

Soham to Wicken Non-Motorised User Route

To:	Highways and Transport Committee
Meeting Date:	3 rd October 2023
From:	Frank Jordan, Executive Director of Place and Sustainability
Electoral division(s):	Soham South and Haddenham
Key decision:	Yes
Forward Plan ref:	2023/087
Outcome:	To report progress with the Soham to Wicken Non-Motorised Route and seek approval to the recommendations below to enable the project to progress to detailed design and construction aligned with the Soham to Wicken Non-Motorised Route project timeline constraints.
Recommendation:	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) note progress to date;b) agree that the Council accept £1,130,000 of funding from the Soham Town Council for detailed design and construction of the Soham to Wicken Non-Motorised User Route;c) delegate authority to the Executive Director; Place and Sustainability in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee and the Section 151 Officer to enter a Grant Funding Agreement with Soham Town Councild) approve the ongoing development of the design, including consultation with stakeholders;e) delegate authority to the Executive Director; Place and Sustainability. In consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee to awarding and executing a contract and any other associated legal agreements or documents for the provision of the construction of Soham to Wicken Non-Motorised User Route.

Officer contact:

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1. Background

- 1.1 It has been a long-established desire of Soham Town Council to improve the Non-Motorised User links between Soham and Wicken. A route has been identified during a previous feasibility study that found that if a number of Byways and Bridleways could be improved it would be possible to make these an attractive route for all non-motorised users including pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.
- 1.2 In 2022 Soham Town Council were successful in a bid for funding to provide an improved Non-Motorised User link between Soham and Wicken. The funding of £1,130,000 has been made available from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and East Cambridgeshire District Council. Initial funding of £100,000 had been made available from the Delivering Transport Strategy Aims (DTSA) to enable the preliminary design to be undertaken following the initial feasibility study.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The route identified starts at Mill Drove, Soham and ends at Drury Lane, Wicken. The route uses the following existing byways and bridleway:

- 205/113 (Byway - Soham)
- 205/126 (Bridleway - Soham)
- 258/23 (Byway - Wicken)

The overall route is indicated at Appendix A. Where possible the intention is to cut back vegetation so that the maximum width possible can be provided but within the extents of the existing highways. A path width of 3m will be maintained for pedestrians and cyclists to share. A separate equestrian path will also be provided with a minimum width of 1.5m and being wider where possible within the extents of the existing highways.

- 2.2 The proposed Non-Motorised User Route has been designed in accordance with the recently approved 'Active Travel User Guide' County Council design guidance. The surfacing of the shared pedestrian and cycle path will be self-binding gravel to provide a smooth surface. The equestrian route surface will include sections of a soil and gravel mix and natural topsoil. The structure of the Non-Motorised User Route will be enhanced in those locations that are subject to being tracked by farm vehicles. Subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment there may also be an opportunity to test a rubber crumb surface formed from recycled tyres on certain sections of the route. The changes to the surface of each Highway need to be approved by the Assistant Director Highway Maintenance and this application process is running in parallel to this report. Where practical low carbon materials will be included within the design. As this is a Non-Motorised User Route the "in use" carbon levels will be low.
- 2.3 It is clearly important that the potential users of the route are consulted regarding the design details. In this way the scheme can be as successful as possible taking on the needs to balance the various views of stakeholders.

- 2.4 As noted above the funding is being provided by Soham Town Council. As Highway Authority, the County Council will act as delivery body therefore enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Soham Town Council. The Grant Funding Agreement has been prepared by Pathfinder Legal Services and will be completed with Soham Town Council following approval to do so by the Committee. It is understood that part of the funding circa £350,000 is from the Transforming Cities Fund and must be spent by 31/03/2024. The construction programme is challenging, and officers will discuss with Soham Town Council, and its funding partners to ensure that delivery takes account of the time limitations on parts of the funding. The route is already comprised of the highways which are identified in paragraph 2.1. These are already maintained by the County Council (pursuant to its statutory duty toward highways maintainable at public expense under the Highways Act 1980) from the annual revenue maintenance budget for Public Rights of Way. By improving the nature of the surface of the highways it is anticipated that there will be a saving on annual revenue maintenance costs for the first five years. The project team running costs are fully covered by the funding from Soham Town Council. The draft Grant Funding Agreement states that Soham Town Council will be responsible for any increase in the cost of the project in excess of the funding as result of change or unforeseen risk. The draft Grant Funding Agreement provides mechanisms to enable the County Council to effectively manage the projects risks and cost increases.
- 2.5 Given the value of the construction contract necessary to complete the project officers believe that best value will be achieved by using the existing Eastern Highways Alliance Framework to procure the construction contract, which will include evaluation criteria for both quality and price. Alternatively, if a suitable option cannot be achieved using the framework a competitive Open procurement process will be followed. This procurement process has been discussed with the procurement team and will be compliant with public procurement law and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. This scheme has also been included within the Council's Procurement Pipeline.
- 2.6 Following this committee the intention is to complete the detailed design, including consultation with stakeholders. The construction procurement will complete in January 2024 with work starting as soon as possible after, allowing time for contract mobilisation. The construction is expected to be completed by July 2024.

3. Alignment with ambitions

- 3.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.

The scheme supports/encourages a move towards more sustainable and low carbon transport options offering an alternative car free route between Soham and Wicken.

- 3.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable

The scheme achieves this in the area of Soham and Wicken.

- 3.3 Health inequalities are reduced

The scheme will provide users with an opportunity to enjoy active travel and the health benefits that accrue.

- 3.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs.

The scheme achieves this in the area of Soham and Wicken.

- 3.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

- 3.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised

See wording under 3.1 above.

- 3.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive

See wording under 3.1 above.

4. Significant Implications

- 4.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in paragraphs 1.2 and 2.4

- 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

The report sets out the implications in paragraph 2.5 All procurement activity will be compliant with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

- 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The report sets out the implications in paragraphs 2.4.

- 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The scheme will improve the available width of the route for all users and will improve the surface of the highway.

- 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The report sets out the implications in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.6.

- 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The Local CCC Member has been informed that this report is being prepared and has been provided a brief summary of the report.

- 4.7 Public Health Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Since the scheme is providing improvements to an Active Travel Route users of the route should have positive health implications from using the route.

4.8 Climate Change and Environment Implications on Priority Areas:

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Positive/neutral/negative Status:

Explanation: Not Applicable

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive Status:

Explanation: The scheme is for a Non-Motorised User Route which will encourage Active Travel between Soham and Wicken.

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: Impact from construction of the Non-Motorised User Route on the adjacent environment will be mitigated following an Environmental Impact Assessment as part of the design process.

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive Status:

Explanation: The scheme will be carefully managed to ensure that the impact is positive.

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Positive Status:

Explanation: The scheme design will include for sustainable drainage of surface water.

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive Status:

Explanation: As the scheme provides a car free alternative route between Soham and Wicken there should be a modest reduction in air pollution when users are not using their motorised vehicles.

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: The scheme will have a modest impact on reducing carbon emissions and therefore a modest impact on slowing climate change.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement and Commercial? Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Emma Duncan and Stephen Randall

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User?

Yes - EQiA assessment submitted to Michael Williams for approval.

Name of Officer: Michael Williams

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Sarah Silk

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Michael Williams

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Iain Green

If a Key decision, have any Climate Change and Environment implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

5. Source documents

5.1 Source documents

Not applicable