

## **Kings Heath and Moseley Places for People FAQs alongside Cabinet report – November 2023**

### **What are the roles and responsibilities in this project?**

#### **Government**

The initial funding for phase 1 and for some of phase 2 came from the Government's (Emergency) Active Travel Fund. This funding comes with conditions about how it may be spent, when it must be spent and with a level of scrutiny from [Active Travel England](#) (ATE). By the time funding is awarded, there is an agreement with the Government about which schemes the money is provided for, and any changes to this must be agreed by ATE.

#### **West Midlands Combined Authority**

The money from the (Emergency) Active Travel Fund is not given directly to Birmingham City Council (BCC). As Birmingham falls under a combined authority, the money is awarded to the [West Midlands Combined Authority](#) (WMCA), and subsequently passed on to BCC. The Combined Authority requires monitoring information as the projects are delivered (i.e., financial and progress reports) and any significant changes to the programme must be agreed by the WMCA.

#### **Cabinet**

On 17 January 2023, [Birmingham City Council's Cabinet](#) decided whether to proceed with the Kings Heath and Moseley Places for People project. The project was approved for delivery.

The Leader, together with the Cabinet, takes all the significant decisions within the council (excluding planning and licensing issues) through their Cabinet meetings or individual decision-making process.

The Forward Plans are available to see and give advance notice of all the "key decisions" which the Executive is likely to take over the next 4-month period. The Leader and Cabinet work towards fulfilling policies and priorities as outlined in the Leader's Policy Statement.

The aim of the Cabinet is to enable political accountability for the Directorates in developing the projects to underpin and carry forward the policies set by the Leader and the Cabinet.

Cabinet Members are councillors with special responsibility for a part of the council's activities, for example Health. Their area of responsibility is known as their portfolio. Cabinet members work with council officers and others to develop policy within their portfolio, and work together on particular cross cutting portfolio areas. The cabinet also produces the council's budget.

#### **Cabinet Member for Transport - Councillor Liz Clements**

The [Cabinet Member for Transport](#) has accountability for:

- Transport strategies: Sustainable transportation policy and strategy, programmes, projects and initiatives to improve connectivity and road safety for the city across all modes of travel.
- Highways: Strategic highways matters. Maintenance of roads and streets, traffic management and car parks, and enforcing rights of way.
- Advice to Planning Committee (Highways): Providing advice, where appropriate, including the effect of proposed developments in relation to roads and transport, and working in cooperation with the West Midlands Combined Authority and Mayor in relation to the key route network.
- Air Quality: Leading the development and delivery of an Air Quality Strategy for Birmingham, to comply with national and pan-national regulations together with key partners.

Approving schemes such as this would normally be done by the Cabinet Member. However, in the case of this scheme, Cabinet approval is being sought because the scheme has been so controversial.

### **Elected members in the project area**

The Kings Heath and Moseley Places for People project is mostly within the Wards of Brandwood & Kings Heath and Moseley. A small part of the scheme is in Billesley Ward.

The Kings Heath and Moseley Advisory Board (now Group) was established to provide some political steer to the project. While the Board was originally attended by Councillors and MPs from Wards affected and adjacent, the remit of the (now) Advisory Group has changed to be more of a consultative panel with local Councillors only. This group, in either guise, has always existed in an advisory capacity and whilst asked to provide advice and endorsement did not and does not have any decision-making capacity linked to the Council's Constitution.

### **Council Officers**

Council officers progress and manage the scheme development including design, engagement, and delivery. They report progress and make recommendations to elected members. Decisions on some matters are delegated to senior officers.

### **What is Cabinet being asked to decide?**

The report seeks approval for the Outline Business Case for the scheme which comprises four elements:

- The main scheme including modal filters and one-way streets;
- The bus gate on Addison Road;
- 20mph speed limits covering the area within the scheme; and
- The traffic calming scheme on Billesley Lane.

Cabinet is being asked to approve that the scheme proceeds to development of Full Business Cases for each of the four elements above. Each will then be subject to further approval in line with the Council's Constitution but will not require further consideration by Cabinet. Cabinet is effectively being asked to approve that the scheme will be delivered in line with the concept design, and that the fine detail of this will be approved by the Cabinet Member and/or the Assistant Director for Transport and connectivity.

### **What happens after the Cabinet meeting?**

At their meeting on 17 January 2023, Cabinet will decide either to approve or reject the recommendations in the report. The project was approved for delivery by Cabinet.

Council process then allows any members (requires at least two Councillors) to request a 'call in' of the report within three clear working days of the decision being published (which is not always on the same day the decision is taken). If no call in is requested, the decision is confirmed. If the report is called in, the relevant [Overview and Scrutiny](#) Committee (for this report, that would be Sustainability and Transport Committee, unless the call in is on financial grounds, in which case it would be the Resources Committee) must schedule a meeting to hear the call-in no later than 15 clear working days after the original publication of the decision. The next steps will be decided at this meeting, which may include an agreement to amend the report and return to Cabinet, or a vote to uphold or reject the grounds on which the report was called in.

**If the report is approved:**

If the Cabinet Report is approved, subject to resolution of any call ins as described above then work will commence on taking forward each of the four Full Business Cases (FBC) set out in the report. Each of these is effectively a scheme in its own right but will be managed as part of an overall programme. This allows us to proceed with elements that are ready for delivery whilst more detailed work is undertaken where required.

The four schemes each with their own FBC are:

1. The main scheme including modal filters and one-way streets;
2. The bus gate on Addison Road;
3. 20mph speed limits covering the area within the scheme; and
4. The traffic calming scheme on Billesley Lane.

Because further work on this project has been on hold pending the Cabinet decision, we currently have a very high-level programme. Once a decision is made, we can work this up in more detail. This will be published when available.

Further engagement will need to take place on the bus gate, 20mph speed limits and Billesley Lane traffic calming to inform the detailed designs. The 20mph speed limits and the bus gate will then be subject to statutory Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultation in due course, but there is no TRO for the traffic calming scheme.

We have already done local engagement on the main scheme and don't anticipate doing any further engagement to inform the detailed design. There will however be a statutory consultation on the TRO which we currently expect will be advertised in the Spring of 2023.

For the main scheme we anticipate physical works commencing towards the end of 2023.

**Programme for delivery**

As the project was approved by Cabinet, the measures will be implemented through a phased approach which will deliver separate packages over the next year (2024). More details on this will be shared when they are available.

Measures have been grouped into four packages, and will be delivered over the next year as follows:

- Package 1: improvements to phase 1 measures (to the west of the High Street) including the York Road pedestrian zone - to be delivered April to May 2024
- Package 2: measures being introduced as part of phase 2 (to the east of the High Street) including new modal filters, one-way streets, and traffic calming - to be delivered August to October 2024
- Package 3: 20mph speed limit across the project area, including all 'boundary' roads - to be delivered September to November 2024
- Package 4: a bus gate on Addison Road and reinstate the right turn from Vicarage Road onto A435 Alcester Road - to be delivered October to December 2024

This timeline is indicative based on the current programme but is subject to change in line with any spend control processes in place. Elements of packages 2, 3, and 4 are also subject to statutory consultation on Traffic Regulation Orders, to take place prior to construction.

**What is Kings Heath BID's involvement in the project?**

Kings Heath Business Improvement District (BID) are a key stakeholder in the local area, representing businesses in Kings Heath. They have assisted the project team by passing

information to businesses, providing feedback to consultations which highlights business issues and concerns and by co-hosting a number of business consultation and engagement events.

The BID have consistently maintained a neutral view on the project, due to the wide ranging opinions held by their members.

Whilst petitions and surveys have been submitted that cover the BID area, these surveys have not been carried out nor endorsed by the BID.

### **Why is the scheme going ahead in spite of some strong opposition?**

We know from speaking to citizens that congestion is a real issue for communities and neighbourhoods; they don't want their roads used as cut throughs by motorists passing through the area, they want them to be safe places to walk, cycle and play. The Places for People scheme is intended to help deliver this – in line with the vision set out in the Birmingham Transport Plan – to make active travel the first choice for local journeys and with cars no longer dominating street life around homes and schools. As a city and as a country we need to move away from designing areas around cars and instead think about creating healthy, safe and better-connected neighbourhoods. This is absolutely critical if we are to address transport's contribution to the climate emergency and meet our net zero commitments.

We have carried out a high amount of consultation and engagement since the start of the initial scheme and are keenly aware of the concerns. The scheme being put forward for approval by Cabinet directly addresses the impacts of the measures implemented in 2020 as well as responding to many of the views expressed by residents; there will be further opportunities as the detailed design of the scheme progresses to take local views into account. We acknowledge that we cannot please everyone but feel that the proposal now on the table presents the best viable way forward – balancing the views expressed locally against the need to make a change. There are compromises to be made; we appreciate that some journeys by car might be longer as a result but that is balanced against the creation of a whole network of local roads that will be quieter and safer and opens new active travel journey options. We must also remember that a quarter of households in this part of the city are without access to a car.

We have always been clear that consultation and engagement is not the same as a referendum. Even when people are opposed to a scheme overall it is still possible to take any constructive comments they make on board in the design, and that has been the case here. [Research by the Local Government Association](#) states that “the received wisdom is that those who strongly either support or oppose this wave of interventions represent a small proportion of the overall community. Use of social media is often credited with making views seem stronger and more widespread than they actually are.” They go on to suggest that “perhaps there is a large group of people who have no particular opinion yet or who are quietly supportive. But, because propensity to voice an opinion is correlated with the strength of that opinion, these people's views are not informing the debate. Councils, meanwhile, continue to struggle to capture the views of the seldom heard, including young people, people from black and minority-ethnic communities and homeless people.” For this reason, the Department for Transport is encouraging the use of stratified polling for future schemes, so that a more representative community view is presented to decision makers.

### **How have you responded to the feedback from consultation and engagement exercises?**

The concept design in the Cabinet Report is a hybrid of the options presented in the formal scheme consultation in Autumn 2021 and seeks to reflect key issues raised in that consultation:

- Minimise the number of modal filters: we have only used modal filters where they are required to remove through traffic.
- Make greater use of one-way systems: modal filters to the east of the high street have been removed in favour of one-way arrangements.
- Ensure multiple access points to each area: the coloured areas have been reviewed and amended to increase the options for access to the larger areas.
- Consider the impacts across a wider area and include measures to manage traffic flow on boundary roads as well as within the scheme area: in the concept design, Coldbath Road has been changed to a one-way street which also gives room to provide for cycling. Several other changes have been identified by the area wide strategy, for example, some traffic light-controlled junctions can be enhanced with specialist technology and software to minimise delays.

This design was the basis of the engagement exercise that took place in Autumn 2022 – the only notable change since then is the reinstatement of the modal filter on Barn Lane as per the original proposal.

The engagement exercise yielded many useful comments which will be fed into the detailed design process and reflected in those final scheme designs – these comments are of a level of detail which means they are not represented in the concept design but that does not mean they will not be taken on board wherever practicable. This means that the final design in the main scheme full business case is likely to have some slight changes from the concept design.

### **Why are you making some changes to the plans and not others?**

We are considering all the changes to the scheme requested during engagement activities.

Some of the requested changes are possible to implement and still achieve the overall traffic management needed for the scheme, and in those cases, we will look at the representations from local people and decided the best way forward. Some changes would undermine the wider scheme (e.g., opening a route through the area for motor vehicles), so cannot be incorporated in the final design.

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### **The scheme will make me drive further – how will this help the aims of the scheme?**

The aim of the scheme is to make people drive less. The Places for People scheme is intended to help deliver this – in line with the vision set out in the Birmingham Transport Plan – to make active travel the first choice for local journeys and with cars no longer dominating street life around homes and schools. There are compromises to be made; we appreciate that some journeys by car might be longer as a result but that is balanced against the creation of a whole network of local roads that will be quieter and safer and opens up new active travel journey options. We usually refer to four main responses when people change their behaviour for making journeys – re-duce (i.e., travel less); re-route (go a different way); re-time (travel at a different time) or re-mode (walk, cycle or use public transport instead of driving). The PfP scheme's main aim is to encourage journeys that can re-mode to active travel to do so. 250,000 car journeys are made every weekday in Birmingham that are less than one mile in length – many of these can easily be walked or cycled.

## **Are the benefits of the scheme distributed evenly? Do people on boundary roads get less benefit?**

One quarter of households in the Places for People area do not have access to a car, and this goes up to one third in the wider Kings Heath and Moseley area. Giving people low cost or free travel options (i.e., active travel) can benefit those without access to a car (noting that this may be because of choice, not just because they cannot afford it), and help those with a car to use it less; therefore, saving money. In addition, a network of inviting active travel options benefits not only those people living on a quieter street, but also anyone using active travel to or through the area.

In terms of the impacts on the wider area and the boundary roads, this was a key consideration in developing the extended scheme and resulted in design changes such as 20mph limits and traffic calming.

Ultimately, the scheme achieving its aims of people driving less will be to everyone's benefit.

An equalities analysis has been carried out for the scheme and has only found neutral or positive impacts against the protected characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010.

## **Is there compensation for people living on boundary roads?**

No compensation is available, as is usual practise for schemes of this type.

A key goal of the project is to reduce the number of motor vehicles travelling in the area, particularly by making it easier to walk and cycle for shorter journeys. With the implementation of the proposed measures, it is possible that there will be some initial displacement to roads bounding the Places for People scheme area, but it is expected that people's behaviour will change as a result of the measures, and other local transport improvements. One of the specific objectives of the Kings Heath and Moseley Places for People scheme is that congestion is neutral on boundary roads, meaning that, over time, it returns to similar levels to before the scheme was implemented, adjusting for general traffic trends where appropriate. This will be monitored with ongoing traffic counts.

There is an interesting analysis of traffic 'evaporation' versus 'displacement' in similar schemes in the report [LTNs for all?](#), published in November 2020 by climate change charity [Possible](#) (pages 19-23, beginning with the section headed 'Limits of LTNs'). This report references evidence of 'traffic evaporation' in 70 road space reallocation schemes in 11 different countries where space for cars was removed (and often reallocated to other modes) and follows a case study of a Low Traffic Neighbourhood in Waltham Forest, concluding that "looking at broader London trends [...] wider factors have more impact than LTNs on levels of motor traffic on the boundary roads".

Additionally, [Transport for London](#) in 2018 published the report [Cycling and the housing market](#), finding that "investment in high quality cycling infrastructure can have a positive impact on the housing market. In particular, it was felt that the greatest impact is realised at a neighbourhood level: creating pleasant, attractive streets that encourage walking and cycling will improve local connectivity and liveability to an extent that additional new development may be unlocked."

## **What are the aims and objectives of the project?**

There are a variety of objectives behind Places for People and in some cases, different people will have different views on their importance and relevance.

General objectives for Places for People (in Kings Heath and Moseley and in other parts of Birmingham) are:

- A reduction in motor traffic across the project area

- A reduction in air pollution across the project area
- A reduction in short motor vehicle trips
- An increase in walking and cycling
- A reduction in collisions
- Where motor vehicle trips are made, the roads designated, designed, and managed for them are used in preference to side streets.

Specific objectives for the Kings Heath and Moseley Places for People scheme are:

- Motor traffic reduces within project area
- Congestion is neutral on boundary roads
- Motor vehicle mode share decreases
- Walking mode share increases
- Cycling mode share increases
- Air quality does not deteriorate across the project area
- People within the project area are satisfied with the scheme over time
- People moving through the project area are satisfied with the scheme over time
- Business owners/ managers across the project area are satisfied with the scheme over time.

In addition, the project contributes to several policy objectives set out in the Birmingham Transport Plan, the Council Financial Plan, the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan, and the national Transport Decarbonisation Plan. More information about these strategic objectives can be found in section B1 of the Outline Business Case.

### **How are you monitoring whether the project achieves its aims and objectives?**

The timescales in which schemes were required to be delivered, coupled with the various COVID-19 related restrictions that were in place immediately prior to scheme implementation, restricted the ability to commission specific baseline surveys for the scheme. This has been an ongoing point of contention within the local community. We have been carrying out air quality monitoring (NO<sub>x</sub>) which indicates that air quality throughout the area is well within legal limits. We have also carried out three rounds of traffic data collection at a range of locations throughout the scheme area since Tranche 1 was introduced, which will allow us to better understand the impact of Tranche 2. We cannot however go back in time and collect data from “before” which in any case would be representative of a pre-Covid transport network.

### **What modelling has been done?**

A high level modelling exercise was carried out to inform the development of the final scheme and was published online as part of the [Kings Heath wider impacts study](#). Some recommendations of the study were incorporated into the final scheme, for example making Coldbath Road one-way.

### **What about air quality?**

We are using a large number of diffusion tubes to monitor the levels of NO<sub>2</sub> across the project area and will continue to do so. These show levels of NO<sub>2</sub> which are well within legal limits.

Overall, there is no safe level of air pollution (from NO<sub>x</sub> and particulate matter), and one of the aims of Places for People is to improve air quality and thus reduce the health impacts.

More information about air quality in Birmingham can be found at [Birmingham pollution](#).

### **What is the impact of the project on businesses in the area?**

The last three years have been extremely challenging for businesses, especially small and local businesses and those in Kings Heath and Moseley are no exception. Changes to business operation come from a range of factors, including COVID, the ongoing shift to online shopping, increases in the cost of living and general economic instability. It is therefore difficult to measure any impact on businesses arising from the Places for People project alone, other than by comparison with other areas where such changes to road layouts have not taken place.

We do not have access to data on turnover of businesses, but information is available on shop vacancy rates from a survey by [Springboard](#) and the Kings Heath BID. In October 2022, vacancy rates were:

- 3.1% of units vacant in the Kings Heath BID area
- 12.4% of units vacant across participating areas the West Midlands
- 10.9% of units vacant across participating areas nationally.

These figures suggest Kings Heath is faring well despite current challenges, and that the Places for People project has not had a negative impact on the occupancy of business units.

### **What is the impact of the project on people with reduced mobility?**

We are mindful of people for whom a motorised vehicle is their mobility aid, allowing them to make journeys which would otherwise be impossible. Currently, they can be delayed by local congestion, but by removing non-essential short vehicle trips we aim to free up road space to improve their trips.

It is important to remember that there are also people living with disabilities which limit their ability to use a car, or for whom their mobility aid is (for example) a scooter or adapted bike. For such people, improving facilities for active travel provide a direct benefit to their mobility.

An equalities analysis has been carried out for the scheme and has only found neutral or positive impacts against the protected characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010.

### **What are you going to do about bollards being taken away and not put back? This is a real issue on York Road.**

There have been issues where removable bollards have been removed or vandalised. This has been a particular problem on York Road where businesses with a shopfront within the pedestrianised area have an arrangement to enable access for deliveries. As part of the detailed design process, we will consider whether different types of bollards, including fixed ones, could be used in some locations. We will need to engage with the emergency services and the Council's own waste collection teams to determine the best way to tackle this. Ultimately if emergency services and refuse collection are comfortable with fixed bollards then this would be the best solution in many locations. In the longer term we will explore camera enforcement of pedestrian zones and no entry restrictions such that physical closures are no longer required – the Council is in the process of applying for the relevant powers from Government, but we are some way off being able to implement this in Kings Heath.

### **What about the new bus routes on Institute Road?**

The bus routes on Institute Road are a separate issue to the Places for People scheme. Bus routes 46 and 169 are subsidised by [Transport for West Midlands](#) (TfWM) to fill a gap in the standards for accessibility of daytime, weekday bus services. TfWM are aware of the Places for People scheme and were aware of the proposals in specifying the routes. The current routing for the 46 and 169 is therefore compatible with the Places for People scheme. There is no formal requirement for TfWM to consult with Birmingham City Council on proposed bus network changes

and as such the Council has not approved or endorsed these route changes in any way. We understand that residents have concerns about the suitability of some of the proposed roads for bus services and will make this representation to TfWM. However, given the low frequency (a total of three buses per hour Monday to Saturday and one bus per hour on Sunday) and one way running, the Council would not be looking to make any representation to the Traffic Commissioner (who approves bus service registrations) in this instance.