

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 30TH NOVEMBER, 2020

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 20TH OCTOBER, 2020

“147 VALE OF GLAMORGAN GATEWAY STATION WELTAG STAGE TWO
OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE (REF) –

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport presented the report which had been referred from Cabinet to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration. For this item the Committee welcomed Matthew Fry from Arcadis.

The report provided an update on progress of the Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station WelTAG Stage Two Outline Business Study. This was covered in Appendix A to the report.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that the draft WelTAG Stage Two Outline Business Case had been completed by Arcadis which had assessed the do minimum scenario plus four options for a station located near the M4 junction 34. The four locations being:

- Location 1 – Land south east of the Renishaw development
- Location 2 – Land south of the railway between the railway and the River Ely
- Location 3 – Situated on marsh/wet woodland west of the Renishaw development
- Location 4 – Existing Renishaw car park site.

Members were advised that on the basis of the WelTAG Stage Two Study and the potential socio economic, cultural and environmental benefits identified, it was considered that Location 4 had merit in being taken forward for further consideration as part of an updated WelTAG Stage Two Appraisal which would include a full value for money assessment. Although Location 4 had been identified as the preferred option, it was advised that the Study considered the potential for an alternate location, due to constraints that could impact on the implementation.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stressed that it had been recognised that proposals for a Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station presented regional, strategic and sustainable transport opportunities that could be better recognised and scrutinised separately from the highway proposals. This also allowed a number of rail sub-options to be developed and independently assessed. In addition, the rail and highway options under consideration had separate management and control processes which would influence the next step and programming for ongoing WelTAG assessments. In agreement with Welsh Government, a decision had therefore been made by the Vale of Glamorgan Council

to separate assessment of the Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station option from the M4 junction 34 to A48 highway link options.

The Committee was advised that following discussions with stakeholders, the preferred design parameter at this stage and as confirmed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council was for a Category D station, able to handle 250,000 to 500,000 trips per year. This would be future proofed, as opposed to a minimum Category F station. It had been identified that as a Category D station there would be a minimum of 500 car parking spaces with the ability to extend this to 1,000 spaces.

In terms of rail service provisions and timetable it had been assumed that all passing Transport for Wales services would call at the new Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station. This could result in a service frequency of approximately three trains per hour in each direction encompassing the Ebbw Vale to Maesteg service, the Carmarthen/ Milford Haven to Manchester Piccadilly services, and the Swansea to Cardiff Central service. It had been estimated that there would be a 4-minute period to slow, stop and accelerate a train for the proposed station.

Significant amendment of the timetable was likely to be required as time could not be absorbed by the current planning margins and turnarounds. Network Rail had also confirmed that the sidings offered additional redundancy which aided performance and could often be used for broken down trains. A further timetable study would be required once operational assumptions had been confirmed and defined further.

Following the introduction by the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport the Committee welcomed Mr. Paul Waite who had registered to speak on this matter.

Mr. Waite began by stating that Members of the Committee may not have had time to read the 354 pages of the WelTAG Two Plus Gateway document, but he had as had fellow environment and transport consultants. Mr. Waite outlined that there was a vast amount of inappropriate cut and paste from the M4 Junction 34 to A48 Transport Study which bared no relevance to the objectives of the Gateway Station. He stated that it was littered with anomalies such as:

- The Outline Business Case (page 2) – the Scrutiny recommendation on 25th June, 2019 regarding writing to Welsh Government on the climate emergency impact on the environment. Referenced here but not actioned.
- The Strategic Case (page 11) – references a review group meeting for Stage 1 on Monday, 27th November, 2017. This was probably the most important review group according to WelTAG guidance, yet minutes had never been seen and stakeholder composition was open to challenge.
- Peter Brett Report – The Case for Change – The Case for Change was made predominantly on the basis of realising the Strategic Development and the employment opportunities associated with Cardiff Airport and St. Athan Economic Zone. It referenced Aston Martin, the Battery Giga Plant and connectivity to Cardiff Airport. Mr. Waite asked how exactly did the Committee think a rail station on the extremities of the Vale taking people to Cardiff Central would realise opportunities at Cardiff Airport and the Economic Zone. There was no mention of improving the bus network nor at present were there buses servicing this part of the Vale going to Cardiff Airport and the Economic Zone.

In addition, Mr. Waite stated that the Impact Assessment report had been trivialised and referred to the Bio-Diversity Study as a preliminary study, a Phase 1 Habitat Assessment and the Ecological Appraisal. This whole study area was recognised as sensitive, yet no primary data had been collected by competent professionals. The Council's own Supplementary Planning Guidance required this to be done in order to inform decisions at the earliest stage. In addition, the local authority had a duty under the Environment Act to protect and enhance bio-diversity and this approach had always been to avoid environmental impacts not just to mitigate them.

Mr. Waite then stated that this brought him to the real reason for the report. Recommendations on page 10 stated that accessibility to and from the station would be enhanced with potential for a new or enhanced road infrastructure between the M4 junction 34 and the A48. This report today was nothing other than a backdoor way to add weight to a road between M4 junction 34 and A48 Sycamore Cross. This represented a transport study that would in time prove to be flawed through the appropriate channels.

Finally, Mr. Waite asked the Committee to consider the following steps:

1. For the Committee to recommend a full bio-diversity study prior to any advancement to WelTAG Stage 3 as a local authority duty under the Environment Act.
2. To reconsider the real reason for splitting the two WelTAG Studies.
3. To provide the community with the Review Group minutes from 27th November, 2017.

In response to Mr. Waite's comments, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that she had received a request for the minutes of what had been termed as the Review Group meeting for 27th November, 2017. She advised that this was not a technical Review Group as in a group that reviewed the evidence and made technical views and opinions, but it was more a presentation to a group of organisations. This would be shared with Mr. Waite via email which was why there were no minutes. A response to the request would be sent to the Committee Members and other interested parties. In terms of a bio-diversity study the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport stated that it was still at the early stages of the process for which an Environmental Impact Assessment would not normally be undertaken. This was more appropriate for the Stage Three should the assessment be progressed. She added that the Study was only at the design concept phase and so an Environmental Impact Assessment would come out if the proposal was taken forward. It was therefore, important for the Council to be proportionate in the work undertaken, and at this stage, all that was required was the overall impact on bio-diversity but a fuller assessment would be undertaken at the next stage. In addition, further consultation would be undertaken on the strategic road improvements and no decisions had yet been made.

With regards to the reasons why the Gateway Station and the Strategic Road Improvement had been separated, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and

Transport stated that there had been discussions with the Review Group, and they were advised that the Council was looking at splitting the project into two. Discussions on this had also been held with Welsh Government. The main reason for the split was that there were two separate processes, the first around the station was a much more regional project which was likely, if taken forward, to be picked up the City Deal and this came under a separate process which was GRIP and Transport for Wales Study. The Strategic Road Improvement was a different process and would also have different impacts which Mr. Waite had referred to. This was purely down to the technical management of the two processes.

The Committee then asked a series of questions with the following replies given.

Question	Answer
The report retained the 'do minimum' option and what was the thinking around why this remained given that the Strategic Road Improvement was now a separate project	In terms of the 'do minimum' approach, this was part of the current consultation which meant that there were in reality 5 options for a new road scheme. This was for both projects and was normal practice.
How would the development of a train station improve the Strategic Road Network and provide benefits for local businesses and communities?	The Member's comment referred to page 5 of the Cabinet report and the WelTAG Stage One report so this was an earlier part of the process which were the original aims of the project when the road and the train station were under the same umbrella.
Could officers confirm that the new Stage Two process would in no way reference a new road and would be considered entirely separately?	It was important to recognise that there would still be a need to improve access to the new station whether that would be via the current infrastructure or by a new road. If this moved to the next stage then terminology would be reconsidered because the station had only recently been separated out from the road project. There was no assumption that the road would be built so the station could be built without a new road.
It was stated that the new station would be a Category D station, with similar train stations located at Dinas Powys but this had proposal for car parking spaces between 500 – 1000 spaces so how many other Category D train stations would have similar	Category D stations and the number of spaces were dependent upon the land and it was also important to recognise that the Dinas Powys location was very accessible with walking and cycling routes close by so there would be an expectation for less parking. In addition, the Gateway Station was a

spaces and were there different planning restrictions?	more rural location and was more accessible by car because of the location to the M4 so there would be a high reliance on car spaces.
There was an assumption that all Transport for Wales train services would stop at the new station but this was not guaranteed so there was concern that figures around the use of the station would be over inflated so this brought into question to viability of the scheme.	The process required consideration of the best case scenario and the number of trains that used the station would be refined as the process moved forward. This was an assumption and would made clearer with Transport for Wales at Stage 3.
It was mentioned that this represented a regional project likely to be picked up by the City Deal so where would funding for the road project come from?	As yet no decision on the road had been made and so there was no commitment for funding, but the train project had been talked about by the City Deal and it would not be competing for funds for a new road.
If this became a City Deal project would that mean that planning was out of the hands of the Vale of Glamorgan Council?	If this became a City Deal project then as the local Planning Authority consideration would still be needed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council unless it was considered a national significant project by Welsh Government.
What were the benefits to residents of the Vale of Glamorgan?	The most obvious benefit would be to Renishaw which operated on the boundary of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and also other businesses such at Hensol Castle. In the longer term it was hoped to realise the transport benefit for Vale of Glamorgan residents who would be better able to travel to London and Cardiff via a Park and Ride scheme. It was also accepted that there would be benefits for the wider regional area.
If Option 4 was selected what exactly were the constraints around development as mentioned in the report?	The constraints referred to in the report were around the need for an agreement with Renishaw regarding the development of the land.
Could there be clarity of whether the Gateway Station was a stand-alone project and was not co-dependent on the development of a new road?	Assurance could be given that the Gateway Station could be stand alone because it was a regional project. However, it was also recognised that

	the new train station would have greater benefit if a new road was developed, so for the maximum benefit, both projects were needed.
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A Committee Member, as local Ward Member, stated that there were concerns in his Ward of a possible link between the train station and a new road. There were concerns regarding where the 1000 new cars would travel through to get to the station which could consequently lead to a call for a new road. The Member asked for further confirmation that this was a stand alone project. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport confirmed that she could give assurance that the two projects were separate, but the only proviso was that a road would improve accessibility to the new railway station. Both would have to be considered in conjunction if either did or did not happen in order to maximise potential.

In referring to the 4-minute waiting time for trains, a Committee Member stated that there was no chance of the London trains stopping at the new Gateway Station, given the amount of money spent on electrification. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport clarified that further discussion on services and timetable would be needed with Transport for Wales and Network Rail.

A Committee proposed a recommendation for Cabinet to disregard any consideration of the potential development of the new road linking Junction 34 to the airport so that the train station project could be given an independent assessment of its feasibility. This recommendation, being seconded and voted upon, was carried by the Committee.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the progress made on the Vale of Glamorgan Gateway Station WeITAG Stage Two Outline Business Case relating to proposals for a new railway station in the Vale of Glamorgan located near to the M4 junction 34 be noted.

(2) T H A T Cabinet be asked to disregard any consideration of the potential development of the new road linking the M4 Junction 34 to Cardiff Airport so that the Gateway Station project be given an independent assessment of its feasibility.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To update Members on progress made on the scheme.

(2) In order to inform Cabinet of the views of the Scrutiny Committee that the development of a new road between M4 Junction 34 and Cardiff Airport should be considered separately and have no impact on proposals for the new Gateway Station.