

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Community Infrastructure Levy Spend Allocation – B1040 Wheatsheaf Road / Somersham Road, St Ives Accident Reduction Scheme

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 18th March 2021

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning

Report by: Strategic Growth Manager

Ward(s) affected: Holywell-cum-Needingworth Ward, Somersham Ward, and Warboys Ward.

Executive Summary:

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of the area. It came into force on 6 April 2010 through the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Huntingdonshire District Council became a CIL charging authority in May 2012.

Local authorities must spend the levy on infrastructure needed to support the development of their area. This helps to deliver across several of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities for 2018 – 2022 but specifically:

- Support development of infrastructure to enable growth
- Improve the supply of new and affordable housing, jobs and community facilities to meet current and future need

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) recognises there is an existing significant issue for highway safety at the junction of the B1040 Wheatsheaf Road / Somersham Road, St Ives. This will worsen if further growth is to occur. It is proposing to signalise the junction to address these issues.

CCC has funded and developed initial plans for a deliverable scheme, including a cost estimate, timescales for implementation and details of its match funding.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is recommended to support CIL funding of up to £500,000 as co-funding toward signalising the junction to allow for better management of traffic flow, significantly reducing the risk of accidents.

RECOMMENDED

Approve in principle CIL funding of up to £500,000, subject to:

- Final costings, as detailed design work is still underway;
- Full business plan;
- Confirmation that all of the land required for the project is available; and
- Confirmation of the match funding by CCC and other sources.

The offer recommended is to be time limited (12 months) to enable the above matters to be addressed.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To consider a payment of £500,000 from CIL toward the provision of a signalised crossing at the junction of the B1040 Wheatsheaf Road / Somersham Road, St Ives.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The junction proposed to be improved is at the crossroads between the Somersham Road (B1040), Wheatsheaf Road (to Woodhurst), and Old heath Road (to Bluntisham). It lies 2.42 km northeast of St Ives within the parishes of Bluntisham, Somersham, and Warboys. The roads link St Ives, Somersham, Woodhurst, Bluntisham, and Warboys beyond. St Ives is identified as a spatial planning area in the Local Plan to 2036, reflecting its status as one of the district's four market towns and most sustainable centres. St Ives is projected to grow by at least 430 dwellings and 5.6ha of employment land over the plan period across a number of allocations. In future, any growth north of St. Ives could potentially increase traffic travelling through St. Ives via this route to access the A1307/ A14. Somersham and Warboys are Key Service Centres also designated to receive growth. Woodhurst and Bluntisham are identified as being Small Settlements in the Local Plan to 2036.

- 2.2 CCC has advised, in its application for CIL funding, that:

'The project does not directly relate to new development however with new development proposed at RAF Wyton there is a potential increase in traffic passing through this high-risk junction, specifically with increased traffic from the Warboys/Ramsey area through Pidley.

Higher levels of traffic on the B1040 leaves less gaps for traffic from side roads and therefore increases the level of risk taking by motorists pulling out.

This concept is known as "gap acceptance" i.e. the gap people are willing to pull out into. Fewer gaps and traffic queuing behind mean people are more likely to pull out into smaller gaps in traffic than they normally would be comfortable doing. As the number of developments increase in the area the volume of traffic will increase, therefore resulting in smaller and few gaps. Signalising the junction will allow for better management of traffic flow, significantly reducing the risk of vehicles misjudging gaps between vehicles and pulling out.'

- 2.3 In July 2020 following a review with partners in the emergency services, health services, Highway Authorities and the Road Victims' Trust in which the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Road Safety Partnership became the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Vision Zero Partnership, a new Vision Zero Partnership strategy was adopted by CCC. The scheme at Wheatsheaf crossroads has been developed in line with the Safe Roads workstream and following its routine cluster site analysis, which identified

the crossroads as a high-risk location for investigation. Approval to progress the scheme design with budget to be confirmed was given at the Council's Highways and Infrastructure Committee meeting on 10th March 2020.

2.4 CCC has advised, in its application, that:

'The junction is a crossover point between 2 key links within Huntingdonshire. The first links Somersham and villages to the north of St Ives, and the second links Bluntisham to Woodhurst access to the A141 and employment centres to the west.

The accident cluster site at the crossroads is =9th on the cluster site list and is highest on the list for Huntingdonshire...

...Signalising the junction will allow for better management of traffic flow, significantly reducing the risk of vehicles misjudging gaps between vehicles and pulling out.'

2.5 The scheme has been through the feasibility stage and at present the indicative plans provided show a signalised junction (see Appendix 1). Other options have not been ruled out by CCC.

2.6 CCC funding for the scheme has not been confirmed, as it is yet to be advised by Government of its highway allocation. Once funding has been announced it will be taking a report to its Highways & Transport Committee to approve its road safety programme for next year and associated funding. Given the current lack of confirmation from Government and the local elections, it is expected that June 2021 will be the next available opportunity to report to its Committee. It has agreement in principle to allocate its road safety budget to this project, totalling £592k with the remaining funding being from other CCC highway capital budgets.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 The levy is intended to focus on the provision of new infrastructure and should not be used to remedy pre-existing deficiencies in infrastructure provision unless those deficiencies will be made more severe by new development. It can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure or to repair failing existing infrastructure if that is necessary to support development. The project is addressing the highest accident cluster site in Huntingdonshire, which has sadly resulted included fatal accidents, and is ranked 9th across the county. As such the project meets the legal requirements.

3.2 The Huntingdonshire Local Plan 2036 (HLP2036) recognises St Ives, Somersham and Warboys as locations where growth will occur. The provision of a signalised junction will improve traffic flow and reduce highway accidents. Given the poor record for this junction and its relative importance in the local highway network, it is considered it would be a desirable infrastructure project that meets the requirements of CIL.

- 3.3 The scheme has been estimated to cost £1.2m. CCC is seeking up to £500,000 funding from CIL held by Huntingdonshire District Council. CCC is to provide match funding of £700,000 (58.33%) of the overall estimated cost of £1.2m. It has confirmed there is in principle agreement to allocate the entire road safety budget of £594k towards this project with the remaining funding being from other CCC highway capital budgets.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The Panel discussed the Community Infrastructure Levy Spend Allocation – B1040 Wheatsheaf Road/Somersham Road, St Ives Accident Reduction Scheme at its meeting on 3rd March 2021.
- 4.2 The Panel has highlighted the fact that the site has been the scene of a considerable amount of accidents and that it was pleasing to see the scheme being considered.
- 4.3 The Panel is supportive of the scheme. A suggestion was made that the local Parish Councils should contribute towards the scheme, even if it was just a nominal amount. The Cabinet was then recommended to approve the allocation of up to £500,000 in CIL funding, subject to the conditions as outlined in the recommendations of the report.

5. RISKS

- 5.1 The key risks are that if the project is not fully funded it will not go ahead, failing to address a serious highway issue. Match funding will be lost and a much-needed junction improvement will not be delivered. The growth planned at present does not necessitate the improvements to be delivered through developer contributions and, therefore, relies on a range of alternative funding mechanisms.
- 5.2 Due to the desire to bring the scheme forward, whilst it is noted the project design and costs have not been finalised and land may need to be purchased by CCC to implement it, the CIL allocation is recommended but on the provision that several factors as outlined in para 10.2 below are addressed satisfactorily prior to a contract being completed and funds issued.
- 5.3 The mitigation is that the offer of funding is limited to 12 months from the date of the Cabinet meeting.

6. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 CCC has advised that it has completed the feasibility assessment stage. The next milestones will be:
- Detailed design - be completed summer 2021.
 - Construction - programmed to commence late 2021/22, potentially spanning two financial years.
 - Completion early 2022/23.

6.2 CCC will be notified of Cabinet's decision following the meeting. If funding is awarded, the next steps would be for CCC to provide the information set out in the recommendation in this report prior finalising the offer. It is recommended that they be given 12 months to provide the information, which allows for project slippage. A contract will be prepared and funds issued in accordance with agreed milestones. Officers will undertake quarterly monitoring of the project if approved.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

7.1 This helps to deliver across a number of the Council's priorities for 2018 - 2022 but specifically:

- Support development of infrastructure to enable growth.
- Improve the supply of new and affordable housing, jobs and community facilities to meet current and future need.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Regulation 59 (1) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) requires a charging authority to apply CIL to funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure to support the development of its area. It may also, under Regulation 59 (3), support infrastructure outside its area where to do so would support the development of its area.

8.2 Passing CIL to another person for that person to apply to funding the provision, improvement, replace, operation and maintenance of infrastructure is also permitted under Regulation 59 (4).

8.3 Section 216 (2) of the Planning Act 2008 as amended by Regulation 63 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 (as amended) stated that infrastructure 'includes [and is therefore not limited to]:

- roads and other transport facilities,
- flood defences,
- schools and other educational facilities,
- medical facilities,
- sporting and recreational facilities,
- open spaces.'

8.4 The levy may not be used to fund affordable housing.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 CIL money can only be spent to deliver infrastructure, in accordance with the legal restrictions on the spending of CIL receipts.

9.2 Subject to member approval of the project outlined this would commit a further £500k of CIL funding towards infrastructure projects.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 10.1 The project has been considered in terms of how it supports growth, deliverability, risks, benefits, outputs, and extent of match funding being provided. The current stage of development of the project has also been considered as have the needs for this road safety scheme.
- 10.2 The project will provide road junction mitigation measures to enhance junction performance and safety for current and future residents, workers and visitors to the district.
- 10.3 CCC will match fund 58.33% of the project's anticipated cost. This is subject to provision of:
- Final costings, as detailed design work is still underway.
 - Full business plan based on final design.
 - Confirmation that all of the land required for the project is available.
 - Confirmation of the match funding by CCC and other sources.
- 10.4 The offer should be time limited (12 months) to enable the above matters to be addressed.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Signalised Junction General Arrangement Plan

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Section 216 of Planning Act 2008

Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2694/infrastructure-delivery-plan.pdf>

Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan – Infrastructure Schedule

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2693/infrastructure-schedule.pdf>

Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan Addendum

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2861/infrastructure-delivery-plan-addendum.pdf>

Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Funding Statement 2019 -2020

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/4980/infrastructure-funding-statement-2019-20.pdf>

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APPENDIX 1 - Signalised Junction General Arrangement Plan

