

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

Full Council – 9 April, 2013

## Proposed Improvements to Creech Castle Junction, Taunton

### Report of the Regeneration and Delivery Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Norman Cavill)

#### 1. Executive Summary

To obtain the Council's approval to:-

1. A Supplementary Estimate for the 2013/2014 Capital Programme of £375,000, funded from the newly established Growth and Regeneration Reserve towards planned improvements to the Creech Castle Junction, Taunton on the basis that Somerset County Council (SCC) makes a similar contribution and the balance of £1,950,000 is met by contributions of £150,000 from private developers (secured) and £1,800,000 from the Department for Transport (DfT).
2. Transfer a small area of Taunton Deane owned land adjoining Creechbarrow Hill to SCC at nil consideration in order to facilitate the planned junction improvements.

#### 2. Background

2.1 The DfT have made funds available to deliver infrastructure improvements which help to facilitate growth and overcome local congestion problems. This fund is called the Local Pinch Points Fund.

2.2 A summary of the guidance for the new fund is as follows:-

- Grant funding for schemes to unlock economic development and tackle congestion with a wide variety of types of scheme eligible (roads, cycling, bus priority, failing structures etc).
- Most awards will be for £1m to £5m schemes, but there will be opportunity by exception for some £5m- £20m schemes. Funding is capital.
- Views of the Local Enterprise Partnership / Local Transport Board will be taken into account in prioritising and approving funding.

- A 30% local contribution is required (this may be from local third parties/ developer funds or other sources).
- Funding is for 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 so schemes must be deliverable at pace. There is no allowance for funding slippage and no allowance for cost over-run.
- Grant funding will not cover scheme preparation costs such as planning and CPO processes etc. Scheme preparation costs must be met by the promoting authority.
- Whilst there is no limit on the number of bids, the DfT reserves the right to limit awards to two schemes per authority if necessary. Bids need to be prepared to a high quality over a very short period of time so it is proposed that the Council submit no more than two bids.
- Business case submissions required by **21 February 2013**. This is a reduced version of the usual major schemes business case assessments but still required significant quantitative evidence about the benefits of any schemes.

2.3 SCC considered a number of alternative schemes both countywide and within Taunton Deane before prioritising the Creech Castle Scheme (along with one other in South Somerset). In particular, improvements to J25 of the M5 were considered and rejected on the basis of relative delivery risk when compared with the Creech Castle scheme.

2.4 A scheme to increase capacity on the circulatory carriageway and slip roads at J25 remains an extremely high priority for the County, the Borough and the Local Enterprise Partnership. There is, however, currently no agreed design for the improvement and land would need to be acquired from the Highways Agency and other landowners. Whilst it was considered possible to deliver within the two year programme, it would have been very challenging and risk prone and would also have been much more difficult to secure the required 30% local contribution for this much more expensive scheme (£5m+). SCC considers that any J25 scheme will be a good candidate for funding though the new Major Transport Schemes Programme currently being prepared by the LEP/Local Transport Board for construction in 2015-2019.

2.5 On balance it was decided that a local Pinch Points bid should be prepared for Creech Castle where there is an outline scheme designed which can be delivered mainly within land in local authority ownership and which is a clear prerequisite to enable the planned delivery of growth and economic development at Monkton Heathfield.

### **3. The Proposed Improvement**

3.1 The planned scheme comprises at-grade capacity improvements at the junction (via a 'hamburger' layout junction) which was identified as the preferred solution through a detailed technical study which considered a variety of options.

3.2 A plan of the scheme design is attached as an appendix.

- 3.3 Delivery of the proposed scheme requires the transfer from the Council to SCC of a small area of land to enable an improved slip onto Tone Way from the south.

#### **4. Officer Views**

- 4.1 Capacity at Creech Castle Junction is undoubtedly having an increasing impact on congestion, journey time reliability and the business perception of Taunton as an effective location in which to invest and do business. These problems are likely to be exacerbated by the planned housing and economic growth at Monkton Heathfield.
- 4.2 It is considered that the opportunity to deliver significant improvements to this critical junction at limited local cost and with 70% of the total cost funded by the DfT is one which should be fully supported.
- 4.3 The alternative is that limited other funding such as CIL is prioritised towards the delivery of this scheme; which would be at considerable opportunity cost.

#### **5. Financial Implications and Comments**

- 5.1 The funding requested for this scheme is on a one-off basis, therefore from a financial management perspective it is advisable that the funding is provided from one-off resources.
- 5.2 The proposal is to pay a Capital Contribution of £375,000 to Somerset County Council towards this scheme. It is recommended by the author that the most appropriate source of funding is the £2,375,000 Growth and Regeneration Reserve Fund, which makes the proposal affordable from existing resources held by the Council. Payment arrangements should be scheduled such that funds are only released when appropriate planning approvals etc are in place, and in line with contractual commitments to pay third party contractors undertaking the works.
- 5.3 SCC has already agreed to provide 'their' £375,000 of local matching funding (Cabinet 20 March 2013).
- 5.4. £150,000 of developer funding is already secured via an existing S106 Agreement for development at Monkton Heathfield.

#### **6. Legal Comments**

- 6.1 Submission of the bid to the DfT does not commit the authority to making a contribution towards the cost of the scheme. A further decision will be taken if grant funding is offered to SCC. It will be necessary to ensure firm commitments to all funding contributions before SCC accepts the grant funding. At this stage, the commitment is indicative only.

- 6.2 Legal agreements may be necessary in due course to secure funding contributions.
- 6.3 There are well established processes for transferring small areas of land between local authorities at nil consideration.

**7. Links to Corporate Aims**

- 7.1 This proposal links to the Regeneration and Growth Aim of the Corporate Strategy.

**8. Environmental Implications**

- 8.1 The scheme is planned to reduce congestion at an existing congestion 'hot spot'. It is likely that the scheme will generate environmental benefits but these will only be quantified in detail as part of the later detailed scheme submission by SCC.

**9. Community Safety Implications**

- 9.1 The scheme will increase capacity at this junction but will also provide better safe crossing opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists.

**10. Equalities Impact**

- 10.1 The implications of the schemes for people with protected characteristics will be examined by SCC as part of the business case and the scheme design in due course.

**11. Risk Management**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Low/Medium/High</b>	<b>Mitigating Action</b>
There is a risk, should the scheme be accepted for funding, that it may not be delivered within the available two-year window due to issues such as land acquisition.	Medium	The scheme has been chosen by SCC specifically because it minimises this risk. Delivery risks will be further examined as part of the detailed business case preparation and appropriate mitigation identified. These risks will be considered carefully prior to acceptance of any grant funding.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Low/Medium/High</b>	<b>Mitigating Action</b>
There is a risk that there may be total scheme cost over-run. DfT have said that they will not absorb any elements of such cost over-run ; which could lead to pressure to identify additional local funding	Medium	There is already a significant amount of scheme and cost information. The scheme has been chosen by SCC specifically because it minimises this risk. Delivery risks will be further examined as part of the detailed business case preparation and appropriate mitigation identified. These risks will be considered carefully prior to acceptance of any grant funding

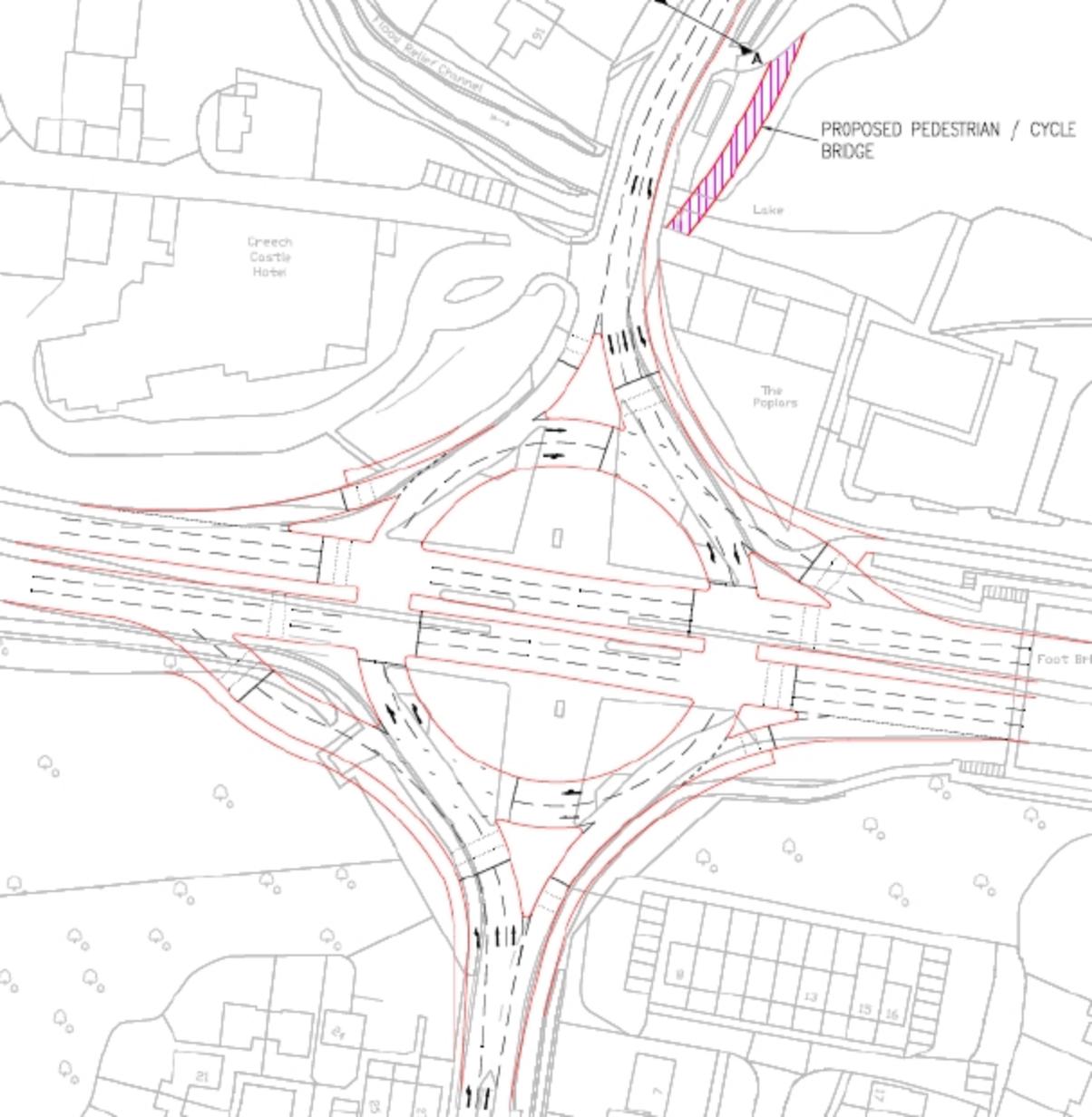
## 12. Partnership Implications

12.1 This is a partnership scheme with SCC as the lead delivery partner.

## 13. Recommendations

- 13.1 That Council approves a Supplementary Estimate for the 2013/2014 Capital Programme of £375,000, funded from the newly established Growth and Regeneration Reserve as Taunton Deane's element of local funding towards the delivery of the planned improvement of Creech Castle Junction, Taunton; and
- 13.2 That the small area of Taunton Deane owned land adjoining the southern slip on to Tone Way required to deliver the planned improvement be transferred to SCC at nil consideration should the DfT funding be forthcoming and the scheme be proceeded with.

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PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN / CYCLE BRIDGE

Crech Castle Hotel

Lake

The Poplars

Foot Br...

Foot Path / Channel

21

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25

23

7

17

13

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