

## Wheatsheaf Crossroads

To: Highways and Transport Committee

Meeting Date: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023

From: Executive Director of Place and Sustainability

Electoral division(s): Somersham & Earith

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2023/92

Outcome: The purpose of this report is to enable progress to be made on the proposed junction improvement at the Wheatsheaf Crossroads through to construction following award of a construction contract.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

a) delegate authority to the Executive Director Place and Sustainability in consultation with the Chair and Vice of the Committee to award and execute a contract for the construction of a new traffic signalised junction at Wheatsheaf Crossroads starting February 2024.

Officer contact:

Name: David Mitchell

Post: Interim Senior Project Manager

Email: [David.Mitchell@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:David.Mitchell@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223 706398

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The junction, known as Wheatsheaf Crossroads, saw 20 injury collisions between January 2015 and December 2020 including 2 fatal and 2 serious injury collisions. The fatal and serious collisions all occurred in 2019 and 2020 and the Council has been named as an interested party in the inquest into the 2020 fatality by the Coroner. Improvements to lining and road marking were installed in 2016. Since the start of 2021 to August 2023 there have been a further 7 injury collisions, 1 of these being serious in March 2022.
- 1.2 Following a report to Highways and Transport Committee in September 2021, a preferred solution to install a traffic signal-controlled junction was agreed at the crossroads on the B1040 Somersham Road/Wheatsheaf Road/Bluntisham Heath Road to reduce the number of collisions involving drivers failing to give way.
- 1.3 Funding of £6.8m for a new signal-controlled junction was approved in 2021 with construction planned to take place in 2024, allowing time for scheme development and required land acquisition. The detailed design of the scheme was completed in September 2023 and the General Arrangement drawing for the scheme is included at Appendix A. Land acquisition is ongoing to secure the parcels of land required to construct the new junction alignment. The land acquisition plan is included at Appendix B.
- 1.4 Vehicle Activated Signs will be installed to serve as advanced warning of the current crossroad junction, these will serve as a temporary improvement until the new signalised junction has been completed. The materials for this instalment have been ordered and anticipated delivery is early December 2023. When the Vehicle Activated Signs are removed, they will be reused to highlight another crossroads junction in the County which will be selected by Road Safety Officers.
- 1.5 It is noted that a significant period has elapsed since the funding was awarded in 2021. This is because key stages in the scheme development need to be undertaken as follows:
  - Whilst the initial feasibility study had concluded that a traffic signal scheme was possible a first stage of design needed to consider the various layout options. The Officer Project Board concluded that a layout with widening mainly to the West of the junction would minimise the number of landowners required in the land acquisition negotiation.
  - Transport Modelling, site testing and development of the preliminary design
  - Detailed design including liaison with utility owners regarding diversions required to their networks.
  - Land acquisition negotiations
  - Preparation of a Bill of Quantities to enable a refined construction cost estimate.
  - Initial preparations for the construction contract procurement
  - Initial discussions with the County Council's Street Works and Permitting Team

## 2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The detailed design has been completed by Milestone, which outlines a 4-way signal-controlled junction. The existing alignment will be shifted to the west and right-hand turn lanes will be provided on the north-bound and south-bound arms of the B1040. Additionally,

segregated running lanes will be constructed on the B1040 north-bound and south-bound approaches to the new junction.

- 2.2 The procurement strategy for the scheme has been considered against the expected value of the construction contract necessary to complete the project. It is proposed to procure this scheme through Lot 2 of the Eastern Highways Alliance Framework, which will include evaluation criteria for both quality and price. Subject to committee approval, a tender process through the framework will commence in December 2023, with award expected in February 2024. If a suitable award cannot be achieved using the framework, a competitive open procurement process will be followed, although that will introduce a delay of four months to the programme. The procurement plan has been discussed with the County Council's 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.
- 2.3 Subject to award of contract, the construction of the improved junction is expected to commence in April 2024. The programme duration is estimated to be at least 6 months and will be further refined in conjunction with the appointed principal contractor.
- 2.4 Prior to the main civils work to construct the improved junction the utility diversion work must take place to divert assets from UK Power Networks, Cambridge Water, Virgin Media and County Broadband. For this to commence the land must first be acquired. The utility diversion work is currently programmed to start in February 2024 and be completed in line with the start date for the main works in April 2024. It should be noted that the programme indicated in 2.3 and 2.4 is a realistic, risk adjusted timeframe which is subject to a prompt settlement of the current land acquisition negotiation. Whilst officers will strive for settlement and acquisition as soon as possible, it is subject to successful agreement and subsequent execution of the agreement. The Executive Director Place and Sustainability has approved the land acquisition as the purchase price is in line with market value and within the finance limit of delegated powers for a property transaction. The existing highway boundary hedges will be removed by the Highway Term Services Contractor, as soon as the land acquisition has been completed and before the start of the bird nesting season.
- 2.5 It will be necessary for temporary traffic management to be used during the construction period and this will be developed by the Principal Contractor following the award of contract. The temporary traffic management will be developed to meet the approval of the County Council's Street Works and Permitting team, including the consultation with the key transport stakeholders. When the approved traffic management plans have been prepared these will be shared with the Local County Council Member.
- 2.6 Following the award of construction contract to the successful bidder the construction programme will be prepared by the contractor. As soon as the programme has been approved by officers, communications will be issued to inform members, key stakeholders and the public regarding the date for the start of construction, the construction period and the fact that delays should be anticipated during the construction period.
- 2.7 The overall funding of £6.8M as indicated at paragraph 1.3 above included an initial allowance for optimism bias of £1.320M which represented 44% of the estimated

construction value. As the scheme has progressed through detail design the current value for optimism bias is now £450K which represents 15% of the estimated construction value. This should represent a cost saving of £870K. However, officers believe that it is prudent to retain the current funding level until forecast costs can be updated once final orders to utility companies are known and the target cost from the successful bidder for the construction contract is known. The budget allows for potential risks with their impact and likelihood being assessed and an allowance made against each based on the range of potential outcomes.

### 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.

- 492m of replacement hedge are to be planted on site. The existing hedges are not continuous and therefore replacement with new continuous hedges is better than the existing provision. The replacement species will be selected to enhance the natural environment.
- Warm Mix Asphalt specified for pavement construction (reduces CO2 emissions throughout the manufacturing process by approx. 15%)

3.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable

The signalised junction is being installed to improve road safety to make travel safer in this area.

3.3 Health inequalities are reduced

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) Public Health Outcomes Framework data on the Killed and Serious Injury (KSI) records for Cambridgeshire demonstrate that this is an important issue to be addressed in Cambridgeshire. This scheme when implemented will help to reduce the KSI current levels. The scheme aligns with the addressing health inequalities ambition in the Council's framework.

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

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

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

There are no significant implications for this ambition

### 3.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive

There are no significant implications for this ambition

## 4. Significant Implications

### 4.1 Resource Implications

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

- The total funding for the scheme of £6.8M was approved in 2021. The funding includes allowances for Optimism Bias and for a fully costed risk register in addition to the direct scheme costs of design, staff, land, utility diversions, supervision and construction.
- The land acquisition required for the scheme is being undertaken by negotiation. Since the negotiations are with the landowners of a single farm estate and that progress is being made with the negotiations officers believe that the negotiations will be successful. There is still an outside risk that this is not the case, and in that event a Compulsory Purchase Order process would need to be progressed which could potentially add eighteen months to the programme.

### 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

The significant implications are set out in paragraph 2.2

### 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

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

- Pathfinder Legal Services have been commissioned to act for the County Council in the land acquisition negotiation. Negotiations are ongoing with the landowner to secure the land required to facilitate the utility diversions, construction compound and land for the junction improvement. Work on site cannot commence until the requisite land acquisition has been completed.
- The County Council as Highway Authority has a duty to undertake improvements to the highway network under the Highways Act 1980.
- In view of the accident record at the junction, any decision not to implement the approved scheme would present significant reputational risk to the County Council as Highway Authority.
- As noted in 4.1 above the delivery risks within the scheme are covered by a fully costed risk register.
- The Health and Safety risks of implementing the scheme are being managed by the County Council in compliance with the Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015 with the appointment of suitably qualified Principal Designer and Principal Contractor.
- The procurement route using either the Eastern Highways Alliance Framework or a procurement using the open procedure has been set out in paragraph 2.2 above. The County Council is eligible to use the Eastern Alliance Highways Framework to procure the works.

- Pathfinder Legal Services has also been asked to review the report and comments from PLS have been included.

#### 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

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

- An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been undertaken and approved by the Assistant Director, Project Delivery.

#### 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The significant implications are set out in paragraph 2.5.

#### 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The significant implications are set out in paragraph 2.5.

#### 4.7 Public Health Implications

The significant implications are set out in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3 inclusive.

#### 4.8 Climate Change and Environment Implications on Priority Areas (See further guidance in Appendix 2):

##### 4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: The scheme is not a building.

##### 4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: The scheme is a junction control improvement to a B road junction to address the current injury accident record at the existing junction.

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

Negative Status:

Explanation: There is a slight loss in farmland to provide the space to construct the improved signalised junction layout.

##### 4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Negative Status:

Explanation: All projects will generate waste from excavations to remove elements of existing infrastructure, e.g., old kerb lines and old signposts. The waste management during construction will be managed through application of the Construction Environmental Management Plan.

##### 4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Neutral Status:

Explanation: There is no implication

#### 4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: On balance by changing the method of control at the junction it is not anticipated that levels of air pollution at the junction will change significantly.

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

Neutral Status:

Explanation: There is no implication.

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 and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Pathfinder Legal Services, Karen White

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

Yes EqIA has been approved

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 guidance

### 5.1 Source documents

None.