

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 18 November 2024

By: Director of Communities, Economy, and Transport

Title: Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package – Phase 2a revised scope

Purpose: To approve the revised scope of Phase 2a of the Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package subject to final approval of the updated business case by the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the revised scope for Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package Phase 2a and moving forward to construction in 2025/26 subject to final approval of the business case and project change request by the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development.

1 Background

1.1. In 2014 East Sussex County Council secured £6m of Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) towards an Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package (ETCMAP). An additional £2m of LGF monies was reallocated to the package in 2017, bringing the total available to £8m.

1.2. £5m of the ETCMAP was allocated towards the delivery of the Eastbourne Town Centre Improvement Scheme (Phase 1) which completed in January 2020. Following extensive stakeholder led engagement on developing a pipeline of potential movement and access improvements for Eastbourne town centre, the identified second phase of the Town Centre Improvement package focussed on:

- Upgrading the existing Terminus Road pedestrianised area from 'Bankers Corner' (the junction of Terminus Road with Cornfield Road) through to the junction with Langney Road;
- Introduce a new pedestrianisation section of Terminus Road. This will result in the removal of the current one-way traffic movement from Bolton Road through a short section of Terminus Road and into Langney Road, by introducing a two-way traffic configuration at the lower ends of both Bolton Road and Langney Road; and
- Creating a new pedestrianised civic space outside Marks and Spencer that continues the character, vibrancy and palette of materials used in the Phase 1 - Eastbourne Town Centre Improvement Scheme.

1.3. The initial business case for Phase 2a of the ETCMAP (previously referred to as Phase 2) was completed in January 2019 and secured the remaining £3m of SELEP LGF monies at the SELEP Accountability Board on 23 February 2019, with construction scheduled to commence in 2019/20 and scheme completion scheduled for 2020/21.

1.4. The outcome of the public consultation on the Phase 2 proposals carried out between November and December 2019 were presented to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment's decision-making meeting on 22 April 2020. The Lead Member resolved that the ETCMAP should progress to detailed design and construction stages. The final detailed design was subsequently approved on 19 July 2021 at the Lead Member for Transport and Environment's decision-making meeting, following an e-petition submitted by local businesses and a review of accessibility and blue badge parking within the vicinity of the scheme.

1.5 However, since the award of the LGF funding for the project in 2019, the construction sector has faced a significant rise in material costs, supply chain disruptions, and labour shortages, exacerbated by both the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine. These factors have contributed to significant unexpected budget increases for Phase 2a of the Eastbourne Town Centre Improvement Scheme. This situation has also been experienced on similar Local Growth Funded packages being delivered by the County Council which have been reviewed and re-scoped to fit within their respective funding envelopes.

2 Supporting information

Funding Constraints

2.1 The County Council has made considerable efforts to reduce the funding gap for the project. In 2022/23, £0.8m was allocated from the County Council's capital programme for local transport improvements towards the delivery of the Town Centre Phase 2a scheme. A further £0.715m was allocated in the 2023/24 capital programme for local transport improvements towards the scheme and an allocation of £0.3m was included in the capital programme approved by the Lead Member in March 2024. In 2023/24 an additional £0.75m was secured via the Active Travel England 4 fund.

Funding Source	Total (£m)
Local Growth Fund	3.000
Capital Programme of Local Transport Improvements:	
2022/23	0.909
2023/24	0.719
2024/25	0.300
Active Travel England	0.750
TOTAL	5.678

2.2 In addition, £0.377m from the capital programme of local transport improvements was used on the development of the scheme prior to the business case being approved.

2.3 The total budget for the project is £6.055m of which £2.461m has been spent to date (as at end September 2024) on the preliminary and detailed design, topographical and underground surveys, engagement with statutory utility providers and the purchase and storage of granite surface materials. There is a remaining budget of £3.594m to complete the scheme.

2.4 Long term maintenance of the scheme is expected to be incorporated into the East Sussex Highways asset management programme.

Design Review

2.5 The County Council, working with Balfour Beatty Living Places, has undertaken a comprehensive design review of the Phase 2a scheme. This identified that the cost for completing the scheme was £4.6m, nearly £1m over the current funding envelope. Therefore, consideration has been given as to whether there are options for descoping and/or value engineering the scheme as well as exploring other available funding sources.

2.6 With significant pressures on existing County Council funding sources such as the capital programme of local transport improvements, and no current identified external funding sources available, an assessment has been undertaken to determine the extent of the previously designed scheme that can be delivered with the remaining available funding. Following this review process, and to remain within the available funding envelope, it is proposed that the design is de-scoped to deliver the following improvements as shown at Appendix 1:

- Upgrading of the existing pedestrianised area with high quality materials, similar to Phase 1, as well as new street furniture and additional planting along Terminus Road between its junction with Cornfield Road (Bankers Corner) and its junction with Bolton Road, and converting it from a pedestrian/cycle zone into a pedestrian zone;

- Creating a new pedestrian zone along Terminus Road between Bolton Road and Langney Road with the continuation of new surface materials from the existing pedestrianised area through to Marks and Spencer/Millets, and removing the existing one-way through traffic movement;
- Installing a turning head at the top end of Bolton Road and converting the lower end of Bolton Road to two-way traffic;
- Installing a turning head at the bottom end of Langney Road and converting the upper end of Langney Road to two-way traffic;
- Changes to existing parking provision along Bolton Road, Terminus Road and Langney Road with an emphasis on blue badge, loading and taxi parking in the available bays; and
- Converting four short term parking bays on Tideswell Road and three doctor permit bays on Lismore Road to provide additional blue badge parking provision, offsetting the majority of the nine blue badge parking bays lost from Terminus Road and Langney Road.

2.7 As a consequence the following elements are proposed to be descoped from the original design:

- New surface materials and changes to the road layout, including the creation of a public space outside Marks and Spencer (M&S), on the section of Terminus Road between M&S/Millets to Langney Road.

2.8 By focusing resources on the most critical elements of the project, the County Council can still deliver the core improvements and outcomes set out in the original business case that will benefit the local community and businesses, and still achieve its primary objectives of:

- Improving pedestrian safety and accessibility (ease of movement for disabled people and/or older people, families with pushchairs etc.) by reallocating road space to pedestrians;
- Creating a continuous pedestrian 'spine route' through the primary retail area of Eastbourne Town Centre along Terminus Road between Eastbourne Station and Langney Road;
- Support economic regeneration by making the town centre more attractive for businesses, residents, and visitors.

2.9 The full extent of Phase 2a has been developed to a detailed design stage. Should further funding become available in the future, the County Council would be in a strong position to seek and potentially secure additional funding to deliver the unfunded public realm and road layout proposals at the Langney Road end of the scheme.

Updated business case and new governance process

2.10 Following the Government's decision to transfer LEP responsibilities to upper tier local authorities from April 2024, Government have confirmed that any Project Change Requests from this date will be managed through East Sussex County Council internal governance processes and submitted directly to the Government's Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Currently an East Sussex Local Growth Assurance Framework is being drafted that will outline new processes and procedures to manage the local responsibilities that are being transferred from SELEP to the County Council and adhere to the Government's Local Economic Development Fund: Assurance Framework. Until this is finalised and approved, any project changes need to be approved by the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development. As with previous East Sussex County Council led projects that have received SELEP funding and required changes from the original business case, such as the Hastings and Bexhill Movement and Access Package, the updated business case will first be presented to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment for their endorsement of the alterations.

2.11 The business case for Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2a has been updated to reflect the revised scheme scope as set out in paragraph 2.6 above. This includes a value for money assessment which appraises the benefits of active travel trips generated by the scheme in relation to health, journey quality and mode shift using:

- The Government's Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit (AMAT); and

- Transport for London's (TfL) Ambience Benefit Calculator which relates to improvements to the overall travel 'environment' when undertaking journeys and is based on market research into how much per trip a passenger is willing to pay for improvements.

2.12 The outputs of the economic appraisal of the updated business case, using the assessment tools highlighted above, show that the scheme still represents very high value for money (VfM) with a benefit cost ratio (BCR) of 4.03:1, significantly above the originally required level of 2:1. In addition, the appraisal identified various non-monetised benefits including:

- Noise – slight benefits with the pedestrianisation and upgrading of Terminus Road potentially encouraging vehicle users to switch to walking, leading to fewer car journeys and therefore reduction in noise level.
- Air Quality – slight benefits to air quality with the transference of car to walking trips through the delivery of the scheme.
- Greenhouse Gases – the reduction in car trips and greater number of walking trips will generate slight benefits by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Townscape – the significant townscape improvements will offer large benefits by creating more pleasant journeys as well as property owner benefits from higher property prices and rateable values.
- Accidents – moderate benefits will be generated with less car journeys in the town centre through the pedestrianisation of the section of Terminus Road between Bolton Road and Langney Road leading to fewer accidents.
- Physical activity – moderate benefits will be generated by increased physical activity levels being encouraged by modal shift to walking for existing trips.
- Security- the additional and upgraded lighting will serve to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and improve perceptions of personal safety generating large benefits.
- Severance – the pedestrianisation of the section of Terminus Road between Bolton Road and Langney Road expands the pedestrian spine through the town centre linking the rail station and seafront. The scheme will generate moderate benefits by reducing the severance for pedestrians who previously had to navigate across the current vehicle dominated environment with the one-way route transversing through this section of Terminus Road.

2.13 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the original business case. This will be updated during the construction phases of the remaining scheme.

Consultation and Engagement

2.14 County Council officers have continued to keep local Councillors, Borough Council officers, the Eastbourne Business Improvement District (BID) Team and the Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce informed on the progress of the scheme and the rescoping exercise. Officers will continue to work closely with them and wider stakeholder groups including local businesses as the package approaches construction stage which is currently programmed for 2025/26.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 Since the County Council secured £3m of LGF monies from the SELEP towards the development and delivery of Phase 2a of the Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package (ETCMAP) in 2018, significant progress has been made on the design proposals for pedestrian improvements on Terminus Road between Bankers Corner (the junction with Cornfield Road) and Langney Road, aimed at supporting economic growth in Eastbourne Town Centre.

3.2 Additional funding has previously been secured from Active Travel England and allocated from the County Council's capital programme of local transport improvements to increase the overall available funding to develop and deliver the Phase 2a scheme. However, scheme development and construction costs have increased significantly across the sector because of high inflation, the war in Ukraine and delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.3 Following a comprehensive design and cost review of the original Phase 2a scheme's scope, the cost to deliver the remaining schemes exceeds the £3.6m remaining funding. With no other funding sources available to address the scheme's funding gap, a descoping exercise has

been undertaken to identify which elements of the existing scheme could be delivered in the current funding envelope.

3.4 The business case for the revised Phase 2a scope, as outlined in section 2.6 of the report, has been updated subject to approval by the Lead Member. This demonstrates that the proposed revised scheme represents very high value for money, with a benefit to cost ratio of 4.03, alongside delivering other non-monetised benefits. Therefore, the re-scoped scheme would continue to meet the original goals of creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment and supporting the town centre's overall attractiveness that drives footfall, boosts local commerce, and contributes to the long-term vitality of Eastbourne's economy.

3.5 The Lead Member is therefore recommended to approve the revised ETCMAP Phase 2a scope, as set out in paragraph 2.6 of the report and approve the revised package moving forward to construction in 2025/26; subject to the business case and project change request being approved by the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Holt

Councillor Wright

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None