

## **Title of report: A465 Aylestone Hill Walking and Cycling Improvements**

**Decision maker: Cabinet member Infrastructure and transport**

**Decision date: Thursday 15, July 2021**

**Report by: Acting Assistant Director for Highways and Transport / Head of Infrastructure Delivery**

### **Classification**

Open

### **Decision type**

Non-key

### **Wards affected**

Aylestone Hill; Central; College; Eign Hill; Holmer; Widemarsh;

### **Purpose**

To approve the development and delivery of a walking and cycling improvement scheme on the A465 Aylestone Hill following the allocation of £120k of Active Travel Fund from the Department for Transport (DfT).

### **Recommendation(s)**

That:

- (a) The A465 Aylestone Hill Walking and Cycling improvement scheme is developed and delivered by the end of March 2022, within the DfT Active Travel Grant funding allocation of £120,000 : and**
- (b) The Director for Economy and Place be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to progress the scheme in consultation with the S151 officer.**

### **Alternative options**

1. Not to progress with the scheme using this grant funding. This is not recommended as the grant was allocated for this scheme and if not delivered the funding will be lost. This would reduce investment in the city's active travel network which is not consistent with the council's corporate policy to encourage active travel and support the local economy and growth.

2. To allocate additional council capital funding to increase the budget to the original bid value of £160k or beyond. This is not recommended as it is considered that the objectives of this scheme can be delivered within the grant funding awarded and this allows other capital funds to be utilised for further active travel schemes. However this will be assessed following the completion of the detailed design to ascertain if the objectives of the scheme can be adequately met within the funding available.

## **Key considerations**

3. Central government funding to local authorities to implement active travel schemes was announced in 2020 as an emergency active travel fund. A sum of £250m was allocated for these measures to be divided between local authorities in two tranches.
4. Tranche 1 funding was initial funding to enable local authorities to implement temporary measures to support active travel in the easing of the first lockdown in summer 2020. A submission for tranche 1 was made to Department for Transport (DfT) and a sum of £20k was allocated to Herefordshire which was supplemented by £29k local funding. Tranche 1 measures were introduced in July and August 2020 following a period of consultation with key stakeholders.
5. Tranche 2 guidance requires local authorities to make a meaningful reallocation of roadspace for walking and cycling, and requires cycle space to be segregated from traffic and pedestrians. A bid for £160k was made to the DfT in August 2020 for tranche 2 based on a walking and cycling improvement scheme on the A465 Aylestone Hill from the Station Approach Junction to the Park and Choose site at Aylestone Park. This scheme was selected following a process of prioritisation using tools provided by the DfT.
6. Following this submission, in November 2020 the DfT confirmed the fund was renamed the Active Travel fund, that Herefordshire had been awarded £120k and that the delivery deadline was extended to 31 March 2022. They also provided additional guidance on communication with stakeholders and the public that are to be followed for the delivery of the scheme. Between November 2021 and June 2021 there was limited progress on the project whilst resources were focused other transport and infrastructure projects that were to be progressed together with the consideration of next steps in the Hereford Transport Strategy.
7. The A465 Aylestone Hill Walking and Cycling improvements scheme is designed to improve the existing cycle infrastructure on the city side of Aylestone Hill to the latest national guidance published in July 2020. This will improve the facilities for pedestrians, in particular crossing arrangements, address the challenges that currently discourage people from walking and cycling in the vicinity and encourage active travel in Hereford as the natural choice for journeys less than 2 km and for active travel journeys to be cost effective, convenient, safe and healthy.
8. The scheme will support a reduction in carbon and other transport related emissions in the county, promote healthy lifestyles by continuing to deliver behavioural change projects and infrastructure that encourage active travel and physical activity and

provide a good quality, convenient and safe transport network on the A465 that prioritises walking and cycling

9. The A465 Aylestone Hill walking and cycling improvements scheme proposes to upgrade the active travel links between the City Centre, Hereford's railway station, new University student accommodation and future transport interchange with the colleges and ultimately the Park & Choose scheme along Hereford's north eastern radial route. It provides improvements along this key route into the city centre from the north east quadrant of the city and seeks to address difficulties experienced by pedestrians and cyclists along and across the busy radial route.
10. This scheme supporting further mode shift to active travel is in line with the outcomes of the recent transport strategy review, which identified the progression of active travel improvements as a priority.
11. Professional and construction services will be procured through an open procurement process to develop and deliver the scheme by March 2022, including undertaking the stakeholder and public consultation in line with our published communications strategy: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/21505/communications-strategy-active-travel-fund-a465-walking-and-cycling-links> .

## Community impact

12. The Herefordshire Council Local Transport Plan 2016 – 2031 Policy highlights that as well as reducing congestion and emissions, switching to walking and cycling will also improve health, fitness and well-being. The scheme is part of wider programme of improvements intended to make the city a more attractive place to visit and to provide a pedestrian and cycle friendly environment. It is intended that there will be a benefit to wide range of people and groups within the business and resident community.
13. The Scheme also contributes to the County Plan 2020 – 2024 which outlines the ambitions for the council over the next four years and how they will be delivered. These are:
  - **Environment** – Protect and enhance our environment and keep Herefordshire a great place to live
    - EN2: Improve and extend active travel options throughout the county
    - EN3: Build understanding and support for sustainable living.
    - EN4: Invest in low carbon projects
  - **Community** – Strengthen communities to ensure that everyone lives well and safely together
  - **Economy** – Support an economy which builds on the county's strengths and resources

- EC1: Develop environmentally sound infrastructure that attracts investment

14. The scheme will support the delivery programme of the Herefordshire Council Delivery Plan:

### **Environment**

- EN2.1: Complete the Hereford Transport Strategy Review and begin implementation of the preferred options
- EN2.2: Continue to deliver and extend the Choose How You Move sustainable and active travel programme to increase levels of walking and cycling
- EN4: Invest in low carbon projects

### **Communities**

- CO0.1: Improve the overall mental and physical health and wellbeing of residents of all ages with a more diverse and increased level of support that helps people to make healthy food and lifestyle choices

## **Environmental Impact**

15. This scheme will support the delivery of the council's environmental policy commitments and aligns to the following success measures in the County Plan.
- Improve the air quality within Herefordshire
  - Increase the number of short distance trips being done by sustainable modes of travel – walking, cycling, public transport
16. This scheme addresses a key missing link in the city's cycle network for journeys to and from the north east of the city centre. The measures proposed will encourage more people to consider replacing short distance journeys currently made by car. The resulting modal shift will help reduce the county carbon emissions and contribute to improving air quality within the city. The scheme will also enhance the attractiveness of Aylestone Hill to active travel mode users.

## **Equality duty**

17. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:
- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –
- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
18. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.
19. Changes in the public realm have the potential to have a high impact including the potential for negative impacts on those with protected characteristics. It will be essential that the needs of users are reflected in the design process as the remaining elements of the scheme develops.
20. The development of the scheme will include consultation with the local and wider community including stakeholder representing key groups. Further Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) will be carried out during their development process to understand potential positive and negative impacts the scheme may have on each of the nine protected characteristics and on any other vulnerable groups.

## **Resource implications**

21. The deliverables of this project will be Improved physical infrastructure on the A465 for walking and cycling, including cycle lanes, footways and crossings. These will support the realisation of the following outcomes:
- a. Increase in walking and cycling along this key radial route into and out of the city centre and to educational establishments.
  - b. Reduce the number of short distance vehicle journeys on this route and in particular the north east quadrant of Hereford.
  - c. Support a reduction in congestion in the city centre through reduced vehicle journeys.
  - d. Support improvement in air quality and reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> through reduced vehicle journeys.
  - e. Improve the health and wellbeing of the community through increased physical activity.
22. The project programme currently anticipates the design and consultation stage of the project to be completed by November 2021 with the construction stage completed by the end of March 2022.
23. The project will be managed in line with the councils project management process and will be reported through the Verto project management system. A corporate project

manager is to be assigned to the project when one becomes available. In the interim the project will continue to be managed by a technical lead from the service. The project will report to a project board and to the Major Infrastructure Programme Board in line with the board structure.

24. Whilst the walking and cycling improvements to be developed and delivered within this project will link with other elements including the park and choose site at Aylestone park and the public realm improvements on Commercial Road under the HCCTP there is not a direct interdependency between these elements that impacts the ability to progress this project. Collaboration between project teams will be undertaken as necessary to ensure that information is shared between each project as necessary.
25. Herefordshire Council was awarded £120k of funding from the Active Travel Fund following a bid made in the summer of 2020 for the design and delivery of this project. Although this award is less than the bid submission it is proposed that the scheme is delivered wholly within the DfT funding.
26. The tables below outlines the breakdown of spend between elements, profile and current funding source for the project:

<b>Capital cost of project</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>Future Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Scheme Design & Build	0	118	0	118
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>118</b>

<b>Revenue cost of project</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>Future Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Monitoring (vehicles, cycles & pedestrians)		2	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Funding streams</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>Future Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Department for Transport</b> Active Travel Fund Tranche 2	0	120		120
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>120</b>

27. The DfT funding agreement stipulates that the scheme must be delivered by the end of March 2022. The spend profile outlined in the table above reflects this requirement on the basis of design and construction of the scheme within the 21/22 financial year.
28. The procurement of professional and construction services to provide the works covered by this decision will be subject to a procurement process in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. In order to deliver the completion of the scheme we are proposing to source the necessary professional and construction services through an open procurement process.

## Legal implications

29. This is an executive function and a non-key decision. Such decisions under the Constitution can be dealt with by the executive, delegated by the executive to the portfolio holder or delegated to the Chief Executive under Part 3 Section 3, on to officers in exercise of its functions in Part 3 Section 7 (officer functions) and subsequently to named officers under the Directorate Scheme of Delegation Economy and Place. The cabinet member Infrastructure and Transport is the decision maker in this instance.
30. The scheme conforms with the Herefordshire Council Local Transport Plan 2016 – 2031 Policy and contributes to the County Plan 2020-2024 encouraging active travel and supporting the local economy and growth.
31. An agreement has been entered into to provide funding for the scheme from the DfT Active Travel Grant. The scheme therefore has to be delivered by March 2022. To not do so will put the Council in breach of the terms of the agreement and the funding will be withdrawn, thereby putting additional constraints on the capital and revenue budgets if the Council have to fund the scheme directly.
32. There are no other legal considerations or implications.

## Risk management

33. Key risks for the project and their mitigation are indicated below:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The required spend profile outlined above cannot be met, resulting in possible clawback of funding.	Provide initial concept design with professional services tender to provide basis for scheme development and budget.
	Optimise the procurement process and timescales to support the necessary delivery programme.

Impact of undertaking construction works on businesses during the current Covid-19 situation causing additional pressure.	Ensure early and regular liaison with businesses throughout development and delivery of project.
Proposed works exceeding budget	Undertake regular cost estimation within the design phase of the works to validate affordability as the design progresses.
Aspirations identified in the consultation cannot be achieved within the current constraints. This could impact public acceptance of the scheme.	Ensure engagement and consultation is framed around scheme objectives.
Dft engagement requirements impact on ability to deliver project within programme and budget.	Scheme has been developed utilising existing active travel corridors developed through previous consultations and recent public engagement on emergency active travel measures.  Lay out DfT requirements within professional service tender documents.

## Consultees

34. Stakeholder engagement is to be carried out as part of this scheme in line with the scheme's published communications strategy on the council's web site: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/21505/communications-strategy-active-travel-fund-a465-walking-and-cycling-links>. The feedback from this engagement will inform the scheme's final design.

## Appendices

None

## Background papers

None identified

## Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

DfT Department for Transport