

Bath & North East Somerset Council			
DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Sarah Warren, Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel		
DECISION DATE:	Not before 4th May 2024	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:	
		E	E3519
TITLE:	Somer Valley Links strategic corridor project		
WARD:	Widcombe & Lyncombe, Odd Down, Bathavon South, Peasedown, Radstock, Midsomer Norton North, Midsomer Norton Redfield, Paulton, High Littleton, Mendip, Clutton & Farmborough, Publow with Whitchurch		
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM			
List of attachments to this report:			
Appendix A – Risk Assessment			

1. THE ISSUE

- 1.1. Somer Valley Links (SVL) is a strategic corridor project within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme, funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) and led by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (the CA).
- 1.2. The SVL project aims to improve travel between Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Westfield and Bath via the A367 and Bristol via the A37; and the A362 link road between them, through better bus infrastructure and enabling more walking and cycling.
- 1.3. It has been led to this point by the CA in partnership with the Council which is now to take the lead on management and delivery following the approval of the Outline Business Case (OBC) at the CA Committee meeting on 26 January 2024.
- 1.4. The next stage is the Full Business Case (FBC), final Preliminary and Detailed Designs. 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 Delegate approval to the Executive 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.

- 2.2 Approve capital budget of £1.744m to develop the Full Business Case (FBC), final Preliminary and Detailed designs for the scheme; this comprises £1.414m CRSTS grant and £330k match funding from developer contributions;

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1. 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.
- 3.2. The Strategic Outline Case (SOC) and the OBC (both produced by the CA) have provided evidence of the need as follows:

- there is a large reliance on cars along the A37 & A367 and both routes are frequently heavily congested;
- journey times are too long because buses get stuck in traffic and access to bus stops is hampered by footways being overgrown or non-existent;
- lack of safe walking paths and crossing points;
- cycling along the A37/A367 can be challenging, even for confident cyclists due to traffic volumes, including large vehicles, passing close and travelling at high speeds;
- there is also little infrastructure that links cycling and bus services together along these routes making interchange between the two difficult;
- narrow sections of the A37 through Pensford and Temple Cloud are not wide enough for large vehicles to pass each other, leading to delays for all traffic;
- Farrington Gurney and Temple Cloud have air quality issues (declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs));
- accidents occur on the fast sections and junctions of both routes.

- 3.3. The project aims to:

- Make catching the bus, walking and cycling easier by offering an improved bus service and delivering safe, easy-to-use walking and cycling facilities
- Reduce bus journey times and provide more frequent, reliable bus services
- Create or improve walking, wheeling and cycling routes which connect to communities along the corridor
- Support opportunities for regeneration and economic growth along the corridor
- Improve options for interchange between/with sustainable modes, through the provision of scalable Mobility Hubs along the corridor.
- Make alternative modes more attractive, enable reduced car use, and supporting improved public health, as well as better air quality and cutting carbon emissions along the corridor

3.4. The scheme proposals were grouped into four types of intervention in the OBC, as follows:

- Eight Mobility Hubs, to be located at key locations along the A37, A362, and A367 corridors where demand to switch between modes is likely to be high. This included locations at Pensford, Temple Cloud, Farrington Gurney, Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Peasedown St John, Odd Down (improvements to the P&R site), and Bear Flat (Bath);

- Six walking, wheeling, and cycling route improvements, including on the northern side of the A362 from Farrington Gurney towards Midsomer Norton, quiet route treatments for Old Mills Lane, quiet routes between Peasedown St John and Shoscombe and Littleton, the A367 Wellsway (Bath), and a quiet route parallel to the A37. It should be noted that two proposed routes in Midsomer Norton have been separated into their own project (the Midsomer Norton & Westfield walking, wheeling and cycling links project)

- Bus lanes and junction improvements to improve bus reliability and journey times, including A37/Staunton Lane (Whitchurch); A37 northbound bus lane on the approach to Whitchurch, A37/A39 junction, A37/A362 junction, A367/Bath Road (Peasedown St John), Odd Down roundabout (Bath), and the A367 approach along the Wellsway as far as the A36 Churchill gyratory (Bath);

- Bus stop improvements (ten pairs of bus stop locations).

3.5. These scheme proposals need to be refined following the feedback from public engagement, receipt of detailed topographic information, targeted traffic modelling and comments from internal B&NES Highways team reviews. It is possible that some of these proposed interventions may, therefore, change as part of the FBC design process.

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. Total funding of £1.414m has been formally offered by CRSTS grant to the Council by the West of England CA. This is supplemented by an additional £330k for project delivery, PMO and procurement support from B&NES match funding.

5.2. The SVL project has – as part of the development of its OBC – developed the schemes to a consistent design level (Concept design, on Ordnance Survey base, followed by draft Preliminary design on topo), developed commensurate scheme costings, and undertaken economic appraisal and Value for Money (VfM) assessments using the Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit (AMAT).

- 5.3. The FBC will develop proposals to through final Preliminary and Detailed design, provide full costings, VfM assessment and undertake further public consultation on the refined designs. The schemes are largely deliverable within the highway boundary; however, there are a number of locations where a small area of land-take may be required, which will require identification and agreement with the landowner(s).
- 5.4. There is a further approved commitment of £15.2m within the B&NES allocation of the CRSTS grant for delivery/construction, of which £2.75m 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.
- 5.5. Delivery & Construction cost estimates and grant funding allocation will be an output of the FBC (scheduled for completion & approval by mid-2025).

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1. A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken (Appendix A), in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.
- 6.2. There is a risk that the scheme elements in the OBC 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. Distributional impact analysis has been undertaken to identify the impacts across different social and groups: Income, sex, age (<16 to 70+), disability, ethnic minority, households without access to a car and carers (with dependent children). Consideration of the impacts on and benefits to these groups will continue through the next design stage. A specific Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been developed and will be 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 and enabling better travel choices for residents, are part of a package of measures to mitigate the climate crisis through the adoption of more sustainable and healthy transport options.
- 8.2. The project will provide people with greater transport choice, providing those able to use alternative modes to the car with genuine choice in how they travel, making it easier and safer to use low carbon modes. This will help B&NES to decarbonise its transport system, promoting the move away from using cars to improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions along the corridor.
- 8.3. The aims of the CRSTS programme are fully aligned with reducing the carbon emissions of transport. The project will also be required to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain to help ensure improved natural systems outcomes.

- 8.4. Proposed schemes within Bath will work with other projects already in development to help support the "Journey to Net Zero" and will work in tandem with the forthcoming Movement Strategy for the city.
- 8.5. A Carbon Management Plan was drafted at the OBC stage. This will be maintained and updated during the FBC to identify opportunities to design out carbon at the earliest stages (both user and embodied carbon) by informing the design process, and to subsequently reduce the carbon impact of the proposals through influencing the selection of materials etc. The Carbon Management Plan will be the main mechanism to ensure the full carbon impacts of the scheme are quantified and known.
- 8.6. The project will contribute to 3 of the 4 specified SMART objectives in the CA CRSTS Programme definition:
 - Secure our region's future with a 30% gross reduction in transport carbon emissions by 2027, measured by the 2021 baseline, leading to a carbon net zero by 2030.
 - Achieve legal air quality across the West of England by 2025, measured by the requirements in EU Directive 2008/50/EC.
 - Enable everyone to access all of our railway stations by bringing them up to a common MetroWest standard by 2027, measured by the DfT Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations.
 - Deliver 100 additional miles of strategic public transport corridors by 2027, measured on a 2021 baseline.

9. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1. The CA to continue to lead the project, with B&NES officer time limited to advisory role and Highways approval only. The council is the Highway Authority so the delivery of highway interventions would be more complex in that delivery model. Local community engagement will be enhanced through increased cross-service liaison and interfaces with other council projects.
- 9.2. To not proceed with the project beyond OBC stage and return CRSTS grant funds to the Combined Authority for distribution across other projects within the sub-region, or to be returned to central government. This is a transformational opportunity for the corridors in question, not proceeding would prevent this scale of investment from taking place.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Executive Director of Sustainable Communities and the Director of Place Management, together with cabinet members.
- 10.2 A full engagement report has been compiled and is available on the WECA website (please follow the link under Background papers). A summary can be found in the OBC report, comments and questions were noted and are being considered in the next stage of Preliminary design.

10.3. The feedback from the above public consultation in summer 2023 is being taken through into the next stage for consideration in updating designs of specific interventions and the overall scope.

10.4. Further engagement with communities will be required as part of the FBC to provide updates on the design work and to communicate more fully the benefits and impacts of scheme proposals.

10.5. This report has been agreed by the s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

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Background papers	OBC report and addendum – within Item 11 at WECA Committee meeting, January 2024 https://westofengland-ca.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=614&Ver=4 Engagement report https://haveyoursaywest.co.uk/index.php?contentid=79
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

Appendix A

Single Member Decision Risk Assessment – E3519 Somer Valley Links strategic corridor project

Issue/Decision:

1. Significant risks which would need to be accepted if the proposed decision and related work is not taken.

Risk Description (Cause & implication(s))	Probability	Impact
<p>Not taking the decision would lose this opportunity to materially impact carbon emissions and create a step-change towards achievement of B&NES' climate emergency targets and net zero in accordance with our policy.</p> <p>https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/journey-net-zero/climate-and-ecological-emergency</p>	Likely	Large
<p>Not taking the decision could mean that funding provided by the Combined Authority to date becomes a financial liability for the Council, requiring repayment and revenue pressure</p>	Likely	Severe
<p>Not taking the decision would diverge from resident and stakeholder expectations given previous public consultation and coverage by the Combined Authority and the Council, resulting in reputational loss</p>	Likely	Large

2. Significant risks envisaged if the proposed decision is taken and what action will be taken to manage these risks.

Risk Description (Cause & implication(s))	Probability	Impact	Action
<p>Schemes and/or packages demonstrate material negative Whole Life Carbon (WLC) impacts, meaning that they do not contribute to net-zero objectives</p>	Unlikely	Large	<p>A Carbon Management Plan including an assessment of Whole Life Carbon impact was included in the Outline Business Case Economic dimension. Schemes shown to have a negative carbon impact may need to be reconsidered, or may need to be redesigned to remove any negative impacts</p>

The scheme does not get approved for delivery and construction through the FBC stage.	Unlikely	Severe	The City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) process of scheme selection identified those that would create the maximum benefit cost ratio. The Full Business Case stage will require significant and comprehensive project management, including schedule, risk and financial aspects, as well as high-quality design to achieve the objectives.
Objection to road space reallocation, eg for bus lanes, cycling lanes, safe road crossings and pedestrian footways	Likely	Large	Consultation feedback to be used to provide alternative designs, with refinements made based on transport modelling and appraisal evidence that was not available at the time of the original designs. This could remove elements of the proposals that are lower impact or unnecessary.
Lack of capacity in the Delivery/Construction supply chain to construct the scheme within the timeframe and quality required.	Fairly likely	Severe	Continue to engage actively with the Combined Authority and B&NES/CRSTS Procurement teams, to evaluate suitable Routes to Market (ECI, D&B, Traditional) for timely governance process and decision-making, and to ensure procurement and commercial plans are agreed with sufficient lead-in and fit with the FBC and Detailed design schedule.

Probability

Description	Likelihood of the risk occurring expressed as a percentage.	Likelihood of the risk occurring expressed in words
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Highly Likely	Over 95%	Very frequent occurrence, almost certain.
Likely	50% to 95%	More than evens chance.
Fairly Likely	21% to 49%	Quite often occurs
Unlikely	2% to 20%	Small likelihood but could happen.
Very Unlikely	0.5% to 2%	Not expected to happen.

Impact

Description	Scenario Description
Disastrous	Service will not achieve stated objective(s).
Severe	Serious threat that objective(s) of Service will not be achieved.
Large	May result in level of service being reduced to a level where objectives may not be achieved.
Moderate	Small effect on service provision.
Negligible	Trivial effect on service provision.