

Bath & North East Somerset Council

DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel		
DECISION DATE:	Not before 10 February 2024	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:	
		E	E3518
TITLE:	Midsomer Norton & Westfield Walking, Wheeling & Cycling Links (WWCL)		
WARD:	Midsomer Norton – North and Redfield; and Westfield		
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM			

1. THE ISSUE

- 1.1. The Midsomer Norton & Westfield Walking, Wheeling & Cycling Links (WWCL) project is part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme, aiming to deliver interventions supporting modal shift into public transport and active travel (walking, wheeling, and cycling) modes across the region. Specifically, this project will provide high quality walking, wheeling, and cycling links within the Midsomer Norton and Westfield area, providing better and more genuine travel choices, and supporting a decrease in private car dependency for local journeys.
- 1.2. The schemes were originally proposed as part of the adopted Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) and preliminary development was carried out within the related CRSTS Somer Valley Links (SVL) project. The SVL project has – as part of the development of its Outline Business Case (OBC) – developed the schemes to a consistent design level (Preliminary Design, on Ordnance Survey base), developed commensurate scheme costings, and undertaken economic appraisal and Value for Money (VfM) assessments using the Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit (AMAT).
- 1.3. The SVL project is defined as a strategic corridor under the West of England Combined Authority's CRSTS programme, focussed on providing improvements to strategic, inter-urban movements across the region. The Midsomer Norton & Westfield WWCL scheme is, however, primarily focussed on providing short-distance intra-urban connectivity aimed at improving local travel options. Whilst performing well as part of the SVL project, continued pressure on the CRSTS programme – particularly as a result of inflationary impacts – has highlighted a risk that this important local scheme may not perform well as part of a strategic corridor focussed package.
- 1.4. To secure the future development of the scheme, the Midsomer Norton and Westfield WWCL project was, therefore, decoupled from the SVL project for

development in isolation. This was confirmed through the CRSTS rebaselining exercise in summer 2023, as a separate project with grant allocation attached. An added advantage of this approach is the potential for more rapid development and delivery, bringing greater travel options to residents in Midsomer Norton and Westfield more quickly than if the scheme remained as part of the wider strategic corridor project.

- 1.5. As part of the governance within Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES), there is a requirement for the grant from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) to be formally accepted by the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet member is asked to;

- 2.1. Note the inclusion of the Midsomer Norton & Westfield WWCL scheme as a separate project within the CRSTS programme, following the rebaselining in summer 2023.
- 2.2. Delegate approval to the Director of Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the s151 Officer, to formally accept grants from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority relating to this scheme.
- 2.3. Approve capital budget of £180k to develop the Full Business Case (FBC) for the scheme.
- 2.4. Note provisional capital budget for the scheme of £1.25m for delivery/ construction is reflected in February Council's budget-setting report.

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1. Key benefits of this Walking, Wheeling and Cycling scheme include:
 - Safer and better-connected cycling routes in Midsomer Norton and Westfield.
 - Reduced vehicle speeds in residential areas.
 - Improved community connectivity and reduced severance, with local roads being easier to cross for those walking, wheeling, or cycling.
- 3.2. It comprises two main elements, which are derived from routes set out in the West of England region Local Cycling Walking and Investment Plan (LCWIP), as follows:
 - Silver Street – Fosseyway (Route 1 of the Somer Valley routes, forming part of the previous Somer Valley Links 2023 public engagement); and
 - Midsomer Norton – Westfield (Route 2 of the Somer Valley routes, forming part of the previous Somer Valley Links 2023 public engagement)
- 3.3. Additionally, the project will provide connections to other walking and cycling routes around Midsomer Norton, including the proposed Farrington Gurney to Midsomer Norton route which is planned for delivery through interventions in

both the CRSTS Somer Valley Links project (Farrington Gurney to Old Mills Lane) and the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone (SVEZ) (Old Mills Lane to Midsomer Norton). However, the project is completely independent of these and its delivery is neither dependent on the successful delivery of those schemes, nor does it provide a contingency for those schemes to come forward.

3.4. The project aims to provide the following proposals which will be confirmed through detailed design work as part of the completion and approval of the FBC scheduled during 2024/25:

- Improved cycle links between residential areas in both Midsomer Norton and Westfield to the existing Norton-Radstock greenway with a new shared use (for walking, wheeling and cycling) route on First Avenue, Second Avenue, Excelsior Terrace, the B3355 and Charlton Road.
- New routes between Chaucer Road and Eagle Drive, Chaucer Road and Kingsley Road, Hazel Terrace and Woodpecker Avenue, plus Longfellow Road and Kingsley Road
- Narrow junctions on side roads along the route to assist crossing movements.
- New pedestrian crossings on raised tables, where the road level is raised to the same height as the pavement.
- Priority to cycles on Charlton Road in order to reduce vehicle speeds.
- A section of shared use path between a new housing development in Silver Street to Charlton Road (supported by a S106 contribution).

3.5. It should be noted that consideration of a third route component, 'Somer Valley Route 3, Charlton Road and Silver Street', was undertaken as part of the development of the schemes as part of the Somer Valley Links OBC. Analysis undertaken by the appointed consultants highlighted that there was limited intervention that could be undertaken in-line with the descriptions set out in the LCWIP and that any intervention was unlikely to provide Value for Money consistent with the requirements of the CRSTS programme. It is possible that this route could be developed further in the future as part of a separate project if an appropriate funding source was identified.

4. STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1. The delivery and construction element of the scheme allows for further public consultation to be undertaken, as part of the TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) process, where applicable.

4.2. The public sector equality duty (Equalities Act 2010) requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, please also see section 7 of this report.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1. Funding of £180k has been formally offered to the Council by the West of England to progress the Full Business Case (FBC and detailed design scheduled during 2024/25. This is funded by £144k of CRSTS grant and a £36k B&NES match, made up of local developer contributions.
- 5.2. It is proposed to develop proposals to detailed design, provide full costings, VfM assessment and undertake further public consultation on the refined designs. Topographic surveys would need to be undertaken in support of the detailed design process.
- 5.3. A further £1.25m is allocated in the CRSTS rebaselining programme for delivery/construction, of which £214k will be met as part of our BANES local match contribution. The remaining grant amount will be drawn down following the approval of the FBC, to include completed detailed design work, and with contractor delivery/construction cost estimates also included.
- 5.4. Project management, Walking/Wheeling/Cycling principal engineers, and Highways technical assurance resources have been allocated from within Council teams and funded by the grant. External support will be procured as necessary, for example FBC consultancy and topographic surveys and other miscellaneous support tasks.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1. A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.
- 6.2. There is a risk that the elements noted in 3.4 will not be deliverable in full, due to technical and/or funding availability reasons.

7. EQUALITIES

- 7.1. Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion impacts are assessed both at a programme level and from the preliminary design stage, as part of the individual scheme design process.
- 7.2. In addition, a specific Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be developed for this scheme and updated at key stages.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1. A Climate Emergency was declared in March 2019 along with an Ecological Emergency in July 2019. In response to this B&NES has pledged to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Active Travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) routes are part of a package of measures to mitigate the climate crisis through the adoption of more sustainable and healthy transport options.

9. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1. The option to retain the project within the Somer Valley Links strategic transport corridor was considered in the rebaselining exercise but this was deemed to risk non-delivery of these routes due to the lack of fit with the strategic corridor objectives.
- 9.2. The option for the Council to progress the scheme with capital budget allocations through the Capital programme budget-setting process was considered unaffordable and unviable amongst other Council priorities.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1. Consultation has been undertaken with the Directors of Sustainable Communities and Place Management, together with ward and cabinet members.
- 10.2. This report has been agreed by the s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

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Background papers	LCWIP: https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan/ SVL engagement report: https://haveyoursaywest.co.uk/index.php?contentid=79 CRSTS rebaselining report Oct 2023 – https://westofengland-ca.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s7333/06.%204DG%20Transport%20Infrastructure%20DG%20Final.pdf
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