



## **CABINET – 20TH MAY 2015**

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED PARK & RIDE FOR YSTRAD MYNACH RAIL STATION**

**REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

---

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider whether or not part of the Council owned land off Cedar Way in Ystrad Mynach, managed by Ystrad Mynach primary school, should be used towards the provision of an additional park and ride facility for Ystrad Mynach rail station.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The recently completed station improvements and access for all scheme at Ystrad Mynach rail station presented an opportunity to consider a park and ride car park extension to the existing oversubscribed car park. Welsh Government has expressed their strong support for the scheme and has engaged a consultant to develop a detailed proposal with a view to delivering it by April 2016, funded from their south east Wales Metro programme.
- 2.2 In order to facilitate the delivery of the scheme, a part of the recreational land currently used by Ystrad Mynach and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Allta primary schools would be required to facilitate the access for the park and ride. The land in question provides less space than recommended in the building regulations but the proposed scheme would not impact on the current useable recreational grassed area. There is also the possibility of negotiating improvement and accommodation works as part of the scheme.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 A key aim of the Council's adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) is to provide a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and protects the environment; where public transport, walking and cycling provide real travel alternatives.
- 3.2 The recently adopted SEW Valleys Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the county borough also reflects the LDP aim in its vision statement. It also includes the aim to protect the environment, by minimising transport emissions and consumption of resources and energy, by promoting walking, cycling, quality public transport, modal shift and minimising demand on the transport system.
- 3.3 Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places (2013) reinforces the importance of an improved transport network and sets out the Welsh Government's Regeneration Framework, which seeks to establish a more integrated way of improving the prosperity of the country. Importantly it identifies an improved transport network as one of the key building blocks to reverse economic, social and physical decline.

## 4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 During 2014/15 Welsh Government (WG) and the Department for Transport (DfT) invested heavily in a station improvement programme/access for all scheme respectively at Ystrad Mynach rail station that greatly improves the station waiting and ticket office facilities and provided lift access between the platforms for rail passengers. This will improve the customer experience and increase passenger numbers.
- 4.2 In order to facilitate these works the contractor leased land from the Council to set up a site office and create a works access to Network Rail's (NR) operational land (refer to the hatched area on the plan in Appendix 1 and for the land that is the subject of this report). The land in question is used as a recreation area for pupils of Ystrad Mynach and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Allta primary schools. The land required for the access road is not used for sports/physical activities by the school.
- 4.3 A site visit was extended to Members and officers in October 2014 and from the extensive clearance that had taken place to accommodate the construction of the new station facilities, an opportunity was identified to consider a park and ride (P&R) facility where the car park could be located on NR's southbound operational land with access provided across the Council's land. Officers approached WG and NR officials to discuss whether or not there was the potential to develop a proposal. From the initial discussions, the scheme was considered feasible and WG engaged their consultant to develop the scheme and design proposals with a view to funding being secured from WG's south east Wales Metro programme.

### Current Scheme Proposal

- 4.4 A copy of the latest scheme proposal is included in Appendix 2. This takes in to account issues raised by officers and the schools and tries to address them as far as possible. The proposed layout offers 121 car parking spaces in addition to the existing 93 spaces provided in 1999 (following an extension to the limited parking previously available) that are greatly oversubscribed. Since then, train frequencies on the Rhymney line have improved to provide a train every fifteen minutes between Bargoed and Cardiff. These improvements have generated significant growth in the number of passenger travelling, and the improvements at the station will accelerate the public demand for P&R facilities.
- 4.5 WG has confirmed that funding is available as part of their south east Wales Metro programme to deliver this scheme but that the funding would need to be spent by the end of March 2016. The scheme is estimated to cost in the order of £1.4m and would be fully funded by WG. However, WG would need confirmation by the end of May 2015 that the Council supports the scheme and would make the land required to provide the access road available, after which the funding would be at risk of being reallocated to another scheme.
- 4.6 This would allow them time to submit a planning application for the access road in June 2015 and deliver the scheme by March 2016 (note the car park on NR's land would be constructed under NR's permitted development rights). It should be noted that allowing use of a small part of the Council's land does not mean the scheme will go ahead as any planning application would need to stand or fall on its own merits.
- 4.7 The schools were initially advised of the P&R proposal by email on 5 December 2014 including a preliminary plan proposal. Officers subsequently attended a meeting of the Ystrad Mynach primary school Governing Body on the 27 January 2015 (where the Head Teacher of Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Allta primary school was also in attendance). The scheme proposals were discussed along with the issues and concerns raised by the school. The meeting concluded with the Schools stating they objected to the proposals, and were requested to submit their objection and detailed concerns in writing.
- 4.8 A letter was received via email on 23 March 2015 a copy of which is attached in Appendix 3. Officers again met with the Head Teacher of Ystrad Mynach primary school and representatives of the Governing Body on 21 April 2015. Details of the latest scheme

proposals at that time were shared and discussed at the meeting together with the proposed delivery timescale if the scheme were to go ahead. Each point of the school's letter was discussed in turn.

- 4.9 A summary of the responses given together with the potential mitigation offered by the scheme is also included in Appendix 3. A plan showing the land that would remain available for recreational activities is included in Appendix 4. The plan in Appendix 5 shows the land take necessary in the context of the existing recreational land. This shows that the available and usable grassed space would not be reduced if the scheme were delivered. In addition, WG has indicated they would be willing to consider mitigation and accommodation/improvement measures for the recreational area as part of the scheme.

#### Comments from Education Services

- 4.10 In considering the request to make land available for the proposed P&R scheme, Cabinet must take account of The Control of School Premises (Wales) Regulations 2008 (regulation 3). This states the local authority may give such directions as to the occupation and use of the premises of a community or community special school or maintained nursery school as it thinks fit. However, full consideration needs to be given to the representations made by the school and also whether sufficient land is left to meet the school's needs.
- 4.11 The provision of spaces is governed by the building bulletin (BB) regulations. BB103 is the most recent (June 2014) area guidelines for mainstream schools and is produced by the Department for Education. As well as recommendations for inside areas, it also has recommendations for the following:
- Soft outdoor PE
  - Hard outdoor PE
  - Soft informal and social areas
  - Hard informal and social areas
  - Habitat areas
- 4.12 The total area of soft surfaced outdoor PE includes sports pitches laid out to suit team games and other soft-surfaced facilities that can provide for the PE and sports provision such as field sports areas, trim trails and bike tracks. This area does not include ecology areas or other general green spaces.
- 4.13 The location, size and shape of grassed outdoor PE areas should be based on a number of considerations including the statutory requirements, safety considerations, gradient, relationships between winter-games pitches and summer athletics and cricket provision (as appropriate), orientation of pitches and accessibility.
- 4.14 Based upon provision for both Ystrad Mynach Primary and YG Bro Allta pupils, the recommended area would amount to circa 11,000 sq m, based upon the combined 5-11 age range (as specified in the regulations). This is in excess of the recreational space available but the schools were built long before the regulations existed. Given the increasing importance of outdoor play to the curriculum and with regulations advising on recommended areas for outdoor play, CCBC has sought to make such provision when developing schools. Recent examples include Greenhill, St James and Cwm Ifor Primary schools. It is also proposed to make such provision with the new YGG Caerffili and the new Abertysswg/Pontlottyn Primary.
- 4.15 Facilities for outdoor play were provided for YGG Penalltau when the school was built. They also have access to facilities closer to the school e.g. Lewis Girls school so is not deemed relevant to this report.

#### Strategic Considerations

- 4.16 Within the County Borough there is an existing network of well established settlements that are focused on key Principal Towns and Local Centres that acts as hubs for enterprise and

activity for those areas. The connectivity of these towns and centres is essential if the county borough is to have a thriving economy and if people are to access jobs and services within the area and within the wider Cardiff Capital Region.

- 4.17 Within the Mid Valleys Corridor the Principal Towns are Ystrad Mynach and Blackwood supported and complemented by the Local Centres of Nelson, and Newbridge. Ystrad Mynach is strategically located in the Rhymney Valley and the Mid Valleys Corridor and has in recent years attracted significant investment, from both the public and private sector. The town is now the home to the Council's headquarters, the Local General Hospital, the College and Ystrad Mynach Police Station and Custody Unit. More recently the Centre for Sporting Excellence has also located in the town.
- 4.18 The presence of all of these major services and facilities means that Ystrad Mynach is a significant employment and learning centre within not only the Mid Valleys Corridor but also for the wider region. Increasingly it is becoming a strategic location for investment and growth and thus the availability of an accessible public transport network is critical to service this important centre.
- 4.19 Looking forward, Ystrad Mynach will become increasingly important as a destination as it will be the Principal Town that will serve the proposed Strategic Development Site at Maesycwmmmer. The potential development of an additional 1700 houses in Maesycwmmmer will place additional pressure on the public transport network and there is a pressing need to improve capacity at nearby stations; in particular at Ystrad Mynach and Llanbradach.
- 4.20 Good public transport provision influences where people will choose to live and work and also where they visit and spend money when they interact with friends and family. It is important therefore stations within the county borough are attractive, accessible and offer a real alternative to private transport for residents.
- 4.21 The existing P&R car park is over subscribed and as a consequence the surrounding streets often experience overflow parking, so there is a need therefore to explore the opportunity to provide additional capacity at Ystrad Mynach and relieve pressure on the surrounding highway network, particularly for the longer term.
- 4.22 The improved connectivity delivered through enhancements to capacity in this area will have a positive impact on the ongoing development of Ystrad Mynach as a Principal Town. The regular frequency of the trains on the Rhymney Valley Line to Cardiff and the wider region, together with future enhancements e.g. electrification, provides the opportunity for residents to access a wide range of jobs, thus having a positive impact on the economic activity levels in the town. It is therefore important that provision is made for adequate P&R at Ystrad Mynach to enable residents to use public transport rather than accessing these job opportunities by car. This will in turn contribute to the reduction in congestion on the highway network and help to achieve national green house gas emission targets

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An EIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. No potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact has been identified therefore a full EIA has not been carried out.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There is no financial obligation on the authority regarding the delivery of the scheme as this would be fully funded by WG. The Council would be responsible for the maintenance of the access road (i.e. that part of the scheme on Council owned land), but this would be accommodated within the existing Engineering Services highway maintenance budget.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None.

## **8. CONSULTATION**

8.1 The schools have been consulted and a copy of their letter stating their objection and concerns is included in Appendix 3, together with officer responses.

8.2 All responses from consultations on this report have been incorporated in the report.

8.3 Should the scheme proceed the access road would require planning permission. A public consultation would be undertaken as part of the planning process and WG has indicated it would hold a public exhibition for the scheme for the local community, this being over and above the normal practice required.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 Cabinet consider the representations set out at Appendix 3 and subsequently determine whether or not part of the Council owned land off Cedar Way in Ystrad Mynach (as shown in Appendix 2) should be used to allow the provision of an additional park and ride facility for Ystrad Mynach rail station.

9.2 If Cabinet are minded to approve the use of the land for the park and ride facility Cabinet approve the transfer of operational responsibility for the land necessary to deliver the scheme to the Engineering Services Division and delegate officers to continue liaising with WG and their consultant/partners to progress the scheme, including the submission of the relevant planning application.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 To fulfil the aspirations set out in the Council's LDP and LTP and to expand rail park and ride facilities in Ystrad Mynach as explained in paragraphs 4.16 to 4.22.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 The Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000 and The Control of School Premises (Wales) Regulations 2008 (regulation 3).

Author: Clive Campbell, Transportation Engineering Manager

Consultees: Cllr. Tom Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation & Engineering  
Cllr. Rhianon Passmore, Cabinet Member for Education & Lifelong Learning  
Cllr. Alan Angel – ward Member for Ystrad Mynach  
Cllr. Martin James, ward Member for Ystrad Mynach  
Chris Burns, Interim Chief Executive  
Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services  
Terry Shaw, Head of Engineering Services  
Huw Morgan, Team Leader – ITU  
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer  
Bleddyn Hopkins, Assistant Director (Education Services)  
Jonathan Lloyd, Head Teacher – Ystrad Mynach primary school  
Delyth Williams, Head Teacher – Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Allta primary school  
Pauline Elliott, Head of Regeneration and Planning  
Rhian Kyte, Team Leader - Strategic & Development Planning

Tim Stephens, Development Control Manager  
Colin Jones, Head of Performance and Property Services  
Gail Williams, Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Map of recreation area showing land leased to Network Rail's contractor

Appendix 2: Plan of proposed P&R scheme for Ystrad Mynach rail station

Appendix 3: Letter of objection from the primary schools with officer responses/comments

Appendix 4: Plan showing the land that would remain available for recreational activities

Appendix 5: Plan showing the land required from the existing recreational activities