

Executive Committee Report

Ward(s) affected: Friary & St Nicolas

Report of Strategic Services Director

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Walnut Bridge – application for additional funding

Executive Summary

The replacement of Walnut Bridge has had a long but consistent history – initially being identified in 2012 in the Guildford Interim Town Centre Framework and again in 2014 when it was identified as a priority in the Guildford Town and Approaches Movement Study (GTAMS). This proposal was endorsed by the Executive at the time. The project was subsequently awarded LEP funding as part of the “Unlocking Guildford, Guildford Town Centre Transport Package” in 2014. It formed one of a number of projects and interventions which together would help alleviate congestion in the Town Centre.

In July 2016 the Executive formally approved the project to replace Walnut Bridge. The replacement would provide improve access to the town centre from the station and was in anticipation of the significant developments expected in the immediate area. There was concern that the existing Bridge was too narrow to accommodate the increasing flow of pedestrians and cyclists. The improvements brought by a new Bridge were many; it would be wider, facilitate two-way cycle flow and be fully accessible, it would also lie on a more obvious alignment to encourage use by new and infrequent users as well as local people familiar to the area. Additionally, it would be seen as a catalyst for regeneration in the Bedford Plaza and Bedford Wharf area thereby becoming a critical access corridor from the Station through to the high street. Finally, it would encourage more sustainable travel and reduce the need for cyclists to have to use the Gyrotory.

It has become apparent that there is a funding gap and a virement of £450k is required to get this project completed.

In addition to the above, the reincorporation of the Bedford Plaza Public Realm works into the Bridge project has been explored primarily because the lighting design of Bedford Plaza including the Bridge is included in these works. Planning consent for the Bridge requires that the public realm works are completed within 6 months of the completion of the Bridge. This would mean that it is possible the Bridge could not be opened after completion until public realm works were completed unless a temporary lighting system was installed. There is therefore a case to be made for these to be undertaken with the Bridge works. This could allow for economies of scale, savings in mobilisation costs etc. and could provide some

additional funding from its £500,000 budget to be brought into the Bridge project.

The Executive is therefore also being asked to approve bringing the Bedford Plaza Public Realm works and budget back within the Walnut Bridge Project and to agree to transfer £350,000 from the provisional budget to the approved budget to allow this work to progress.

Recommendation to Executive

- That a virement of £450,000 is transferred from the capital contingency fund for the Walnut Bridge Project
- That the Bedford Plaza Public realm works are incorporated within the Walnut Bridge Project.
- That £350,000 is transferred from the provisional to approved capital budget to fund the public realm work.

Reason(s) for Recommendation:

It has become apparent that there is a funding gap and a virement of £450k is required to get this project completed.

The assimilation of the Bedford Plaza Public Realm works into the Bridge project is twofold:

- To combine the lighting design for both schemes within the main Bridge Contract and
- To leverage some of the associated budget for use on the Bridge project through economies of scale and mobilisation costs etc.

The budget for the public realm works needs to be transferred to the approved budget to enable the work to proceed.

Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication?

Annex only – it describes matters directly relevant to an ongoing commercial negotiation, and which constitute commercially sensitive information, and therefore the annex should be exempt from publication under Paragraph 3, of Schedule 12A, of the Local Government Act 1972.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask the Executive to approve

- a. A virement of £450,000 for the Walnut Bridge Project
- b. Bringing the Bedford Plaza Public realm works and Budget back into the Walnut Bridge Project.
- c. The transfer of £350,000 from the provisional budget to the approved budget

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- To combine the lighting design for both schemes within the main Bridge Contract and
- To leverage some of the associated budget for use on the Bridge project through economies of scale and mobilisation costs etc.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 Within the Corporate Plan 2018-23 the 'replacement of Walnut Tree Bridge' is referred to as a key project as part of the Strategic Priority 'Making Travel in Guildford Easier'.

3. Background

- 3.1 As far back as 2012 specific reference was made to a new wider Walnut Bridge in the *Guildford Interim Town Centre Framework*, as a preferred intervention with respect to improving pedestrian connection between the University and the Town centre.
- 3.2 In April 2014, a new Walnut Bridge was included in the *Guildford Town & Approaches Movement Study (GTAMs)* whose priorities were endorsed by the Executive.
- 3.3 In 2013 Surrey County Council submitted a number of Expressions of Interest to the newly formed Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for funding - these included the *Guildford Sustainable Transport Package*. In 2014 the LEP agreed that a number of those packages of work could be brought together to create the *Guildford Town Centre Transport Package (GTCTP)* – this included a new Walnut Bridge.
- 3.4 As a result Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council prepared and submitted a joint strategic business case called *Unlocking Guildford* to the LEP. This included the Guildford Town Centre Transport Package (GTCTP).
- 3.5 The GTCTP made the business case for a number of projects/interventions that together would alleviate congestion in the town centre. One of these was a new Walnut Bridge.
- 3.6 Following agreement from the LEP to funding, GBC received a letter in October 2014 from SCC indicating that GBC take the lead on the Walnut Bridge project.
- 3.7 This Project was then incorporated into the Draft Local Plan in 2015 (and was adopted 25 April 2019).
- 3.8 In 2016 A consultant was brought on board to carry out a feasibility study and report for the bridge and to identify particular design options for consideration. Councillors at the time were keen to ensure that the new Bridge was distinctive and sent a clear message that the area in which it stood was ripe for regeneration and that part of Guildford Town Centre had not been forgotten.
- 3.9 There was also a concern at the time that the narrow width of the existing bridge made it unfit as the main access corridor from the station to the town centre

- especially in light of potential developments in the immediate area. The Solum scheme which will deliver 430+ new homes is one development that is currently being delivered.
- 3.10 It was also believed that a new Walnut Bridge would promote the Council's aspiration for more sustainable travel.
 - 3.11 Ultimately it was expected that it would act as a catalyst for the regeneration of Bedford Wharf.
 - 3.12 In July 2016, the Executive identified the Bridge Design that it felt best represented its view and endorsed the Bridge project with a Budget of £3.4m. There has been public support for this project over its history and additionally there have been objections from residents and local organisations such as GBug. This continues to be the case and all comments received are considered in the overall context of what the Bridge is expected to deliver for Guildford.
 - 3.13 **Allowing for some contingency Officers believe that a request for a supplementary estimate of £ 450,000 is prudent and recommend that this is approved to get this project into construction and completed.**
 - 3.14 The public realm element of the Bridge project, which includes lighting, has been treated as a separate project with a separate budget. Currently the only lighting designed as part of the Bridge is within the handrail on the deck and part of the ramp.
 - 3.15 Planning consent included a condition that stated that the public realm project should be completed within 6 months of the completion of the bridge. It will however be difficult for another contractor to start these works while the Bridge construction is ongoing. If it commences after the bridge is completed, it is likely that the Bridge will not be able to be used until these works are completed for health & safety reasons.
 - 3.16 Also it is possible that the public realm works may undo some of the construction undertaken on the bridge to incorporate ducting for lighting.
 - 3.17 It would be possible to vary any contract for the Bridge construction to include the Public Realm works. The benefits of this are:
 - a. Savings in economies of scale in materials
 - b. Savings in prelims
 - c. Savings in mobilisation costs of another contractor
 - d. Savings in the costs to provide a temporary lighting system to be able to use the Bridge if the Public Realm project does not go ahead until after the Bridge is completed
 - e. Potential to undertake a light touch on the Public Realm design that meets the requirements to finish the bridge but that can be easily enhanced in the future as the Bedford Wharf regeneration commences so that there can be consistency in all open spaces.
 - f. Brings with it a budget of £500,00 which if e) above is acceptable may release some further funding into the Bridge project.

- 3.18 **Officers recommend that the Executive approve bringing the Bedford Plaza Public Realm project back into the Walnut Bridge Project and agree to the transfer of £350,000 from the provisional to approved budget so as to:**
- **To address the lack of lighting design for the Bridge illumination in the main Bridge Contract and**
 - **To leverage some of the associated budget for use on the Bridge project through economies of scale and mobilisation costs etc.**

4. Consultations

- 4.1 The Lead Councillor for Planning, Regeneration and Housing Delivery, Jan Harwood and the Lead Councillor for Finance, Assets and Customer Service, Joss Bigmore, have been consulted on the proposed way forward.
- 4.2 Additionally there have been consultations (public and otherwise) on the Bridge replacement, throughout the history of the project. These have shown public support for the new Bridge. Equally there have been objections to the Bridge from organisations such as GBug throughout the process. Objections raised include against the ramp design on the grounds that it does not provide a clear run for cyclists. All comments have been considered in determining how the project has moved forward.

5. Key Risks

- 5.1 A year extension to the LEP funding agreement has already been agreed through a Deed of Variation which allows GBC to have spent the funding and completed the works by 31 March 2021. There is an obligation to spend the LEP funding on Walnut Bridge and should the project not progress, the Council would be required to repay that funding as it is already spent.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council is under a duty to ensure it complies with its Procurement Procedure Rules for a contract of this value. It also has a general duty to ensure it achieves Best Value when entering into contracts.

7. Human Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct human resource implications as a result of this report. It is possible that there could be a requirement for a Council Clerk of Works role on this project during construction but this would be provided by an external specialist.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 This duty has been considered in the context of this report and it has been concluded that there are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report. The delivery of the bridge would however improve accessibility to those with mobility challenges.

9. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

- 9.1 The bridge would support the Council's ambition to increase sustainable travel both in the local area and as part of a wider package of interventions to provide safe and accessible routes to and around Guildford for cyclists and pedestrians. However the Carbon Cost of constructing a new bridge is currently not measurable.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 This project forms part of long-term plans developed by GBC and supported by Surrey County Council to improve links within and around Guildford by providing improved travel routes for cyclists and pedestrians.
- 10.2 In conclusion, the recommendation to the Committee is
- That a virement of £450,000 is transferred from the capital contingency fund for the Walnut Bridge Project
 - That the Bedford Plaza Public realm works are incorporated within the Walnut Bridge Project.
 - That £350,000 is transferred from the provisional to approved capital budget to fund the public realm work.