

AGENDA ITEM 10**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL****CABINET****19th APRIL 2016****CYNON GATEWAY SOUTH – MOUNTAIN ASH SOUTHERN CROSS VALLEY LINK****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (COUNCILLOR ANDREW MORGAN)****AUTHOR: Roger Waters, Service Director Highways and Streetcare (01443 494702)****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on developments related to the major highways project; Cynon Gateway South – Mountain Ash Southern Cross Valley Link.
- 1.2 This report also highlights the main scheme development events and the broad timescales for these elements.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
 - Notes the progress on developing detailed proposals for the Cross Valley Link and the forthcoming elements of work that will be taking place.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The project represents a significant investment by this Council in key transportation infrastructure that has received early funding support from the Welsh Government. It is important that local authority Members are kept informed of progress on this initiative.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 On the 28th October 2015, Council approved Investment Priorities under the Mid Year Review initiated by Cabinet. This identified an additional £3.6M of funding towards Transport Infrastructure for projects to improve accessibility, reduce congestion, encourage sustainable travel and improve road safety, providing a total Council investment in Transport Infrastructure of £4M.

4.2 On 24th November 2015, Cabinet approved the Supplementary Capital Programme for Highways, Transportation and Strategic Projects which committed £1.95M towards the southern cross-valley link at Mountain Ash.

4.3 The funding was committed to;

“develop proposals and commence land assembly to deliver the long standing aspiration to improve access to Mountain Ash and relieve growing congestion on the A4059 strategic route and associated town bridge junctions”.

The report noted that the investment would enhance opportunities to seek third party funding and this has proven to be the case with the Welsh Government accepting a bid and committing Local Transport Fund grant in the sum of £0.098M for 2015/16 and £0.300M for 2016/17.

4.4 This report describes these proposals in more detail including the various stages of scheme development and potential timescales.

5. DETAILS OF PROPOSALS

5.1 The proposal is a long standing aspiration that has had the benefit of previous planning consents but has hitherto failed to progress through detailed design and construction due to funding constraints. A plan showing the scheme layout is included at Appendix A.

5.2 The works will involve the construction of a new bridge from Cwm Cynon (North) Industrial Estate over the Afon Cynon and the Cynon Valley Rail Line. The scheme will effectively create a new link between the A4059 to the east and the B4257 to the west. The bridge will need to span the live railway and this will form a significant constraint to scheme development and delivery involving close liaison with Network Rail including asset protection agreements and consideration of future electrification of the Valley Lines rail network.

- 5.3 Following comprehensive traffic surveys and analysis, it is clear that the proposal has the potential to reduce congestion on the key junctions in the area and reduce journey times on strategic and local routes. The analysis that has been undertaken has considered current and future traffic scenarios to simulate traffic levels. It anticipates that the bridge will carry over 1700 vehicles in each of the morning and afternoon peak hours in 2030.
- 5.4 Following funding approval, the Council commissioned Capita to develop a programme for scheme development and to deliver the packages of work necessary to take the project forward. The main elements of work are:
- Topographic/Drainage/Utilities surveys
 - Ground Investigation
 - Ecology
 - Highways Design
 - Structures Design
 - Landscape Design
 - Noise
 - Planning
 - Flood Consequences Assessment
 - Public Consultation
 - Compulsory Purchase Order.
- 5.5 From a land perspective, dialogue has been opened with local residents and land owners and legal processes will be progressed to allow Compulsory Purchase subject to statutory processes should the need arise.
- 5.6 In terms of site activity; the following activities will commence as indicated below:
- Topographical/etc surveys – early April commencement; circa 4 weeks duration
 - Ecological Surveys – March commencement; circa 11 months duration (related to seasonal survey requirements)
 - Ground Investigation – late April commencement; circa 4 weeks duration
- These surveys will capture technical data which will inform technical analyses and generate reports which will subsequently inform scheme design and mitigation measures.
- 5.7 The key milestone for approvals will be submission of a planning application which is envisaged during late November 2016. The issue of planning consent will be the trigger for legal initiation of the Compulsory Purchase Order process.

- 5.8 Subject to progressing in accordance with the current draft programme, a copy of which is included at Appendix B, the construction phase should start during the latter part of the 2017/18 financial year with a construction period envisaged at this stage to be around 18 months.
- 5.9 It should be stressed that this is an initial estimate of programmed activities and timescales which will be further informed by the technical data secured from the numerous surveys that have been commissioned.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time. The screening form can be accessed by contacting the author of the report.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Public consultation will be undertaken prior to submission of a planning application and as part of the planning consultation process. There is a reasonable level of public awareness of the scheme due to the project having secured planning consent in the past.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The project development will be stage gated to allow ongoing review of financial implications as the scheme evolves and further detailed requirements become clear. At the present time the Council has committed £1.95M of funding to the scheme. In addition, Welsh Government has committed £0.398M; comprising £0.098M for 2015/16 and £0.300M for 2016/17, via Local Transport Fund grant. Further bids will be submitted for this annual grant and any other available funding opportunities as the project progresses.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The Council is seeking to enhance the strategic and local highway network in accordance with its responsibilities and powers as the local highway authority. The Council will need to undertake a number of statutory processes in order to deliver the project.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 10.1 The Council's Corporate Plan cites '*Economy – building a strong economy*' as a key priority. The proposal will have a significant impact on improving accessibility and connectivity which is recognised as a fundamental factor in linking the labour market with employment opportunities and supporting economic activity. The scheme will ease congestion on the local and strategic highway network. Congestion adds cost to the economy and inhibits economic activity.
- 10.2 The project directly addresses the Corporate Plan commitment to invest in highways infrastructure and to improve the transport network.
- 10.3 The bridge will create a new access on foot or cycle to the wider active travel network which will promote more active and healthy lifestyles.

11. CONCLUSION

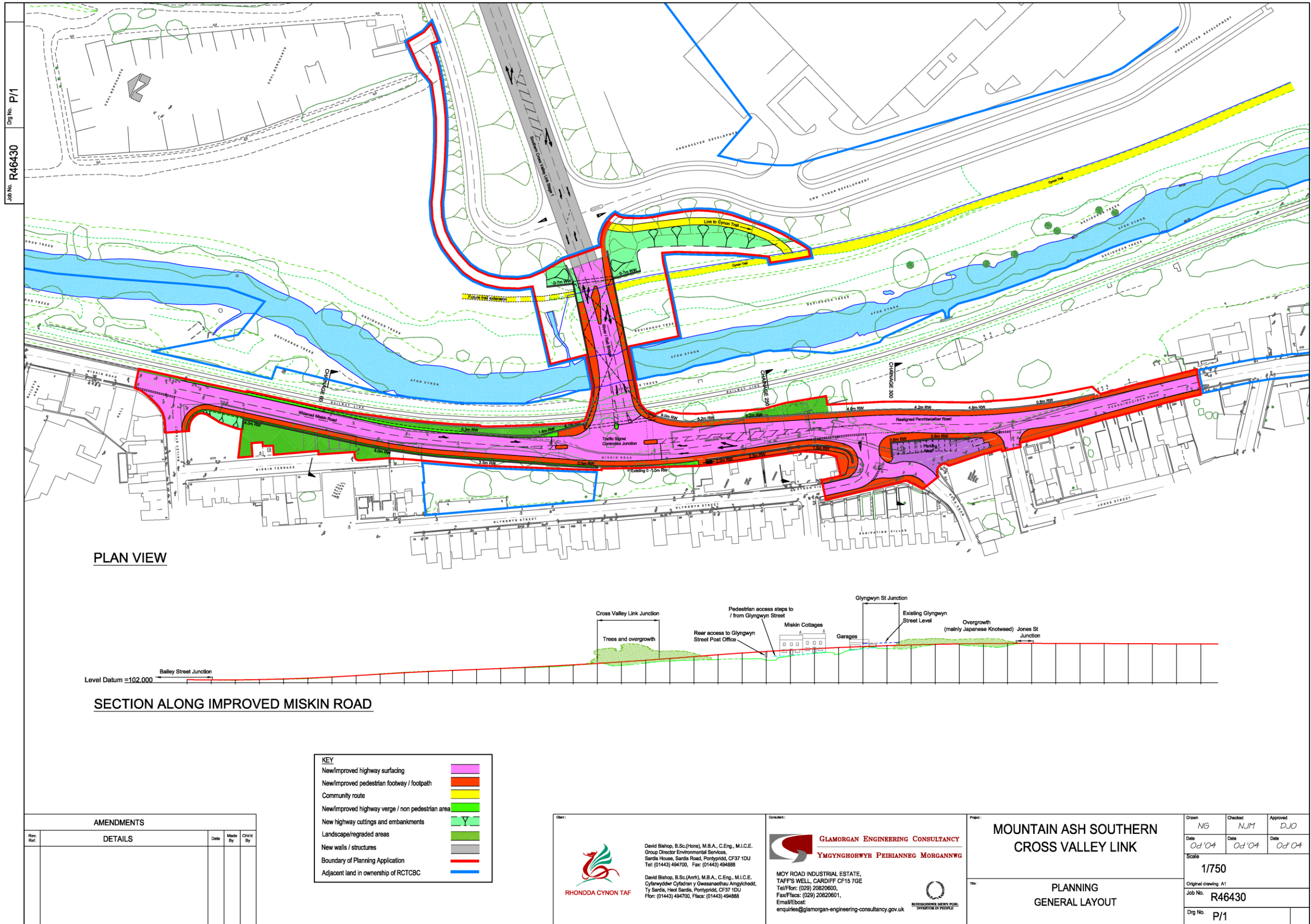
- 11.1 The project offers the opportunity to improve accessibility and connectivity in an area where limited cross valley linkage causes significant congestion on the local and strategic transport network affecting all highway users, including commercial delivery services and public transport.
- 11.2 The committed funding from the Council and Welsh Government will support development of the scheme and inform future bids for further funding via the annual grant approval process and any other available funding opportunities that may arise.

Appendix A – General Layout Plan

Appendix B – Indicative Scheme Development Programme

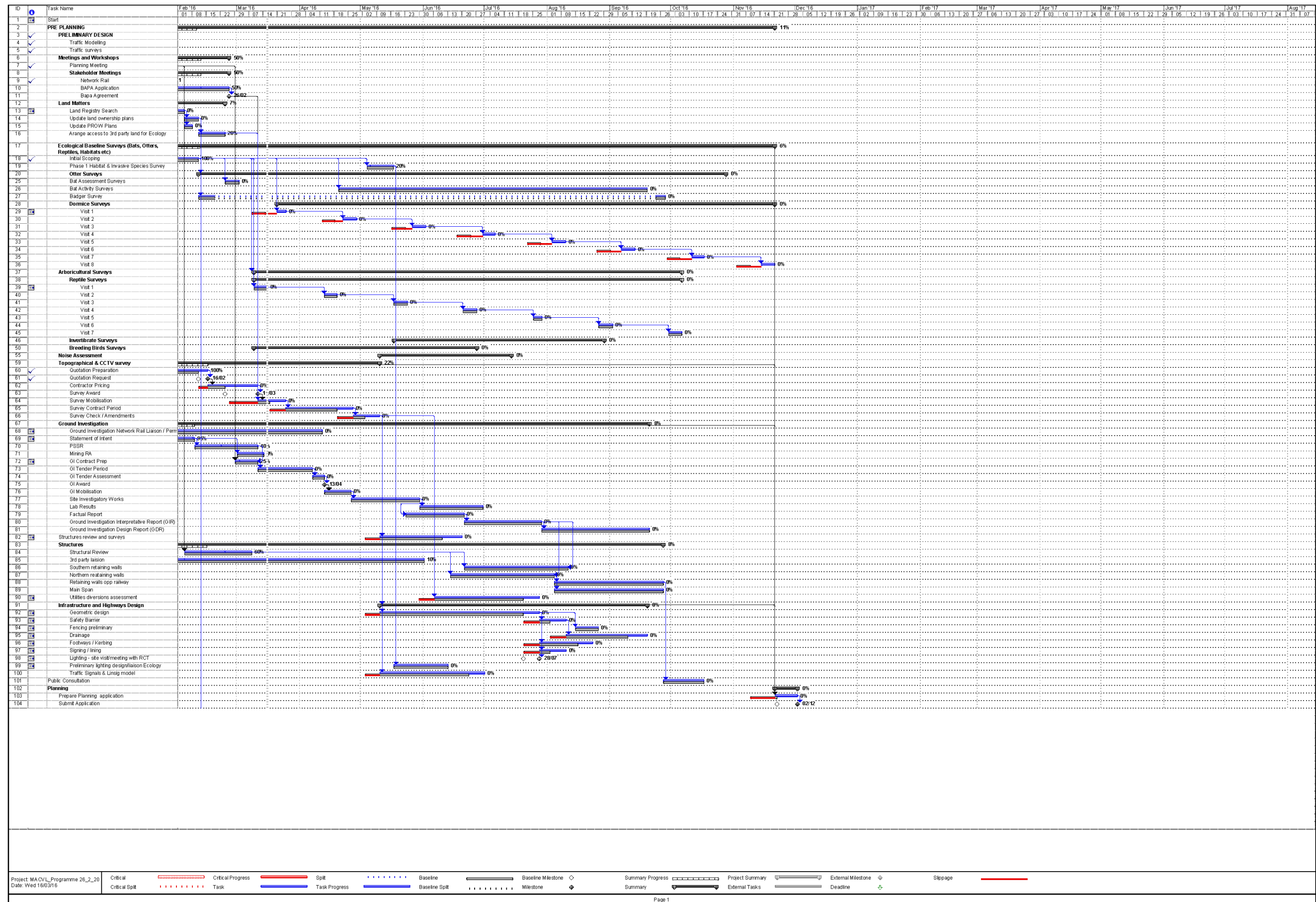
This page is left Blank.

Appendix A – General Layout Plan



This page is left Blank.

Appendix B – Indicative Scheme Development Programme



This page is left Blank.