

## BP Witchford Road Non-Motorised User Crossing

To: Highways and Transport Committee

Meeting Date: 5 March 2024

From: Executive Director for Place and Sustainability

Electoral division(s): Ely South

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2024/030

Executive Summary: This report provides an update on the development of a Non-Motorised User crossing at BP Witchford Roundabout. It seeks approval to proceed with a feasibility study and to develop a preferred option for the scheme. This is to be funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Recommendation: The Committee are recommended to:

- a) note the progress that has been made on the options assessment and the procurement plan for the conclusion of feasibility work
- b) agree that the Council accept £550,000 of funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to undertake a feasibility study to identify the preferred option for a non-motorised user crossing.
- 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 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- d) approve the ongoing development of the design, including consultation with stakeholders.

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# 1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

1.1 The development of a safe crossing of the A10 near the BP/ Witchford Road roundabout will contribute to the Council's seven ambitions.

1.2 Ambition 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.

A new crossing will help reduce carbon emissions and contribute to meeting the 2045 net zero carbon emissions target through providing a safe crossing enabling more people to cycle and walk for shorter journeys currently undertaken in the car.

1.3 Ambition 2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable.

Provision of a safe crossing will contribute to making travel across the county safer and more environmentally sustainable.

1.4 Ambition 3 Health inequalities are reduced.

Provision of a new crossing will also contribute to the ambitions of reducing health inequalities and allowing people to enjoy safe and independent lives by improving access to non-motorised travel routes suitable for walking, cycling and equestrians, promoting access to outside spaces and reducing dependency on private car use.

1.5 The improved access between Ely and Witchford will also serve to support improved access to education and employment facilities for those without access to a car, helping reduce income inequality. The crossing will provide increased access to employment areas thereby assisting businesses and communities. It also allows for safer routes for young people.

## 2. Background

2.1 The A10 represents a barrier to pedestrians and cyclists travelling between Witchford and Ely and prevents onward movement to the southwest of Ely and beyond. There are local facilities on the west side of the Witchford Road roundabout junction, such as the BP garage and the Lancaster Way Business Park which create an existing desire line through the roundabout junction.

2.2 Between 2017 and 2023, there have been 12 collisions in the vicinity of the BP Roundabout at Ely. These have resulted in 15 casualties, four of which have been serious. The serious accidents included one elderly pedestrian, one cyclist and one powered two-wheeler. The addition of an extra lane on the A10 north of the BP junction in 2021 has exacerbated the difficulty faced by non-motorised users in safely navigating the road at its most intuitive desire line near the BP garage. Further opportunities remain to improve connectivity for non-motorised users and enhance access for commuters, leisure trips and home to school journeys.

- 2.3 In April 2023, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) commissioned an Option Assessment Report to investigate and generate viable options to introduce an effective at-grade or grade separated crossing over the A10 in the vicinity of the BP roundabout. This route connects Ely to Witchford village, encompassing Lancaster Way Business Park and wider destinations in the A142/Witchford Road corridor. This work was funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).
- 2.4 The Options Assessment Report identified and considered fourteen options for provision of a safe crossing of the A10, including do-nothing and construction of an overbridge, underpass or signalised crossing options. The options were scored for suitability and feasibility, and concluded that one signalised junction and two overbridge options should be taken forward for further assessment and development, the selected options are:
- A signalised crossing, constructed on the A10 approximately 65m north of the Witchford Road roundabout junction.
  - Overbridge Option (OB/2) to be constructed approximately 68m north of the Witchford roundabout junction.
  - Overbridge Option (OB/4) approximately 83m to the south of the existing alignment of Byway 39 approximately 228m north of the Witchford Road roundabout junction.
- 2.5 Further detailed assessment of the three shortlisted options is required to understand the key risks in more detail and progress the scheme through to identifying a preferred option. A grade separated solution (overbridge) is expected to be more attractive from a highway safety perspective but is expected to have higher cost and greater carbon impact than a signalised crossing. There may be further opportunities to undertake value engineering on the bridge options and additional consideration must be given to risks that may impact the viability of an at grade crossing.

### 3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The next step to progress this scheme is the development of an Outline Business Case based on further feasibility work on the three shortlisted options. Further study will be undertaken to carry out detailed assessments of the three options considering ecology and environmental impacts, traffic modelling and development of the design. The study is expected to commence in April 2024, and conclude in March 2025. Engagement with landowners and key stakeholders will be undertaken during this period. The design development will inform more detailed cost assessments to support the delivery of an Outline Business Case, which will propose a preferred option to be taken through to detailed design.
- 3.2 As part of the previous options appraisal, stakeholder engagement was held through a series of three meetings. The stakeholder group included representatives from Ely City Council, Witchford Parish Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, cycling groups and the British Horse Society. A further meeting was held with the local business community. The feasibility study will assess the three options with a view to presenting them for public consultation, which will then inform the recommendation for the preferred option.
- 3.3 A professional services contractor will be appointed through the ESPO Framework to undertake the feasibility study and develop an Outline Business Case. This package of

work includes feasibility support for completion of Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the option development process, expected to be completed by end of March 2025. A procurement plan has been prepared with corporate procurement and given the value of the contract (below £500,000), and the need to ensure competition within the procurement, it was considered that best value would be achieved through a framework. Following expressions of interest, a further competition has been carried out through the ESPO Framework 664\_21 Consultancy Services Lot 5: Highways, Traffic and Transport., with award subject to approval of accepting funding from the CPCA. The procurement plan for the construction phase will be confirmed as part of the feasibility stage, considering the preferred option, and will be reported to a future Highways and Transport Committee.

- 3.4 In November 2021, CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee approved a recommendation to allocate £550,000 for further appraisal work. A Grant Funding Agreement is being prepared by Pathfinder Legal Services to be completed with CPCA subject to approval by this committee. The cost of delivering the scheme has been estimated at £6,600,000 based on delivery of an overbridge option. This value is an early estimate based on the initial options assessment including Optimism Bias and will be reviewed throughout the further development of the Outline Business Case. The CPCA has proposed to allocate further funding for the scheme in 2025/26 as part of their Medium-Term Financial Plan to support the detailed design and towards the cost of construction.
- 3.5 Following completion of the feasibility study in March 2025, the scheme will progress through to the design phase for the preferred option. Subject to securing the relevant consents and full funding for the scheme, construction is expected in 2026/27-2027/28. The current programme is based on the most complex solution to deliver, an overbridge, however if an alternative signalised crossing is the preferred option the delivery programme will be shorter as this will minimise the design and planning requirements.

## 4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 A do-nothing approach was considered in the options assessment, which offers no improvement for non-motorised users at or close to the Witchford Rd/ BP roundabout. Results of the option sifting undertaken were discussed with the stakeholder group at a workshop in July 2023 and it was agreed that all options that scored less than or equal to the do-nothing option through the sifting process would be discounted from further consideration. If funding is not accepted from the CPCA for the feasibility study and outline business case, the scheme will be unable to progress at this time until further funding opportunities become available.

## 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 Provision of a safe, non-motorised user crossing across the A10 close to the BP Witchford Road roundabout would create a safe crossing at this desire line and support active travel, in turn supporting the Councils ambitions. The next phase of this scheme, being funded by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, is to develop the business case and establish a preferred solution for the scheme. Continued development of the proposal along with further consultation with stakeholders will lead to a preferred single option to be taken forward.

## 6. Significant Implications

### 6.1 Finance Implications

£550,000 funding has been allocated for the scheme by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and a grant funding agreement will be secured for this. Funding will cover the costs of the project team alongside the appointed consultants to complete the feasibility study.

Further work during the feasibility stage will support the refinement of costs for the preferred option. Further funding has been sought for subsequent stages in the CPCA Medium Term Financial Plan as outlined in paragraph 3.5.

### 6.2 Legal Implications

Funding will be secured through a Grant Funding Agreement with CPCA for the feasibility stage. Future grant funding will be secured via a new or varied agreement.

### 6.3 Risk Implications

A risk register for the scheme has been compiled and key risks include the prospect of an objection to land take for any overbridge option and challenging ground conditions and the presence of ground water.

### 6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The early options appraisal report considered the improvements that the project could bring in enabling safe and independent travel. It is foreseeable that people from protected characteristic groups will be impacted through provision of a new crossing and further work, including an equality impact assessment action plan, will be considered during the feasibility and early design stages of this scheme. As part the option development on the scheme, groups representing vulnerable users and those with protected characteristics will be included in engagement and consultation in the next phase.

### 6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications (Key decisions only)

Overall, the scheme seeks to create a safe access across the A10 for non-motorised users, including cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians allowing safer travel and reducing car use. As part of the development of the Outline Business Case, a carbon assessment of all options will be undertaken, and the appointed consultant will be required to demonstrate how they will reduce carbon impacts throughout the design phase. Additionally, the feasibility stage will also consider the impact of each option in more detail on ecology and the environment, including any required surveys and development of a biodiversity net gain strategy.

## 7. Source Documents

- 7.1 CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee 15 November 2023 – BP Roundabout Non-Motorised User (NMU) Crossing Study [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)