

Report of the Strategic Director, Regeneration & Culture to the Bradford South Area Committee Meeting to be held on 24 January 2013

AN**Subject:**

Update on Issues Surrounding the delivery of Low Moor Rail Station

Summary Statement:

This report provides an update to the Bradford South Area Committee on the current progress towards delivery of a new railway station at Low Moor. It provides information about the current delivery issues in relation to the business case, design standards and budget implications which have arisen during the development of detailed proposals together with details of key activities for Metro, Network Rail and Council Officers to address these to continue to progress the delivery of the new railway station.

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1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report updates the Bradford South Area committee on the progress made to date on the development and delivery of a new railway station at Low Moor and provides details of the key issues impacting on the proposed delivery date of December 2014 and the actions currently being taken to mitigate and address their impacts. The report seeks the Committee's endorsement of the actions being taken by Metro, Network Rail and Council Officers to address these issues.
- 1.2. The report also outlines for the committee the current financial situation in regards to the project budget.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Proposals to develop a new passenger railway station at Low Moor have been in development for a number of years and in 2009 were prioritised by the five West Yorkshire Authorities through the West Yorkshire Strategic Programme of Schemes (WYSPS) with an allocation of funding of £5.5m. This funding is now incorporated into the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan programme and remains allocated to the delivery of the station.
- 2.2. It is intended that the new station at Low Moor would include:
 - a) Accessible platforms with pedestrian footbridge and ramps;
 - b) Approximately 117 car parking spaces with dedicated disabled persons parking bays, drop off point and cycle parking;
 - c) Modern waiting shelters, lighting, seating and CCTV;
 - d) Passenger information displays and public address system;
 - e) Direct access to and from the adjacent Spen Valley Greenway.
- 2.3. The station has been progressed by Metro in accordance with the Network Rail Governance on Rail Investment Projects (GRIP) process, which splits design development into logical stages, at the end of which development decisions can be taken. The main stages of specific design development are GRIP3 (option selection), GRIP4 (single option development) and GRIP5 (detailed design).
- 2.4. The GRIP3 stage was undertaken by Network Rail on behalf of Metro. This stage looked at potential design solutions at a feasibility level, identified whether a feasible design exists and identifies a single option to be taken forward for GRIP4 outline design.
- 2.5. The GRIP4 stage has been taken forward by Metro directly. This stage takes the single option selected at the previous stage and develops an outline design to gain 'approval in principle' before developing a detailed design for construction (the GRIP5 stage).
- 2.6. Public consultation on the design, in advance of submission of a formal planning application, was undertaken in November 2011 and the scheme was well received by the vast majority of people who responded to the proposals. A further public meeting

to update local residents on the progress of the station's delivery was held on 23 January. This meeting was attended by officers of Metro together with Cllr James Lewis (ITA Chair) and a verbal précis of the key outcomes of that meeting will be presented to the committee by officers at this committee meeting.

- 2.7. The inputs and outputs required at each stage are defined in the GRIP process. At the GRIP4 stage, design and cost estimates are firmed up, the business case updated and formal technical approval to the scheme needs to be sought from Network Rail and the affected train operators. Metro have progressed the design as planned and in line with the GRIP process.
- 2.8. In addition there are a number of rail industry bodies that need to give their approval to the technical, operational and business case aspects of the scheme. This includes Network Rail, Northern Rail and the Department for Transport (DfT). Whilst Metro has worked with these bodies throughout the development of the scheme, the delivery of the Low Moor scheme cannot be progressed until they are satisfied and written confirmation of their satisfaction is obtained.
- 2.9. Metro remain committed to delivering the station and previously committed funding remains ring-fenced.

3.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1. Design development during the GRIP4 stage by its nature identifies issues which need to be resolved before a project can be moved forward to the next stage. This is the case with the Low Moor project where a number of issues have been identified in the course of design development and solutions to their impacts are currently being sought. The main issues are described in the following paragraphs.

Track Curvature / Derogation Issue

- 3.2. The track curve radius at the site is approximately 750m and whilst a station previously existed nearby, modern railway design standards require the minimum curvature radius of the track to be 1,000m at any station for safe platform to train stepping distances.
- 3.3. Network Rail advised at the GRIP3 stage that a derogation (permission to disregard) to this standard would be required from the responsible body, who at that time were Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate (HMRI). Initial discussions with HMRI confirmed that they were 'minded' to grant the derogation for Low Moor so development of proposals proceeded on the basis that a formal application for the derogation would need to be made at the end of the GRIP4 stage.
- 3.4. Derogations now need to be sought from the independent Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB), seeking their agreement that the station will be safe to use and the cost involved in implementing a compliant design is not reasonable. Following an increasing number of applications for derogations for other rail schemes throughout the UK the RSSB are now increasingly resistant to approving any application for derogation, especially if it can be demonstrated that a compliant design can be delivered

albeit at increased costs. As the latter judgement is subjective, this represents a risk to the scheme which Metro was made aware of by Network Rail earlier in 2012.

- 3.5. Metro, through their design consultant are currently assessing the feasibility and impact of a compliant design solution of realigning the track to achieve the necessary 1,000m radius standard. This would remove the need to seek any derogation of standards and hence the risk to the project but would increase capital costs by an estimated order of at least £0.5m.

Capital Costs

- 3.6. At the GRIP3 stage capital costs for the scheme were estimated at £5.5m, based on experience of delivery of Glasshoughton rail station. However, capital costs for the Low Moor station have increased as a more robust cost estimate has been developed by Metro during the GRIP4 stage as more information has come to light on specific site constraints and conditions through the development work.
- 3.7. A key point is that whilst the costs of the station infrastructure itself are broadly comparable with other recent railway schemes, the emerging site characteristics have added additional elements of risk, and hence cost, to the scheme which to date it has not been possible to mitigate. The main drivers of the cost increases, are:
- a) Identification of the presence of old mineshafts in the vicinity of the proposed station infrastructure site which surveys were unable to locate;
 - b) Significant ground slopes and challenging topography of the car park site and track side access; and
 - c) The presence of high, medium and low pressure gas pipelines which cross the site which were not identified at the GRIP3 stage.
- 3.8. These issues have led to escalation of budget costs to the order of £7.2m with a potential for further increase if cost savings cannot be found.

Business Case

- 3.9. The updated business case based on current conditions undertaken by Metro confirms that the scheme now has a strong business case at a service frequency of 3 trains per hour (tph). The business case at 2 tph is less robust and service levels of 1tph are economically unachievable alone. The 3tph service also continues to demonstrate a sustainable business case even with increased capital costs above £7.2m
- 3.10. In the context of the approval of key organisations namely the Department for Transport (DfT), Train Operating Companies (TOCs), Network Rail and the Treasury each will consider aspects of the business case from different perspectives.
- 3.11. For the TOCs, Network Rail and DfT(Rail) their primary interest will be the impact of delivering the station on the wider rail network (see paragraph 3.13), which includes the impact on train operator overall revenues and operational performance impacts. This case is robust at 3tph, but very marginal at 2tph.

- 3.12. The Treasury and DfT will be interested in the capital cost and Benefit:CostRatio (BCR) which needs to be generally greater than 2, although values over 1 are acceptable if a scheme is justified on broader grounds e.g. regeneration. The Low Moor business case only has a BCR meeting this criteria in the 3tph scenario.

Railway Timetabling Issues

- 3.13. The GRIP4 design stage was launched by Metro following agreement with the train operators on the viability of a 2tph service.
- 3.14. However, discussions with rail industry partners have identified that the broader strategic initiatives which have emerged during the life of this project, combined with the complex interactions on the Caldervale line make achievement of a 3tph or now even a 2tph service at Low Moor difficult. 1tph can be accommodated more easily, although making an economic case to DfT would be challenging. In particular the proposal for a station at Low Moor needs to interface with the emerging broader strategic initiatives of:
- a) The Northern Hub - specifically Caldervale line speed improvements;
 - b) Todmorden West Curve – specifically in terms of impact on line capacity on the Todmorden to Manchester section;
 - c) Introduction of a 4 tph service on the Huddersfield route – specifically due to its interaction with the Huddersfield/Bradford/Leeds service; and
 - d) Future line electrification impacts.
- 3.15. The interface with Caldervale line speed improvements is of particular direct relevance to Bradford as there is a conflict with the objective of providing a faster Bradford to Manchester service and providing a railway station at Low Moor.
- 3.16. Metro have worked very hard on these timetable issues to date and are continuing joint industry work to develop a future timetable to facilitate the station. Metro have made it clear to the rail industry that a station at Low Moor should be included in all future timetabling planning. In particular Metro are now engaging with Network Rail and Northern Rail in detailed technical discussions on the timetable and route infrastructure implications to understand what is now required to implement the Low Moor rail station at the required service levels and the implications on the other strategic initiatives affecting the route including those outlined above, particularly those of direct interest to Bradford. These discussions also include consideration about the desired opening date of 2014.

Car Park Provision

- 3.17. Modelling of the trips originating/terminating at a station at Low Moor based on the 3tph scenarios has been undertaken by Metro to assess the adequacy of the currently proposed car park provision of 117 spaces. The results of this exercise suggest that a car park of around 350 spaces would be necessary to support the passenger demand at 3tph. If this number of spaces were not provided, the 3tph business case would be

constrained in achieving the necessary passenger demand due to parking provision being less than half that predicted to be required.

- 3.18. However, these conclusions are based on mature demand at Low Moor and patronage usually builds up over a short period (generally taken to be between 1 to 3 years). This raises the possibility for phasing of the delivery of a larger car park facility to take place over a number of years following station opening, potentially offsetting the initial capital costs of the station and assisting the business case. This approach has yet to be tested with the DfT who may not be agreeable to such a proposal and the considerable increase in rail patronage which has been commonly predicted also needs to be considered.
- 3.19. Irrespective of the business case conclusions a viable site large enough for this size of car park needs to be confirmed. A recent exercise to identify suitable additional, or alternative sites, was undertaken by Metro and the findings discussed with Council Officers. This study identified two potential sites (which are shown in Appendix A, Figure 1) which could potentially be suitable for car parking purposes. These sites were (a) the former Transperience site and (b) land to the south of the current proposed car park proposal (Kelvic& Ogden owned land).
- 3.20. Of these two potential sites the former Transperience site is 988 metres northeast of the proposed Low Moor station. The site itself is flat but is bisected by Experience Way; it has the remains of the former car park partially intact. The section to the east of Experience Way is more derelict with vegetation growing through the concrete. Both sides of the site still have lighting columns erected and have an estimated vehicle capacity of between 100-150 cars at a single (ground) level. There is potential to deck both, or one, of the car park sites to provide additional car parking as the surrounding buildings are double/treble height industrial units. Road links to the site are excellent with close access to the M606 and the adjacent industrial estate.
- 3.21. However, the walking distance of 988 meters take approximately 8 minutes to walk and is beyond that recommended in current standards for sustainable access. The walking route itself is along lit pavement for part of the way and then along the Spen Valley Greenway for the remainder and would feel isolated during dusk and hours of darkness. For the above reasons this proposed location has been discounted by Metro and Council Officers as a feasible proposal.
- 3.22. The site to the south of the current proposed station car park is wholly owned by Kelvic and could be purchased and used as the car park for Low Moor, either as a second car park along with the existing proposed provision or as the only car park for the station. The Kelvic site falls within 800 metres walking distance to the proposed rail station and would provide level access to the Halifax bound platform and the Spen Valley Greenway. Kelvic, the site owner, have recently gone into administration and the administrators are looking to dispose of the site once legal issues in relation to leases have been resolved.
- 3.23. Metro previously secured a tacit understanding that they will be approached by the administrators prior to the land being placed on the open market, potentially offering an opportunity for the land to be secured at a reasonable cost. However, the

administrators have now advised that they will be required to market the site on a competitive basis to secure the best value sale, so it is not guaranteed that the site could be secured at the present time.

- 3.24. The site of the former railway station at Low Moor has also been examined in relation to availability of land to create additional car parking provision. However, this site falls within a Site of Regional and Local Importance (SEGI – Sites of Ecological/Geological Importance; RIGS – Regionally Important Geological Site and BWA – Bradford Wildlife Areas). (Figures 2 & 3 of Appendix A) As such provisions of policy NE9 of the Replacement UDP place restrictions on the development of this site, namely:

Policy NE9:

Development likely to have an adverse effect on a site of ecological/geological importance (SEGIs and RIGs), or a site of local nature conservation value (Bradford Wildlife Areas (BWAs)), as shown on the proposals map (or subsequent SEGI/RIGS or BWA review), will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal which outweigh the need to safeguard the substantive nature conservation value of the site, where development is permitted which would damage the nature conservation value of the site, such damage will be kept to a minimum, where appropriate the council will consider the use of conditions and/or planning obligations to provide adequate mitigation and/or compensation measures.

- 3.25. The site also falls within the protection zone of Urban Green space under the Replacement UDP and as such the provisions of policy OS1 would also apply, namely:

Policy OS1

Within urban green spaces defined on the proposals maps development will not be permitted unless it:

- (a) Retains their open character and*
- (b) Through design makes a positive contribution to the character and amenity of such areas.*

Developers and landowners are encouraged to prepare management plans for the improvement and upkeep of the urban green space, as part of development proposals which are acceptable under the policy.

- 3.26. The above UDP restrictions, combined with the assessment of the other potential alternative sites have led to the identification of the Kelvic land as the preferred solution for increasing parking provision. Further discussions between Metro and Council Officers are required to identify a solution and how it may best be secured. Members should also note that this would add further capital cost to the scheme.

- 3.27. If the station site could be released for use this may help to reduce costs through less onerous site conditions, although this is as yet not proven. It would also add significant further delay to the project and the issue of larger car park location would remain.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF METRO & COUNCIL OFFICERS

3.28. To address the issues highlighted in this report Officers and colleagues from Metro have developed an action plan which is broadly described below.

- a) The Project Board, comprising representatives of Metro, Council Officers, Northern Rail and Network Rail is being convened on a 2-weekly basis to steer the project and obtain buy-in to a cross-industry plan;
- b) Metro will complete assessment of the feasibility and impact of a compliant design solution with their technical advisors and Network Rail. A decision on whether to proceed with an application for derogation or take a compliant design forward is expected to be taken by February 2013.
- c) A series of specific cross-industry workshops in addition to the on-going Northern Hub timetabling and modelling workstream have been convened to resolve the timetabling issues in relation to 2tph and 3tph proposals. The first of these meetings was held on 12 December and was attended by representatives from Network Rail, Northern Rail, Metro and the Council. The initial workshop has confirmed that delivery of a 1tph service could be facilitated reasonably easily into the existing timetabling; increasing to 2tph or 3tph presents a number of challenges which relate not only to infrastructure investment but potentially the need for additional rolling stock and train crews. An initial conclusion has been that the work needs to focus on the Manchester all-stations services and Huddersfield/Bradford/Leeds services, on which further discussion on the implications is required. A conclusion on route infrastructure and impacts on timescales is expected in May 2013 following a further workshop exploring each of these issues in detail. It should be noted that consideration may need to be given by the Council to trade-offs between strategic objectives to facilitate the new station.
- d) Metro have undertaken an initial value engineering exercise on the budget estimate for the station and are continuing discussions with Network Rail and the Council on cost savings and additional funding routes. Based on experience of recent tenders for the stations at Apperley Bridge and Kirkstall Forge some savings on the estimated costs may be possible although quantification of these for use in revising the Low Moor estimate is difficult at this stage of design.
- e) Council Officers and Metro are exploring the possibility of adjusting the phasing of delivery of the car park and station to establish if use of incremental delivery with phased capital costs could establish an acceptable business case scenario which the DfT could approve. This includes discussions on how and where the additional car parking may be provided. A conclusion to this work is expected by the end of February 2013.

Overall the target is to propose a robust solution to take Low Moor rail station forward by May 2013.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.29. A report outlining the initial progress on dealing with the issues described previously relating to Low Moor Station was considered by the Environment & Waste Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 December 2012. In addition to noting the actions currently being taken to address the issues outlined in this report the committee made further recommendations of Officers, namely:
- a) That Metro Officers arrange to attend the Bradford South Neighbourhood Forum (or Special Neighbourhood Forum) to update the public on progress towards delivery of Low Moor Station at the earliest opportunity in 2013 (see paragraph 2.6 for actions arising from this recommendation).
 - b) That Officers take into consideration the comments raised by Members at the meeting in relation to other potential sites for car parking and involve local Ward Members in the project.

4.0 OPTIONS

- 4.1. Members can decide to approve the recommendations as detailed in this report, or amend them, or suggest alternative recommendations in which case technical advice will be provided by Officers on their proposals.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE APPRAISAL

Financial

- 5.1. A budget of £5.5m has been allocated by the West Yorkshire ITA for the delivery of the station at Low Moor. The latest estimated cost of delivery of the station currently stands at £7.2m (excluding £0.5m for dealing with the derogation issue and as yet unquantified additional capital costs for the larger car park) which exceeds the available budget. Whilst efforts are being taken to reduce the estimated cost of the scheme as outlined above these are unlikely to bring costs down to within the available budget. Previously committed funding remains ring-fenced.
- 5.2. Whilst the scope of the additional funding necessary to cover the increased costs is still being quantified the possibility of using additional budgets to contribute towards the delivery of the station is being examined by the Council and Metro Officers. One possible option could include reprioritising some of Bradford's Local Transport Plan monies in the next implementation plan.

Staff Resources

- 5.3. Resources to deliver the highway access improvements are available within the Council's existing staff resources.

6.0 LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1. Delivery of the planning aspects of the project and improvements to the highway network necessitated by the new station are within the Council's powers as Highway and Planning Authority.

7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1. Area Committee Action Plan Implications

The development and implementation of the proposals in this report support priorities within the Area Committee Action Plans.

7.2. Equal Rights

Design of the station car park, platform approach ramps to the station platforms and footbridge will be designed in accordance with the prevailing accessibility standards to afford equal opportunity to access the train service to all users.

7.3. Sustainability Implications

The Local Transport Plan and District Transport Strategy anticipate the development of sustainable transport modes (public transport, cycling and walking) and associated traffic management improvements. The introduction of a station at Low Moor will contribute to reducing carbon emissions as it will offer commuters and other travellers access to a fast and safe connection to locations served by the Caldervale line and other parts of the wider rail network.

7.4. Community Safety Implications

The Local Transport Plan and District Transport Strategy aim to control traffic movements within the community and to enhance safety for vulnerable road users. Any highway construction associated with the development of the new railway station would be designed to reduce conflicts between vehicles and vulnerable road users.

7.5. Human Rights Act

There are no direct Human Rights implications arising from this report.

7.6. Trade Union Implications

There are no Trade Union implications arising from this report.

8.0 NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1. That the Bradford South Area Committee note the contents of this report, specifically the continued commitment from Metro to delivery of a station at Low Moor.
- 9.2. That the Bradford South Area Committee endorse the current action plan of Council and Metro Officers, together with Industry partners towards continuing to progress the delivery of a railway station at Low Moor.
- 9.3. That a further report be presented to Members following completion of the industry discussions outlining the revised delivery programme, budget and proposals for any additional budget contributions necessary to secure delivery of Low Moor Station.

10.0 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Alternative Car Park Sites & UDP Implications

11.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 11.1. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration & Culture) to the meeting of the Environment & Waste Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 December, 2012 – Low Moor Rail Station Progress Report
- 11.2. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration & Culture) to the meeting of Bradford South Area Committee held on 16 March, 2011 – Low Moor Station Progress Report.
- 11.3. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration & Culture) to the meeting of Bradford South Area Committee held on 25 June, 2009 – Low Moor Rail Station.
- 11.4. Report of the Strategic Director (Regeneration) to the meeting of the Environment and Waste Management Improvement Committee held on 21 October 2008 – Low Moor Station

APPENDIX 'A': Alternative Car Park Sites and rUDP Implications

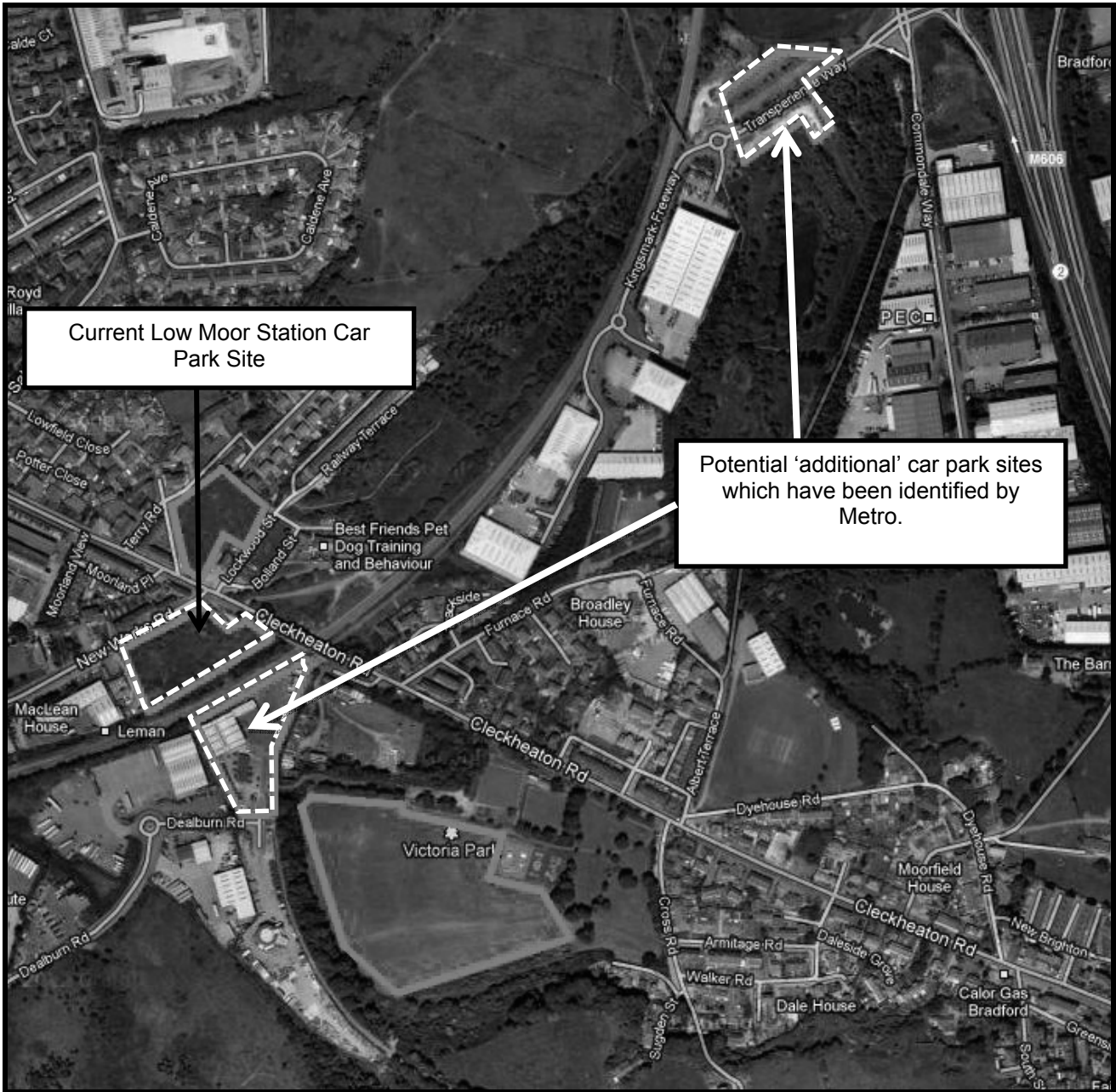


Figure 1: Location of Potential Alternative/Additional Car Park Sites

Site of the Former Low Moor Station – Implications of the rUDP

The following figures illustrate the interaction of the various rUDP policies in relation to the potential car park site on the former Low Moor Station land.

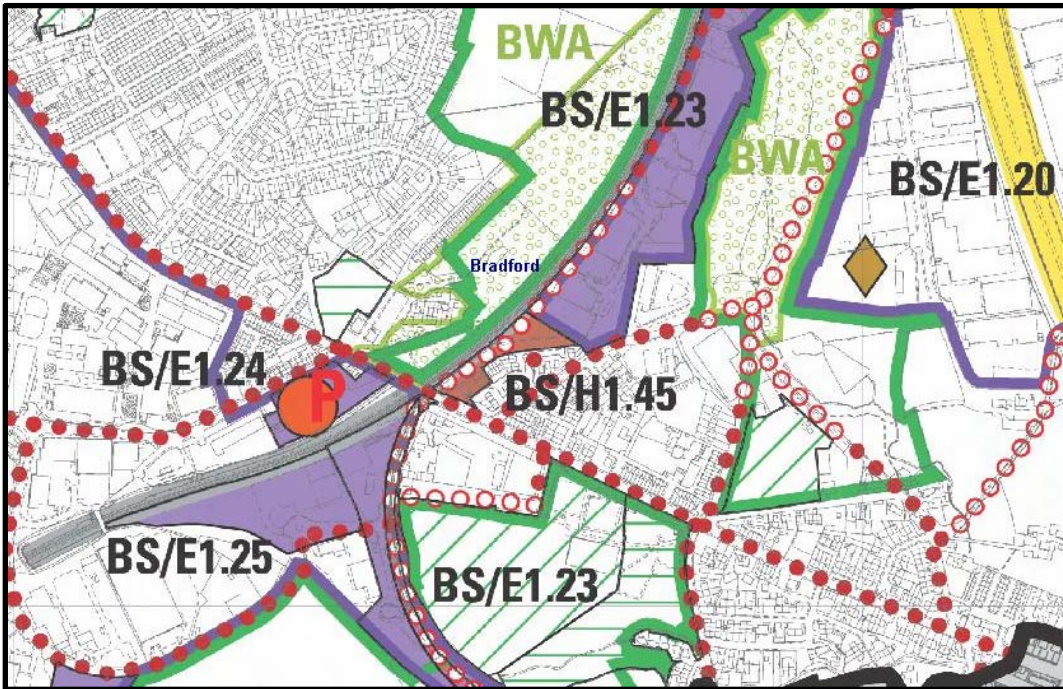
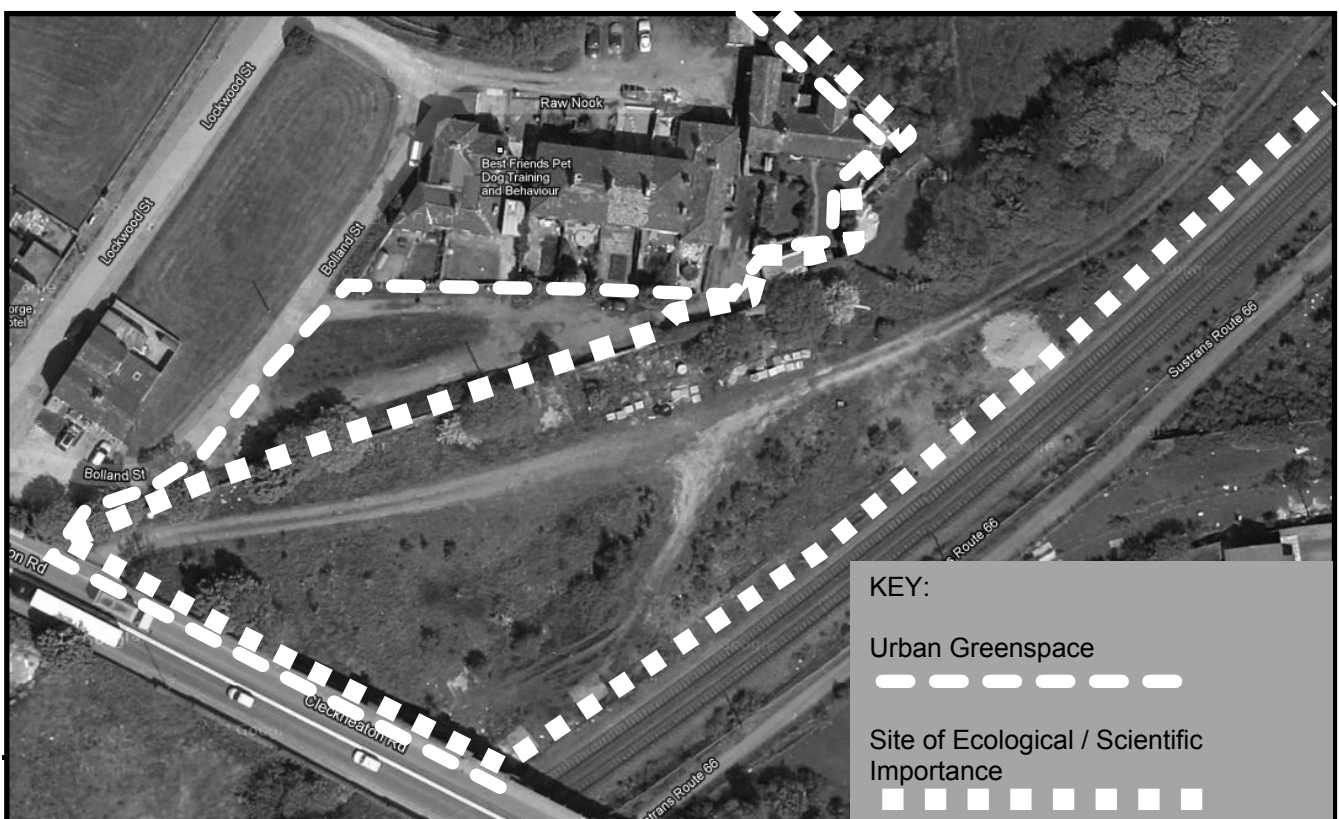


Figure 2: Extract from Replacement UDP Development Map

Figure 3: Overlay of UDP Policies on site of Former Low Moor Station



January 2013