

Cabinet

12 November 2020

Emscote Road Corridor Improvements

Recommendations

That Cabinet

1) Recommends that Council:

- Approves the allocation of £6.645m from the Capital Investment Fund to the Emscote Road Corridor Improvements Scheme;
- Adds the scheme to the capital programme at a total cost of £10.239m; and
- Agrees that the allocation from the Capital Investment Fund is reduced by the amount of any alternative external funding secured in the future.

2) Subject to Council approving recommendation 1), authorises the Strategic Director for Communities to invite tenders and award all necessary contracts, on terms acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources, and secure all necessary consents and take all such other steps as the Strategic Director for Communities considers necessary to deliver the scheme.

1. Description of the Scheme

- 1.1 The Emscote Road (A445) corridor is a key route between Warwick and Leamington which currently suffers significant congestion during peak hours due to capacity constraints at key junctions. Delays caused to bus services and the inadequacy of current cycling and pedestrian provision make sustainable transport alternatives unattractive.
- 1.2 A further issue on this corridor is Portobello bridge; a listed structure that suffers with a number of long-standing issues. The bridge is structurally weak, and one footway has been closed, narrowing the existing carriageway, and this encumbers both pedestrians and cyclists. Maintenance work to the bridge is essential and can be delivered as part of this scheme.
- 1.3 The Warwick District Local Plan (2011-2029) sets out allocations for over 17,000 new houses and demand for 66 hectares of new employment land. This includes nearly 7,000 new houses and 11.7 hectares of employment land within the Warwick and Leamington urban area. The level of allocated development will increase pressure on the key routes in that area, including

the Emscote Road Corridor, which will increase congestion and journey times if not mitigated.

- 1.4 The Strategic Transport Assessment (STA4, April 2014), produced to support the Local Plan, identified mitigation at several junctions along this corridor, namely Emscote Road/Greville Road and Princes Drive/Warwick New Road junctions, as strategically essential to enable Local Plan growth to come forward. The modelling work underpinning the STA demonstrates that these junctions are under pressure.
- 1.5 The 2015 Warwick and Leamington Transport Strategy, commissioned by Warwickshire County Council and produced by Atkins highlighted how the quality of sustainable transport infrastructure currently acts as a barrier to the use of alternative modes. The Study concluded that comprehensive area-wide improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure to prioritise the movement of pedestrians and cyclists as part of a sustainable transport package would generate a 7% modal shift away from cars during the morning peak hour and deliver 13-20% journey time savings along the Emscote Road Corridor specifically.
- 1.6 The proposed scheme will deliver a segregated cycle superhighway along the Emscote Road Corridor, providing high-quality, safe, direct and continuous cycle and pedestrian provision connecting the town centres of Warwick and Leamington.
- 1.7 The scheme will also deliver improvements to key junctions along this corridor, namely Greville Road, Rugby Road, Princes Drive/Warwick New Road, Warwick Place and Regent Street/A452, along with the essential upgrade to Portobello bridge.
- 1.8 The scheme builds on WCC investment in cycling routes and active travel, for example the recently funded K2L scheme, by improving the quality and connectivity of Warwickshire's cycle network. It also aligns with central government's bold vision for cycling and walking as set out in their 'Gear Change' document published earlier this year.
- 1.9 Designs for the scheme have been drawn up by Sustrans, who have significant experience in delivering similar infrastructure across the UK, and the viability of the scheme designs have been assessed in a bespoke microsimulation traffic model by WCC framework modelling consultants Vectos Microsim.
- 1.10 In July this year central government published Local Transport Note 1/20 setting out standards for Cycle Infrastructure Design. Sustrans were cognisant of the development of this document pre-publication and so the scheme has been designed with the current standards in mind.
- 1.11 Delivery of the scheme will enable a greater modal shift towards active travel modes, capitalising on the increased interest in walking and cycling brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. This will lead to a reduction in traffic

congestion and increased network efficiency that will reduce journey times for all modes. This, in turn, will reduce transport costs for businesses and improve access to town centres.

- 1.12 The scheme will facilitate the strategic objectives of the Warwick District Local Plan by enabling the allocated housing and employment growth to come forward. Without the scheme, capacity constraints will act as a barrier to economic growth in Warwick District.
- 1.13 The uptake in active travel modes will promote healthier communities and improve sustainable access to leisure facilities such as Warwick Leisure Centre.
- 1.14 The improvements to Portobello bridge will bring the structure to current safety and design standards, reduce ongoing maintenance costs and improve network resilience.

2. Capital Investment Fund (CIF) Overview and Evaluation

- 2.1 Under existing capital approval rules agreed by Members, all CIF allocations and subsequent additions to the capital programme require approval by Cabinet (and Council if the cost of the scheme exceeds £2 million), unless an urgent decision is required which can be taken by the Leader under delegated powers.
- 2.2 Services submit detailed bids to the CIF for evaluation by the Fund’s Technical Panel. The Panel, consisting of experts from Finance, Legal, Property, Project Management Office and Directorate Service Teams evaluate and score each individual bid out of 100 based on the bid’s strengths in each of the following key areas:
 - Delivery of the Council’s Strategic Objectives;
 - Alignment with the investment criteria of the capital strategy;
 - Achievability, quality of evidence base, rational evaluation and challenge of options, financial viability and risk; and
 - Sustainability, climate change and environmental impact.
- 2.3 Technical Panel Findings

The Panel scored the bid as follows:

Delivery of the Strategic Objective (out of 10)	8.4
Alignment with the investment criteria of the capital strategy (out of 40)	32.8
Achievability, quality of evidence base, rational evaluation and challenge of options, financial viability and risk (out of 40)	27.2
Sustainability, climate change and environmental impact (out of 10)	9.0
Total Score	77.4

The following key points were raised by the Panel:

- Overall the business case offers a good solution to an identified problem in the area but there are risks associated with the complexity of the project. It is for this reason and in order for Members to fully understand the risks and implications of the scheme, given its size, complexity and visibility to the public, that is being brought forward to Cabinet/Council as a stand-alone report, rather than as part of the quarterly report on CIF that is elsewhere on today's agenda.
- Contingencies were estimated on a section-by-section basis by Sustrans, who have significant experience in delivering infrastructure of this kind on transport corridors. The cost estimates were checked by the Council's Engineering Design Services (EDS) Team and revised downwards to what is considered to be realistic costs based on their local knowledge. The construction and utility contingencies calculated by EDS were 40% of the scheme cost. The original Sustrans costs and contingencies were considerably higher, over 60%. In light of these differences the Panel carefully scrutinised the robustness of the bid and were satisfied with the information provided. However, the overall financial envelope remains a risk and it is recommended this risk is reflected in the oversight and scrutiny of progress through the Major Schemes Board in Communities Directorate.
- Portobello bridge is a listed bridge. A consequence of this is that the design of proposals and restoration works to the existing listed structure will need to be sensitive to its status and are subject to Listed Building Consent. Archaeological concerns around the listed bridge are a risk, however, significant groundworks are not expected to be undertaken so there will be minimal disruption in the area. The expectation is that there will be a few small piles at specific locations near the existing bridge footings.
- £1.429m of funding for the scheme is expected to be from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This funding is unsecured. However, Emscote Rd is a top priority scheme for Warwick District Council (who approve the allocation of CIL funding) and is part of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Warwick District Council has given a letter of support to the scheme and agreed to £1.660m of CIL funding, but the CIL process requires the Council to apply for this funding every year.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The total cost of the scheme is estimated to be £10.239m. The Council has previously approved £1.5m capital funding towards the upgrading of Portobello bridge and £1.660m of CIL funding has been notionally allocated to the scheme by Warwick District Council. A further £0.434m of developer funding has previously been secured for improvements to Emscote Road and the Rugby Road junction. This leaves a gap of £6.645m in the funding required to deliver the scheme.
- 3.2 The £6.645m allocation from the CIF is requested to meet the shortfall.
- 3.3 This is expected to be the maximum level of County Council funding required. An Expression of Interest (EoI) has been put forward to the Department for Transport (DfT) to their Local Pinch Point Fund. This is the first stage in a two step process: if we are successful with this EoI then a formal bid will be submitted for Pinch Point Funding. Appraisal of this submission by DfT has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Any funding received from DfT will be used to reduce the £6.645m of CIF funding required to deliver the scheme.
- 3.4 A contingency, at the level proposed by the EDS Team, has been built into the cost estimates to reflect the current stage of design. As recognised by the CIF Technical Panel, given the complexity of the scheme, the overall financial envelope remains a risk and that this risk should be reflected in the oversight and scrutiny of progress through the Council's Major Schemes Board.
- 3.5 Although allocated in principle, Community Infrastructure Levy funding must be applied for each financial year. £53,000 has already been spent by the Council on preliminary design work and traffic modelling with a further £115,000 secured for financial year 2020/21. The remaining £1.492m CIL from within the overall allocation notionally set aside by Warwick District Council will be applied for in 2021/22. If this funding is not received then the scheme is not fully funded.
- 3.6 The scheme has been designed such that the new infrastructure falls within the bounds of the existing public highway and so there is no requirement for acquisition of third-party land in order to deliver the scheme. The scheme will be delivered using the County Council's powers as Highway Authority under the provisions of the Highways Act 1980.
- 3.7 Prior to the construction works, searches will be need to be undertaken to determine the positions of utilities along the corridor and the relevant utility companies engaged with as necessary during the construction process. As no highway land is to be extinguished or diverted as part of the scheme then it is not expected that there will be any requirement for utility diversions.

- 3.8 As noted above, Portobello Bridge is a Grade II listed structure. A Listed Building Consent will be required from Warwick District Council in order to undertake any demolition or alteration works. A consent was previously given for one of the proposed widening and improvement options. Direct engagement will be undertaken with Warwick District Council's Conservation Team in order to ensure the success of the consent application.
- 3.9 Works on Portobello Bridge will require working within the River Avon. This will require environmental permits to be applied for from the Environment Agency.

4. Environmental Implications

- 4.1 The scheme will enable a shift towards greener travel modes and a reduction of traffic congestion. Both Warwickshire County Council and Warwick District Council have declared a climate change emergency and are developing strategic action plans to achieve carbon neutrality and promote sustainable transport solutions. The scheme will assist this strategic objective by reducing carbon emissions along the Emscote Road Corridor.
- 4.2 The shift towards more sustainable travel modes and reduced carbon emissions along the corridor will have a positive impact on air quality. Benefit-cost ratio analysis undertaken as part of the scheme modelling assessment showed reductions in three air quality metrics; NO_x, PM₁₀ and Total Carbon emissions. This has positive implications for Warwick town centre, which is a designated Air Quality Management Area.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 Approval of the CIF funding allocation and the addition of the scheme to the Capital Programme will enable progression of detailed design work and statutory processes necessary to deliver the scheme.

Appendices

1. Preliminary Scheme Drawings
2. Extract from DfT Publication 'Gear Change' illustrating active travel benefits

Background Paper

Completed CIF Application

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

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