

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee

DATE: 29 November 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Director Of Environment

SUBJECT: Highway Improvement Scheme
A56/A558 Daresbury Expressway Junction

WARDS: Daresbury

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek approval for Capital Funding for the scheme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the Council be recommended to include the scheme in the capital programme at a total cost of £3.478m; and**
- (2) the funding for the scheme, and the fact that it will be undertaken within one contract be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The rapid development of the eastern Runcorn area is continuing to generate significant traffic growth, resulting in congestion at the junction of the A558 Daresbury Expressway and A56 Chester Road. Halton's Local Transport Plan describes a highway improvement scheme that is designed to increase junction capacity through the introduction of traffic signal control and widening the Expressway, to dual carriageway standard, between this junction and the Daresbury Science Park roundabout. These measures are designed to accommodate the increase in traffic growth due to committed developments identified in the Unitary Development Plan and in particular, to improve access to the Daresbury Science and Innovation Centre in support of continuing business interest. The estimated cost of the scheme is £3.478m including contract supervision and administration.

3.2 When permission was granted for the Daresbury Science and Innovation Centre, it was subject to a Section 106 agreement relating to off site highway improvements which committed the NWDA to providing a new roundabout to an agreed specification on the Daresbury Expressway and a link road from there to Keckwick Lane. Both these elements have been provided. The S106 agreement also provided for the Council to improve the A56 junction with the Daresbury Expressway and to dual the road between there and the new roundabout provided by the NWDA.

3.3 The scheme now to be implemented to satisfy the terms of the S106 agreement comprises:- replacement of the roundabout at A56 / Daresbury Expressway junction with traffic signals; the dualling of the carriageway between the A56 and the new roundabout on the Daresbury Expressway; and traffic movement restrictions on Keckwick Lane at the junction with A56.

3.4 Funding for the scheme has been secured from the following sources:

- Local transport Plan £650,000
 - ERDF Objective 2 £658,500
 - NWDA Section 106 Contributions £185,000
(Daresbury Innovation Centre)
 - English Partnerships (EP) contributions £250,000
- Total **£1,743,500**

Therefore balance of funding needed to deliver the full scheme is **£1,734,500.**

The ERDF contribution is dependant upon works being completed by June 2008 in order that final payment claims can be processed under ERDF regulations, and this will allow a first phase of the scheme, the conversion of the junction to traffic signal control, to proceed.

3.5 Further funding from English Partnerships has been secured under a Section 106 planning agreement, tied into the future development of housing within the Sandymoor developments. The agreement contains a schedule of infrastructure and transport related works in the Sandymoor area together with estimated costs including the proposed highway improvements totalling £4.5m at 2005 prices. However, the payment of contributions is dependant upon housing plot completion being in line with an anticipated four to five year programme and the initial contribution may not be available until 2008/09. Development has already commenced and EP have recently indicated a willingness to release funding more quickly, upon completion of land sales to developers.

3.6 In order to meet the timetable for the construction of Phase 1 works, tenders have been invited on the basis of a phased approach, delaying the award of Phase 2 dualling scheme, until funding is confirmed in place. However, there are distinct advantages to awarding a contract for the full scheme initially:

- Operationally: Construction of the junction layout can be better planned and programmed to ease the transition between phases thereby reducing abortive work and future disruption to traffic using the junction.
- Contractually: A simpler contract agreement with clearer programming and lower risk of compensation event payments (claims) can be achieved.

- Financially: Greater certainty of contract price, without need to re-negotiate Phase 2 rates if the commencement date is delayed beyond 2008. There are also economies to be gained in minimising abortive or transitional works (described above) and reduced preliminary costs for site establishments etc.

It should be noted, however, that even within a single contract, the work itself will still need to be phased, as it is necessary to relocate an existing badger sett that is close to a section of the proposed dual carriageway. Badgers are a protected species and their relocation can only proceed during certain times of year.

- 3.7 It is recommended that £1.735m be made available from the Council's capital programme in 2008/09 to enable implementation of the full scheme, until funding from the Section 106 agreement with English Partnerships is available. The Council would be reimbursed from contributions paid under the agreement.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications relating to the scheme implementation

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

Awarding a contract for the whole of the works will reduce the amount of staff time required for drawing up agreements and in contract administration.

5.2 Best value implications

Letting a contract for the full scheme in accordance with BV principles will permit efficient use of the resources available to deliver the improvement scheme in the most effective manner for residents, businesses and the travelling public.

5.3 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1.1 Children and Young People in Halton

No implications

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

These highway improvements will be undertaken on a busy traffic route serving the commercial and industrial developments at Daresbury SIC, Daresbury Park, Manor Park and Astmoor. Implementing the scheme

within a single contract will enable completion earlier than under a phased approach and therefore deliver improved access to these important employment centres sooner and within a shorter period of traffic disruption.

6.2 A Healthy Halton

No implications

6.4 A Safer Halton

The scheme addresses road traffic accident problems related to the layout of the A56 / A558 roundabout junction. Improving the junction capacity will also reduce congestion and delays. Improved traffic flow along this route should therefore reduce the incidence of 'rat-running', where drivers migrate onto other less suitable routes through residential areas of Sandymoor. Early delivery of the full scheme will therefore deliver the increased capacity sooner, negating the need to use alternative routes and will facilitate the introduction of safety improvements on adjacent local roads in accordance with the safer roads and integrated transport strategies.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The scheme provides improved transport access and connectivity to Daresbury SIC and other key employment sites in east Runcorn and contributes to meeting key urban renewal objectives in terms of supporting investment and economic growth.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Risks associated with funding the scheme from Halton's capital programme:

The payment of S106 planning agreement contributions from English Partnerships fail to materialise leaving the Council exposed to meeting the full additional cost of the scheme:

- English Partnerships fail to find purchasers for the development land
- Developers fail to secure planning permission for housing

These scenarios are unlikely. The agreement has already been invoked following the development of one of the 'First Sites', the Sandymoor 28 housing development. The other sites, Sandymoor 12 / 14 / 15 & 16 are identified for housing development in the UDP. English Partnerships are currently undertaking a re-appraisal of specific areas allocated for housing and recreation within the sites, although this is intended to address flood risk issues and should not result in reduction in plot numbers. Developer interest in Sandymoor is still strong and likely to remain so.

The payment of S106 planning agreement contributions are delayed leaving the Council exposed to interest payments for a longer period:

- EP delay in bringing sites forward for sale for development
- Slow developer interest in sites brought forward for development
- Slow purchase of housing plots from developers

Although the marketing of development land has been delayed for reasons stated above, these issues should be resolved soon. A joint steering group has been set up comprising representatives of EP and the Council. Recent discussions have focused on the payment of contributions at completion of land sale to developers, delays in plot sales would therefore not affect contributions to the Council.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality and diversity issues.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Section 106 Agreement between English Partnerships and Halton Borough Council	Planning Division Environment Directorate Rutland House, Runcorn	L. Beard
A56 / A558 Daresbury Expressway Dualling and Junction Improvement. Scheme Drawings	Highways Management Division Environment Directorate Rutland House, Runcorn	D. Cunliffe