

CABINET
18 MARCH 2021**HAMPTON BRIDGE**

Relevant Cabinet Member

Dr K A Pollock

Relevant Officer

Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure

Local Member

Mr J H Smith

Recommendation

1. **The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure recommends that Cabinet:**
 - (a) **authorises the continuation of the surveys and negotiations necessary to progress the Hampton Bridge scheme;**
 - (b) **endorses the allocation of s.106 and WNEP contributions towards the scheme;**
 - (c) **authorises the completion of a pre-planning public engagement exercise and the preparation and submission of a Planning Application for the Hampton Bridge Project;**
 - (d) **authorises the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change to acquire the land or part thereof necessary to deliver the scheme (shown edged red in Appendix 1) through negotiation if possible, and, if not possible, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure, to make a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to acquire the land and rights required for the project, and further authorises the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change to approve any Statement of Reasons in relation to the land, that must accompany any CPO submitted for confirmation to the Secretary of State and notes that this will be approved prior to the making of any CPO;**
 - (e) **authorises the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure, to revise the extent of the land to be acquired if necessary;**

(f) authorises the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure to finalise the design of the bridge and links; and

(g) authorises the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure, to award contracts and to enter any other such agreements as are necessary to complete the bridge within the funding envelope already 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 as soon as possible.

Background

3. A lack of capacity in Evesham's transport network leads to congestion, poor journey time reliability and reduced air quality. This lack of capacity also constrains future housing and employment growth. Alongside this it is apparent that a significant number of short journeys to and within the town that are currently being driven could easily be walked or cycled if supported by suitable infrastructure. Survey data from Evesham indicates that 22% of trips are currently under 4 miles. The proposed location of the bridge has been influenced by a number of factors including buildability, environmental constraints and connectivity to the walking and cycling network (see Appendix 2 Location Plan). The provision of a pedestrian/cycle bridge is supported in the emerging Evesham Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), Evesham Transport Strategy and Worcestershire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4.

Planning context

4. A pedestrian/cycle bridge across the Avon at Evesham was identified as a requirement as part of the planning submission for the Hampton housing development to the west of the town in 2014. The bridge would provide a direct link from Hampton to the Town Centre, schools, employment and the rail station.

5. The bridge is widely referenced in the documentation supporting the planning application. The Transport Assessment outlines that *"it is ... proposed that the developers will provide a developer financial contribution towards the implementation of the following ... acquisition of the necessary land to provide a fixed, all-weather pedestrian and cycle bridge link across the River Avon at the site of the existing Hampton Ferry"*

6. s.106 contributions were subsequently secured for the bridge, alongside additional contributions for walking and cycling and bus stops. An extension to the site for a further 56 dwellings was granted permission earlier this year, with additional s.106 funds being secured towards the bridge and link paths.

Policy context

7. 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.

8. The importance of walking and cycling infrastructure has been further highlighted during the Coronavirus pandemic with the Government publishing “*Gear Change: A bold vision for cycling and walking*” This new strategy aims for half of all journeys in towns and cities to be cycled or walked by 2030 and commits to thousands of miles of new cycle lanes in order to deliver this.

9. Further to this, in July 2020, Local Transport Note 1/20 was published by the Department for Transport. This guidance document has been developed to promote the delivery of high-quality cycle infrastructure and reflects current good practice, standards and legal requirements.

10. 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 (LTP4).

11. The 2011 Public Consultation version of the SWDP identified an area in Hampton as suitable for an urban extension of up to 400 new homes and the provision of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Avon at Hampton was also identified, in order to improve links to the town centre. Policy SWDP4 (Moving Around South Worcestershire) sets out the strategy for the local transport network. It states that development proposals should minimise the need to travel, offer genuine sustainable travel choices, improve road safety and support Local Transport Objectives.

12. 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
- Increased leisure use of the riverside area through the completion of a “figure of 8” circuit using the existing Ferry Crossing and Abbey Road bridges
- Increased active travel between Hampton and the Town Centre
- Contributing towards relieving Evesham’s congestion problems
- Opportunity for increased footfall in Evesham town centre, which could contribute to revitalizing the local economy
- A safer pedestrian and cycle network as set out in the Evesham Transport Strategy and mandated in LTP4
- A more legible cycling network as set out in the emerging LCWIP, and
- Improved connections to National Cycle Network Routes 41 to Tewkesbury and 442 to Worcester together with an opportunity to reroute the NCN through the town itself, avoiding the need for cyclists to cross the busy A46 corridor.

Public health benefits

13. 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.

14. 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, and
- Providing appropriate infrastructure.

Progress to date

15. The following activities have been completed or are underway:

- Initial Bridge Feasibility Study - identification of scheme constraints and initial costing based on feasibility study
- Initial discussions with Landowners
- Topographical Survey of the land either side of the Avon
- Geotechnical Desk Study – in progress
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Bat Activity Survey
- Reptile Surveys
- Pedestrian/Cycle Upgrade Study – study into how the structure will link into the wider network
- Transport Assessment – in progress, and
- Initial discussions regarding construction with the Council's Infrastructure Engineering Term Contractor.

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

Planning

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

Delivery and Timescales

17. To commence construction as early as possible, 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): Spring 2021

- Planning application submission: December 2021
- Planning determination: Spring 2022
- Start on site: following planning approval (assuming Compulsory Purchase Order not required).

Key project risks

Risk	Mitigation
Unknown ground conditions	Investigations are currently underway to determine requirements for likelihood of ground improvements and increased costs to foundations.
Potential delays to land acquisition	Work is underway to secure the land through negotiation but a CPO is being proposed to run in parallel as a contingency.
The areas adjacent to the bridge landing areas are susceptible to high river levels and flooding, preventing access to bridge as well as impacting construction	Flood Risk Assessment undertaken to determine impact of flooding. Construction works to be scheduled to avoid periods of high flows.
Requirement for additional funding	Continue to identify additional funding.

Legal Implications

18. The proposed landing points of the structure are to be sited on privately owned land which will need to be acquired, ideally through negotiation (Appendix 1 Land Acquisition Plan). However, it is recommended that the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure, are authorised to acquire the land through a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) including any compulsory acquisition of rights required for the project if it is not possible to acquire the land by negotiation. It is further recommended that the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change are authorised to approve any Statement of Reasons in relation to the land, that must accompany any CPO submitted for confirmation to the Secretary of State. It is also recommended that the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure and the Strategic Director of Commercial and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy and Infrastructure, are authorised to revise the extent of the land to be acquired if necessary.

19. 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 Avon.

20. Full planning consent will be required for the structure, approaches and some of the improvements to the local and strategic cycle and pedestrian links. It is recommended that a pre-planning engagement exercise is carried out ahead of the formal planning application.

21. Consent will be required from statutory undertakers and legislative bodies including the Avon Navigation Trust and Environment Agency.

Financial Implications

22. The overall cost estimate to complete the main bridge works has been identified as c.£4.26m (including a 10% contingency sum). This covers scheme development and bridge construction.

23. Funding is available to meet the expenditure requirement of £4.26m from the following sources:

- £3.1m – s.106 contributions to the main bridge
- £0.23m – s.106 contribution to the linkages
- £0.4m – s.106 Phase 3 contributions
- £0.03m – s.106 contributions towards sustainable transport links
- £0.5m – Worcestershire County Council WNEP contribution.

24. It is recommended that the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure is authorised to award contracts and enter into any other such agreements as are necessary to construct the bridge up to the £4.26m value of funding already secured.

25. Further expenditure will be required (estimated at c£1m) for the links to the local walking and cycling network and funding for this second phase will be sought from other sources including from within the existing Capital Programme. This will be confirmed to Cabinet at a subsequent meeting, however, expenditure on this element of the scheme will not progress until funding has been identified.

HR, Privacy and Human Rights Implications

26. No Human Resources or Human Rights implications have been identified.

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

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

28. Full Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments have been carried out in respect of the recommendations (Appendix 3). No negative impacts have been identified for Protected Groups and other impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated through existing policies and procedures.

Supporting Information – Available Electronically

- Appendix 1 - Land Acquisition Plan
- Appendix 2 - Location Plan
- Appendix 3 - Joint Impact Assessment Screening and Full Assessments

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points
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Specific Contact Points for this report
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Cabinet – 18 March 2021

List of Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure) the following background papers relate to the subject matter of this item:

- Local Transport Plan 4
- Evesham Transport Strategy
- Hampton Bridge Feasibility Study