

**From:** Bryan Sweetland, Cabinet Member – Environment, Highways & Waste  
John Burr, Director - Highways & Transportation

**To:** Environment, Highways & Waste Cabinet Committee

**Date:** 23 April 2013

**Subject:** North Farm Link Road (Longfield Road) Improvement, Tunbridge Wells

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Summary:**

Approval to take the highway improvement scheme through the next stages of development including authority to progress statutory orders and to enter into land and funding agreements.

**Introduction**

North Farm is the main commercial, shopping and strategic employment area within the Borough. Primary access is from the A21 along Longfield Road – a single carriageway link road that was built in the late 1970's. The expansion and popularity of North Farm has put Longfield Road under considerable pressure with considerable congestion and delays during peak periods and at weekends. Some 300 businesses are losing trade and future development opportunities are at risk. A scheme to improve Longfield Road to a dual carriageway standard together with improved junctions has been developed and this has the support of the local business community. See plan attached.

Following a successful bid to the Department for Transport (DfT) for Local Pinch Point funding, under which the Transport Secretary has awarded £3.5m towards the overall cost of the scheme estimated at £5m, KCC is proceeding rapidly to negotiate with landowners to secure the necessary land.

A condition of DfT funding is that the scheme must be completed by 31 March 2015 and hence there is considerable urgency to progress the scheme through the next stages to see if its delivery remains a viable, albeit challenging, proposition.

**Critical Aspects**

Land owners will be required to dedicate or transfer land required for the scheme and to make no claims against KCC for any disruption that may result from construction of the scheme. This must now be translated swiftly into binding

obligations to minimise abortive costs that will start to be rapidly incurred in progressing the design of the scheme and achieving statutory approvals. Landowners have been advised and this will be further discussed at the next regular liaison meeting with the North Farm business/landowner community on 19 April. Officers consider that binding commitments on land dedication and on the disruption issue must be secured by mid June and I would expect to report accordingly on this key 'make or break' milestone to the 19 June meeting of this Committee.

Some land is unregistered or in unknown ownership and while unhelpful this is not an unusual situation with major highway improvements. The procedural solution is to promote a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) limited to these areas of land. Assuming there were no objections, the Secretary of State would then be invited to confirm the CPO, thereby securing this land for the scheme.

An environmental screening opinion is under consideration that will determine whether a planning application and an Environmental Impact Assessment will be required for the scheme. Completing the seasonally dependent environmental surveys over the coming summer and autumn will be critical to when a planning application can be submitted. Making a planning application, obtaining consent and satisfying reserved matters will be the main influence on the ability to deliver the scheme within the Pinch Point funding time constraints.

Scheme cost, construction procurement and construction period are key factors in affordability and target end date delivery and these aspects will be considered in detail in the coming months as the detailed design is progressed by Amey – our new engineering and transportation term consultant. In addition to the DfT Pinch Point funding and KCC's funding commitment, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has agreed to underwrite £0.5m of scheme costs, and this will need to be formalised within an Agreement.

## **Recommendations**

Subject to the views of this Committee, the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways & Waste will be recommended to:

- i. approve the scheme for the improvement of Longfield Road, shown as an outline design on Drg B2500600/04 Rev0 for land charge disclosures and development control.
- ii. give approval to progress the scheme for the improvement of Longfield Road, shown as an outline design on Drg B2500600/04 Rev0, including any ancillary works such as drainage and environmental mitigation, with the intention of submitting a planning application if required.
- iii. give approval for Legal Services to take a dedication, transfer or by some other appropriate legal mechanism to secure the land required to deliver the Longfield Road scheme, shown in outline on Drg B2500600/04 Rev0, including but not limited to any ancillary works such as drainage and environmental mitigation.

- iv. give authority for Legal Services to promote a Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of unregistered land or land in unknown ownership, and any other Orders deemed necessary, required to deliver the Longfield Road scheme, shown in outline on Drg B2500600/04 Rev0, including but not limited to any ancillary works such as drainage and environmental mitigation.
- v. give authority for Legal Services to enter into a funding Agreement with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
- vi. give authority for Legal Services or S151 Officer, as required, to formally accept the DfT Pinch Point funding offer when received and subject to being satisfied with the terms and conditions.

## **Background Documents**

Local Pinch Point Funding Application – February 2013  
Scheme Plan – Drg. No. B2500600/04 Rev0

## **Contact details**

John Farmer, Major Capital Projects Manager  
[john.farmer@kent.gov.uk](mailto:john.farmer@kent.gov.uk)  
07740 185252