

# Warrington Local Plan Examination

## Hearing Session Note Action 41 and 49

### Matter 8 and 12 – Funding for Town Centre Infrastructure

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19th October 2022

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Inspectors have asked the Council to provide information on its Levelling up Bid, Town Deal and the relationship with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) as far as Town Centre infrastructure is concerned.
- 1.2 This note provides the information as requested, together with other funding sources the Council has either secured or is in the process of bidding for to deliver town centre infrastructure.
- 1.3 The note also responds to the Inspectors' request to provide information relating to improvements in open space and recreation provision in the Town Centre.

## **2 Town Deal**

- 2.1 The Council has secured £22.1m from the Town Deal towards the following projects:
  - A cutting-edge, purpose-built bus depot, funded by the Town Deal, Warrington Borough Council and the Getting Building Fund. Work has just got under way on the depot, which by 2023 will have the capability to support an all-electric fleet of buses.
  - A digital enterprise hub, which will support digital innovation across all disciplines – including artificial intelligence, big data, virtual reality, ecommerce, gaming and automation.
  - A health and social care academy (HSCA), which will offer opportunities to build a social care workforce in Warrington fit for the future. Identified as a Town Deal fast-track project, the academy at Warrington & Vale Royal College will train the next generation of health and social care professionals in Warrington.
  - A health and wellbeing hub, where people will be able to access a range of services under one roof.
  - An advanced construction & civil engineering (ACCE) centre, which will support the engineering, construction, nuclear and allied industries.
  - A remastered cultural hub at the Pyramid, improving the arts centre to become a place that will nurture the arts professionals of the future, providing a modern and flexible creative space to collaborate, produce, present and perform
  - A comprehensive active travel programme, putting in place the right infrastructure to encourage more walking and cycling throughout the town centre.
- 2.2 The Bus Depot and the Health and Wellbeing Hub are included within the IDP. The other projects will be included in the IDP when it is next updated.
- 2.3 Further details are provided on the Council's web site:  
<https://www.warrington.gov.uk/my-town>

### **3 Levelling Up Bid**

3.1 The Council has submitted the following 3 'Levelling up' bids:

#### Bid 1

3.2 Bid 1 focuses on 'Levelling Up Health and Wellbeing in Warrington South', with plans to improve health and wellbeing through three cultural and leisure facilities:

- A new flagship, inclusive sports centre at Victoria Park, providing regionally-important accessible facilities, designed with people with disabilities in mind. Plans include a new indoor wheelchair sports hall, a new artificial grass pitch and a new Warrington Wolves training facility – supporting women's, men's, youth, physical and learning disability teams.
- Transformational improvements to Broomfield's Leisure Centre, reviving the facility and significantly enhancing the quality of the health and leisure offer. Plans include a new, high quality 20 metre swimming pool, designed to the latest accessibility standards, a new 'changing village' and a new fitness suite.
- A new Performing Arts Centre in Lymm, providing much-needed performance space for Warrington's thriving arts scene. Delivered in partnership with Lymm High School, the centre would also serve the east and south of Warrington and north Cheshire, providing performance and rehearsal space for drama, dance, and music.

3.3 All three facilities would be designed to enhance inclusivity in all forms, such as maximising access for people with disabilities, those who may not have their own transport, and groups who may be disengaged from sport or the arts.

3.4 The total value of these projects is £23.8million, with the Council bidding for £19.7million from the Levelling Up Fund.

#### Bid 2

3.5 Bid 2 focuses on 'Reconnecting the settlements' of Warrington North, with three new active travel routes implemented to improve traffic-free links between the rural settlements of Burtonwood, Winwick and Culcheth and urban Warrington. The routes would encourage modal shift and active lifestyles, helping improve the health and wellbeing of local people, as well as bringing environmental benefits.

3.6 In addition, two existing recreation facilities in Burtonwood would be upgraded:

- The derelict pavilion at Burtonwood Recreation Ground would be redeveloped into a landmark structure for accommodating multi-purpose community activities.
- Burtonwood Community Centre would be significantly extended to provide improved facilities for sports teams using the local pitches and additional space to support community activities.

3.7 The total value of these projects is 10.4million, with the Council bidding for £9.4million from the Levelling Up Fund.

### Bid 3

- 3.8 Bid 3 focuses on active transport and the council's 'First and Last mile' Connectivity Plan. It covers an east to west corridor through the centre of the urban area of Warrington, with the first and last mile approaches to the retail and commercial town centre at its heart. The project would remove barriers to movement along this strategically important spine route of the borough's cycle network, providing high quality and fully segregated facilities to allow safer and more direct walking and cycling journeys to take place to and from the town centre.
- 3.9 The total value of the project is £19.5million, with the Council bidding for £17.5million from the Levelling Up Fund.

### Relationship to the Town Centre, IDP and wider Local Plan Spatial Strategy

- 3.10 Bid 3 is specially focussed on the Town Centre and is included in the IDP. The improvements to Victoria Park under Bid 1 are within inner Warrington on the edge of the Town Centre and are also included in the IDP.
- 3.11 The other projects under Bid 1 and the projects under Bid 2 do not directly benefit the town centre. They do however, support the wider spatial strategy of the Local Plan. These projects are not currently included within the IDP but will be included when the IDP is next updated, subject to confirmation of funding. Further details are provided on the Council's web site: [Warrington submits £47m Levelling Up bid | warrington.gov.uk](https://warrington.gov.uk)

## **4 Other Funding Sources and investment opportunities**

### Time Square Development

- 4.1 The Time Square development was completed in 2020, and includes a new multiplex cinema, several restaurants, a new market hall, new council offices, a new 1160 space multi-storey car park and a new civic square. The Council invested £142 million on the development and has successfully led on its implementation.

### Funding for Bus Services

- 4.2 In terms of bus travel, the Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan has been allocated £16.2m of funding up to March 2025.
- 4.3 Of this funding, £9.9m is capital funding (topped up by £1.5m capital funding provided by the Council) for bus priority measures on the A49 Winwick Road southbound. This will improve bus services into the Town Centre.
- 4.4 £6.3m is provided for revenue funding - £4m of which is towards preserving bus services and putting on additional services and £2m towards fare reductions to £2 capped fares for adults, £1 for children (to be introduced from 1st January 2023) and the introduction of multi operator ticketing.

- 4.5 The Council has also secured £21.5m Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) funding to replace the entire Warrington's Own Buses fleet with electric buses.
- 4.6 The Council considers these measures will provide a transformational change in bus services across the Borough, including those serving the Town Centre. They provide a full package of measures to increase bus travel, achieve modal shift and help accommodate new development proposed in the Local Plan.
- 4.7 Further details are provided on the Council's web site:  
[Warrington secures £16m in Bus Back Better funding | warrington.gov.uk](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/news/2022/09/warrington-secures-16m-in-bus-back-better-funding)  
[ZEBRA funding paves way to all-electric bus fleet | warrington.gov.uk](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/news/2022/09/zebra-funding-paves-way-to-all-electric-bus-fleet)

#### Active Travel Fund

- 4.8 The Council has secured funding in Active Travel Fund Round 1 (£130k), Round 2 (£650k) and Round 3 (£750K). The Council is currently preparing a bid under Active Travel Fund 4 for a 3 year capital allocation for 2022-2025 with the bid due in by the end of 2023.
- 4.9 A number of the specific schemes delivered under this fund have provided pedestrian and cycle improvements to and within the Town Centre. Further details are provided on the Council's web site: [Active Travel Fund | warrington.gov.uk](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/news/2022/09/active-travel-fund)

#### DfT Annual Capital Allocation

- 4.10 The Council receives an annual capital allocation from the DfT. For 2022/23 this is £1.505m for the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) and is being used for a variety of highway and transport infrastructure. A further allocation of £2.216m has been provided for highway maintenance (bridges, roads, pavements, signals, bus stops).
- 4.11 The funding is Borough-wide but a proportion of funding has previously been spent in and around the Town Centre and it is likely that further funds will be spent in and around the Town Centre in the future.

#### Town Centre 'Investment Zone'

- 4.12 It should be noted that the Council has submitted an expression of interest to the Government for the Bank Quay Gateway area within the Town Centre to be considered as an 'Investment Zone'. Investment Zones are designated sites where businesses will benefit from time-limited tax incentives and streamlined planning rules to deliver investment, create jobs and build new homes.

## **5 Open Space and Recreation Provision**

- 5.1 As detailed in sections 2 and 3 above, the Council has secured through the Town Deal and is bidding via the Levelling Up Fund for specific projects to improve open space, recreation and public realm provision in and around the Town Centre. Further details on recent improvements to these types of schemes in and around the Town Centre are provide below:

<b>Action 49: Town Centre Infrastructure</b>					
<b>Information relating to recent improvements in open space, recreation and public realm provision</b>					
<b>Open Space Audit Reference</b>	<b>POS Site Name</b>	<b>Description of Improvements</b>	<b>Date improvements completed (Month/Year)</b>	<b>Funding amount and Source (£106/Grant)</b>	<b>Location</b>
47	Bank Park	Demolition of existing pavilion and construction of a new pavilion, new terrace area; replacement of grass bowling greens with all-weather bowling greens (x2); and installation of flood lighting.	June 2016	CCFP	Town Centre
47	Bank Park	Refurbishment and enhancements to existing equipped play area to upgrade to a NEAP.	March 2016	WREN £134,642	Town Centre
172	Brickfields Park	Refurbishment and enhancements to existing equipped play area to upgrade to a LEAP.	2017	WREN £50,000 CCFP £131,000	Inner Warrington
n/a	Springfield Street / Palmyra Square Sth	Environmental improvement works, tree planting and associated public realm improvements.	December 2018	CCFP £505,952	Town Centre
n/a	Town Hall Sankey Street	Public realm improvements outside the Town Hall gates.	October 2019	CCFP	Town Centre
906	Warrington Bridge War Memorial	River Bank stabilisation and improvement of Cenotaph and associated public realm.	October 2019	CCFP £1,867,624	Town Centre
51	Causeway Park	Refurbishment and enhancements to existing equipped play area and provision of gym stations.	2019	WREN £50,000 CCFP £90,000	Inner Warrington
101	St Elphin's Park	Pavilion refurbishment	2019	CCFP £100,000	Inner Warrington
31	Whitecross Play Zone (Sankey Grn)	Refurbishment and enhancements to existing equipped play area to upgrade to a NEAP.	2019	WREN £50,000 CCFP £80,000	Inner Warrington
79	Victoria Park	Bowling pavilion extension.	2019	CCFP £150,000	Inner Warrington
50	Marshall Gardens	Environmental improvements; including tree/scrub removal and tree/wildflower replanting, path renewal, seating provision, memorial walk, gate refurbishment and signage.	March 2022	CCFP	Town Centre

CCFP = Council Capital Funding Programme

WREN = FCC Community Action Fund (formally WREN)