

Division(s):

## **CABINET– 19 MARCH 2013**

### **WITNEY TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Report by Deputy Director (Strategy and Infrastructure Planning)**

#### **Introduction**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek:
  - Endorsement for the programme of investment in transport infrastructure in Witney in support of the proposals in the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan
  - Approval to proceed with delivery of Phase 1 of the investment programme (delivery of the Ducklington Lane/Station Lane junction improvement).

#### **Context**

2. At its meeting on 18 December the Cabinet agreed its response to the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan. The County Council continues to work closely with the District Council as it prepares the draft submission document for the Local Plan on which it will consult later in 2013.
3. The draft Local Plan included proposals for 1,900 new homes in the Witney sub area, with Strategic Development Areas identified at West Witney and East Witney. In its response the County Council supported the proposals in principle and identified the need for further investment in the transport infrastructure of Witney in order to relieve congestion and support the planned level of growth.
4. In due course the draft Local Plan will be subject to a public examination by an independent Planning Inspector. An important consideration for the Inspector will be assessing the extent to which the proposals in the Local Plan are deliverable. In that context having clarity on how the package of transport investment relates to the proposed development will be significant. The County Council's response agreed in December began to set out the details of a future package of investment in the transport infrastructure. Work to develop that package has been informed by further traffic modelling undertaken by the County Council's transport consultants. The purpose of this report is to set out that package in further detail so that it can be taken into account by the District Council as it develops the draft submission document.

## Witney Transport Infrastructure

5. It is proposed that the package of investment in Witney's transport infrastructure be undertaken in four phases:

<b>Witney Transport Infrastructure Package</b>		
<b>Phase</b>	<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
Phase 1	Ducklington Lane/Station Lane junction improvement	Summer/Autumn 2014
Phase 2	A40 Downs Road junction	January 2015 – Summer 2016
Phase 3	A40 Shores Green slip roads	2017 - 2019
Phase 4	Bridge Street	Linked to Shores Green slip roads

6. The phasing of the package reflects the County Council's understanding of the likely timing of major developments in the Witney area. It also takes into account the need to consider the knock on implications of works on any one part of the highway network.

*Phase 1: Ducklington Lane/Station Lane junction improvement*

7. The Ducklington Lane/Station Lane junction is an important junction in the local highway network. It currently experiences congestion. Further development in and around Witney will increase the pressure on the junction necessitating an improvement to be delivered.
8. Previous proposals for an improvement to this junction have focused on a roundabout, however more recent technical work now indicates that an improved traffic signal controlled junction is the most appropriate solution.
9. The proposal involves
- Having three lanes on the approach to the junction on all arms
  - Having two exit lanes, merging down to one lane on all arms except Thorney Leys which would have one exit lane
  - Two northbound lanes on Ducklington Lane between the roundabout to the south of the A40 and the Station Lane junction
  - Improved pedestrian facilities across Station Lane
10. The land required for the improvement already sits within the highway boundary. The scheme is estimated to cost £2m. The County Council holds sufficient S106 funding (secured for investment in Witney's transport infrastructure) to enable this to be delivered.
11. Approval is therefore being sought from Cabinet to develop the detailed design of this scheme. Completion of detailed design would enable construction to begin in late spring 2014, with the new junction operational by

that autumn. This would ensure that the new junction is operational prior to construction works begin on the new A40 Downs Road junction.

*Phase 2: A40/Downs Road Junction*

12. A new junction on the A40 at Downs Road is required to enable the development of 1,000 homes and 10 ha of employment land in West Witney.
13. An outline planning application for this development including an at-grade roundabout on the A40 has been made. It is due to be considered by West Oxfordshire District Council at its lowlands area planning sub-committee on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2013. The outcome of the district's meeting will be reported to the Cabinet meeting.
14. The cost of delivering the A40 Downs Road junction will be covered by developer funding. The County Council already holds some developer funds on the basis that these would be used to help deliver the new junction. The remainder of the funds required to deliver the A40 Downs Road junction will be secured from the West Witney development.
15. The promoter of the West Witney development has indicated that they will take on the delivery of the junction as part of their works. The County Council is content with this approach and will make available the funds it already holds towards delivery so that the West Witney developer can deliver the junction.
16. If planning permission is granted the West Witney developer will commit to ensuring that the A40 Downs Road junction is delivered by the time 200 homes are occupied. Based on the information currently available, this suggests that construction work for the new junction would start in early 2015 and completed by summer 2016.

*Phase 3: A40 Shores Green Slip Roads*

17. In its consultation response to the draft Local Plan the County Council set out that delivery of the proposed Strategic Development Area in East Witney could only be supported once improvements to the A40 Shores Green junction had been delivered. It went on to highlight that the need for an improvement at that junction arose from both the proposed Strategic Development Area **and** the impact of previous housing development on the eastern side of Witney. As a consequence the County Council expects the improvement at Shores Green to be delivered at nil cost to the public purse.
18. Public statements from the land owner of the previous developments in east Witney have indicated an acceptance of the need to make a substantial contribution towards the cost of delivering an improvement to the A40 Shores Green junction: such a contribution would be in lieu of proposals previously promoted to offset the impact of their development.
19. To that end the County Council is in discussion with the developers of the previous housing development on the eastern side of Witney with a view to

retaining the developer contributions previously secured (and currently held by the County Council) so that they can be invested towards the cost of delivering the A40 Shores Green slip roads. Those funds in themselves are unlikely to be sufficient to fund delivery of the required improvement. Accordingly it is expected that the East Witney Strategic Development Area would provide sufficient contribution as to enable the slip roads to be constructed.

20. The potential developers have indicated that a planning application will not be made for housing until after the inspector's report on the Local Plan has been received. At this stage that suggests that the slip roads would need to be constructed at some point between 2017 and 2019. In this scenario construction works would not begin until after completion of the A40 Downs Road junction.

*Phase 4: Bridge Street*

21. Construction of the A40 Shores Green slip roads will provide an alternative route for some traffic that currently uses Bridge Street. Completion of the slip roads will therefore provide the opportunity to take forward smaller scale measures in and around the Bridge Street area that will help improve the flow of traffic.
22. Further work is required to explore potential solutions and this is being taken forward in parallel with the rest of the work on the package of measures for Witney.

*Longer Term Issues*

23. The County Council's response to the draft Local Plan confirmed its support for the safeguarding of the route for the proposed West End Link. However, at this stage such a link is not considered to be essential to deliver the planned levels of growth in the draft Local Plan.

**Financial and Staff Implications**

24. The estimate of £2m for the Ducklington Lane/Station Lane scheme includes the costs of design and construction, plus a contingency sum. It will be funded from developer contributions already held by the County Council.
25. The cost of the A40 Downs Road junction will be met from developer contributions – a combination of funds already held by the County Council and contribution secured as part of the package of measures associated with the West Witney development.
26. The County Council's agreed position is that delivery of the A40 Shores Green slip roads will be at nil cost to the public purse.

27. The County Council will use current staffing and revenue budgets to take forward the development and delivery of the package of transport infrastructure set out in this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

28. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**

- (a) endorse the programme of investment in transport infrastructure in Witney in support of the proposals in the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan**
  
- (b) approve in principle Phase 1 of the investment programme (delivery of the Ducklington Lane/Station Lane junction improvement) and agree to the use of S106 funds held by the County Council to enable its delivery at the earliest opportunity. Agree to the inclusion into the capital programme of £2m total project budget and release of £0.2m project development budget under the capital governance approval process.**
  
- (c) approve in principle the use of S106 funds held by the County Council to support delivery of Phase 2 of the investment programme (the A40 Downs Road junction), in conjunction with funds secured as part of the measures agreed in relation to the proposed West Witney strategic development area. Agree to release of £0.2m project development budget under the capital governance approval process.**

MARTIN TUGWELL

Deputy Director (Strategy and Infrastructure Planning)

Contact Officer: Roy Newton, Service Manager Infrastructure Development; Tel: 01865 815647

March 2013