

From: Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Subject: EDC Highway Landscaping Enhancement Programme

Key decision No: 25/00050

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Electoral Division:

Dartford – Swanscombe and Greenhithe; Cllr Thomas Mallon

Gravesend – Northfleet and Gravesham West; Cllr Sharon Roots and Cllr Matthew Fraser Moat

Summary: This report seeks Member approval to progress to detailed design and construction stage the EDC Highway Landscaping Enhancement programme in Ebbsfleet. The report further discusses and seeks approval for KCC to enter into a grant funding agreement with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC) to fully fund the scheme.

KCC Landscaping are partnering with EDC to enhance the habitat and planting at highway verge and roundabout sites across Ebbsfleet Garden City. The scheme is intended to be fully funded by Ebbsfleet Development Corporation with Kent County Council (KCC) acting as the delivery arm for the project.

The available capital funding, should KCC enter into a grant agreement with EDC, is £2.515m. Subject to the grant agreement terms, all project expenditure (staffing, construction costs, surveys, overheads) will be funded from the grant. The budget is considered healthy with a significant contingency and risk provision.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to give approval to progress the EDC Highway Landscaping Enhancement Programme through the stages of development and delivery as indicated below and specifically for:

- I. Approval to enter into a funding agreement with EDC subject to the approval of the Corporate Director of Finance, Corporate & Strategic Services.
- II. Approval to progress the detailed design and surveys for the project.
- III. Approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the schemes.
- IV. Approval to carry out any additional consultation with stakeholders required for the schemes.
- V. Approval to enter construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the schemes.

VI. Approval for any further decisions required to allow the scheme to progress through to delivery to be undertaken by the Corporate Director of Growth Environment and Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member.

The proposed decision is attached as appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) are working in partnership with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation to enhance the habitat and planting at highway verge and roundabout sites across Ebbsfleet Garden City. The programme of works aims to demonstrate both parties' commitment to high quality, sustainable placemaking across Ebbsfleet Garden City.
- 1.2 The project proposes to deliver an exemplar approach to design and maintenance of green infrastructure and the creation of ecological value at key gateways into the Garden City, to include roundabouts, verges and along primary road environments.
- 1.3 The project is championed by Ebbsfleet Development Corporation but will be delivered in partnership with KCC, with the intention for KCC to lead the delivery of the landscaping improvements on highway land, subject to the outcome of KCC governance.

2. The report

Background

- 2.1 EDC was established in 2015 by the UK Government to accelerate the delivery of up to 15,000 new homes and create a 21st-century Garden City in Ebbsfleet, North Kent. Acting as the planning authority for the designated Urban Regeneration Area, EDC also owns key land parcels across Ebbsfleet and its surrounding communities. The Corporation is sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and works closely with KCC by providing grants for programmes and infrastructure improvements to enhance the Ebbsfleet area.
- 2.2 EDC has placed a strong emphasis on cultivating a distinctive identity for Ebbsfleet Garden City. Through the EDC Landscaping Enhancement project, the Corporation aims to transform the arrival experience for residents and visitors by elevating the design and maintenance of key gateway routes, including roundabouts, verges, and primary roads. This initiative seeks to replace inconsistent and low-aspiration landscaping with a cohesive, visually striking, and ecologically rich environment that reinforces Ebbsfleet's image as a modern, sustainable Garden City.
- 2.3 As the highway authority, KCC are responsible for all adopted highway verges and highway landscaped areas across Ebbsfleet. Given the stringent maintenance budgets KCC work within, it is vital that we ensure that any enhancements to our verges require low maintenance, and the regimes are

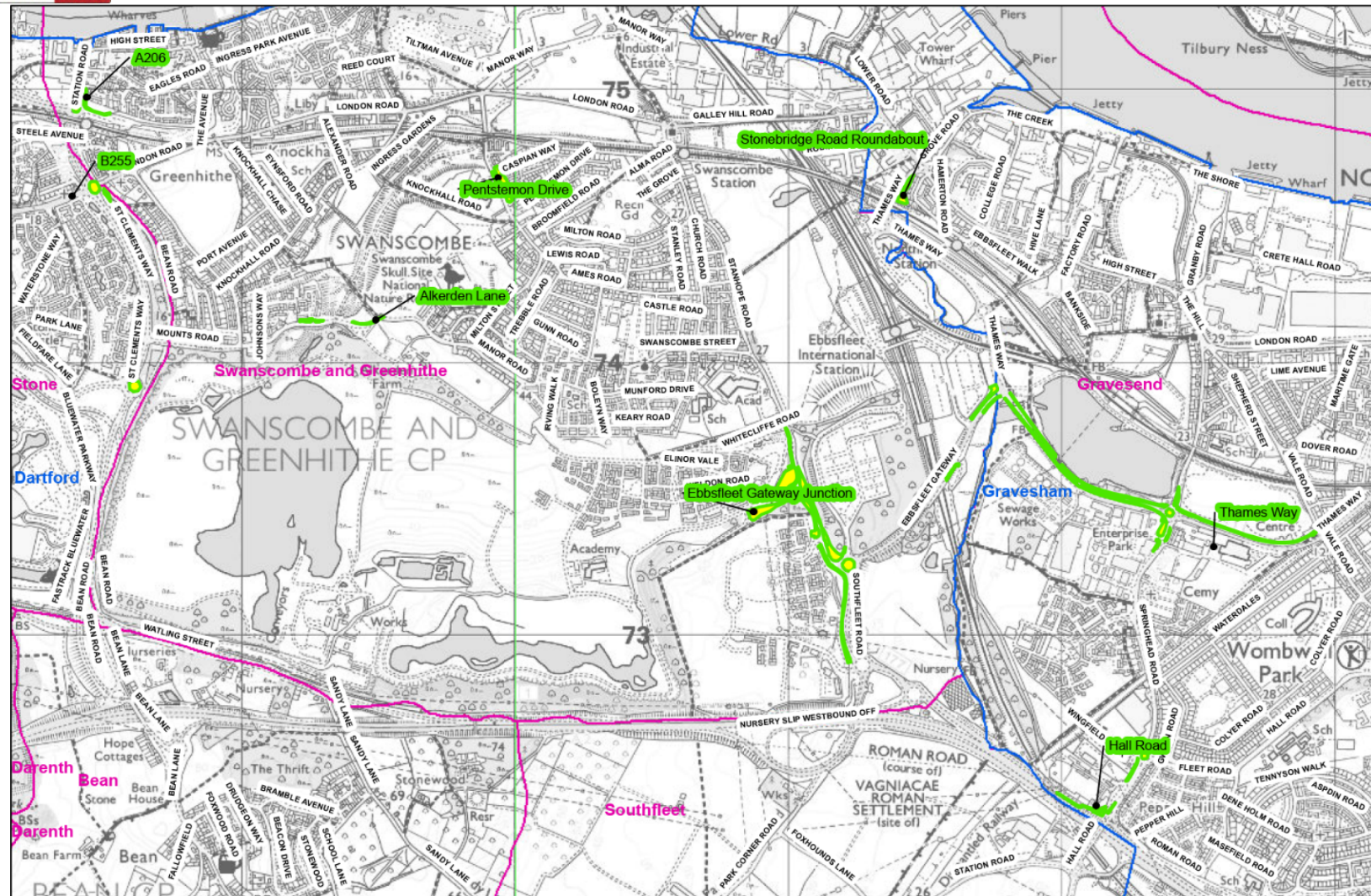
designed so that the costs fall within our existing identified budgets. As such, it is the intention that KCC act as the delivery arm for the scheme.

Scope

- 2.4 The initial feasibility and outline design work for this programme has been completed through a small-scale feasibility grant from EDC. This includes the production of a landscape design strategy which has informed the design for each site.
- 2.5 The scheme incorporates layered planting strategies, such as species-rich meadows, groundcover shrubs, and seasonal bulbs, to create varied habitats and enhance ecological value across the landscape.
- 2.6 These interventions are designed not only to support wildlife and pollinators but also to deliver nature-based climate solutions and improve residents' access to green space. The project aligns with broader environmental goals, including Kent County Council's "Plan Tree" initiative, which targets the planting of 1.5 million trees and a 19% canopy cover over the next decade.
- 2.7 EDC considered a number of site options for the sites to be investigated as part of the landscaping programme. The long list of sites comprised several off-highway and developer sites, which are not being delivered by KCC. This list was reduced to a shortlist by removing all sites which are expected to come forward through developers or Ebbsfleet will directly deliver. Sites delivered by EDC or developers on private land are not maintained by KCC, with regimes managed by the respective landowners.
- 2.8 The final site locations are highlighted in Figure 1 and listed below:
 - A206 Station Approach
 - B255 North
 - B255 South
 - Alkerden Lane
 - Pentstemon Drive
 - Stonebridge Road
 - Hall Road/Springhead Road roundabout
 - Ebbsfleet Gateway Junction
 - Thames Way

Ebbsfleet Biodiversity Overview

Ebbsfleet Biodiversity



Date: 27/11/2024

Author: Ashley Irons

Figure 1: Map of EDC Landscaping scheme

- 2.9 Should approval be given to progress, the high-level forecasted programme of works is:
- **July to August 2025:**
 - o Progress detailed design (utilising existing grant funding)
 - o Agree grant terms with EDC and accept grant
 - o Conduct ecological surveys (summer surveys) to inform the detailed design as required
 - **Autumn 2025 to Spring 2026:** Progress sites which do not require ecological licences. This will include tree planting during the winter period.
 - **Summer 2026 to Spring 2027:** Progress remaining sites.
- 2.10 This programme may be subject to change given potential for ecological licence constraints.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The programme will be fully funded through a capital grant from EDC, with the Corporation providing KCC with a grant of up to £2.515m between 2025/26 and 2026/27 to deliver the sites. Subject to the grant agreement terms, this project should come at no revenue or capital cost to KCC and all expenditure (staffing, construction costs, surveys, overheads) will be funded from the grant.
- 3.2 Discussions are ongoing in terms of the purpose of the grant, the terms and conditions as well as eligible expenditure. Full details of the grant are to be established through the ongoing discussions. KCC Legal and financial oversight of the proposed agreement will be undertaken prior to the recommendation to sign to protect the financial interests of KCC. The agreed terms shall conclude the outstanding issues, ensuring that KCC spend within the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice. It should also be noted that the grant will be ringfenced to be spent on these schemes only.
- 3.3 The identified sites are all existing KCC highway verge or roundabout areas, no additional landscaping areas are to be created through this programme, instead the existing areas will be enhanced. As such, all maintenance costs will be included within the existing landscaping maintenance budgets and there will be no additional financial burden to KCC for future maintenance.
- 3.4 The Project Cost plan is featured in Table 1.

Table 1: Forecast spend for project. This forecast includes £150k feasibility grant previously provided by EDC.

	Prior feasibility spend	2025/26 forecast (existing grant)	2025/26 Forecast (proposed grant)	2026/27 Forecast (proposed grant)	Totals
PM and Legal fees		£30,000			£30,000
Design and Construction costs	£35,139	£84,861	£1,019,866	£1,495,324	£2,635,190
Totals	£35,139	£114,861	£1,019,866	£1,495,324	£2,665,190

4. Other options considered but discarded

- 4.1 Not accept the funding and forego the opportunity to enhance the habitat and planting at highway verge and roundabout sites across Ebbsfleet Garden City.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Legal oversight will be provided prior to the recommendation to accept the grant agreement.
- 5.2 There are no additional identified legal implications associated with this scheme. No land acquisition or agreements are required to progress the scheme. Equally, as all areas to be enhanced are already designated as highway land, there are no legal costs or requirements associated with land access.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for this scheme is appended to this report (Appendix B).

7. Other corporate implications

- 7.1 In respect to other projects, no other KCC corporate implications of this report have been identified.
- 7.2 It is noted that some resource will be required from KCC procurement to support the procurement process for a contractor. This resource will be required from late Summer 2025 to Autumn 2025.

8. Governance

- 8.1 Delegated authority for scope and scheme decisions will be provided to Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member. Decisions relating directly to Finance will be delegated to the Corporate Director of Finance.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The Highway Landscaping Enhancement Programme is a key scheme to deliver biodiversity enhancement within the Ebbsfleet area. The scheme will deliver an exemplar approach to design and maintenance of green infrastructure and the creation of ecological value at key gateways into the Garden City. KCC will utilise the results of this programme to review practices elsewhere in the county which could also benefit from adopting enhanced landscaping.
- 9.2 The programme will be fully funded through a capital grant from EDC, with the Corporation providing KCC with a grant of up to £2.515m. This grant is intended to cover all scheme costs including staffing and resource.

9. Recommendation(s):

9.1 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to give approval to progress the EDC Highway Landscaping Enhancement Programme through the stages of development and delivery as indicated below and specifically for:

- I. Approval to enter into a funding agreement with EDC subject to the approval of the Corporate Director of Finance, Corporate & Strategic Services.
- II. Approval to progress the detailed design and surveys for the project.
- III. Approval to progress all statutory approvals or consents required for the schemes.
- IV. Approval to carry out any additional consultation with stakeholders required for the schemes.
- V. Approval to enter construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the schemes.
- VI. Approval for any further decisions required to allow the scheme to progress through to delivery to be undertaken by the Corporate Director of Growth Environment and Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member.

9.2 The proposed decision is attached as appendix A.

10. Background Documents

10.1 Appendix A – Proposed Decision

10.2 Appendix B – EQIA

11. Contact details

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