

Cabinet

13 November 2019

County Durham Plan – Delivery of the Western Relief Road



Report of Corporate Management Team

Ian Thompson, Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services and John Hewitt, Corporate Director of Resources

Councillor Carl Marshall, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration and Councillor Alan Napier

Electoral division(s) affected:

Deerness, Framwellgate, Newton Hall Neville's Cross Electoral Divisions.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To seek Cabinet's commitment to the delivery of the proposed Western Relief Road.

Executive summary

- 2 The County Durham Plan 'the Plan' is currently subject to an Examination in Public, whereby an independent planning inspector is to determine its soundness. After the Examination in Public and following consultation on any modifications proposed by the Inspector, the Council will be asked to adopt the Plan.
- 3 The Western Relief Road is a proposal set out within Policy 23 of the County Durham Plan. The Western Relief Road is required to reduce traffic congestion on the western edge of the city around Neville's Cross and the surrounding network and to facilitate development at Sniperley Park.
- 4 The Western Relief Road will connect the A691 at Sniperley Park and Ride roundabout at its northern end with the B6302 Broom Lane at its southern end.

Recommendation(s)

5 Cabinet is recommended to:

Agree the continued preparation for the construction of the Western Relief Road, subject to Examination in public of the County Durham Plan, on the principle that the Council commits to the delivery of the Western Relief Road by agreeing to forward funding the delivery of the road as detailed within the report.

Background

- 6 Council approved the submission of the County Durham Plan to Examination in Public on 19 June 2019. The Examination in Public is an independent examination conducted by the Planning Inspectorate, which is a process from the date of submission on 28 June 2018 through to the receipt of the appointed Inspector's final report. Council will be considering the adoption of the County Durham Plan on completion of the Examination in Public so that it can become part of the statutory development plan against which planning decisions will be made.
- 7 On 12 June 2019, Cabinet agreed the future infrastructure costs associated with the implementation of the County Durham Plan and acknowledged the need for a future Cabinet report setting out how the Northern and Western Relief Roads would be financed.
- 8 As part of the Examination in Public process, the Inspector needs to be satisfied that the Plan is sound in accordance with paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The tests of soundness are that the Plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. Part of the assessment of effectiveness is whether the roads are likely to be deliverable over the plan period. As part of the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions, the Inspector has asked about the delivery of the proposed northern and western relief roads, their likely date of operation and whether there is a reasonable prospect that funding will be available to deliver the roads within the timescale envisaged.

Northern Relief Road

- 9 Earlier this year, the Department for Transport (DfT) issued a call for schemes related to improving the Major Road Network (MRN) to apply for funding, via the region and Transport for the North (TfN). A bid for £40m was submitted for funding for the Northern Relief Road, which included £6m commitment to match fund from the Council, as the scheme closely aligned with the objectives of the MRN fund. The bid for funding for the Northern Relief Road was submitted to the North East Joint Transport Committee and was subsequently shortlisted by TfN as a priority. Programme Entry decisions for individual schemes are expected in early 2020.

Western Relief Road

- 10 The A167 corridor is a key north-south route connecting the city of Durham with Gateshead and Newcastle upon Tyne. Although it is an historically important route which links these key economic centres, the

A167 corridor does not just serve as a through route to traffic. It also performs an important function locally within Durham enabling access to the University Hospital of North Durham, New College Durham, Durham Johnston school and the Sniperley Park and Ride site.

- 11 Both the A691 and A690 intersect with the A167 at the Sniperley roundabout and Neville's Cross junctions respectively. Situated between these two junctions is the Toll House Road junction. The interaction of the A167 with each of these busy side roads causes congestion and slow moving traffic which negatively impacts upon the performance of the corridor.
- 12 During peak hours at the A691 Sniperley roundabout junction, traffic on the A167 often queues through the junction, which not only causes delay to north-south A167 traffic but also impedes the movement of east-west traffic heading to and from Durham City. The junction with Toll House Road, which serves the village of Bearpark to the west of the city, currently causes long queues and presents a major constraint for both northbound and southbound traffic on the A167. During the evening peak period in particular, a high demand for southbound A167 traffic turning right onto Toll House Road restricts the southbound flow of traffic along the A167. This junction is also used as a 'rat-run' into Durham City for east-west traffic which uses a combination of Toll House Road and the nearby Redhills Lane to traverse the A167, further highlighting the poor east-west connectivity across Durham.
- 13 To address these issues, the Plan allocates land for the Western Relief Road which will connect the A691 at Sniperley Park and Ride roundabout at its northern end with the B6302 Broom Lane at its southern end.
- 14 The cost of the Western Relief Road is estimated to cost in the region of £35 million which includes an estimate for land acquisition. The Treasury and Department for Transport issue specific advice on the budgeting of transport projects and advocate the inclusion of an Optimism Bias (an amount to account for risk in a project) which is linked to progress on development and design. Current estimates for the Western Relief Road include an appropriate allowance that incorporates the effects of inflation on the estimated costs.
- 15 The Council's aspiration is that the full cost of the road is funded. As part of the Statement of Common Ground on 4 October 2019, the site promoters and owners of the Sniperley Park Sustainable Urban Extension specify that at least £15 million has been agreed at this stage. It is likely that this will be received in staged payments over the lifetime of the build out of the site. The precise detail will be set out

within a Section 106 agreement as part of the planning application(s) for the site.

- 16 If the full cost of the relief road cannot be secured through S106 agreements, the Council will explore grant funding opportunities to cover any shortfall. Whilst no funding bids have been submitted to date, it is clear that the scheme would be attractive for future regional and national funding opportunities related to the delivery of new housing and transport betterment. Most funding pots require between 10 and 15% local match funding. Having a commitment for at least 43% from private funding would therefore put the scheme in a strong position to gain external funding. The attractiveness of the scheme to external funding is also demonstrated by the fact it previously attracted funding in 2014 when a provisional allocation of £6.3 million was made through the Local Growth Fund. Therefore, bids will be submitted to any appropriate funding opportunities that arise.
- 17 There is a high degree of confidence that funding will be secured for the road and the council can further support this through forward funding the construction costs in advance of receipts being received. . The current build out for the site is 135 dwellings per year. It is assumed at this stage that the council will be the accountable body for the scheme and will provide cash flow for the works up-front. Any grant identified in advance will assist cashflow of the project. .

Background papers

County Durham Plan, Pre-Submission.

Contact:	Mike Allum	Tel: 03000 261908
	Jeff Garfoot	Tel: 03000 261946

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Local plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in accordance with section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The legislation allows for three possible outcomes to the Examination in Public which are set out in the Procedural Guide. The preparation of the Plan has been informed by a continuous dialogue with the Council's legal team. This report highlights that, subject to a sound allocation for the Western Relief Road, land acquisition along the route will be required. The cost estimates include an allowance for Part 1 compensation claims.

Finance

The report provides details of the financial elements related to the Western Relief Road.

Consultation

The proposals continue to be subject to detailed consultation, as part of the finalisation of the County Durham Plan.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Council acknowledges that, in exercising its functions, it has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This duty applies to all people defined as having protected characteristics under that legislation.

Climate Change

The County Durham Plan is subject to a Sustainability Appraisal process which considers the impact of policies on climate change. Furthermore, a planning application for the Western Relief Road would need to be supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment which will also need to include consideration of climate change. The consultation on the Climate Emergency Update Report makes reference to both relief roads as part of the Examination in Public.

Human Rights

The Council will need to ensure that the purposes for which any Compulsory Purchase Order is made justify interfering with the human rights of those with

an interest in the land or buildings affected. Particular consideration should be given to the provisions of Article 1 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and, in the case of a dwelling, Article 8 of the Convention.

Crime and Disorder

The prioritisation of intervention will consider any reports or known issues including crime. Where necessary liaison will be had with Durham Constabulary.

Staffing

The scale and scope of the proposals identified may have staffing implications in terms of both programme and project management.

Accommodation

No implications identified.

Risk

Individual projects will have risks assessed and managed as part of project management processes. The revenue income flows are predicated on the current local government finance arrangements being unchanged especially in relation to retention of any growth in council tax and business rates. This will need to be monitored through the planning of the programme.

Procurement

No implications identified.