from the utility diversions required for the scheme to be built. These utilities include water, sewage, gas, electricity and communications, and would add a minimum of two years to the delivery programme, which is incompatible with the Government requirement that the NO<sub>2</sub> levels be brought below the legal limit in the shortest possible time.
- 3.7 An alternative option for opening up Upper Hill Street without impacting upon the utilities was also investigated, but that requires land from the St Osburg's School site, and following discussions with the School Governors and officials from the Department for Education it has been concluded that this process would also be too great a risk to the delivery programme for the CLAQAP.
- 3.8 Therefore, it has been concluded that it is not feasible to continue with the proposed Upper Hill Street scheme as part of the CLAQAP package. An alternative option has been identified that achieves the NO<sub>2</sub> reduction required and avoids the need to open up Upper Hill Street. Further consultation will take place with the local community within the next two months on this alternative option, whilst a change control request is being prepared for submission to Government's Joint Air Quality Unit. JAQU will need to approve any amendment to the package of measures set out in the Air Quality Direction issued in May 2021.

- 3.9 A further package of traffic management measures are proposed for Foleshill Road, with the aim of removing extraneous through traffic and reducing traffic flows, congestion, and NO<sub>2</sub> emissions on this route into the city centre from the north. Through traffic will be encouraged to use the A444 instead, which is the designated route for through traffic accessing the city centre from M6 Junction 3. Funding for this package has been secured from a variety of sources, as set out in the funding table in 3.2. The Foleshill Transport Package is being consulted upon during 2023, with scheme delivery planned for 2023/24, although one element, the improvement of the cycle route across the ring road at Junction 9, is under construction using Active Travel Fund grant already secured.
- 3.10 The change control request process is underway, with officers in regular dialogue with JAQU officials. A decision on the change control request is expected in early 2023.
- 3.11 The following table provides a summary of the measures contained in the Council's preferred package, and the progress being made with implementation.

Measure	Description
Capacity improvements on the B4106 through Spon End	<p>Scheme part funded through the £5.8 million Transforming Cities Fund grant awarded by the WMCA.</p> <p>Includes improvement of the B4106 / Hearsall Lane junction, and widening the road at the railway viaduct.</p> <p>Incorporates improved pedestrian and cycle routes and green infrastructure.</p> <p>By removing a capacity constraint and reducing congestion on this alternative route into the city centre from the West, the scheme will make it possible to divert traffic away from the Holyhead Road route when air quality conditions are poor on that route.</p> <p><b>This scheme is under construction.</b></p>
Capacity improvements at Junction 7 on the Ring Road (A4053 / B4106)	<p>This scheme re-models the existing junction to reduce congestion and provide improved pedestrian and cycle routes across the ring road linking the Spon End area with the city centre.</p> <p>Linked to the Spon End scheme, this will provide an attractive alternative route into the city centre from the West, allowing the diversion of traffic from Holyhead Road.</p> <p><b>This scheme is under construction.</b></p>
Opening of Upper Hill Street onto the A4053 Ring Road giving left-in, left-out access onto the ring road via the clockwise slip road at Junction 8.	<p>This scheme was intended to facilitate the closure of Barras Lane to through traffic, thereby allowing the removal of the Holyhead Road / Barras Lane traffic signals that are a primary cause of queuing, and therefore high emissions levels, on Holyhead Road.</p> <p>During the detailed design process, however, significant technical issues have been identified that mean that this scheme is no longer a viable option on programme and cost grounds. These issues include the need for significant utility diversions, with lead-in times of around two years being quoted for the works.</p> <p>Alternative options have been investigated for Upper Hill Street, but these have been discounted due to the need to take land from St Osburg's School.</p>

	<b>This scheme is no longer being implemented, subject to Government approval of the Change Control request.</b>
Closure of Barras Lane between the A4114 Holyhead Road and Coundon Road / Upper Hill Street.	This would have allowed the removal of the traffic signals at the Holyhead Road / Barras Lane junction, thereby allowing Holyhead Road to move more freely. These signals are considered to be a major contributor to the high NO <sub>2</sub> levels on Holyhead Road. As part of the alternative scheme options being explored, it remains important that the signals are removed from the Barras Lane / Holyhead Road junction. <b>A revised junction layout is still being proposed, with signals removed, and Barras Lane remaining open. Holyhead Road will be re-modelled to reflect the reduced traffic flows.</b>
Peak time traffic restrictions and additional interpeak time traffic restrictions on the eastern section of the A4114 Holyhead Road on the approach to Junction 8.	Dynamic traffic management techniques will be implemented that will ration road space and limit the number of vehicles passing along this section of Holyhead Road through the use of traffic signals (similar to the use of ramp-metering on busy motorways to control the flow of traffic entering the motorway from slip roads).
Engagement initiative (travel planning) with schools, businesses and communities along the Holyhead Road corridor to encourage mode shift.	This measure seeks to remove car trips from the network by working with residents, commuters and schools to encourage local trips to be made by other modes of travel than the car. This will build upon the success of a similar programme undertaken in the Walsgrave corridor as part of the Early Measures programme. <b>This programme is underway, with an initial focus upon the schools located within the Holyhead Road and Coundon corridors.</b>
Construction of a segregated cycle route linking Coundon with the city centre along Coundon Road / Upper Hill Street.	This scheme will support the engagement programme (see above) by providing a step change in cycle route provision on a parallel corridor to Holyhead Road, serving the schools at Bablake and St Osburg's as well as linking residential areas with the city centre. This is one of the key cycle routes identified as a priority through the Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan, and will complement investment in a similarly segregated cycle route between the City Centre and the Hospital. Collectively, these schemes will provide a spine route linking the city from east to west. <b>This route has been completed from Coundon to the city centre, linking via Coundon Street and the linear park path. The final section through Upper Hill Street will be completed as part of the final phase of works in the Holyhead Road area.</b>
Removal of through traffic from Foleshill Road.	This measure is aimed at reducing congestion on Foleshill Road, with the aim of improving the flow of traffic, and thereby reduce emissions, on Foleshill Road. The main aim is to reduce

	<p>the amount of through traffic using Foleshill Road, and to divert this onto the higher standard, parallel, A444. A range of approaches to achieve this, whilst maintaining access for residents and businesses, will be considered during the consultation process.</p> <p><b>This scheme is being developed as part of the CRSTS programme, with engagement planned for early 2023. The cycle route across the ring road at J9 is being built at present.</b></p>
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