

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

**Agenda
Item No.**

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

**to
Cabinet**

on

6th November 2018

Report prepared by: Neil Hoskins (Interim Group Manager)
and Karen Gearing (Major Schemes Project Manager) Major
Projects and Strategic Transport Policy Group

A127 The Bell Junction Improvement Update - Local Growth Fund Scheme

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Place Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member: Councillor Moring
A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

To advise Cabinet that:

- 1.1 Three preliminary options for the main junction improvement works were developed and taken forward for public consultation with a suggested preferred option for detailed design and completion by 2020/21. The scheme to be implemented be based upon the outcome of the public consultation, key stakeholders feedback, Members feedback, discussions on cost and programme with utilities, site constraints and deliverability.
- 1.2 Subject to the approval of the business case, £4.3m from the Local Growth Fund and £0.72m Capital Contribution has been allocated against The Bell junction. However, as specified within the consultation documents, Highway Option 3 with a footbridge exceeds this value to the amount of £2.144m. The scheme to be implemented has yet to be decided and will be based upon the outcome of the consultation, Members feedback and site constraints. However, it was felt necessary to put in place measures to support any gap in funding. To support this potential gap in funding, a submission to the call for Local Growth Fund 3B has been issued to SELEP. Also a Capital Bid has been submitted for the same value. These bids will be reviewed subject to the outcome of the public consultation and final scheme to be implemented.
- 1.3 A briefing with all Members took place on 10th January 2018 with further briefings held with Ward Councillors to discuss the site issues and constraints and consider suggest options. Pre consultation all Member drop in session were held on 9th July. Public consultation commenced on 16th July for 8 weeks until 9th September 2018. Two public consultation events were held at local schools on 17th and 18th July.

- 1.4 Public consultation responses are being reviewed and require further investigation. The results of the public consultation questionnaire preferred no footbridge and also highway Option 2. However, comments raised were that a pedestrian crossing be provided on Hobleythick Lane; and concerns were raised on the removal of the right hand turn lane into Rochford Road; environmental mitigation measures on the public open space; local traffic management measures be implemented and extending the dedicated slip lane into Rochford Road and extending the right hand turn lane further.
- 1.5 Advice from Cabinet be provided in advance of Cabinet on; traffic management constraints verses delivery; views on a replacement footbridge not being provided.
- 1.6 Lessons have been learnt from issues with utility diversions at Kent Elms Junction and extensive trial hole investigations will be undertaken to locate utilities at The Bell junction. The trial holes will require traffic management and lane closures around the junction.
- 1.7 The procurement of the contractor for the main works will be made through the Eastern Highways Alliance Framework.
- 1.8 Traffic Regulation Orders and utilities diversions will be required in advance and during the main works in accordance with the New Roads and Street works Act.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That Option 2, without a footbridge, be taken forward as the preferred option, taking into consideration comments from the public consultation, utility constraints, programming, environmental mitigations and deliverability within the LGF deadline.**
- 2.2 **That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive for Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure to agree the final option to be taken forward to detailed design, implementation, advertisement of any necessary traffic regulation orders, any land transfer and planning permissions following circulation of these details to all Members and discussions with Group Leaders;**
- 2.3 **That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive for Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure to implement any experimental orders to inform the final option to be implemented.**
- 2.3 **Following SELEP Accountability Board approval of The Bell Junction Improvement Business Case, the project proceed to detailed design and procurement of the Design and Build Contractor.**
- 2.4 **Following the outcome of the public consultation, should Southend Capital Contribution increase more than the additional £2.144m being requested, a further report on the funding shall be presented at Cabinet.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan identifies the A127 as a key corridor for growth. The A127 links London with Basildon and Southend and Rochford. In Basildon, the A127 corridor is home to one of the largest single concentrations of advanced manufacturing companies in the South of England. It makes substantial contributions to the prosperity of the SELEP area and offers considerable growth prospects. London Southend Airport, now with scheduled air services to Europe and hub airports for onward global travel, and planned business parks, will prove attractive to a wide range of global companies and offers capacity for at least 4,200 additional jobs up to 2021 and a further 3,180 post 2021. Southend and Rochford have agreed the Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP) to unlock these opportunities and the Council has appointed Henry Boot as their development partner.
- 3.2 To enable growth in Thames Gateway South Essex the A127 requires substantial improvement and a higher level of maintenance. The 'A127 Corridor for Growth Economic Plan', approved by Cabinet, sets out the rationale and supporting evidence in detail. The A127 Corridor for Growth package is a partnership project between Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council. The Southend element includes A127 Major Scheme Highway Maintenance; Highway and bridge maintenance identified through asset management surveys and the bridge maintenance programme together with the A127 Kent Elms and A127 The Bell junction improvements.
- 3.3 Elements of the A127 Corridor for Growth package have been designated as a "retained" scheme which, subject to the approval of the business case, will be supported by the Local Growth Fund. Subject to the approval of the business case, The Bell has an allocation of £4.3m from the Local Growth Fund and £0.72m Capital Contribution. However as specified within the consultation documents Option 3 with a footbridge exceeds this value to the amount of £2.144m. To support this potential gap in funding, a submission to the call for Local Growth Fund 3B in the form of an Expression of Interest (EOI) was issued to SELEP. The EOI has passed the sifting process and the next step is to submit a Strategic Outline Business case by 26th October. The scheme recommended to be implemented is based on Option 3 without a replacement footbridge. However the extent of Option 3 scheme requires further investigation and further consultation with utility companies to ensure scheme deliverability by 2021 LGF deadline and certainty of costs.
- 3.4 A Capital Bid will also been submitted for £2.144m to bridge the potential gap in funding, should the Local Growth Fund route be unsuccessful. Both these bids will be reviewed subject to the outcome of the public consultation and final scheme to be implemented.
- 3.5 The recommended scheme to be implemented is based on Option 2 with further investigations into a crossing on Hobblythick Lane and further associated highway improvements following the outcome of the public consultation and site constraints. However, further consultation is required with utility companies to ensure the project can be completed the LGF deadline March 2021.

- 3.6 Concerns on the public open space have been raised by the local residents and further investigations are required to establish mitigation measures.
- 3.7 A127 The Bell junction improvement works are programmed to commence construction in 2019/20. Consultations have commenced with the utility companies to establish the required diversions and costs. The completion of the main works will be undertaken through the Eastern Highways Alliance Framework 2 (EHAF2).

4. Scheme Options

4.1 Option Development

- 4.1.1 The Bell scheme options were developed based on issues and constraints engagement exercise with all Members, key stakeholders, local businesses and officers. Engagement with Ward Cllrs, all Members, local schools, bus operator and London Southend Airport were held and informed options. Early engagement was also carried out with local residents. The 20 Highway Options were sifted and evaluated including deliverability with a maximum of three highway options and two footbridge options taken forward to public consultation and business case submission. Refer to Appendix 1 for Issues and Constraints plan, Appendix 4 for Highway Options. Following the results of the public consultation further investigations are being undertaken on the feasibility of enhancing Option 2 to include a crossing on Hobbeythick Lane. This will confirm the detailed design development.
- 4.1.2 Two non-viable footbridge options, one with 1:20 ramps and one with 1:12 ramps, were included within the consultation documents for information only to demonstrate the impact on the nearby buildings and their non-viability. The majority of the results of the consultation were that a replacement footbridge is not required.
- 4.1.3 A lift was also considered as an alternative to ramps and steps but was discounted due to safety, reliability and maintenance issues.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 Business Case Submission

- 5.1.1 It is proposed the Local Growth Fund (LGF) business case is submitted for approval at November 2018 Accountability Board to draw down LGF funding to support the scheme development with the final full business case submitted to February 2019 Accountability board for the final scheme to be developed. LGF funding condition is that grant must be spent by 2020/21.
- 5.1.2 The Bell Junction Improvement will maximise the delivery of the JAAP ambition for 7,380 new jobs and future Rochford and Southend growth, provides access to pedestrians, local businesses, local schools and access.
- 5.1.3 Following with outcome of The Bell public consultation and comments raised it is felt further investigations are necessary based on enhancing highway Option 2 and investigations on a crossing on Hobbeythick Lane. Following the

investigations a review of the costs will be undertaken and final business case submitted for February 2019 Accountability Board by which time it will be established if further LGF funding has been agreed to support the final scheme costs. The scheme for implementation will be developed further during the detailed design process with ongoing public engagement with local schools, Airport, bus operators, businesses and local residents.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

6.1.1 This scheme contributes to the Council's visions, particularly in terms of creating a thriving and sustainable local economy and move towards a safer borough by upgrading the junction to the latest design standards.

6.2 Financial Implications

6.2.1 As shown on the A127 The Bell Junction Improvement funding profile table, budget cost for the project was estimated at £5.020m with the funding subject to the approval of the final business case. The contribution from the DfT Local Growth Fund is £4.3m with a £63,027 S106 contribution from Bellway Homes the remaining £720,000 contribution from the Council capital programme.

6.2.2. Subject to the approval of the business case, £4.3m from the Local Growth Fund and £0.72m Capital Contribution has been allocated against The Bell junction. However as specified within the consultation documents Option 3 with a footbridge exceeds this value to the amount of £2.144m. The scheme to be implemented has yet to be decided and will be based upon the outcome of the consultation, Members feedback and site constraints. However, it was felt necessary to put in place measures to support any gap in funding. To support this potential gap in funding, a submission to the call for Local Growth Fund 3B has been issued to SELEP. Also a Capital Bid will be submitted for the same value. These bids will be reviewed subject to the outcome of The Bell public consultation and final scheme to be implemented.

The current funding profile for the projects are as follows:

A127 The Bell Junction Improvement Current LGF Funding Profile

Funding Profile	FY 2015-18	FY 2018/19	FY 2019/20 - 2020/21	Total
DfT LGF	£0	£400,000*	£3,900,000*	£4,300,000*
S106 contribution	£0	£0	£63,027	£63,027
Southend Capital	£191,000	£12,000	£517,000	£720,000
	£191,000	£412,000	£4,363,027*	£5,083,027

*Subject to business case approval

6.3 Legal Implications

- 6.3.1 Elements of the traffic management features will require the advertisement of Traffic Regulation Orders. It is proposed to re-use the A127/B1013 Tesco contractor's compound at Nestuda Way for these works which may require planning approval.
- 6.3.2 If a new footbridge be chosen, then a departure from standard may need to be granted by Southend Borough Council to install a footbridge that is not Equality Act 2010 compliant.

6.4 People Implications

- 6.4.1 The intention is to provide improved pedestrian and cycle facilities at The Bell Junction to provide access to local amenities. The scheme affects the lives of all those who live, work and visit the town. The implications are positive as the intention is to provide an improved accessibility and safety.
- 6.4.2 Should the scheme to be developed be based on Options 2 the area of Public Open Space will be reviewed for environmental screening based on comments raised during the public consultation. The screening will be reviewed based on air quality, noise, visual, landscaping and maintenance.

6.5 Property Implications

- 6.5.1 There are no proposals to acquire private land, acquire or remove properties. If the scheme to be developed is based on Options 2 the area of Public Open Space will require to be transferred to Highway to incorporate the carriageway widening and any replacement footbridge. Any land transfer will be supported by Legal services.

6.6 Consultation

- 6.6.1 The consultation process for this work is based on the "Southend Together" toolkit which seeks to engage and inform residents businesses and key stakeholders throughout the life of the project.
- 6.6.2 A127 schemes were reported to Cabinet on 8th January 2013 with cross party support towards developing the schemes. Proposals for consultation were contained within that report. The consultation process commenced focusing on community engagement conversations to explore the issues and problems around the junctions to hear the views of residents, businesses, key stakeholders and drivers. The consultation plan for A127 will be reviewed to meet the scheme programme.
- 6.6.3 The engagement exercise for the three A127 schemes commenced in February 2013, with all Councillors given the opportunity to attend a discussion, focus group or feedback session to consider and offer input about potential improvements to the junctions, together with Opposition Group Transport Leads briefings. This was followed by a focused business group session in March 2013 and on site engagement and an online questionnaire.

- 6.6.4 A briefing with all Members took place on 10th January 2018 with further briefings held with Ward Councillors to discuss the site issues and constraints and consider and suggest design proposals and provide an opportunity to offer input into the improvements at The Bell Junction. A number of these were included within the scheme options. Pre consultation all Member drop in session held on 9th July. Public consultation commenced on 16th July for 8 weeks until 9th September 2018. Public consultation events were held at Prince Avenue Academy on 17th July and Earls Hall Primary School on 18th July 2018 between 3pm to 8pm for parents and members of the public. On 17th July businesses and members were invited between 2pm and 3pm.
- 6.6.5 Early engagement with local schools has been carried out and will continue during the construction and with consideration during the detailed design process for the main junction improvement works.
- 6.6.6 The consultation process will continue throughout the life of the project and those principles of the Better Southend communications plan will be adopted. The Better Southend website will inform residents, businesses and visitors of the progress of the works throughout the design and construction. Officers will also engage further with Members, key and local businesses, Airport, bus operators, emergency services and local residents.
- 6.6.7 Consultation with key stakeholders, local schools, businesses and residents will continue during the detailed design and construction process. As with previous A127 Junction Improvements, a dedicated Public Liaison Officer will be appointed via the contractor to ensure members, residents, businesses, schools and drivers are kept up-to-date and engaged on the progress of the works.
- 6.6.8 The principles of the Better Southend Transport Access Routeing Plan (TARP) will be adopted, which seeks to minimise disruption and delay to road users. Consultation will continue during the design and construction process to determine the best way to maintain access to the businesses, residents and the town during the construction of the works.
- 6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications
- 6.7.1 A draft Equality Analysis has been reviewed and will be further refined to support the scheme to be implemented. Best practice will be adopted in the final design proposal with the aim to improve accessibility for pedestrians, cyclist and mobility impaired which will be a major factor in the development of the scheme and during construction works.
- 6.8 Risk Assessment
- 6.8.1 Risks are reviewed throughout the life of the project and mitigation measures undertaken to reduce risks.
- 6.9 Value for Money
- 6.9.1 The business case for the project is required to provide value for money.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

6.10.1 The combined scheme aims to ensure and improve access to local amenities and improve access for pedestrians, cyclists, wheel chair users to cross the junction. Improvements to road safety and community safety will be delivered through good design and consideration to standards.

6.11 Environmental Impact

6.11.1 The scheme will help deliver an improved local environment and contribute positively towards sustainable transport objectives. Landscape and environmental measures will be considered further during the detailed design.

6.11.2 Local air quality implications were considered during the development of the options. If the scheme to be developed is based on Options 2 or Option 3 the area of Public Open Space will be reviewed for environmental screening based on comments raised during the public consultation. The screening will be reviewed based on air quality, noise, visual, landscaping and maintenance.

7. Background Papers

7.1 LTP3 (2011-2026) and the LTP Implementation Plan

7.2 Framework for Prioritising Strategic Transport Infrastructure in the SELEP area

7.3 Devolving local major transport schemes DfT 31st January 2012

7.4 SELEP response to Devolving local major transport schemes

7.5 Devolving local major transport schemes: consultation responses

7.6 Local frameworks for funding major transport schemes: guidance for local transport bodies DfT 23rd November 2012

7.7 Report to Cabinet 8th January 2015: A127 Kent Elms, A127 The Bell Corner and A127 Tesco Junction Improvements and progress of South East LEP Local Transport Body

7.8 A127 Corridor for Growth – An Economic Plan March 2014

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Constraints plan

8.2 Appendix 2 – A127 The Bell Junction Improvement Options for Consultation

8.3 Appendix 3 – The Bell Questionnaire.

8.4 Appendix 4 – The Bell Highway Option Appraisal