

**CABINET**  
**14 NOVEMBER 2019****KEPAX BRIDGE**

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**Relevant Cabinet Member**

Dr K A Pollock

**Relevant Officer**

Director of Economy and Infrastructure

**Local Members**

Mr S E Geraghty

Mr A Stafford

**Recommendation**

1. **The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure recommends that Cabinet:**
  - (a) **welcomes the contents of the Strategic Outline Business Case and authorises the development of a Full Business Case;**
  - (b) **authorises the preparation of a Planning Application for the Kepax Bridge Project and delegates the decision to submit the Planning Application to the Director of Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility;**
  - (c) **allocates £1.5m from the Capital Programme allocation for Walking and Cycling Bridges towards this scheme;**
  - (d) **authorises the submission of funding bids to third parties for the completion of the scheme;**
  - (e) **approves the expenditure of the funds necessary to complete the Full Business Case and to prepare the Planning Application up to the parameter for preparation set out in paragraph 19;**
  - (f) **authorises the completion of a pre-planning public engagement exercise;**
  - (g) **receives a further report regarding the project following the outcome of the Planning Application and with details of the Full Business Case and progress on funding applications; and**
  - (h) **notes that commencement of construction will not occur until funding sources have been secured.**

## Why are these decisions important?

2. It is important that these decisions are made now to progress the project and maintain a programme whereby construction could start on the bridge in the next 18 months or so, subject to securing funding and the award of planning consent.

## Background

3. Worcestershire County Council is working in partnership with Worcester City Council in the development and delivery of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Severn in Worcester from Gheluvelt Park to the Kepax Ferry Lane and Riverside Close area (see Annex 1 Location Plan, Kepax Bridge Strategic Outline Business Case).
4. Building on the success of the Connect2 Diglis Bridge scheme, this project aims to provide improved cycle and pedestrian connectivity to the north of Worcester and to enhance links along the riverside thereby completing a “figure of 8” circuit encompassing Kepax Bridge, Sabrina Bridge and Diglis Bridge.

## Policy context

5. The national, regional and local policy context for improving walking and cycling opportunities to provide health, transport and planning benefits is well established. The National Planning Policy Framework, strongly requires investment in walking and cycling including suggestions that:
  - Local Authorities must promote healthy and safe environments – specifically by 'layouts that encourage walking and cycling'
  - Opportunities to promote walking must be prioritised
  - Investing in cycling and providing travel mode choice reduces congestion, improves air quality and benefits public health.
6. The Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership Energy Strategy identifies the facilitation of walking and cycling opportunities as a key aspect of achieving a lower-carbon economy while a number of objectives designed to encourage walking and cycling are included in Local Transport Plan 4.
7. The potential scheme benefits and outcomes are anticipated to include the following:
  - Increased use of active modes resulting in improved physical health and mental wellbeing of residents, reduced congestion, improved local air quality and improved accessibility and transport choice
  - Reduced severance and increased network resilience through the provision of an additional river crossing
  - Increased leisure use of the riverside area through the completion of a “figure of 8” circuit using the Kepax Bridge, Sabrina Bridge and Diglis Bridge as crossing points
  - Increased tourism and visits to attractions such as Worcester Racecourse and the Pump House Environment Centre
  - Increased use of the Green Flag park which includes a splash pad and open fields to the west

- A safer pedestrian and cycle network in the north of Worcester, with more off-road provision
- A more legible cycling network from the north of Worcester to destinations such as the canal, city centre and university
- Improved connections to National Cycle Network Routes 45 and 46
- Improved connections to Regional Cycle Network Routes 3 and 7.

### **Progress to date**

8. The following activities have been completed:
- Initial Bridge Feasibility Study - identification of scheme constraints, initial costing based on feasibility study, geotechnical overview and environmental checklist
  - Topographical Survey of the Kepax disused landfill site and Gheluvelt Park
  - Transport Planning/Economic Impact inputs to cover the forecast demand for the proposed asset and economic impact
  - Flood Risk Assessment and river modelling
  - Geotechnical Desk Study - including envirocheck and unexploded ordnance reports
  - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)
  - Bat Activity Survey
  - Reptile Presence/Absence Surveys
  - Archaeological Survey – desk-based surveys on both sides of the river focused on the more recent histories of the sites
  - Pedestrian/Cycle Upgrade Study – study into how the structure will link into the wider network and where improvements are required to ensure that the structure has the demand required for a strong benefit cost ratio
  - Ground Investigation Phase 1 - ground investigation to both sides of the river to determine the current ground conditions and the depth of the bedrock
  - Tree Survey - required as part of the planning application and screening opinion
  - Initial discussions with construction contractor – through Early Contractor Involvement (ECI).

The survey works undertaken to date are critical to inform the design of the bridge and planning applications.

9. A Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC), included as supporting information to this report, has been completed and presents the Strategic, Economic, Commercial, Financial and Management Case for the provision of the bridge and improved local and strategic cycle and pedestrian links creating leisure, employment and access to education opportunities.

### **Cost Benefit Ratio**

10. The economic assessment of the project has indicated that improvements to local and strategic cycle and pedestrian links in addition to the bridge would result in a significantly improved Cost Benefit Ratio (BCR) for the scheme compared with constructing the bridge in isolation. A strong BCR is essential to secure third-party funding and it is therefore proposed that the strategic linkages are included as an integral part of the scheme but that the project is delivered in phases with the bridge

being constructed first with links to the nearest highway and improvements to the wider links following later.

## Planning Approach

11. A full planning application will be required for the scheme which will be determined by the County Council.

## Delivery and Timescales

12. It is currently envisaged that the bridge and the local and strategic cycle and pedestrian links will be delivered in phases, with the initial phase comprising the main bridge including links to the nearest highway with works to the wider network following later.

13. The next stages for progressing the bridge requires completion of the initial ground investigations, enabling outline design to be developed (including architectural and early contractor involvement, required to support planning and buildability of the scheme). This information is necessary for the production and submission of the planning application. During the preparation, submission and determination of the planning application, the design will be progressed through the detail design phase, with involvement from the contractor, inclusion of independent checks of the design and production of construction information to enable procurement and award of works for commencement on site.

14. In order to commence construction in 2021, adherence to the following timeline is required for the following activities:

- Design Development (including architectural inputs, early contractor involvement, outline design and phase 2 ground investigation, detailed design and independent design checks): completed Autumn 2020
- Planning application submission (including Environmental Impact Assessment, stakeholder and public consultation): Summer 2020
- Planning application: determined Winter 2020/21
- Final Cabinet Approval: Spring 2021
- Award construction contract: Spring/Summer 2021
- Start on site: Summer 2021.

## Key project risks

Risk	Mitigation
The demand and economics for the standalone bridge do not justify the business case	Improvements to the wider linkages included within the strategic outline business case to demonstrate a medium value business case
Unknown ground conditions	Investigations are currently underway to determine requirements for likelihood of ground improvements and increased costs to foundations
The areas adjacent to the bridge landing areas are susceptible to high river levels	Flood Risk Assessment undertaken to determine impact of flooding.

and flooding, preventing access to bridge as well as impacting construction	Construction works to be coordinated to avoid periods of high flows
Requirement for additional funding processes, impacting on phasing of the works along with extending the programme duration and delivery timescales	Continue to search for additional funding streams

## Legal, Financial and HR Implications

15. The proposed location of the landing points of the structure are to be sited on Worcestershire County and Worcester City Council owned land.
16. Legal agreement will be required to exercise powers under Section 106 (3) of the Highways Act 1980 to construct the bridge to form a footpath/cycle track (with a right of way on foot) over the navigable waters of the River Severn.
17. Full planning consent will be required for the structure, approaches and some of the improvements to the local and strategic cycle and pedestrian links.
18. Consent will be required from statutory undertakers and legislative bodies including the Canals and Rivers Trust, Environment Agency and Fields in Trust.
19. The overall cost estimate for this project (bridge and access paths, and wider linkages) has been identified as c.£8.9m at current prices.
20. The funding required for the delivery of the scheme at current prices is estimated as follows:
- Preparation (including design) c.£0.9m – includes spend to date
  - Bridge construction c.£6m
  - Linkages and wider network construction c.£2m
21. Funding available at present;
- £0.875m - Worcester City Council
  - £1.5m - Worcestershire County Council – already allocated for Walking and Cycling Bridges in the Capital Programme.
22. The balance of c.£6.525m will be sought from third parties.
23. Construction will not commence until funding has been secured and further updates will be provided to Cabinet on progress.
24. No HR implications have been identified.
25. No Human Rights issues have been identified.

## Privacy and Public Health Impact Assessments

26. In Worcestershire, 65% of adults and one third of year 6 children are overweight and/or obese. A strong reason for this is physical inactivity – around 21% of adults in Worcestershire do less than 30 minutes of exercise per week. Encouraging active

travel is one solution to help people achieve recommended physical activity levels and recommended weight. Active travel can lead to health benefits including reduction of heart disease, stroke, cancer, obesity and type 2 diabetes. The environment can also benefit by a model shift to active travel, including reduced air pollution, congestion, road danger and noise pollution.

27. There is a strong evidence base around the benefits of helping people to take up walking or cycling which requires an integrated and joined up approach, including:

- Providing clear information and advice promoting physical activity and active travel
- Encouraging families, children and young people to live active lives
- Supporting those who have the poorest health outcomes and those who are most inactive to take steps to increase physical activity
- Creating health-promoting environments
- Providing appropriate infrastructure.

28. The Council is therefore committed to investing in, and promoting, good quality walking and cycling infrastructure that aims to get more people in Worcestershire travelling actively.

29. No privacy issues have been identified but this will be modelled during the design process e.g. potential for overlooking.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

30. An Equality Relevance Screening has been completed for Local Transport Plan 4 which provides the policy context for the proposed Kepax Bridge Project. The screening is included in the Strategic Outline Business Case. A combined Equality and Public Health Impact Assessment for this specific project will be carried out as part of the Full Business Case process.

## **Supporting Information – Available Electronically**

- Kepax Bridge Draft Strategic Outline Business Case and associated annexes

## **Contact Points**

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

### Specific Contact Points for this report

Rachel Hill, Strategic Commissioner Major Projects

Tel: 01905 843539

Email: [rjhill@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:rjhill@worcestershire.gov.uk)

## **List of Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Economy and Infrastructure) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this item.