

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION

CULLOMPTON TOWN CENTRE RELIEF ROAD ROUTE OPTIONS PUBLIC CONSULTATION.

Cabinet Member	Cllr Richard Chesterton
Responsible Officer	Mrs Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration

Reason for Report: To seek agreement to go out to public consultation over route options for a town centre relief road for Cullompton. Members will recall that a previous report identified the current opportunity to progress planning for the delivery of this road in connection with the available funding stream via the Council's bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Marginal Viability. Public consultation over potential route options is the next stage in progressing this project. The delivery of a new relief road is considered an important highway intervention to not only bring forward sustainable growth in the Cullompton area, but also address environmental concerns within the town centre in connection with congestion, poor air quality and resultant impact upon townscape attractiveness.

RECOMMENDATION: That Cabinet agree to:

- 1. Approve Cullompton town centre relief road route options for public consultation.**
- 2. Grant delegated authority to the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration to prepare and finalise consultation material.**

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Improving road capacity and air quality issues within the town will enable development identified in the Local Plan to come forward and make a valuable contribution to delivering the priorities of the Corporate Plan 2016 to 2020; Economy, Homes, Community and Environment.

Financial Implications: Delivery of key highway infrastructure improvements in Cullompton will play a pivotal role in bringing forward the corporate aspirations to facilitate growth within the district which in turn will help boost the economy. The delivery of the town centre relief road is also expected to contribute towards regeneration within the core of Cullompton.

The Council anticipates that the majority of the cost of the road would be funded by the Housing Delivery Fund. The route to the east of motorway would not meet HIF funding requirements and would need alternative funding to be delivered. The highway consultant commissioned to work on option generation has provided broad comparative construction cost information on the different route options. The cost of land assembly, acquisition and any legal issues arising will also need to be accounted for as the scheme progresses and will be subject to negotiation. The HIF funding is not yet secured and work is ongoing with Homes England over the Council's bid submission.

Cabinet considered the cost of working up the project towards planning application submission via up front funding at the meeting of 23rd May 2018.

Legal Implications: None at this stage. Future legal implications are likely to arise in respect of a range of land ownerships and interests associated with land assembly and acquisition as the project progresses. It is understood that the Cullompton Community Association Fields are subject to a charitable trust for recreational purposes.

To draw down funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund, the Council will need to enter into a funding agreement with MHCLG which would be considered by Legal Services prior to signing. A separate legal agreement will also be needed with Devon County Council to deliver the road. The Council will also seek section 106 developer contributions through legal agreements towards the cost of the scheme.

Risk Assessment: To qualify for funding, the proposed relief road will need to meet the HIF scheme criteria and deliverables and be subject to further assessments by Homes England. In order to meet fund timescales work streams and expenditure has needed to commence in advance of likely timescales for the Homes England final decision. Spend to advance the project as authorised up to the initial £100,000 is on an 'at risk' basis should Homes England not agree to support this intervention. It is not expected that Homes England will conform its position over the bid until autumn 2018.

The aspiration for the delivery of a relief road for Cullompton is long standing and as such, all work currently being undertaken to progress the project is not abortive as it forms part of more extensive infrastructure necessary to deliver the growth planned within the Cullompton area in the longer term including the garden village. The current HIF funding opportunity represents the best chance for it to be achieved in the short term and will require adherence to tight and challenging timescales.

Risks associated with the ability to deliver the project include scheme finance via HIF fund outcome, timescale for delivery to meet HIF requirements and land assembly / acquisition matters. In turn, should the relief road not be pursued through the HIF or should HIF funding not be forthcoming, this will impact upon the ability to deliver the relief road and its timing with resultant delay in realising highway capacity, environmental improvements in the town centre and achieving growth aspirations.

Equalities: No implications anticipated except for the usual requirement to ensure that public consultation is inclusive.

1.0 Background.

1.1 A report was considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 23rd May 2018 in relation to the opportunity that currently exists in connection with the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund to progress the delivery of a relief road for Cullompton. Under this fund the Government is supporting infrastructure delivery in order to unlock or accelerate the delivery of housing.

1.2 The Council's bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for £10 million focusses upon creating capacity at junction 28 of the M5. At Cabinet on 23rd

May 2018 it was agreed to proceed with the bid on the basis of delivering a town centre relief road to the east of Cullompton which if delivered would improve capacity at the motorway junction together with achieving a reduction of traffic flows through the town centre resulting in air quality and town centre amenity benefits. At the time of writing this report, the final decision over fund award is still unconfirmed and engagement continues with Homes England.

2.0 Cullompton town centre relief road.

- 2.1 The delivery of a relief road for Cullompton has been a long term objective, receiving policy support within both the adopted and submitted Local Plans. It would deliver benefits to the operation of J28 of the motorway and would also enable the reduction of traffic flows through the town centre resulting in air quality and town centre amenity benefits. It is known that significant highway improvements will be required to serve the proposed garden village to the east of Junction 28. A relief road would form the first part of such improvements, thereby also contributing to longer term growth and delivery aspirations as set out in the Local Plan Review and garden village expression of interest.
- 2.2 Policy AL/CU/14 of the Allocations and Infrastructure Development Plan Document 2011 expresses the aspiration to provide a relief road for the town and sets out the following:

Eastern Relief Road

An Eastern Relief Road linking Station Road to Meadow Lane will be provided subject to the following:

- a. **Public consultation exercise before the route is determined;**
 - b. **Provision of replacement open space and sporting facilities within the Cullompton Community Association fields and/or elsewhere in Cullompton;**
 - c. **Enhancement of the existing footpath to form a shared use foot and cycleway;**
 - d. **Provision of a Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme to deal with all surface water from the development and arrangements for future maintenance;**
 - e. **Measures to protect and strengthen trees, hedgerows and other environmental features which contribute to the character and biodiversity, maintaining a wildlife network within the site and linking to the surrounding countryside.**
- 2.3 The Local Plan Review 2013-2033 as submitted for examination also provides policy support for a relief road under policy CU19. Its provision is described as an integral part of the development strategy for Cullompton and essential if the objectives of traffic relief, air quality improvement and town centre enhancement are to be achieved. Whilst these objectives are longstanding and important, for HIF purposes Homes England assessment of the benefits of the scheme will focus almost exclusively upon the ability to unlock and /or accelerate housing growth and cost / benefit of the scheme in new housing terms. As submitted, policy CU19 states:

Town Centre Relief Road

A relief road, providing traffic relief to the town centre, will be provided subject to the following:

- a) Public consultation exercise before the route of the road is determined;**
- b) Provision of replacement open space and sporting facilities elsewhere in Cullompton if these are affected;**
- c) Provision of a shared use foot and cycleway;**
- d) Measures to protect and enhance trees, hedgerows and other environmental features which contribute to the character and biodiversity, maintaining a wildlife network on the affected alignment and linking to the surrounding countryside. Appropriate noise measures to mitigate the effects from the relief road including the provision of landscaping; and**
- e) Archaeological investigation and appropriate mitigation.**

- 2.4 Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan has not yet been submitted for examination. The pre-submission version has been subject to public consultation. Whilst still subject to further amendment and not adopted, it is currently of little weight to planning decision making. Policies within it are referred to only in order to provide some local context to the delivery of a relief road for Cullompton. Draft policy SD07 seeks the phasing of major development in tandem with the co-ordinated provision of infrastructure to help support sustainable growth and ensure that an unacceptable strain is not placed on the existing infrastructure. Draft policy HT01 relates to proposals to ensure that junction 28 of the M5 functions efficiently and safely and states that such proposals will be supported. Also relevant is draft policy WL02 relating to Cullompton Community Association Fields which are described as an important resource for the local community. A series of criteria for proposals to develop part of the CCA Fields to provide a relief road for Cullompton are set out with the intention of minimising potential impact.

3.0 Route options assessment.

- 3.1 Since consideration at the Cabinet meeting in May 2018, your officers have been working closely with Devon County Council as Highway Authority over the commissioning of work to generate and assess potential relief road route options for public consultation purposes. Consultants have been engaged and a report produced which is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2 The appended route options report seeks to identify the existing issues and constraints, define the main objectives of the scheme and to provide a high level appraisal of viable options to address the issues and meet the objectives.
- 3.3 The methodology followed within the report aligns with the Department for Transport guidance for the assessment of proposed transport schemes:
- Understand the current context of the study site
 - Understand the future context for the study site
 - Establish the need for intervention

- Identify intervention specific objectives within a defined geographic area
- Generate options
- Undertake an initial sift
- Develop and assess potential options and undertake public consultation
- Document the option development process within a options appraisal report
- Clarify the methodology for further appraisal within an appraisal specification report

3.4 Four route options are identified within the report and referred to as options A–D. Layout plans of each are to be found towards the rear of the option report (its Appendix B). At this stage they are not definitive routes and could be subject to change following receipt of comments as part of the public consultation.

Option A connects Station Road to Duke Street near the Meadow Lane junction within the corridor between the town centre to the west and the railway /motorway to the east.

Option B similarly connects Station Road to Duke Street near the Meadow Lane junction within the corridor between the town centre to the west and the railway /motorway to the east. The difference from Option A is that it takes a route closer to the railway /motorway and has a different connection alignment with Duke Street.

Option C connects Honiton Road with Duke Street near the junction with Meadow Lane. It follows a longer broadly east- west route and crosses the motorway and railway line. It connects to Honiton Road east of existing houses.

Option D connects Honiton Road with Duke Street near the junction with Meadow Lane, but unlike Option C follows a broadly north-south line for much of its route between the motorway to the west and existing housing to the east. For much of its route it lies close to the motorway and River Culm on their eastern side before crossing the motorway and railway to the south and linking to Duke Street. Liaison with the Environment Agency indicates that this option would not be viable due to flood risk and would be unacceptable to them. As a result of this advice, at sifting stage it has been identified that this option not be taken forward. This option will therefore not form part of the viable options presented for public consultation. Whilst it will be referred to within consultation material, it will be within the context of options considered, but discounted.

A full description of the location and alignment of each option is to be found within the accompanying report.

3.5 Options A, B and C are proposed to be taken forward for public consultation.

3.6 For each of the three options the report also includes plans showing how each could relate to a potential future motorway junction improvement and possible

extension of a relief road further south. This is to demonstrate consideration of future proofing. It should be noted that the precise nature and design of the future motorway junction intervention is yet to be finalised and accordingly should be considered illustrative only and is included with the sole purpose of demonstrating a view to the future. Similarly a future extension of the relief road further south is suggested in the plans as a possibility in order to rise above the area subject to flooding in the vicinity of the Duke Street / Meadow Lane junction. This could be considered at time of connection to the motorway in order to safeguard its strategic nature.

- 3.7 The options report considers each of the initial four options against the scheme objectives before a sifting exercise at which time Option D was discounted from further consideration. A high level comparative assessment of Options A-C has been undertaken against environmental considerations including air quality, noise, landscape / townscape, socio-economic, geotechnical and contamination, arboriculture, waste, ecology, historic environment and water environment. Qualitative appraisal scores are applied for each option as to whether likely impacts for the different topics are high, moderate, low or negligible. Finally, the report undertakes a high level delivery comparative assessment of the three options considering land, flood risk, buildability constraints and construction cost.

4.0 Public consultation.

- 4.1 It is intended that public consultation will take place in accordance with the requirements of policy before selection of a preferred route which would then be worked up towards a planning application submission. The consultation will be informed by the contents of the assessment report and the plans contained within.
- 4.2 Consultation over a four week period is intended commencing in mid September 2018 (likely to start of the 10th) with a series of public consultation events being held within Cullompton. The aim will be for these to be scheduled to take place to provide practical opportunity for the public to attend on different days of the week and at different times of the day including a Saturday and evening. Members of the project team will be in attendance.

5.0 Next steps.

- 5.1. Following public consultation, a further report recommending a preferred route will be prepared, reporting on and drawing on the consultation responses and high-level assessment. Further investigations, surveys and design may be undertaken prior to completion of the preferred route report, to inform the decision following on from the public consultation. This preferred route option would be considered by Cabinet towards the end of the year.
- 5.2 Subsequent stages would then depend on which option is preferred. If an option is chosen which is still consistent with the requirements of the HIF funding then it is envisaged that a planning application would be submitted in Spring 2019. If an alternative route or course of action is preferred which is

not consistent with the HIF funding requirements then members would need to take a view as to alternative funding options and related risks.

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Background Papers	<p>Cabinet November and December 2014; Council January 2015; Council 27th April 2016; Cabinet 15th September 2016; Council 22nd September 2016; Cabinet 21st November 2016 Council 1st December 2016 Cabinet 31st August 2017 Cabinet 23rd May 2018</p> <p>MHCLG https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-infrastructure-fund</p>
File Reference	
Circulation of the Report	Councillor Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration