

**CABINET – 23 MARCH 2021****A511 GROWTH CORRIDOR PROPOSALS - BARDON LINK ROAD****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet on the progress of the A511 Growth Corridor proposals and seek permission to undertake consultation to support the future submission of a planning permission for the extension of the Bardon Link Road which is an element of the A511 Growth Corridor Scheme.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that:
  - (a) The progress on the A511 Growth Corridor scheme is noted;
  - (b) All necessary work continues to progress the A511 Growth Corridor scheme including submission of the Full Business Case to the Department for Transport (DfT);
  - (c) The Director of Environment and Transport be authorised:
    - (i) following consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources and the Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transportation, to undertake a pre-submission consultation exercise to support the submission of a planning application in respect of the route of the extension of the Bardon Link Road aligned to the programme for scheme delivery as required by the DfT,
    - (ii) to make minor amendments to the A511 Growth Corridor proposals as the Scheme develops.

**Reason for Recommendations**

3. Following the Cabinet decision of November 2019 to support development of a package of measures which meet the criteria for Major Road Network (MRN) funding, ongoing work on the proposals for the A511 Growth Corridor and on the business case process continue to indicate that the scheme represents good value for money.
4. Undertaking a pre-submission consultation will support the Council in making a preferred route decision for the Bardon Link Road extension that will form the basis of the planning application.

5. Submission of a planning application is a critical part of the scheme programme that supports meeting timescales for the DfT funding. In order to complete the application process for DfT MRN funding it is necessary for the County Council to prepare a business case before DfT funding is awarded.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

6. Work commenced in December 2020 between North West Leicestershire District Council and the County Council to consider a refresh of the current funding strategy in place between the two authorities with regard to the financing of the Coalville Transport Strategy, of which the A511 Growth Corridor is a major component. It is intended that the outcome of these discussions will be reported to the Cabinet in July 2021.
7. The Outline Business Case (OBC) for the package of measures proposed for the A511 Corridor was submitted to the DfT in January 2020, with a revised post-COVID-19 version being submitted in July 2020. It was expected that the County Council would be advised of the outcome in autumn 2020 but the pandemic has affected government timelines and a decision is now expected in May 2021.
8. Subject to the Cabinet's agreement the pre-submission planning consultation exercise will take place in May/June 2021.
9. If the OBC is successful, then submission of a planning application for the Bardon Link Road Extension is likely to be in August 2021 with a decision expected early in 2022.
10. Subject to securing planning permission and the authorisation, making and confirmation of any required Compulsory and Side Roads Orders, the Full Business Case will be submitted to DfT in autumn 2023.
11. Subject to securing the funding and approval to proceed, construction of the A511 MRN Corridor scheme is expected to commence in Spring 2024.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

12. In March 2011 the County Council approved the third Leicestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP3). This contains six strategic transport goals, of which Goal 1 is to have a transport system that supports a prosperous economy and provides successfully for population growth. The LTP3 sets out the Council's approach to achieving this namely, to improve the management of the road network and continuing to address congestion issues.
13. In March 2014 the Cabinet approved the principles set out in the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's (LLEP) Strategic Economic Plan, which prioritises support for the economy of Market Towns and rural Leicestershire.

14. The County Council's Enabling Growth Action Plan (approved in March 2015) supports the development of Market Towns for employment land as a priority and includes a specific action to work with North West Leicestershire District Council to plan for the future growth in the area and in particular Coalville.
15. In November 2015 the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee was advised that given the significant opposition to making any changes to Hugglescote Crossroads, future highways improvement work in the area would be focused on the A511.
16. In March 2019 the Cabinet agreed to the development of the Strategic Outline Business Case and the OBC for the MRN A511 Growth Corridor scheme. It authorised the Director of Environment and Transport to prepare and submit bids, as appropriate, to secure external funding for delivery of schemes identified in the Highways Capital Programme.
17. In November 2019, following public consultation, the Cabinet agreed to support the proposals comprising proposed improvements to eight junctions along the A511, including a Bardon Link Road extension to south-east Coalville, and dual carriageway between Thornborough Road and Whitwick Road. It authorised the Director of Environment and Transport to use the existing funding allocation of £4m capital funding to develop and submit a planning application for the extension to the Bardon Link Road and undertake all necessary preparations to progress the scheme to Full Business Case (FBC) and, subject to Department for Transport (DfT) approval, deliver the scheme.

### **Resource Implications**

18. The total estimated cost of the A511 Growth Corridor scheme is currently £48.7m. The funding for the scheme is made up of £1.5m development funding from DfT and Midlands Connect with £40.4m expected from DfT Major Road Network funding (should the bid be successful) and £6.8m from developers via the Coalville Contribution Strategy (as agreed with North West Leicestershire District Council).
19. As part of the MTFs capital programme the County Council has forward funded £4.0m of the £6.8m in advance of receipt of developer contributions.
20. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the content of this report.

### **Legal Implications**

21. Wherever possible the acquisition of land and rights will be conducted by negotiation and agreement with landowners, but it is likely that the Compulsory Purchase process pursuant to the Highways Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 will be critical for procurement of the land and rights along the route. At the appropriate time a further report will be submitted to the Cabinet seeking the necessary authorisations in connection with compulsory purchase requirements.

22. The Director of Law and Governance has been consulted on the content of this report.

**Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

23. This report has been circulated to members representing the electoral divisions that are affected by the proposals - Mr D. Harrison CC, Mrs D. Taylor CC, Dr T. Eynon CC, Mr M. Wyatt CC, Mr T. Gillard CC, Mr P. Bedford CC and Mr N. J. Rushton CC.

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**PART B****Background**

24. Congestion on the A511 Growth Corridor has been a long-standing issue recognised by both North West Leicestershire District Council and Leicestershire County Council. This dates back to 2008 when the Coalville Transport Strategy (CTS) was developed and officers investigated junctions on the corridor requiring improvement to facilitate housing growth in Coalville and Ashby.
25. An outcome of the CTS was the implementation of the Coalville Contribution Strategy (CCS) to help facilitate the delivery of improvements along the Growth Corridor. However, insufficient funding has currently been received from the CCS to deliver the range of improvements required and issues (such as congestion and pollution) have become increasingly pronounced. This is likely to be exacerbated further by increases in background traffic and the significant levels of growth planned for Coalville as part of the District Council's Local Plan.
26. The A511 Growth Corridor is recognised by Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) in its Strategic Economic Plan as one of five Growth Areas. The Strategic Economic Plan states through appropriate investment and improvements along the corridor, there is the potential to deliver at least 5,275 houses and 25 hectares of employment land. Importantly, a significant number of the committed dwellings (3,500) are on sites which are collectively referred to as south-east Coalville.
27. One of the main HS2 Phase 2b construction compounds is to be located near the A42 Junction 13, which forms the westernmost end of the A511 Growth Corridor. Accessibility to the compound will potentially have major traffic implications and it is therefore desirable that the major works on the A511 Growth Corridor are largely completed prior to HS2 work commencing.
28. Taking into account the aims of the MRN funding opportunity and the evidence of priorities needed to support growth a package has been developed for submission to DfT to seek MRN funding. The A511 Growth Corridor proposals consist of a range of measures, including improvements to 8 junctions, a dual carriageway between Thornborough Road and Whitwick Road in Coalville and an extension to the Bardon Link Road. This last is being provided as part of the South East Coalville development. It is this section which is subject to the pre-submission planning consultation.
29. Implementation of A511 MRN Corridor scheme will provide the breathing space to enable a wider transport strategy for Coalville and the surrounding area to address localised traffic issues, public transport improvements and walking and cycling connectivity; building on the work done as part of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund in 2012 and 2013.

### **DfT Major Road Network Bid**

30. The Council submitted the MRN bid to the DfT in July 2019, requesting funding to prepare an OBC by December 2019 with a potential scheme construction start date of 2022. This was the only bid submitted across the East Midlands to the MRN funding pot.
31. In October 2019 the DfT announced that the bid was successful, with £1.28m funding awarded to commence work on the OBC from July 2019. The OBC was submitted in January 2020, with a potential construction start date of Spring 2022.
32. As a result of the impact of the pandemic the DfT requested a revised OBC in order to understand the impact of COVID-19 on all projects that were to be supported by MRN funding. The revised OBC was submitted by the Director in July 2020 with an updated start date of spring 2024.

### **Bardon Link Road Consultation**

33. An essential step in the development of the scheme is to identify a preferred route for the new section of the Bardon Link Road. The preferred route forms the basis for the planning and Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) processes (minor alterations may be made as part of the later detailed design process).
34. Subject to a successful funding announcement, currently expected from the DfT in May 2021, it is proposed that a formal public consultation exercise should be undertaken prior to the Cabinet making a preferred route decision and a planning application being submitted.
35. Consultation is planned for May/June 2021. The primary purpose will be to seek views on the preferred route for the scheme.
36. A further report, including the outcome of the consultation, will be brought to the Cabinet in July 2021, with a view to deciding the preferred route to be taken for planning and CPO purposes.
37. At this stage it is envisaged that the consultation could be held over 6 weeks, to include appropriate parish and town councils, local communities and businesses and other stakeholders. A consultation survey would be placed on the County Council's website, with copies available on request. The County Council, in partnership with North West Leicestershire District Council, will also hold a public exhibition in the area or virtually in line with COVID-19 rules. The Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be consulted.

### **Resource Implications**

38. The total estimated cost of the A511 Growth Corridor scheme is currently £48.7m of which £40.4m is expected to be met from DfT funding should the

Major Road Network Bid be successful. This is an early estimate of cost and there is the potential for this to change before the scheme is delivered.

39. Of the remaining financial commitment of £8.3m, £1.5m has already been received for development of the project from DfT and Midlands Connect. The remaining £6.8m is to be funded from the Coalville Contribution Strategy (the means by which funds are collected from developers via section 106 agreements to fund transport infrastructure in North West Leicestershire, as agreed with North West Leicestershire District Council). As some of this £6.8m may need to be financed in advance of receipt of this funding it is proposed that it is forward-funded through the County Council's capital programme, £4m having been allocated in the MTFS.
40. Forward funding involves a risk to the County Council if the developer funding to be used to recoup the forward funding does not fully materialise via s106 developer contributions – noting that decisions on developer contributions will be made by the District Council as the local Planning Authority. However, contributions of approximately £3.7m for physical infrastructure works have been received to date through the Contribution Strategy and in discussion with North West Leicestershire District Council it is estimated that a further £6.7m is expected in developer contributions from signed s106 agreements as the planning permissions attached to the s106 agreements in question are implemented. Discussions, supported by the Council's Growth Service, will continue to refresh the Contribution Strategy and so minimise potential risks to this funding being available to fund the works on site.
41. To ensure work on the proposals could take place to secure central government funding, approval was given by the Cabinet on 29 March 2019 for £4m of capital funding to be made available to develop the scheme to FBC and delivery. Since then, submitted development funding bids have been successful and a further £1.5m has been received for development of the project from DfT and Midlands Connect. However, as COVID-19 has hampered progress on developing the scheme to FBC and delivery, the £4m MTFS allocation has not been reduced as it may be needed to progress the scheme before being recouped from the DfT grant if the bid is successful. It is only intended that this will be funded from the Highways capital programme if the bid is unsuccessful.
42. The funding to date has enabled a Strategic Outline Business Case to be submitted to the DfT in July 2019 and the OBC to be submitted in January 2020. £1.0m of the funding was spent in 2019/20 to complete the OBC for submission to the DfT, with the remaining £4.5m profiled through 2020/21 and 2021/22 to enable work to submit a planning application, carry out statutory procedures and carry out work necessary to prepare the scheme for delivery. Continuation of the scheme will be kept under review with reference to key decisions and milestones such as the outcome of the MRN funding submission, planning process and assessment of value for money.

### Next Steps

43. To date, the A511 MRN Corridor scheme including the Bardon Link Road extension has completed the outline design process and undergone the first stages of detailed design. In order to meet the timescales for planning submission the next stage would be to complete detailed design and firm up alignment which will only be finally confirmed via the planning application process. This work needs to continue before the outcome of the bid is known but the planning application will only be submitted if the bid is successful.
44. Further environmental survey and associated design work will be progressed as part of this work to give a fuller understanding of environmental impacts and potential mitigation required. This information would be presented during any future consultation. This work will also need to be progressed before the outcome of the bid is known.
45. If the OBC is successful, then submission of a planning application for the Bardon Link Road Extension is expected to take place in August/September 2021.
46. The planning determination period is 16 weeks, meaning a decision would be expected by late January 2022/early February 2022. This will provide an opportunity to carry out further consultation with residents and stakeholders on the full list of the A511 scheme proposals which will confirm the final proposals for all the transport improvements, identifying any changes which have been made since the planning consultation, which may arise from detailed design and survey work on the scheme.
47. The DfT has indicated that a decision on the scheme will not be made until May 2021 at the earliest. In order to meet the scheme programme, the County Council would be required to start preparing the scheme planning application and associated statutory orders (including CPO and Traffic Orders) during spring and summer 2021. If DfT funding is not approved by this time, this work would effectively be carried out 'at risk' on the basis that DfT funding would be awarded at the end of the business case process. However, if this was the case, the work would not be unproductive as it would help prepare the scheme for future bid opportunities and inform schemes design for future delivery as contributions are received over time.
48. In the event that the DfT does not award MRN funding a report will be presented to the Cabinet to review the future programme for the scheme.
49. The consultation undertaken in October 2019, showed that residents agree with the need for improvement on the A511 corridor but would like the proposals to go further. The outcomes of the consultation are being considered where appropriate in undertaking the detailed design, but the scheme business case submission will focus on the alignment of the proposals to the scheme objectives, affordability, risk and value for money.



## **Conclusion**

50. The financial risk of delivering the scheme will, in part, be mitigated by secured and expected s106 development contributions and continued working with North West Leicestershire District Council. Whilst it is hoped that the MRN Fund will enable construction of the A511 Growth Corridor to commence in 2024, the preparatory work will ensure that the project is 'shovel ready' for any other funding opportunities that arise.
51. In the context of planned growth, the A511 Growth Corridor scheme will have considerable benefits for North West Leicestershire, especially Coalville, and indeed for Leicestershire and the wider region. As well as addressing existing traffic delays and congestion in and around Coalville, the scheme will support the expansion and economic growth in the area as well as making sure the route is HS2-ready.

## **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

52. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) Screening has already been approved by the Cabinet. It was produced in order to understand the potential impacts, both negative and positive, on protected characteristic groups. The full and final report will form part of the Environmental Statement that will be included in the submission of the planning application.
53. The conclusion of this screening is that there are a number of potential impacts that could affect groups with protected characteristics across North West Leicestershire. In particular groups most likely be affected are younger people, older people, people with disabilities and low income/deprived groups. At this stage there is insufficient clear evidence as to the level or direction of these impacts in terms of equalities and therefore it is proposed that the impact assessment is updated as the detail of the scheme progresses, as well as undertaking further consultation with relevant groups and organisations.
54. As further evidence emerges through the design and consultation process on the impact of detailed proposals on those with protected characteristics, mitigation measures will be suggested to minimise or avoid potential negative impacts. This will be in addition to recommendations for advancing equality of opportunity for those with protected characteristics. A monitoring plan will also be developed to ensure that impacts are monitored throughout the design and development of the proposed scheme, as well as through construction and operation stages.

## **Environmental Implications**

55. Currently a small section of the A511 around the Broom Leys junction is designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Without intervention to ease the current and future levels of congestion along the A511 there is a likelihood that air quality objectives will not be met at other locations, leading to the need to declare more AQMAs along the route. The scheme offers the opportunity to reduce exhaust emissions through reducing acceleration/

deceleration events, thus reducing particulates due to tyre and brake wear that such events cause. The proposed scheme also provides an opportunity to contribute to improving biodiversity through thoughtful landscaping. The table below sets out how the proposed scheme is aligned to the carbon reduction and biodiversity and habitat commitment set out in the County Council's Environment Strategy.

Aim	Objective	Actions taken
A. Reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions and those in the wider county where we have influence	A2. Contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions across the County.	Reduce exhaust emissions through reducing acceleration/deceleration events
F. Reduce the environmental impacts of travel and transport	F4. Work with partners to reduce greenhouse gas and other pollutant emissions from the local transport network.	
G. Have due regard for biodiversity throughout all our activities and seek to improve the biodiversity value of our own land and influence improvements in the wider county	G4. Work with partners to support wider biodiversity improvements across Leicestershire.	As part of the detailed design, opportunities to improve biodiversity within the green areas of highway land will be considered.

56. The potential to promote short journeys by promoting sustainable transport will also contribute to the Council's commitment to tackling climate change.

### **Background Papers**

Report to the Cabinet 29 March 2019. 'Environment and Transport 2019/20 Highways Capital Programme and Highways Transportation work Programme':  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=5601&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet 16 March 2015. 'Enabling Growth Plan':  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4360&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet 5 March 2014. 'Strategic Economic Plan and City Deal':  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=3988&Ver=4>

Report to the County Council 23 March 2011. 'Final Draft Local Transport Plan (LTP3) Proposals':  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=3057&Ver=4>

Consultation Report  
<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/road-maintenance/A511MRN>

### **Appendix**

Plan of the proposed A511 MRN Corridor Scheme