

4th December 2023

Agenda Item:

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR OF GREEN GROWTH, INVESTMENT AND ASSETS

TRANSFORMING CITIES FUND TRANCHE 2 – A612 COLWICK, FOOTWAY IMPROVEMENT

Purpose of the Report

1. To secure approval to construct the A612 footway improvement scheme being funded by the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) Tranche 2.
2. This is a key decision because it is likely to result in expenditure of £1 million or over. As required, this key decision was published on the Forward Plan on 1st September 2023.

Information

Policy Background

3. National policy highlights the importance of sustainable and effective transport infrastructure to connect people and places and support economic growth. The national cycling and walking strategy (Gear Change) set out the Government's vision to encourage cycling and walking over shorter journeys.
4. The **Nottinghamshire Plan** sets out the Council's ambitions to improve transport connections, protect the environment, reduce carbon, and improve health and wellbeing by making journeys easier, supporting healthier and more sustainable transport options and expanding our cycling and walking networks. The Council's **Local Transport Plan** (LTP) and **Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan** (LCWIP) prioritise key schemes which are designed to help deliver these ambitions.
5. Improving access to training and jobs, and moving goods more efficiently, is central to Nottinghamshire's economic recovery and levelling up agenda. The Council's **Economic Transition Plan** (ETP) looks to maximise opportunities for transport infrastructure improvements within Nottinghamshire and ensure those projects with secured funding are ready for delivery. To help deliver these priorities, the Infrastructure and Transport Programme Delivery team work closely with a range of partners and stakeholders. The TCF funding is an example of working with our partners (Nottingham and Derby City Councils) to deliver various cross-area sustainable transport projects.

Programme background

6. In March 2020, the Government announced that Nottingham and Derby had been successful in securing £161 million of grant funding from Tranche 2 of TCF. The TCF fund aims to support sustainable growth in cities, reduce carbon and improve air quality by improving access to jobs, reducing congestion, and improving public transport and other forms of sustainable transport such as walking and cycling.
7. Nottingham City Council led and developed the bid and is designated as the accountable body and lead contact with the Department for Transport (DfT). Although Nottinghamshire County Council was not eligible to bid into this funding stream, several of the proposed public transport and active travel improvement schemes are within, or impact upon, areas of the County Council network. It was agreed that the County Council would lead the delivery of these schemes.
8. Unexpected cost increases and delivery constraints prompted County Council Members to request a review of the programme of TCF proposals within Nottinghamshire to ensure this still offered value for money. This review was led by the Growth, Infrastructure and Development Group. A revised project programme was subsequently approved by the County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment in July 2023. This included the carrying out of further design and traffic impact analysis for the proposed A612 footway improvement in Colwick.
9. The Government deadline for this round of TCF funding requires schemes to be committed by March 2024.

Scheme background

10. The A612 is a key highway corridor within Nottinghamshire and is identified as priority route within the D2N2 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Along this part of the route there are a wide range of local services and major retail, employment, and leisure opportunities, within walking or cycling distance, in Colwick, Netherfield, and Nottingham city centre.
11. It is proposed to widen the existing shared use footway alongside the A612 between First Avenue/Mile End Road and Private Road No.1 in Colwick as this no longer meets current design standards. This narrow section of footway provides the only pedestrian/cycle facility along this stretch of the A612 and requires regular maintenance to keep the narrow width clear due to trees and bushes within the highway extent. Widening the footway would benefit both pedestrians and cyclists and would form part of a potential wider strategic footway improvement identified through the development of LCWIP. This would also complement existing A612 footway improvements carried out by Nottingham City Council under the TCF programme. An overview plan of the scheme and construction drawings are provided in Appendices 1 and 2 of this report and photographs along the route are provided in Appendix 3.
12. The improvement to the A612 footway in Colwick was identified within Nottinghamshire's original TCF programme and has been carried forward following the review of all the Nottinghamshire's TCF proposals. Nottingham City Council has earmarked £1.25 million for

this scheme as part of the revised project programme package agreed in July 2023. Via East Midlands was commissioned to undertake the preliminary feasibility work on this scheme and the proposal has been discussed with the local County Council Member. Further detailed design and traffic impact analysis has now been carried out by Via East Midlands including ground surveys, construction phasing, traffic management and landscaping.

13. The proposed footway widening can be accommodated within the existing 'adopted' highway boundary alongside the A612 without reducing the carriageway width available for motorists along this busy corridor. If approved, construction could commence in December this year and is expected to last 23 weeks. Construction is unable to commence any sooner due to programmed utility works in the vicinity.

Scheme details

14. It is proposed to widen and resurface a 715m section of the existing shared use footway alongside the outbound carriageway of the A612, between the junction with First Avenue and the junction with Private Road No.1 as shown in Appendix 2. This would provide a continuous 3m wide shared use facility to match improvements already made elsewhere along this route from the city centre past Nottingham Racecourse. The proposed widening would improve pedestrian and cyclist safety along this currently narrow section, improve the ease of use for existing users, and encourage additional users to make use of this enhanced facility. There are no changes proposed to the existing pedestrian crossings at each junction.
15. The proposed footway widening would be achieved by cutting approximately 1.5m into the existing highway verge away from the roadside. The remaining verge would then be regraded and landscaped to tie in with the new footway. Construction of the scheme would therefore require some of the existing self-set vegetation and trees to be cut back and replaced. A detailed tree survey has been carried out to categorise the age, physical condition and significance of the trees which are mainly a mix of young or semi-mature cherry, apple, and ash. The scheme design has subsequently been revised to minimise the number of trees affected. It is proposed to remove 17 trees including two dead specimens and 11 ash trees which are susceptible to "ash die-back" which may present further maintenance and safety issues in the future. None of the other trees to be removed are high value, mature, or protected specimens and have been classified as 'moderate' quality and value in fair or poor physical condition. A total of 15 trees will be replanted. All landscaping works, including tree removal and replanting will be overseen by Via East Midlands' arboriculture team.
16. The adjoining residential and commercial properties along this side of the A612 are screened and separated from the footway and carriageway by boundary fencing at the rear of each property and the existing highway verge. As the proposed works are confined to the footway and existing verge there would be no additional traffic impacts arising from the proposed scheme. The ward divisional Councillor has expressed support for the proposal, noting that the removal of the existing vegetation along the route would probably be welcomed by residents noting that the proposed landscaping scheme includes replacement species that are more appropriate. Officers were also asked to consider whether acoustic fencing could be installed to mitigate the existing traffic noise but there is not sufficient funding available within the agreed budget allocation (and this is unlikely to meet the original funding guidelines) to deliver this as part of the proposed footway widening scheme.

17. The proposed construction, traffic management and landscaping programme would be phased over a total of 23 weeks and designed to minimise traffic disruption. Via East Midlands' proposed Traffic Management contractor has confirmed most of the work can be carried out without impacting traffic flow in either direction. However, it is anticipated there may be some disruption during the final four weeks of construction as temporary traffic signals will be required at both junctions during the off-peak period only.
18. Officers have explored whether any disruption could be further minimised by coordinating the proposed works with other planned maintenance along this part of the A612 corridor. It has been confirmed that there are no other planned highway authority works currently scheduled.

Funding

19. Nottingham City Council has allocated £1.25m of TCF funding for this scheme. The County Council has also secured developer contributions of up to £232,000 which would need to be returned to the developers if not used. Via East Midlands has confirmed the latest cost estimate for this scheme is £1.4 million which is within the available budget envelope. As Nottingham City Council does not have a valid procurement route, it has been agreed that Nottinghamshire County Council will commission Via East Midlands to deliver the scheme on a fixed cost basis. This will ensure there is no financial risk to the County Council.

Discussion

20. Upgrading this section of the A612 footway would bring it in line with improvements made elsewhere along this route and support the Council's strategic objectives included within the LCWIP including the possibility of extending the footway improvements to Victoria Retail Park.
21. The TCF funding provides an opportunity to improve existing standards of footway which are below what is desirable. Successful delivery of this scheme will also support future funding opportunities.

Summary

22. Construction of this scheme would enable the County Council to deliver the intended sustainable transport benefits of the TCF funding programme and maintain future funding opportunities.

Next Steps

23. Final DfT approval has been obtained for the wider changes to the TCF programme.

Other Options Considered

24. Not delivering this scheme would mean the user benefits of improving the existing footway could not be realised and this funding opportunity would be missed. The money would need to be returned to Nottingham City Council and the developer contributions which have been secured towards this scheme would need to be refunded. Given current and likely future constraints on local authority funding, this would pass up a significant opportunity to invest in local infrastructure to benefit Nottinghamshire residents and businesses. Furthermore, not

delivering the proposed improvements could pose a reputational risk to the authority that may jeopardise future funding opportunities.

25. No other alternative options have been identified that could use this funding in this location, due to the limits of the current footway and roadway.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

26. To seek approval to carry out the A612 footway improvement at Colwick to deliver the associated local infrastructure benefits and ensure the available funding is spent within the DfT funding timeframe.

Statutory and Policy Implications

27. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

28. There are no financial implications for the County Council. All work is being funded from the TCF monies allocated by Nottingham City Council and any unspent funding will be returned to Nottingham City Council. Any potential for cost overruns and longer-term financial implications have been considered as part of the review and options presented to reduce this issue.

Consultation

29. The proposals included in this report help to deliver the priorities and objectives of the Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031, the Nottinghamshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 and the Nottinghamshire LCWIP. Consultation on these priorities/objectives was undertaken as part of the development of those documents, including with local members, communities, businesses, and stakeholders.
30. Specific consultation on this scheme has taken place with the local divisional ward Councillor who has expressed support. As the proposed works are all within the Highway Authority boundary there is no requirement to carry out statutory consultation but non-statutory consultation, or information provision (i.e., informing people that works will take place) will be undertaken with households and businesses immediately adjacent to the scheme.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

31. All proposals/schemes detailed within this report comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. An equality impact assessment was undertaken on the Nottinghamshire Local Transport Plan 2011/12-2025/26 in March 2011 to ensure that strategy and its capital programmes to deliver it met the duty. A programme-level equality impact assessment of the submitted TCF bid was undertaken by Nottingham City Council. A scheme-specific equality impact assessment (see

Appendix 4) has also now been undertaken which identifies positive benefits for younger and older age groups and those with disabilities due to the increased footway width and improved surfacing. No negative impacts or mitigation requirements have been identified.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

32. The proposals in this report help to deliver the key aims of the TCF funding to reduce carbon and improve air quality by improving public transport and other forms of sustainable transport such as cycling and walking.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment:

- 1) Approves the construction of the proposed A612 footway improvement.

Wayne Bexton, Director of Green Growth, Investment and Assets

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Joelle Davies, Group Manager 0115 977 4857 joelle.davies@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (SJE 21/11/2023)

33. This Key Decision falls within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member (Transport & Environment) to whom responsibility for the exercise of the Authority's functions relating to integrated transport measures, to the planning, management and maintenance of highways and pavements, and to road safety has been delegated. As a Key Decision, notice must be published in the Forward Plan at least 28 days before the decision is made. Paragraph 2 indicates that this decision was published on Friday, 1st September, 2023.

Financial Comments (GB 14/11/2023)

34. It is proposed that the £1.4m of costs set out in the report will be funded from the Transforming Cities Fund and developer contributions both of which are approved within the Transport and Environment portfolio capital programme.

Background Papers and Published Documents

- Report to Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment 24 July 2023 – Transforming Cities Fund Tranche 3 Project Programme

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- Carlton East, Councillor Mike Adams