

CABINET
2 FEBRUARY 2017**A4440 WORCESTER SOUTHERN LINK ROAD DUALLING**
(SLR DUALLING) – FINAL PHASES

Relevant Cabinet Member

Dr Ken Pollock

Relevant Officer

Director of Economy and Infrastructure

Local Members

Mr R C Adams, Mr M L Bayliss, Mr R J Sutton

Recommendation

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure recommends that Cabinet:**
 - a) Notes the physical progress made on the SLR Dualling to date and the continuing exploratory and preparatory work which is necessary to bring Phase 3c (Whittington to Norton - new railway bridge and new footbridge) and Phase 4 (Ketch to Powick including new bridge parallel to Carrington Bridge) (the Final Phases) of SLR Dualling to implementation;**
 - b) Notes the financial position in the February 2017 Cabinet Budget Report regarding the Final Phases;**
 - c) Approves, subject to the receipt of all necessary consents and approvals the implementation of the Final Phases of SLR Dualling and subject to the approval of funding as noted by recommendation b) above;**
 - d) Delegates the decision to award contracts for the Final Phases of SLR Dualling to the Director of Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with Chief Financial Officer and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure;**
 - e) Approves the submission of a planning application for Phase 4 of SLR Dualling and applications for other relevant consents, including those relating to environment, utilities and rail, by the Council or by the relevant successful contractor as agent for the Council as Highway Authority;**
 - f) Authorises the acquisition of the land required for Phase 4 shown coloured pink and the rights over the land coloured blue on the attached plan**

(together the Land) including the making of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) in case it is not possible to acquire the land by negotiation;

g) Authorises the submission of an Outline Business Case (OBC) to the Department for Transport in relation to SLR Phase 4, pursuant to the WEBTAG process for the approval of major highways infrastructure schemes; and

h) Authorises any public engagement necessary to inform residents about the proposals for the Final Phases and to respond to any concerns raised.

Why is this decision important?

2. The Council has deployed the resources available to it, some c£17 million, to make as much progress as it can with Phase 3 of SLR Dualling. The Final Phases require the project team to maintain momentum with the securing of funding, necessary consents, securing possessions (Network Rail) and implementing works. Many of these issues will require the project team to be able to react quickly to a series of intense activities and events in the first 6 months of 2017. A requirement to seek Cabinet approvals on an iterative basis would introduce delays and fetter the project team's ability to manage events in real time. If approved, the recommendations above will enable the project team to make progress to the best advantage of the Council, but with appropriate safeguards in terms of financial control and accountability.

Background

3. The need for SLR Dualling is well rehearsed in previous Cabinet Reports (specifically September 2014) and policies of this Council and in the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) which has recently been adopted by the constituent Local Planning Authorities. The rationale for SLR dualling is summarised in **Appendix A**, in particular accessibility, housing and economic element that lie at the heart of the case. The consequences of failing to deliver this infrastructure are, clearly, the antitheses of the benefits referred to in those documents as they relate, particularly, to the enabling of house building and employment land, highway capacity, congestion, air quality and various economic factors relevant to growth. The Council also has its own corporate ambitions relating to economic development under the heading of Open for Business. A map showing the phasing of SLR dualling is shown at **Appendix B**.

Progress to date

4. The progress of SLR Dualling to date is shown in **Appendix C**. The most recent event is the confirmation of the CPO relating to Phase 3c following a public local inquiry in September 2016.

Scope, funding and programme for Phase 3c

5. Phase 3c involves the construction of a new railway bridge and a new replacement footbridge to span, and thereby enable the completion of, the dualling of the road beneath. Phase 3 has been predicated upon receipt of £16.3 million in developer contributions to be agreed over the period of the development with the balance from the Council's own funding sources via the Local Growth Fund via the Local Enterprise

Partnership (LEP). Now that the land issues are resolved, the programme for Phase 3c of SLR Dualling is dictated by the window that Network Rail will allow for the possession of the relevant rail infrastructure and consequential suspension of rail services over it. The current offer is for a short possession in May 2018 which means that a contractor will have to have been procured and appointed during the summer of 2017.

Scope, funding and programme for Phase 4

6. Phase 4 involves the completion of SLR Dualling from the Ketch roundabout to Powick roundabout including the construction of a new bridge over the River Severn parallel to the existing Carrington Bridge, major engineering earthworks and other significant structures. The cost of this project is estimated to be c£70 million the majority of which is intended to be funded through the Department for Transport (DfT) local major schemes bid process (WEBTAG). In the meantime, unless or until this project becomes a capital project for accounting purposes, it must be funded from revenue sources. Funding to date has included £1.7million from Worcestershire County Council and a grant of £500k from the DfT recognising its ranking as a fast track project within their approvals process. In order to continue with this progress up to the DfT decision point, a further £1.5 million of revenue will be need to be allocated to this project (covered in the February 2017 Cabinet Budget Paper). If the project becomes a capital project, the opportunity will arise to convert such revenue expenditure to capital retrospectively. The programme for Phase 4 is determined to a large extent by the DfT approvals process which requires the submission of the Outline Business Case (OBC) by March 2017. The project team is in receipt of tenders for the design and construction of Phase 4 works. Upon appointment, the successful contractor will undertake the design and preparatory works necessary for it and/or the project team to obtain planning consents, land acquisition and DfT approvals for a scheme start in early 2019. Completion of construction is anticipated in the spring of 2021.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

Financial implications

7. The most significant financial implication arises in the event that the Final Phases of SLR become undeliverable due to an inability to secure funding or consents because any revenue monies expended up to that point will be abortive. Assuming that the Final Phases of SLR Dualling are deliverable with funding from from third party sources, the principal financial implications should be cash-flow, particularly relating to phased funding streams, and the financing cost associated with any negative periods in the cash-flow model. This will be dealt with in more detail as the funding arrangements become more certain.

Legal implications

8. The SLR Dualling is being promoted and delivered as a scheme under general powers of wellbeing and promotion of economic prosperity, and statutory obligations under the Transport Act. Delivery will draw on Commons, Planning and Highway and Utilities legislation both for obtaining statutory consents and securing relevant developer contributions to financing.

9. Delivery of the construction activity will involve the County Council entering into a construction contract as employer with properly procured and competent contractors.

WCC's adopted policies provide the relevant framework for procurement and implementation.

10. Land acquisition will be taken forward by negotiation by a WCC nominated advisor at Place Partnership where possible, underpinned by Compulsory Purchase Powers. These processes are well rehearsed and normal for such significant and complex projects. The land requirements are shown at **Appendix D**.

Planning and Consultation

11. The Phase 3 works are being constructed under the Permitted Development Rights as highway authority under Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order 2015, and therefore planning permission is not required. Construction of the new bridleway bridge (for pedestrian, cycle and equestrian users) does require planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This planning permission was granted by Worcestershire County Council on 6th November 2014. Moving forward construction of Phase 4 will be subject to a full planning application supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The technical work is currently underway, and once contracted, the construction contractor will be responsible for submission and management of the planning application process. A formal public engagement and consultation process carried out by the council and the contractor will support the planning application and decision making process.

12. The environmental and social impact assessment required for the planning process are in the early stages of development. Whilst the initial environmental assessment suggests the scheme will result in having slight adverse impacts on noise; water; air quality and green-house gases, the social assessment of the scheme results in having slight beneficial impacts on access to services by public transport and on severance.

Privacy and Public Health Impact Assessments

13. Health implications of transport proposals can be identified by assessing changes in the opportunities for increased physical activity through cycling and walking. The scheme includes provision of a pedestrian/cyclist footbridge on the western side of Powick Roundabout, the upgrade of the grade separated pedestrian route at Ketch roundabout. Whilst these improvements may result in more walking and cycling, increased vehicle speed and flow on the new carriageway as a result of the scheme may also exacerbate fear of accidents for cyclists and pedestrians. In summary, the scheme is likely to have a neutral impact to physical activity.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. An Equality Impact screening was completed in November 2016 (see **Appendix E**). Based on the screening an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required for this scheme.

Supporting Information

- Appendix A – Worcester Southern Link Road: Improvements Phase 4

- Appendix B – Map showing phasing
- Appendix C – Progress to date
- Appendix D – Land Requirements
- Appendix E - Equality Impact Screening

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Economy and Infrastructure) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Worcester Transport Strategy and Local Transport Plan 3
- Papers and Minutes of Cabinet held on 25 September 2014