

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	17 June 2021
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources
PORTFOLIO:	Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	East Runcorn Connectivity Corridor – Scheme Development
WARDS:	All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report seeks approval to develop a transport scheme for East Runcorn Connectivity Corridor (ERCC). Initial pre-development funding is available from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority on a competitive basis to develop schemes such as the ERCC. The proposed ERCC scheme consists of four elements:

- A558 Dualling from Pitts Heath Lane to Innovation Way
- A56 Major Maintenance – from Keckwick Lane to M56 Junction 11
- Route options for a road connection between M56 J11 and A533 Integrated active travel interventions to complement each component.

1.2 The A558 dualling scheme has been a long standing objective of the Council, and as such, is included in Halton's Local Transport Plan 3. The purpose of the scheme is to provide network capacity for the planned growth in East Runcorn at Sandymoor, Sci-Tech, Manor Park and adjacent developments.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That

1. A transport scheme covering the East Runcorn Connectivity Corridor is developed and added to the Council's Capital Programme (paragraphs 3.8 & 5.10).
2. An initial programme ('Year 1') covering technical investigations to inform options appraisal and scheme feasibility is approved (Appendix 1).
3. Mott MacDonald, an external consultant, is commissioned via Direct Award under the Warrington Consultancy Framework to undertake the Year 1 programme (paragraph 3.10).
4. Approval is delegated to the Operational Director PPT in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal to advance the initial programme (Year 1) for the scheme.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The ERCC scheme is highly complex and it is estimated that delivery of all elements would be over a ten-year period. Therefore, in advance of site works being procured, a considerable amount of planning and preparation needs to be undertaken to inform options and investigate construction details. The purpose of this advanced pre-development work is to create a well-designed, feasible, and cost effective scheme.
- 3.2 As part of the Liverpool City Region's Transport Pipeline, the East Runcorn Connectivity Corridor is an ambitious scheme that will support the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities by providing a resilient, sustainable transport corridor within East Runcorn. This area is home to the Enterprise Zone, business parks and large housing sites. The scheme will significantly enhance the existing transport network in the Borough.

The scheme is made up of four elements

- A. Widening of the A558 Daresbury Expressway from the junction of Pitts Heath Lane to Innovation Way, taking into account four structures and canal.
 - B. The major maintenance of the A56 from the junction at Keckwick Lane to M56 Junction 11. New construction of existing road due to failing condition.
 - C. The introduction of a direct cycle superhighway from the Pitts Heath Lane Junction to the existing A56 cycle corridor connecting Halton with Warrington and a number of sustainable transport improvements.
 - D. Potential new road connecting M56 J11 at Preston Brook to the A533, to relieve congestion and create future opportunities to release development land.
- 3.3 This project supports the emerging Local Plan with the development of necessary infrastructure to support development land allocations. Elements of the project are referred to in Halton's Local Transport Plan 3 and are justified by technical analysis work found in the East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study and the recent Halton Local Plan Transport Network Impacts Study. These studies identified highway capacity improvements and sustainable transport improvements would be required to enable a successful delivery of the proposed Local Plan allocations.
- 3.4 The findings of the East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study were confirmed with the recent Halton Local Plan Transport Network impacts study which highlighted capacity issues at the following locations:

- A56
 - Pitts Heath Lane
 - A558 and
 - A533
- 3.5 In line with East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study, S106 contributions have and will be secured from developments in the area towards capacity and sustainable transport improvements. However, there has been development viability limitations which have provided a cap to the level of funding secured through this mechanism. Therefore due to the scale of these infrastructure projects further funding will need to be sought from the LCRCA to deliver the required infrastructure and other improvements.
- 3.6 Intra-city transport settlements for eight city regions around the country have been agreed. These settlements are designed to provide city regions with long-term, stable transport investment to deliver local priorities such as tackling congestion and driving productivity.
- 3.7 Liverpool City Region will receive £5.6m resource funding in 2021-22 to support preparations for intra-city transport settlements. A component of this resource funding can be used to support building longer-term local transport planning and delivery capacity, this funding is only to be used on wider priorities.
- 3.8 A proposal has been submitted to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to access four years pre-development funding to ensure that a robust Business Case is developed which meets the Governments Green Book and Webtag appraisal mechanisms, whilst meeting the objectives of the Liverpool City Region's Transport Growth Strategy. The value of the submission is £7m over four years with an initial first year request of £1.91m.

This four-year proposal includes the following elements.

1. Project Management / Staff Costs
 2. Capital spend
 3. Revenue spend.
- 3.9 Feedback from the Combined Authority is expected by the end of May 2021. if successful, the scheme would receive one year's grant fundin,g with a potential additional 3 years funding to develop a detailed scheme, with all necessary site investigations, designs, option appraisal, consultations with stakeholders and reporting findings which will influence the individual project business plans.
- 3.10 Given the previous involvement by Mott MacDonald in the production of the East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study and the Liverpool City Region Transport Model (upon which the Halton Local Plan Transport Network impacts study was based), together with Mott MacDonald's

extensive involvement with the Structures Maintenance Programme, it is intended to give a 1 year Direct Award to Mott MacDonald under the Warrington Consultancy Framework.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The significant infrastructure investment described in this report aligns with the Council's strategic policies contained in the Local Plan, the Mersey Gateway Plus Regeneration Strategy, Local Transport Plan 3, Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan whilst aligning itself with the priorities of the Liverpool City Region. The new infrastructure delivered by the ERCC project will provide the capacity for growth in the local transport system.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Preparation of the High Level Schedule and Annual Expenditure Profile for the 10 year project has been made possible with a pre development grant of £95,000 (2020/21) to date, which has been used to provide additional specialist technical support. Further LCRCA funding will be required from June 2021 to continue to develop each of the schemes project business cases. An application for the initial year 1 development costs for £1.9m has been submitted to the LCRCA, with a project spend profile to 2025 also submitted reflecting a 4 year budget of £7m.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Indirect benefits will be gained from a much improved physical environment for local communities. There will be benefits to this group from the employment, learning and skills as well as the health and safer implications described below.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

There are strong prospects of new business and job creation as a result by providing a more resilient, sustainable transport corridor, connecting residents of Halton and the LCR to employment and learning opportunities at the Enterprise Zone and neighbouring business parks.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The projects will deliver improved active travel linkages by providing a direct Cycle Superhighway completing the cycle network from the Silver Jubilee Bridge to the A56. As part of the project there is an opportunity to develop a Zero Emission Refuelling Centre (ZERC) supporting local businesses to transition their fleet over to cleaner energy sources such as electric and hydrogen thereby support the councils emerging climate change strategy.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Upon completion, the projects will provide a more resilient, safer, and well connected routes within East Runcorn and our town centres for cyclists and pedestrians.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The combination of projects will support an improved urban environment to existing and future residents, businesses and visitors by enabling currently constrained areas to become more accessible.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

All large highway projects have associated project risks with uncertainty arising from various aspects of the process, such as securing funding, land acquisition, stakeholders, fluctuating prices for labour and materials (COVID and Brexit), severe weather, consents, environment factors, ecology assessments. These risks may lead to increased project delivery timescales and costs. These risks will be identified as the scheme develops and highlighted in the development of the options appraisal reports for the various elements. The project team will work to reduce and mitigate these as the detailed business case/s evolve.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
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Halton Local Plan Transport Network impacts study Jonathan Farmer

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/eip.aspx>

East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study – Jonathan Farmer

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/PolicyBackgroundDocuments.aspx>
x

Delivery and Allocations Local Plan – Alasdair Cross

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/planningplans.aspx>

Appendix 1

East Runcorn Connectivity – Year 1 Programme Activity (Outline)

- Daresbury Expressway Widening
- A56 Major Maintenance
- Cycle and Walking infrastructure
- Loop Road Preston on the Hill/Preston Brook

A value of £1,910,000 is expected to be sufficient to cover the scope of year 1 works (01/04/2021 to 31/03/2022) that have been estimated to date in relation to the proposed East Runcorn Connectivity scheme.

The expected outputs from the Year 1 Programme are:

- Establish set of programme objectives and requirements
- Revise and further develop Options Appraisal Report (OAR)
- Project Requirements Management Strategy
- Technology Strategy
- Stakeholder Management Strategy
- Communications Management Strategy
- Daresbury Expressway Widening
- Schedule Management
- Design Stage 1
- Existing terrain data gathering
- Initial H+V Highway alignment design
- Initial junction design and tie-ins
- Assessments and Report (Structures)
- Initial Noise Impact Assessment (desktop)
- Initial Utilities and Third Party equipment assessment, inc. above ground (desktop)
- Initial flood risk impact assessment (desktop)
- Initial Traffic Impact Assessment
- Initial Environmental Impact Assessment (desktop)
- Geotech - Preliminary Sources Study Report
- Develop concept bridge designs
- Inputs to the OAR