



Reading 3rd Thames crossing update, January 2020





Recap on work done to date

- A draft Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) was prepared by Wokingham BC in June 2017
- A SOBC is the very first step to undertake in securing grant funding from the Treasury, the process is very rigid and there is significant guidance telling bidders what information is required
- The SOBC was submitted to the DfT for consideration, but was not successful due to an over subscribed budget and other schemes being prioritised over it
- The SOBC case looked at the impacts a bridge would have including on the environment and transport.
- The DfT is currently considering the SOBC



Recent work

- Wokingham arranged for Balfour Beatty to undertake a feasibility report to look at:
 - Whether it would be technically feasible to construct a new bridge in the proposed location; and
 - To establish some more accurate costs.
- As part of the report, some images were produced by Balfour Beatty:
 - these were intended to demonstrate what the basic construction methods they had selected could look like – and are not truly reflective of the final design as much more work is required to establish a final design.
- The report concluded that more work would be required to progress the scheme and the current estimate to build the bridge and go through the relevant planning process is £150 million.



Image from the Balfour Beatty Report





Image from the Balfour Beatty Report





Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) concerns

- OCC officers read over the Balfour Beatty report and raised a number of concerns with it including:
 - Further work required to finish the SOBC before moving onto OBC.
 - Design / Cost Estimates – OCC felt further clarification was needed on a number of the design elements as well understanding the current cost estimates.
 - Modelling – OCC had concerns that the transport modelling done previously is now out of date and would need updating.
 - Scheme package – a crossing on its own is unlikely to solve the problem and may have impacts beyond – therefore OCC want to see a package of measure to fully address the potential impacts.
 - Planning – The scheme would cut across three (top tier) authorities OCC, Reading BC and Wokingham BC. With roughly 85% of the scheme in OCC. It is unclear how planning could be achieved across boundaries
 - Ownership and maintenance – OCC is currently unwilling to take on the ownership of the structure or the maintenance associated with it due to the significant financial implications of this. This is a key issue to be bottomed out.

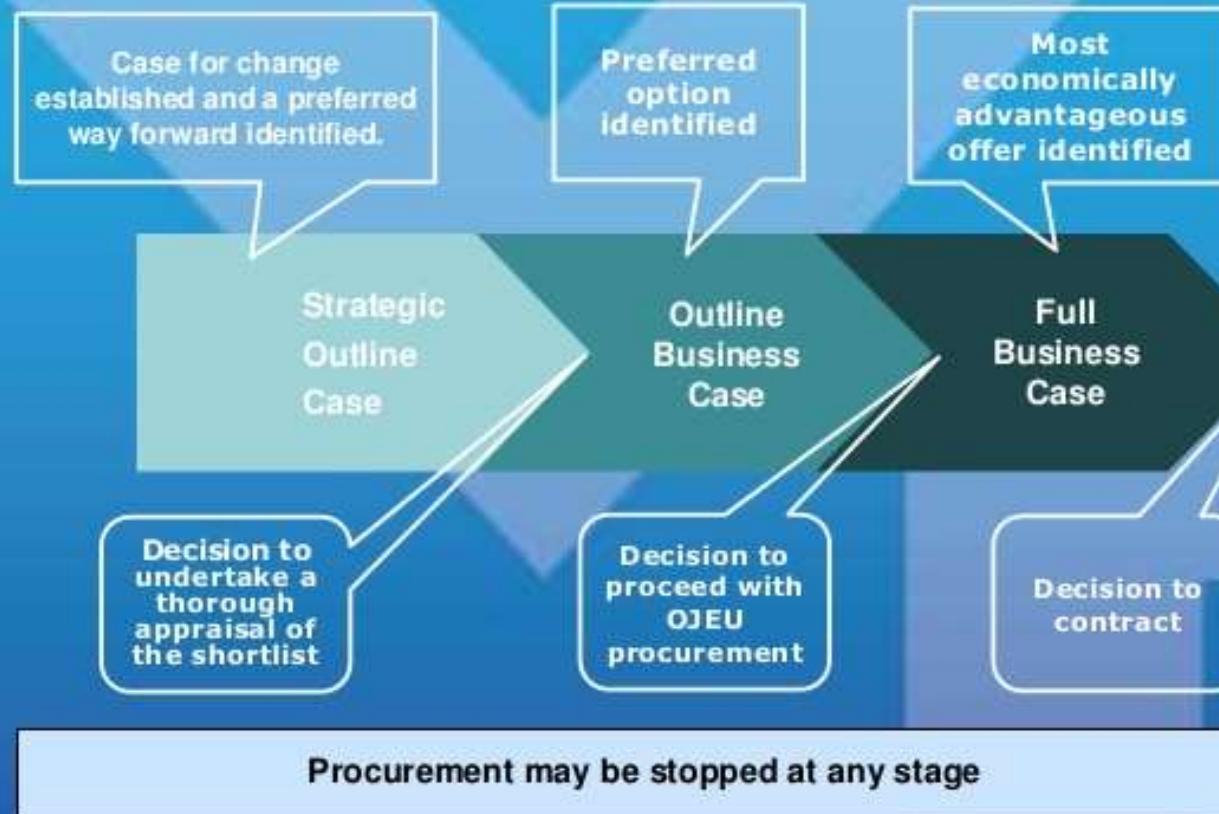


Moving forward

- Wokingham BC would like to move towards the next stage of the Business Case process – The Outline Business Case (OBC).
- Wokingham BC, Reading BC, Oxfordshire CC, South Oxfordshire DC, Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council have an officer working group named the Cross Thames Transport Group (CTTG). This is also attended by the TVB LEP.
- On 18th October 2019 there was an MP's summit hosted by Matt Rodda MP and John Howell MP.
 - At this meeting officers were tasked at moving the project forward, including making an acknowledgement that infrastructure both north and south of the bridge needs to be look at, and included in a package if required to mitigate the impact of the bridge.
 - It was agreed that further work was required to answer a number of outstanding questions as well a need to identify match funding to support progression to the OBC
 - TVB LEP offered £25k as a contribution toward the match funding.



Stages of Business Case Development



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OXFORDSHIRE
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CTTG Officer Meetings

- At subsequent CTTG officer meetings a way forward has been discussed and that is to move towards an Outline Business Case.
- This will allow the concerns that OCC has raised to be properly assessed as part of the OBC process and if successful a bid for funding to undertake this work could be forthcoming (bid amount is £800,000).
- DfT have raised a number of questions linked to the SOBC and release of £800,000 and want to discuss answers.
- OCC, Reading B, Wokingham BC and TVB LEP have each put in £25,000 totalling £100,000 for further work.

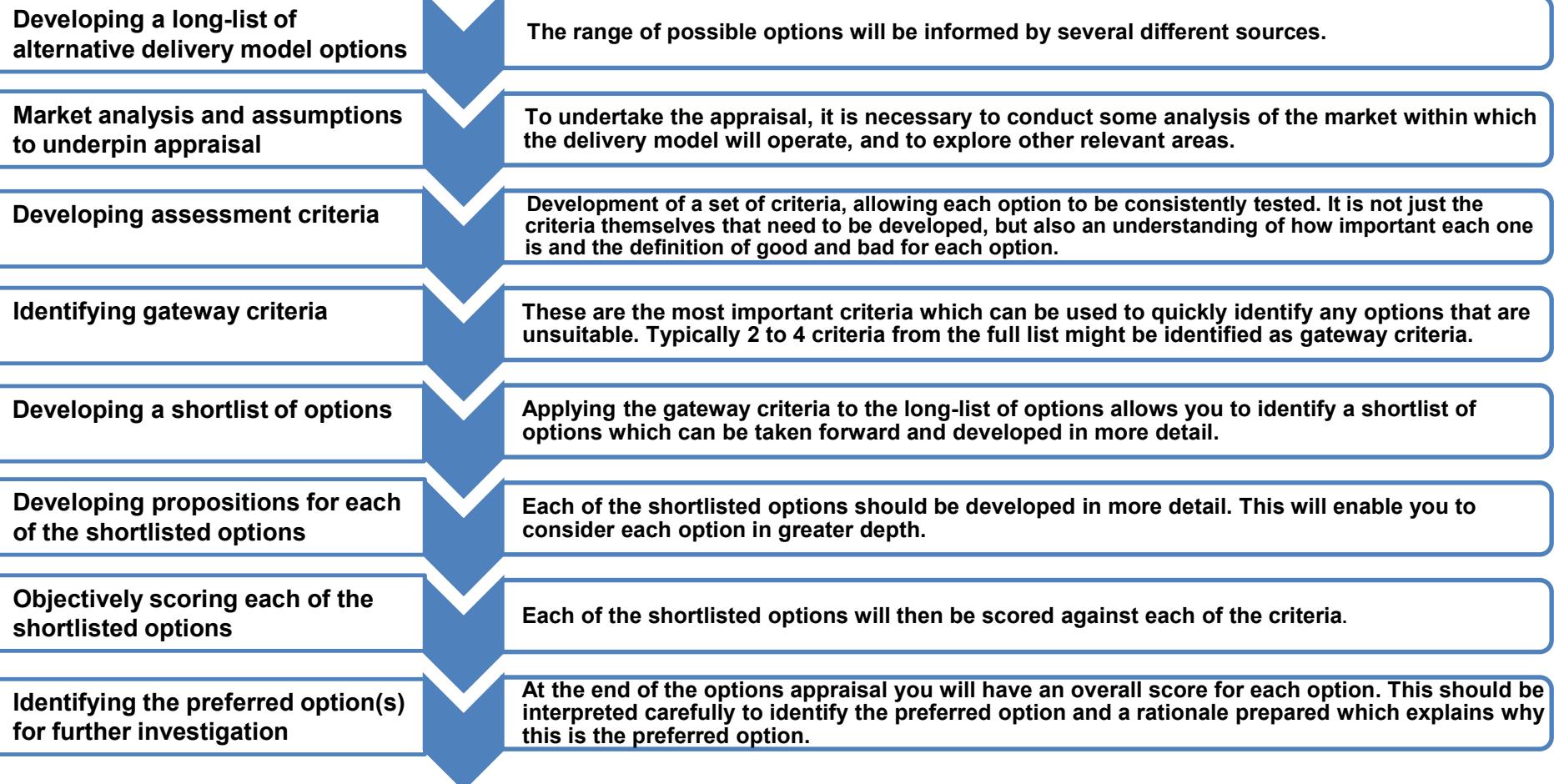


Further Work

1. Production of a "stage 1 Options Appraisal Report (OAR) in time for the next MP's summit in March
2. Modelling responses and discussion with DfT
3. Mitigation (north and south of the river) – to be investigated further following DfT discussion
4. Working with Highways England
5. Response to DfT regarding Governance and particularly discussion on how the CPO would work for a scheme crossing the boundaries – for this we will get specialist counsel advice



Options Appraisal Report (OAR) Process





OCC's Current Position

- Officers are happy that concerns raised are being listened to and measures are being put in place to address concerns.
- The OAR will look at lots of options for capacity improvements for Reading's current crossing capacity issues, including non-river crossing and public transport, walking & cycling options.
- We wanted to get specialist legal advice for planning and this will be undertaken in the next couple of months.
- If the funding bid for moving to OBC is successful then this will be used to look at updating the previous transport modelling work done as well as potential mitigation measures in South Oxfordshire (and south of the bridge).
- OCC officers are satisfied that the CTTG is committed to undertaking the relevant assessments required, and also that OCC has a say in and is part of the process.



Working together

- The CTTG will continue to meet monthly.
- The next MPs summit will be held at the end of March.
- Discussions will be on-going.
- Whilst there is still a lot more evidence and assessment work to be undertaken, significant progress has been made in the last few months – through working together.



Questions?