

RING FORT PATH

To: Highways and Transport Committee

Meeting Date: 6th October 2020

From: Steve Cox, Executive Director; Place and Economy

Electoral division(s): Histon and Impington

Forward Plan ref: N/A **Key decision:** No

Outcome: To have noted the scheme development to date and approve the way forward.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended;

- a) To note the scheme development to date.
- b) To approve the delivery of the steps option within the available budget of £255k.
- c) To note that should further funding be made available, the option for provision of a ramp may be explored further.

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contacts:</i>	
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 There is a lack of direct access for pedestrians and cyclists between Histon and Impington, and the Orchard Park development, which lies north of Kings Hedges Road in Cambridge.

This has led to the creation of an informal path down a steep bank, linking the two communities. The path is steep and slippery with users climbing over the safety barriers at Histon Interchange to access. It is used as it avoids a longer walk down Histon Road, Kings Hedges Road & back up Ring Fort Road from the south.

The image below gives an overview of the site:



- 1.2 On 8th September 2011 a 475 signature petition, was submitted to Cabinet, asking for the creation of a new link, known as Ring Fort Path.
- 1.3 Approval to provide £350,000 of Section 106 funding towards Ring Fort Path was given by Cabinet on 18th December 2012.
- 1.4 Following an initial feasibility report which considered a number of possible options, two options were taken forward to public consultation, including reference to constructing steps if the ramp options proved too expensive to deliver or too risky on geotechnical grounds.

The consultation took place throughout November 2014 with a number of manned exhibitions taking place, and information being available on the County Council's website. 101 responses were received. Although the consultation response was not vast compared to other projects, the initial petition did generate a lot of interest in the issue and showed strong local support to make provision for the link.

The consultation results indicated that 79% of respondents saw a definite need for improved access between the communities in question. In the event of it not being feasible to provide a ramp, 40% of respondents felt that steps would still be a useful facility, though 40% did not.

- 1.5 In December 2014 Economy and Environment Spokes discussed the project and consultation results. Due to the relatively high costs for both of the options consulted on, officers were asked to consider further options that may provide better value.

- 1.6 Following this in July 2015 approval was gained from CCC E&E Committee as follows:
- a) Note the consultation response, and the current project risks;
 - b) Approve the development and delivery of Option Four (shown at Appendix A), along with steps;
 - c) Approve continuing negotiations with landowners.

This option had the shortest ramp length of the designs being considered. At the time of approval it was favoured by Orchard Park Community Council, as it does not impact on the wildlife area behind the skate park.

The approval gained from Committee indicated that should extensive strengthening of the embankment be required or that there is a risk of future failure of the embankment, then it may be that the provision of just steps is the only feasible option.

There has been a history of maintenance problems associated with the embankment at this location, which was constructed in 1979. It is sited on gault clay, is relatively steep and has required reconstruction on two separate occasions. Building the ramp option could be a potential maintenance liability for the County Council. Initial geotechnical survey work has revealed that the embankment appears to be in good condition but to progress the ramp option further a more detailed comprehensive survey would be required.

RECENT PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Project Costs to Date and Funding.

- 2.1.1 Project costs to date are in the region of £95k. This includes CCC management costs of £20k, costs for preliminary design activities of £55k and a payment of £20k to Highways England.
- 2.1.2 The cost for provision of the ramp option is high with an initial cost estimate for construction in the region of £520k. This was provided in July 2019. Further geo-technical work and detailed design would also need to be completed with a risk budget of 30% applied. This would mean overall project costs in the region of £800-850k.
- 2.1.4 The original budget available was £350k. If a project is to proceed within the current funding constraints then it cannot exceed £255k. The project team were instructed in early 2020 to develop options that could be delivered within the budget available.

2.2 Option 1 - Do Nothing

- 2.2.1 If a scheme does not progress the existing embankment, which is CCC owned and maintained, is likely to deteriorate further. The risk of users walking down the embankment slipping and sustaining injury is significant on a muddy route with a 7m level difference between top and bottom of the embankment.
- 2.2.2 The current situation excludes mobility impaired users, people with prams / buggies and cyclists who would have to lift their bike over the safety barrier and down the embankment.
- 2.2.3 Users who wish to stay on a made path will continue to make the 700m+ detour via Kings Hedges Road or may find alternative shortcuts causing additional embankment and vegetation damage.

2.3 Option 2 - Steps

2.3.1 The project team have considered options for steps constructed from concrete, steel and timber. These options have been developed through preliminary design and budget estimates have been received for each. The design for concrete option is shown at Appendix B.

2.3.2 The main advantage of this option is that it can be delivered within the current budget available of £255k. A budget estimate for construction of the concrete step option was received in May 2020. The cost is £225k and includes an allocation of 25% for risk (£45k). The detailed design is estimated at £32k with CCC Management costs set at £8k.

These costs amount to £265k. However it is believed that the risks identified can be reduced to allow for the project to be delivered within budget. The alternative is to look at value engineering options through the detailed design process.

The option of concrete steps is favoured by the CCC Structures Team. It will provide less liability in terms of future maintenance. In comparison with the steel and timber structures considered it would provide increased assurance against slippage of the structure and would also be less prone to vandalism / theft.

The steps would incorporate a concrete or metal channel for cyclists to run their wheels in to push cycles up / down the steps (as per Sustrans / DfT guidance).

The construction of the steps would be in a relatively small area with minimal impact onto the existing embankment, planting and existing dry pond. A single lamp column would illuminate the structure meaning ecological impacts would be reduced.

2.3.3 The main disadvantage of the steps only option is that it is not inclusive to mobility impaired users, people with prams / buggies or cyclists who wish to remain mounted. The only other pedestrian / cycle route to enter Orchard Park is to continue down Histon Road to the junction with Kings Hedges Road and back into the development. The length of this route from the top of the Histon Interchange to the Roundabout near Premier Inn on Ring Fort Road is 725m. In comparison the ramp option would provide this link at a distance of 360m.

3. WAY FORWARD

3.1 The cost estimates indicate that the existing budget is not sufficient to provide the ramp option. As detailed previously the condition and stability of the embankment is not certain. Further geotechnical investigation would be recommended ahead of detailed design to determine its suitability.

3.2 The project team have met with a representative from Camcycle. They have indicated that their preferred option would be to proceed with the ramp option as it would provide improved access for cyclists.

3.3 A reply from Councillor Noel Kavanagh, CCC Cycling Champion has suggested that sources for additional funding should be explored to deliver the ramp option. The steps option will not fully address the need for a safe route accessible for all, particularly disabled residents.

3.4 A reply has been received from Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum. This stated, "We consider that steps would be wholly inappropriate and inaccessible for the disabled, for mothers with pushchairs and toddlers, for older people and for anyone with mobility

problems. They would also prove to be very difficult for people pushing bicycles up them, even if there was a bicycle gutter. Steps would certainly not provide safe, off-road, easy access". They have suggested that additional funding should be sought to develop the ramp option further.

- 3.5 To proceed with the ramp option only then additional funding in the region of £600k would need to be provided. Opportunities for funding could be explored but this would delay delivery of the project.
- 3.6 The project team have now received replies from Orchard Park Community Council and the local County Councillor David Jenkins. Both parties have expressed support for the 'steps only' option. They have safety concerns with the current situation and want to see a definitive link established.
- 3.7 Programme for Delivery:
H&T Approval – 6 October 2020
Project Set Up – October (3 weeks)
Detailed Design of Concrete Steps Option – October / November (5 weeks)
Procurement – December / January (6 weeks)
Mobilisation / Construction – January to May 2021 (16 weeks)
- 3.8 Based on the information in this report we would ask that CCC H&T Committee give their support to proceed with the detailed design and construction of the steps only option. To note that if future funding becomes available then the provision of the ramp option could be developed further.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4.1 A good quality of life for everyone

More people cycling and walking contributes to a healthier population, improved productivity, reduced traffic congestion, reliability of journey times and adds capacity into an already constrained road network, all of which contributes to economic wellbeing.

4.2 Thriving places for people to live

The project is aligned with CCC policy. It is giving consideration to local developments and links to connect communities.

4.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

Currently many people including children feel unsafe walking and cycling. Cycling is potentially a form of economic, reliable transport that allows them to access schools or training and hence independence, and the opportunity to incorporate active travel into their lives. This project will establish a safe link for children to access leisure facilities on Orchard Park and for links to schools in Histon and Impington.

4.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

The Climate Change and Environment Strategy identifies active travel as a priority. Better cycling and pedestrian links would contribute to reduced vehicle journeys, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions.

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Finance Implications

The financial implications are contained within the main body of the report

5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Current preliminary design is being undertaken via Skanska and the Highways Services Contract (HSC). Detailed Design and Build via HSC.

5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

Land adoption process currently in progress involving CCC Assets and Highways England.

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed, and is included at Appendix C. This will be reviewed as the project moves through detailed design and communication with key stakeholders / groups will continue.

5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

Previous consultation and engagement. Meetings and engagement with local key stakeholders including county councillors, Orchard Park Community Council and Camcycle.

5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Previous consultation and engagement. Meetings and engagement with local key stakeholders including county councillors, Orchard Park Community Council and Camcycle.

5.7 Public Health Implications

More people cycling and walking undoubtedly contributes to improved public health. It is important that people are supported and encouraged to be physically active, and any efforts should focus upon interventions that mitigate any barriers like perceived safety risks.

The Transport and Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment makes reference to encouraging short trips of less than 2km to be undertaken on foot or by cycle. The proposals support and encourage this.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council	Yes Name of Officer: Gus de Silva

Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law?	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Elsa Evans
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: Andy Preston
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Iain Green

Source Documents	Location
CCC Project Documents Preliminary Design & Cost Estimates E&E Report, July 2015	Room 310 Shire Hall

- NOTES
1. CHECK SCALE FROM THE DRAWING
 2. REPORT ALL DISCREPANCIES TO THE DRAWING ORIGINATOR
 3. THIS DRAWING IS TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND DRAWINGS

HEALTH AND SAFETY WARNING

THIS PROPOSAL IS A PRELIMINARY DESIGN. THE DESIGNER HAS CONSIDERED THE HEALTH AND SAFETY ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSAL. HOWEVER, THE DESIGNER HAS NOT CONDUCTED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT AND ANY RESIDUAL SIGNIFICANT RISKS WILL BE NOTED AND INDICATED BY THE SYMBOL.

SIGNIFICANT.COM/HEALTH&SAFETY/ISSUES



No.	Date	Description	By	Check
001	17/10/2024	FOR PROPOSAL		

Cambridgeshire Highways

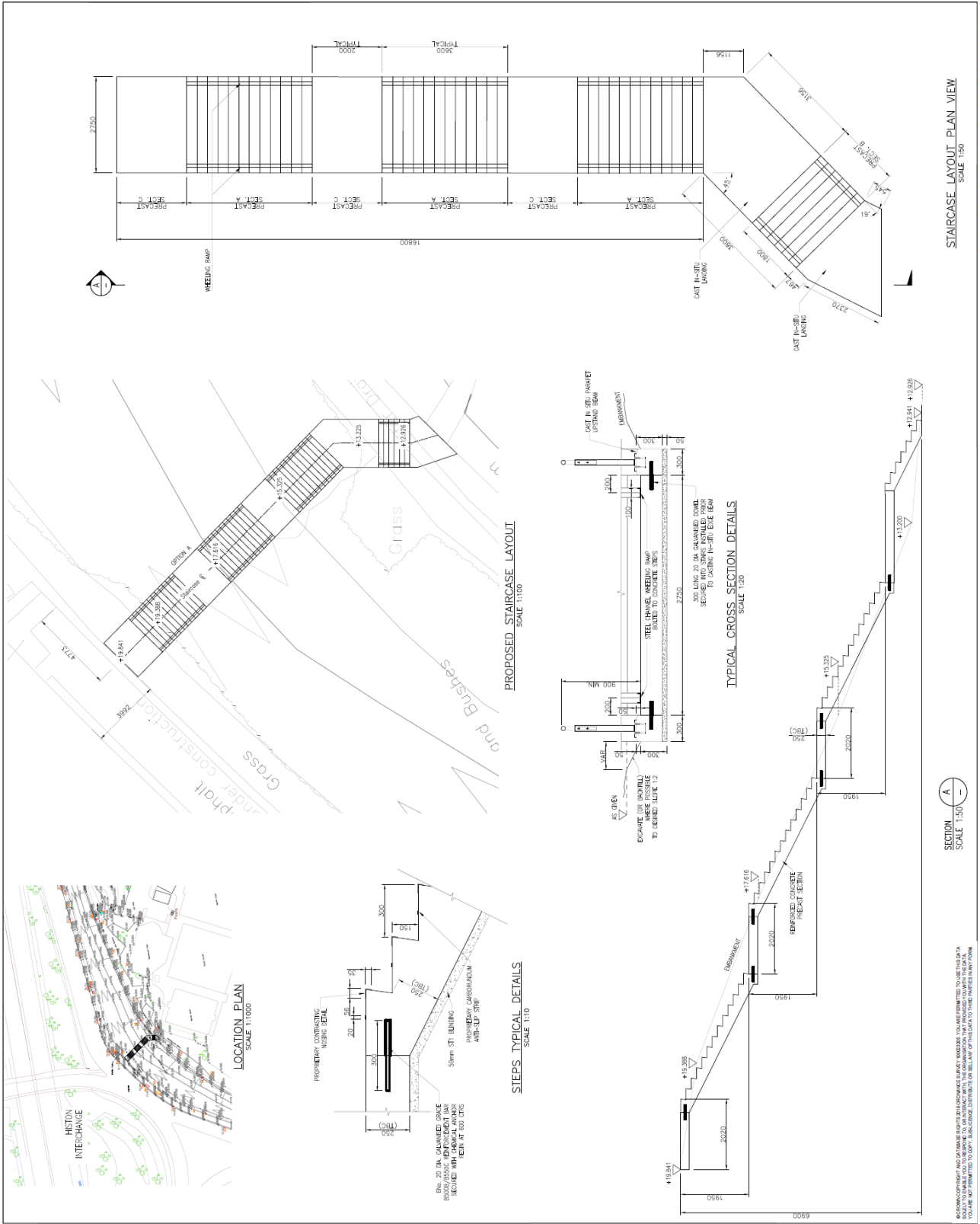
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UNIT 10, Vantage House
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Drawn	Checked	Approved	Authority	Project No.
17/10/2024				5000346-SKA-SMN-DRS-0001

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Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

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Please see separate Appendix C attachment.