

From: David Brazier - Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport
Mike Austerberry - Corporate Director Growth, Environment & Transport

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 17 September 2014

Subject: 13/00094 Gravesend Transport Quarter Phase 3 - Rathmore Road Link, Gravesend

Key decision Major Scheme affecting two electoral divisions and with cost over £1m

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: For Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Northfleet & Gravesham West and Gravesham East

Summary: Approval to take the highway improvement scheme through the next stages of development and delivery including authority to progress Statutory Orders and to enter into land, funding and construction contracts.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport on the proposed decision as follows (and indicated on the proposed decision sheet attached at Appendix A):

- i) give approval to the outline design scheme for Gravesend Transport Quarter Phase 3 - Rathmore Road Link shown on Drg. No. 4300015/000/001 Rev 2 for development control and land charge disclosures; and subject to planning approval;
- ii) give approval to the publication of a Compulsory Purchase Order, any other statutory approvals and any other necessary legal rights or consents required for the scheme shown in principle on Drg, No. 4300015/000/001 Rev 2 subject to any substantive amendments arising from the detailed design being approved by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport;
- iii) give approval to the advance voluntary acquisition of No. 15 Darnley Road that is affected by the scheme on terms to be agreed with the Director of Property;
- iv) give approval to the voluntary acquisition of Gravesham Borough Council car park land that is affected by the scheme on terms to be agreed with the Director of Property;
- v) give approval to enter into a funding agreement for financial support through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Single Local Growth Fund, and other such funding agreements as required for the delivery of the scheme, subject to the approval of the Corporate Director of Finance & Procurement; and

- vi) give approval to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme subject to the approval of the Procurement Board to the procurement strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Gravesend Transport Quarter Phase 3 - Rathmore Road Link involves the re-alignment of the existing Rathmore Road and its upgrade to provide a new two-way link road between Stone Street and Darnley Road. The scheme also includes restricting access to Barrack Row and making Clive Road two-way with associated works to Railway Place. A key objective of the scheme is to remove unnecessary traffic from Barrack Row so that it can be used almost exclusively for public transport and provide the opportunity for a purpose made public transport interchange that would be a later phase of the Gravesend Transport Quarter project. See Fig. 1 attached as Appendix B.
- 1.2 Phase 1 of the Gravesend Transport Quarter project involved public realm improvements to the area in front of the Civic Centre, including some highway changes, to provide a unified space. These were completed in 2011. Phase 2 involves the provision by Network Rail of a multi-storey car park including an integral public transport facility in the Barack Row area. All of these phases are in pursuance of a Masterplan that was promoted by Gravesham Borough Council. See Fig 2 attached as Appendix B.
- 1.3 The scheme has been proceeding on the basis of a decision taken by the then Cabinet Member for Environment & Enterprise in April 2012 (Decision 12-01888 refers) but it is an appropriate time to report the current situation and seek to revalidate and update that decision.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 There are no capital financial implications or risks for KCC. All costs associated with the development of the scheme, land acquisition and construction currently estimated at £8m are to be fully funded through the Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Programme utilising grant funding from the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) together with the recent allocation in principle of £4.1m through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Single Local Growth Funding by the Department of Transport (DfT). The Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Programme is managed by the internal client within the Economic Division of the Directorate.
- 2.2 A high standard of public realm is an important aspect of some elements of the scheme such as an enhanced forecourt area to the southside entrance to Gravesend railway station that will include a drop-off/pick-up area and space for taxis and disabled parking. The choice of materials has been reviewed with the Borough Council and is driven by the objectives of the Masterplan and to achieve continuity with the new Civic Square (Phase 1). Account has been taken of factors such as appropriateness, cost, maintenance, durability and buildability and in particular has been influenced by experience on other similar schemes in Kent. There is a higher level of potential revenue maintenance

liability but this will be offset by it being new build, robustly constructed and replacing some older parts of the network.

- 2.3 Delivery will of course also be dependent on cost and affordability and this will only be clear after the detailed design has been completed and in particular fully costed details of utility diversions have been provided by the statutory undertakers. A scheme specific business case also needs to be submitted to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) for approval before the £4.1m indicative funding to supplement the funding from the Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Programme is confirmed.

3. Policy Framework

The scheme supports the BS4K objectives of supporting existing businesses and encouraging economic activity with housing growth and job creation by improving infrastructure and accessibility.

4. Scheme Update

- 4.1 The outline design was completed and a planning application submitted in April 2012. The application and supporting environmental assessment such as noise and air quality was predicated on Phase 2 - the Network rail multi-storey car park - proceeding as it had achieved planning consent and construction at the time was imminent. However, the car park did not proceed, planning consent has since lapsed and the proposal is now unlikely to be resurrected until a new Train Operating Company franchise is in place. A revised planning application for the scheme had to be prepared and submitted on the basis of it being a stand-alone proposal that made no assumptions about the car park proceeding.
- 4.2 The revised planning application was submitted to the December 2013 Planning Applications Committee and determination was deferred pending a site visit that was held on 20th January 2014. A number of concerns were raised during the site visit and it was decided to submit a further revised application that would address these concerns where appropriate or provide additional supporting explanation. The opportunity was also taken to amend the scheme and application to reflect the requirement of Gravesham Borough Council to maximise their retained land for use in a continuing role as a car park.
- 4.3 The revised application was submitted in April 2014 and it is expected to be determined by the Planning Applications Committee at its meeting on 22 October 2014.
- 4.4 Subject to planning approval, the next stage will be to secure the land for the scheme. The bulk of the land required is from the Rathmore Road car park owned by Gravesham Borough Council. An agreement in principle has been reached with the Borough Council reflecting an appropriate level of compensation for the land taken and loss of parking revenue. No. 13 Darnley Road is affected by the scheme and will need to be demolished. It is owned by Gravesham Borough Council but its acquisition was funded by HCA and hence will be made freely available for the scheme.

- 4.5 Land from the front of No.15 Darnley Road will be required and extensive party wall works will also be required resulting from the demolition of the adjacent No.13. Acquisition of the whole property is appropriate and negotiations are underway with the owner with the objective of securing a voluntary acquisition. The property is currently in tenanted residential use and it is likely that when the scheme construction starts a planning application will be made for a change to commercial use. This has the benefit of dealing with any marginal air quality concerns resulting from the scheme. The property will become an asset of the Kent Thameside Strategic Transport Programme and it is likely that it will be sold and the capital receipt netted off the scheme cost.
- 4.6 To cover the situation where the voluntary acquisition of No.15 Darnley Road does not proceed or falls behind programme, it is likely that a Compulsory Purchase Order will be promoted for all the land required for the scheme in order to give programme certainty.
- 4.7 If a Compulsory Purchase Order can be avoided and other complementary statutory orders are also unnecessary then delivery of the scheme in practical terms will then be dependent on completing the detailed design of the scheme and procuring a contractor through a competitive tender process under European procurement rules.
- 4.8 On the basis of funding being confirmed and statutory Orders being avoided a start of construction in early 2016 is possible. This would allow the scheme to be built in good weather and avoid disruption during important Christmas and New Year town centre trading periods.

5. Conclusions

Progress has been somewhat disrupted over the last two years because of external factors and issues raised during the planning application process that have required revisions to the scheme. On the basis of funding being confirmed and statutory Orders being avoided a start of construction in early 2016 is possible. This would allow the scheme to be built in good weather and avoid disruption during important Christmas and New Year town centre trading periods. If statutory Orders are required and a public inquiry required then, subject of course to confirmation by the Secretary of State, a start would not be likely before sometime during 2017.

6. Recommendations

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport on, the proposed decision as follows (and indicated on the proposed decision sheet attached at Appendix A):

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- vi) give approval to enter into construction contracts as necessary for the delivery of the scheme subject to the approval of the Procurement Board to the procurement strategy.

7. Background Documents

None

8. Contact details

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