

General Services Capital Plan : A701 Relief Road and A702 Spur Road

Report by Ian Johnson, Head of Communities and Economy

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks confirmation from Council for the expenditure of developer contributions on preparatory works towards implementation of proposals for the new A701 Relief Road and A702 Spur Road.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Midlothian Local Development Plan (MLDP) includes proposals for a new road to relieve traffic congestion on the existing A701, and to provide a new link road between the A703 and the A702 roads. Integral to these proposals is the upgrading of the existing A701 to be a primary route for public transport, walking and cycling. The new A702 spur road will also provide an essentially needed access from the strategic road network into the Easter Bush campus of major science based academic, research, and manufacturing premises.
- 2.2 The MLDP has recently been subject to its statutory public examination process following which the Scottish Government Reporters published their report in July 2017. That report endorses the A701 and A702 road proposals in the Plan. This confirmation enables the Council to instigate preparatory works towards implementation of the scheme.
- 2.3 There has been recognition since 2008 of the need for improvements to the A701 and, as a consequence, major developments in that corridor have been required to contribute to such improvements. The relevant clauses in the legal agreements are specific in identifying the reason for the contribution; and it is considered that the extent of the secured contributions is approximately £1,425,500. As further developments take place within the A701 corridor, they will be subject to similar requirements to contribute to the improvements.
- 2.4 In July 2017 the Scottish and UK Governments signed heads of terms with the six constituent Councils for the implementation of an Edinburgh and South East Scotland Region City Deal. Whilst the detailed proposals and levels of funding for individual projects have yet to be prepared and confirmed, it is confidently expected that the A701/A702 scheme will be one of the projects to benefit from the City Deal, through a certain level of financial contribution.

3 Current Considerations

- 3.1 There is an urgent need to seek early implementation of the A701 Relief Road and A702 Spur Road, to ensure that MLDP development allocations can come forward, to ease the congestion on the existing A701, to encourage greater use of public transport and to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists along the existing A701, and to secure unconstrained access from the Easter Bush complex to both the local and strategy roads network.

3.2 The Council previously commissioned some initial work on ground conditions and traffic projections to be sufficiently confident of the viability of the scheme in principle so that it could be included in the MLDP. Moving forward towards implementation of the scheme requires a comprehensive invasive ground conditions survey, and a package of other technical work. Of particular importance will be early engagement with Transport Scotland as trunk roads authority as the scheme links into a trunk road at each end (A720 bypass, and A702 road). All of this work would be essential to inform the subsequent detailed design and construction stages.

3.3 As some of the developer contributions are time-bound, such that if they are not spent or committed for spend by a certain date they are required to be returned to the developer, some initial expenditure of around £75k has already been committed for consultancy services to inform the main contracts.

4 Report Implications

4.1 Resource

There are no costs to the Council arising from this report, as it seeks confirmation of the placement of collected developer financial contributions into the Capital Plan for expenditure in accordance with the terms on which such contributions have been agreed. The total sum is £1,425,500. The costs of the contracts identified in part 3 above will be less than this sum.

4.2 Risk

If these developer contributions are not spent or legally committed for spending by certain trigger dates as set out in the respective legal planning agreements, they will have to be returned to the developers.

4.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- None of the above

4.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Provision of the new roads will promote economic development, assist in meeting housing need, and improving public safety.

4.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The new roads will provide for positive outcomes in local employment, housing, transport, and environmental sustainability.

4.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The road proposals are an essential element of medium and long term planning of the Midlothian economy and environment.

4.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The road proposals have been the subject of extensive consultation with the public and other stakeholders through the statutory procedures for preparation of the MLDP.

4.8 Ensuring Equalities

This report is not proposing any new policies, strategies or proposals. The MLDP has been subject to a full Equalities Impact Assessment.

4.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The roads proposals are a part of the MLDP strategy, which has been prepared in accordance with the principle of promoting and securing sustainable development.

4.10 IT Issues

None.

5 Summary

- 5.1** Having now received endorsement by Scottish Government Reporters of the A701/A702 roads proposals in its Midlothian Local Development Plan, the Council can now make progress towards implementation of that scheme. The commissioning of the first major contracts can be funded from developer contributions held by the Council and which can be transferred into the Capital Plan.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1** It is recommended that Council approves a provision for expenditure of £1,425,500, fully funded from collected developer contributions, into the General Services Capital Plan in 2017/18 and 2018/19 to cover costs associated with the Council's approved proposals for the A701 Relief Road and A702 Spur Road.

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Background Papers: None