

**Agenda Item No:** 10  
**Report To:** Joint Transportation Board  
**Date:** 14 September 2010  
**Report Title:** Ashford Station Forecourt Update



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**Summary:**

This report updates members on the current position with the design and approval of the GAF3 funded Station Forecourt Improvements Scheme. Progress is being made to try to accommodate stakeholder's views into the scheme prior to approval by the Executive.

**Key Decision:** NO

**Affected Wards:** Ashford Town Centre Wards

**Recommendations:** **The Board is asked to note the progress being made to accommodate stakeholder's views into the scheme design.**

**Policy Overview:** Improving the 'welcome to Ashford' message to those arriving in Ashford at the Station and in particular the new high speed train services, is a key economic driver encourage investment in the town centre. The Ashford Town Centre Area Action Plan promotes a vision of 'a lively new Station Square to present a welcoming and contemporary face to those arriving in Ashford.'

**Financial Implications:** The project is being entirely funded by GAF3, and the payment of the fund for 2010/11 has now been received in full by the Council who are the accountable body.

**Risk Assessment** YES – being completed shortly to take full account of the design changes

**Equalities Impact Assessment** YES – being completed shortly to take full account of the design changes.

**Other Material Implications:** A small parcel of land is required for the scheme and is in the process of being purchased from the Council by Network Rail. The remaining land for the scheme is in the ownership of Network Rail except for a small strip of land owned by SEEDA along the northern edge.

**Exemption Clauses:**

**Background Papers:** Plans of the latest design option(s) will be displayed at the meeting

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## **Report Title: Ashford Station Forecourt Update**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members of the Board with the progress being made to accommodate stakeholder's views into the design.

### **Issue to be Decided**

2. There are no issues to be decided at this stage although Members of the Board are invited to comment on the progress being made with the scheme.

### **Background**

3. Following comments raised about the design of the scheme at the Transport Forum by stakeholders which were considered by this Board at its last meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> June, a site meeting was held with Members on 1 July 2010. This scheme has also been reviewed by the Executive on 8 July 2010 and 12 August 2010.
4. The Executive agreed at their meeting on 12 August 2010 to seek revisions to the scheme to better reflect the views of stakeholders and that this review should be overseen on behalf of the Executive by Cllr Clokie for Strategic Planning and Cllr Clarkson for Environmental Services. Subsequent meetings have been held with Councillors Clokie and Clarkson and the key parties to the scheme namely, Southeastern trains as franchise holder for the operation and maintenance of the station, Ashford's Future Company, who are responsible for delivering the scheme on behalf of partners, Optimum who are Project Managing the scheme, and Council officers. A number of options for changing the scheme to better reflect the views of affected stakeholders were considered and options are to be discussed at a meeting of key stakeholders on 9<sup>th</sup> September. The outcome of these discussions together with a plan of an emerging preferred option will hopefully be available for display at the Board.
5. It is the intention that following this key stakeholder meeting, consideration by this Board and the Ashford's Future Partnership Board also on 14<sup>th</sup> September, the proposals can be drawn up in more detail and fully costed prior to consideration and decision by the Executive on 14 October.
6. It has been confirmed by the Homes and Communities agency who are responsible for the GAF3 funding, that budget spend can be carried forward beyond 31 March 2011. Subject to approval of an acceptable scheme and costs being contained within budget, it is proposed to award a contract such that the scheme can be delivered and completed by early Summer 2011.

### **Implications Assessment**

7. Ashford's Future Partnership Board is considering the role of Ashford's Future Company in their role as client for this project in relation to VAT liabilities.

Subject to consideration of a case put forward by the Company by the HMRC, if a decision is reached that AFCo is not deemed to be a public sector company and cannot claim back VAT, then an alternative client for the project will need to be sought, most likely to be either of the local authorities.

## **Handling**

8. A report will be made available for comment by the Council's Management Team prior to consideration by the Executive on 14 October.

## **Conclusion**

9. Good progress has been achieved over the past few weeks to try and address the concerns made by stakeholders, including arrangements for the consideration of options at a stakeholder meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> September. Whilst it is unlikely that all views will be able to be fully accommodated, there is now a clear aim to achieve consensus around striking a better balance between providing a quality public realm space and a quality transport interchange.
10. Whilst there are still some issues to be resolved, the funding has now been confirmed which, subject to approval, will allow the scheme to proceed to contract and completion.

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

11. Councillors Clokie and Clarkson on behalf of the Executive, are aware of, and have given helpful advice to the options now being considered and are now fully engaged with progressing this scheme to a satisfactory conclusion.

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