

Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	30 th July 2024
Subject:	CULLOMPTON CRICKET CLUB RELOCATION AND PROJECT UPDATE
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Steve Keable, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Adrian Welsh, Strategic Manager Growth, Economy & Delivery
Exempt:	None which are Exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
Wards Affected:	Cullompton St Andrew, Cullompton Vale, Cullompton Padbrook, Lower Culm
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

Reason for Report. To update Members with regard to relocation works for Cullompton Cricket Club and provide a wider update in relation to Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road

Recommendation:

1. That members note the contents of this report.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Cabinet considered a report regarding Cullompton strategic transport infrastructure schemes at its 4 June 2024 meeting. This report provides a

further update on the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road and specifically in relation to relocation works relating to the cricket club.

1.2 The Relief Road has planning permission and is a major strategic transport intervention which unlocks strategic growth within the district, as set out within the adopted Local Plan. The scheme is crucial as:

- Its delivery will unlock environmental and air quality improvements within Cullompton's historic town centre;
- Historic England has made it clear that the award of the Heritage Action Zone monies in Cullompton was predicated by a clear expectation of its delivery;
- It will unlock early capacity at J28 M5 and on existing transport infrastructure within the town in advance of a more significant junction intervention, allowing planned growth within the adopted Local Plan to come forward – including at the Culm Garden Village.
- Failure to deliver homes within the required timeframe will significantly increase the risk of unplanned development proposals coming forward in other, less sustainable locations within the District. It will also reduce the ability of the Local Planning Authority to resist such proposals.

1.3 It should also be noted that in a recent 2024 survey, of 815 local residents, 92% were supportive of the Relief Road proposal.

2.0 Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road Possible Funding

2.1 At the time the June Cabinet report was written officers were expecting a decision from Homes England regarding the possibility of additional funding to ensure delivery of the scheme. This decision was deferred as a result of the general election. The cross-agency decision-making Board including representatives of DLUHC, Treasury, Homes England and the Department for Transport (DfT) will be considering this request shortly. If a decision is made by the Board regarding funding before this Cabinet meeting, or if further information is received in relation to the consideration of this application, a verbal update will be provided.

3.0 Relocation of Cullompton Cricket Pitch

3.1 Whilst awaiting a decision from Homes England with regard to the submission for additional funding to enable wholesale delivery of the relief road, officers have been working hard to ensure that key activities and workstreams have continued and that our critical path (programme) is maintained. This will ensure swift delivery of the road, should a positive funding decision be confirmed.

3.2 Most notable has been the desire to maintain momentum and make firm progress with regard to the relocation of the Cullompton cricket pitch. This is important because the relief road route will pass through the existing pitch and a replacement is therefore required. The cricket club will be relocated to Horn

Road (east of the M5). The bowling club and football club pitches will be reconfigured within the existing area. All of the sports clubs are in agreement with these proposals and this strategy is consistent with that which was developed at the point in time of the relief road securing planning permission.

- 3.3 The relocation of the cricket pitch has been a key consideration with regard to the timetabling and project management of the scheme given that the Cricket square needs sufficient time to settle before games can be played on it and the club can be relocated from its current ground.
- 3.4 Over the last few months there has been very positive progress in partnership with the Cricket Club, their specialist agents, Devon County Council's land agent, the promoters and the landowner. Legal agreements are now nearing completion with regard to allowing access to the land for the new cricket club under license in order to enable construction of the Cricket square. The cricket square work is now scheduled with mobilisation about to get underway subject to finalisation of the legal agreements. This work is planned to start in the very near future and be completed by the end of September 2024.
- 3.5 This is a very significant step forwards for the project as it means that a key piece of work will be underway and delivered. It also means that the project remains on track with the programme which was submitted as part of the funding application (despite the delay in decision making introduced by the general election). This assists significantly in de-risking the project, demonstrating to Government the capacity of the project/the partners to unlock and deliver the relief road scheme, thereby supporting the delivery of planned housing growth within the town.

4.0 Land Assembly

- 4.1 Another key dependency is land assembly and the team has also continued to be active in this regard since the last report to Cabinet (June.)
- 4.2 As explained in the June Cabinet report; progress with land acquisition has been positive, but productive engagement with Tesco has proved challenging. Officers and/or representatives from both Councils (MDDC and DCC) have been attempting to liaise with Tesco plc to attempt to resolve this issue for a considerable period of time, but progress by Tesco continues to be slow and seemingly non-committal despite the fact that the Councils have repeatedly explained proposals, the benefits of the proposals to the town and the lack of alternative development potential for the Tesco owned land.
- 4.3 The intransience of Tesco in this regard presents a continued risk to delivery should Tesco not proactively and positively engage with the Authorities in a timely and proactive manner. This risk to delivery will not only affect the relief road proposals, but will also equally impact the potential around the planned future upgrade to Junction 28 of the M5 Motorway. It is therefore essential that this issue is positively resolved as soon as possible.

- 4.4 To this end, it is also understood that Richard Foord MP has also now written to the Tesco Chairman urging Tesco to urgently progress productive dialogue in relation to the sale of their land.
- 4.5 CPO capabilities exist in order to progress the matter through this route, as necessary and if required. However, the clear preference of the Councils would be to avoid or minimise this if at all possible in order to expedite delivery of the required infrastructure. It should also be noted that it is expected that the new Government will be strengthening CPO powers, which may also favour the Councils in these circumstances.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 This report provides an update on recent activity with regard to the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road and it can be seen that positive and significant progress has been made in relation to the Cullompton Cricket pitch relocation. However, progress remains slower than hoped in terms of discussions with Tesco.
- 5.2 Officers will continue to liaise with other key organisations. It is hoped that the current funding application for the relief road is considered favourably at the forthcoming Board meeting in order to unlock planned growth within the District and assist the new Government in achieving its highly ambitious planned housing delivery targets.

Financial Implications

Cullompton Town Centre relief road:

The current shortfall for delivering the relief road scheme is in excess of £24m (accounting for the existing HIF grant of £10m plus existing S106 contributions). A key step forwards in de-risking the scheme is the commencement of the cricket pitch relocation, as set out within this report.

Should the District Council secure the full funding requested of Homes England to enable delivery of the relief road, it will need to act promptly with Devon County Council to deliver the scheme within agreed timescales. Should any grant offer be made by Homes England, a further report will then be brought before Cabinet detailing the full terms of any offer and the implications to the district council. Details would need to be finalised, understood and approved prior to entering in to any revised or replacement Grant Funding Agreement as set out within the previous report.

Legal Implications

Land acquisition is currently being progressed by the County Council's land agent supported by the County Council's legal staff. A Construction Access Lease / Licence is also in the process of being agreed to allow early access on the Horn Road land to allow for construction of the Cricket square.

A formal compulsory purchase order process will be initiated immediately following a positive outcome on funding for the whole relief road scheme. However, it should be noted that significant amounts of work around this process has already been undertaken in order to ensure swift progress should we receive funding for the scheme.

Any external funding will have legal implications and will be subject to legal agreement (e.g. Grant Funding Agreement, Section 106 etc.) dependent on the nature of the funding mechanism. These cannot be specified until the precise nature of the funding packages is known and further detailed information will therefore be provided for consideration and decision in due course and as exact detail becomes known.

Risk Assessment

Significant risk accrues to the Authority as a consequence of continued delayed delivery of the relief road and this is why the relief road features at the highest risk level ('25') within the corporate risk register.

Specific risk issues associated with continued non-delivery of the relief road include;

- Failure to unlock planned growth (in accordance with the Local Plan) owing to continued non-delivery of the relief road, including at the Culm Garden Village (a flagship Homes England Garden Community);
- Failure to support Cullompton to address wider issues, including Air Quality, in order to allow the high street to realise its full social and economic potential;
- Delayed or under delivery of new homes to meet forecast housing need/demand (noting that recent Council performance on delivery has been strong);
- A failure to deliver new homes, including affordable homes, to address the current housing emergency prevalent within Devon and the wider region, and;
- An increased risk of challenge to the adopted plan/infrastructure requirements by developers – including those who may seek to make speculative applications which do not accord with the spatial strategy as set out through the adopted Local Plan.

It should however be recognised that the cricket pitch relocation works as discussed in this report are a significant step forwards in de-risking the timely delivery of the relief road scheme.

Impact on Climate Change

The relief road project is a scheme with planning permission which will deliver significant environmental improvements within the town centre, unlock significant development within Cullompton and reduce issues currently associated with congestion and pollution. The scheme is therefore considered, on balance, to be one which should be pursued and delivered in order to deliver the benefits associated with the scheme. However, the road will of course create new highways infrastructure which will continue to support the use of private and public vehicles and the associated environmental impacts of emissions from such vehicles.

The relocation of the cricket pitch is not considered to have any significant impacts upon climate change in its own right.

Equalities Impact Assessment

The full relief road scheme is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment which demonstrates how the scheme will reduce economic and social inequalities, or promote wider growth and economic / job creation opportunities particularly as they impact the most vulnerable residents or hardest hit communities.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The relief road scheme contributes towards all four corporate priorities of economy, homes, community and environment and assist in the delivery of many of the aims identified within the Corporate Plan.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer:

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151: Andrew Jarrett

Date: 19th July 2024

Statutory Officer:

Agreed by the Monitoring Officer: Maria De Leburne

Date: 16th July 2024

Chief Officer:

Agreed by Stephen Walford:

Date: 22 July 2024

Statutory Officer: Agreed by or on behalf of the Director: Richard Marsh, Director of Place and Economy

Date: 19th July 2024

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed by the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager:

Date: 19 July 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Adrian Welsh

Email: awelsh@middevon.gov.uk

Background papers:

Cabinet Report 7 March 2023 [230307 Cullompton TCRR -Cabinet Report V2.pdf \(middevon.gov.uk\)](#)

Cabinet Report 4 June 2024 [240604 Cullompton Transport Infrastructure](#)