

Cabinet

Item No:

Report Title: Levelling Up Fund Bid for the Southgates and Gyratory Bus and Active Travel scheme in King's Lynn

Executive Summary / Introduction from Cabinet Member

Working in partnership with the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) Norfolk County Council have developed a Transport Strategy which was adopted in spring 2020 which has a number of transport interventions aligned with regeneration aspirations for the town. These include transformational layout changes to the Southgates area and roundabout. Recent masterplanning by BCKLWN has indicated several possible options which dispense with the current roundabout and provide alternative signalised junction forms. The intention of these is to both provide a better layout of land for regeneration development on land the BCKLWN owns and to enable bus priority and Active Travel (walking and cycling) measures to be incorporated into the junction.

In addition to this, building on the recently adopted Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) a scheme has been developed for the central town centre Gyratory focussing on Railway Road that introduces cycle lanes and measures to advantage bus services. The scheme has been developed with input from bus operators, NCC network management staff and taking account of the views of cycle groups. This scheme was going to form part of the King's Lynn Town Deal allocation bid but has been removed to ensure there is sufficient funding for other schemes in the programme.

Recommendations:

- 1. Cabinet is asked to approve in principle the donation of land to support the delivery of the project, should the County LUF bid be successful.**

1. Background and Purpose

1.1 Levelling up is at the heart of the government's agenda following the pandemic with Government publishing their Levelling Up Fund Round 2: Prospectus on 23 March 2022. This is a capital only competitive Fund and part of a package of funding measures including the Community Renewal Fund, Community Ownership Fund, Plan for Jobs, Freeports programme, Infrastructure Bank, Towns Fund, and the recently announced UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

- 1.2 Government is encouraging bids to focus on supporting high priority and high impact projects that will make a visible positive difference to local areas. Each Norfolk district local authority can submit bids to the Levelling Up Fund under three investment themes: local transport projects that make a genuine difference to local areas; town centre and high street regeneration; and support for maintaining and expanding the UK's world-leading portfolio of cultural and heritage assets. However, Norfolk County Council is the Highway Authority for the County and can therefore only submit **one transport-only bid** which must be for at least 90% transport (by value).
- 1.3 The assessment of bids will focus on four criteria: characteristics of places, deliverability, strategic fit with local and Fund priorities, and the economic case.
- 1.4 The second round of funding is open to projects that can demonstrate spend from the Fund in the 2022-23 financial year with the expectation that all funding will be spent by 31 March 2025, and by 2025-26 on an exceptional basis. It is not known at present if there will be further rounds.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The County Council as the Highway Authority can only submit one bid up to £20m (or up to £50m by exception).
- 2.2 Working in partnership with the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) NCC have developed a Transport Strategy which was adopted in spring 2020 which has a number of transport interventions aligned with regeneration aspirations for the town. These include transformational layout changes to the Southgates area and roundabout. Recent masterplanning by BCKLWN has indicated several feasible options which dispense with the current roundabout and provide alternative signalised junction forms. The intention of these is to both provide a better layout of land for regeneration development on land the BCKLWN owns and to enable bus priority and Active Travel (walking and cycling) enhancements to be incorporated into the junction.
- 2.3 In addition to this, building on the recently adopted Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) a scheme has been developed for the central town centre Gyratory focussing on Railway Road that introduces cycle lanes and measures to advantage bus services. The scheme has been developed with input from bus operators, NCC network management staff and taking account of the views of cycle groups. This scheme was going to form part of the King's Lynn Town Deal allocation bid but has been removed to ensure there is sufficient funding for other schemes in the programme.
- 2.4 Government measured places on an Index of Priority Places to identify their need for investment. This considers the following place characteristics:

- Need for economic recovery and growth (considering productivity, skills, and unemployment).
- Need for improved transport connectivity (considering journey times to employment centres); and
- Need for regeneration (considering commercial and dwellings vacancy rates).

2.5 In Norfolk, the local authorities and their priority category are set out below.

Category 1 places are those scoring as being most in need of levelling-up. This forms part of the bid assessment. North Norfolk was in category 2 during the first round of funding but has subsequently been moved up.

- Great Yarmouth:1
- King's Lynn and West Norfolk:1
- North Norfolk:1
- Breckland:2
- Norwich: 2
- South Norfolk: 2
- Broadland: 3

2.6 The County Council is proposing to submit a *Large transport bid (from a single applicant) over £20 million* for a package of two schemes in King's Lynn, the improvements to the Southgates Roundabout and the Gyratory public transport and Active Travel scheme described above. The roundabout is a key gateway into the town of King's Lynn and suffers from regular peak hour congestion, affecting public transport reliability as well as other travel modes. Navigation through the junction is difficult for people on foot or bicycle. The proposal is for a large transformative improvement which would provide significant benefit to the community by enabling the regeneration of the area using land the BCKLWN has bought. The area is also recognised as needing improvement as it has been subject to Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) funding. As well as significant, transformative benefits to the public realm and streetscene it will benefit the local economy and local community by transforming this key gateway area into the town. The project will improve cycling and walking infrastructure and include bus priority measures.

2.7 A bid to the levelling Up Fund will need to be submitted by 12pm Wednesday 6 July.

2.8 In developing the Southgates element of the scheme, the BCKLWN consultants have engaged with a variety of stakeholders and interests on their Masterplan vision. A log of this activity will be used to support the bid. For the town centre gyratory element, this has been developed over recent months with input from bus operators, NCC network management staff and taking account of the views of cycle groups. The Gyratory element also has the support of the Town Deal (Active and Clean Connectivity Programme) Board and its inclusion delivers a

far stronger bid, as it meets additional outcomes and outputs and elements are deliverable within the timeframe.

2.9 Both scheme elements also align very well with the Town Investment Plan and have good linkages and a strong case for delivering them as a package. These include:

- They are good schemes in isolation both delivering on the current transport agenda but are truly transformational in combination.
- They are located on the Town Deal Active and Clean Connectivity corridor from the West Winch Growth area to the town centre which is also a focus of the Bus Back Better BSIP funding.
- The switch to Active Travel will deliver on Climate Change and Healthy Lifestyle agendas and will have a greater impact in combination providing a sea change to perceptions of travel within the town.

3. Impact of the Proposal

3.1 Investment in local transport networks can boost growth, improve connectivity, and making places healthier, greener, safer, and more attractive. This can improve access to jobs whilst supporting cleaner air and greener, healthier travel whilst removing congestion pinch points.

3.2 It is estimated that the total cost of the scheme will be more than £20m. Exact costs will be confirmed once detailed modelling is carried out. Initial work to be completed by 6 July in support of the bid should give an initial cost estimate which will be refined further as more work is carried out on subsequent scheme and business case development.

3.3 The desired impact of submitting a bid now is not only to secure a commitment to fund but also to raise awareness of our proposal with DfT.

3.4 Norfolk County Council have asked their Cabinet to both approve the submission of the bid and to underwrite the 10% local contribution as is suggested for LUF schemes.

4. Evidence and Reasons for Decision

4.1 There are several reasons why the County Council is putting forward this bid:

4.2 King's Lynn and West Norfolk is a category 1 priority place which means Government feels it is most in need of investment.

- 4.3 The project complements projects underway as part of the district's [King's Lynn Town Deal](#).
- 4.4 Furthermore, the project offers a very strong strategic fit with local plans including [King's Lynn Local Cycling and Walking Plan](#), [Transport for King's Lynn, Norfolk Bus service improvement plan](#), [Local Transport Plan](#) and the [King's Lynn Local Plan](#).
- 4.5 The project will significantly improve cycle, pedestrian and vehicle flow, improve public transport reliability, support modal shift and improve passenger experience.
- 4.6 The project should support the other key themes of the bid: economic recovery and growth, and regeneration.
- 4.7 Delivering to government's required timescale (delivery complete by March 2025, exceptionally by March 2026) is extremely challenging. Developing projects to such a stage that they can be delivered almost immediately should a bid opportunity arise is unrealistic, although elements of the bid, particularly the gyratory works, can be delivered within timescales. The bid will therefore clearly set out what is practicable but will challenge full delivery assumptions. Government will be asked to allow a further exception given the excellent strategic fit with levelling up fund bid criteria. At the time of writing, the business case is being developed which will show early deliverables, a programme for the whole project, and the cost-benefit analysis. Of all potential projects scoped across the county, this proposal is considered to best fit the criteria for this round of levelling up.
- 4.8 Moreover, the project supports Government's strategies [Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener](#) and [Levelling Up White Paper](#). It includes a strong public transport and active travel element, which government has made clear should be a key feature of any proposal for which government funding is sought.
- 4.10 The County Council has considered other projects within priority 1 areas. As the County Council only receives one bid it needs to be transformational, fit within all the criteria set out in the guidance and deliver on government's commitments.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 At the time of writing the total cost of the scheme to be submitted is still being worked up, but for both elements is likely to total less than £30m. Officers are in discussion with partners on the content of the bid. Consultants WSP have been commissioned to develop the scheme and provide cost estimates. The guidance states "A local contribution of 10% or higher (local authority and/or third party) of the bid costs is encouraged." Match funding is considered to be required to

maximise chances of a successful bid and Norfolk County Council are committing to underwrite this – after a cabinet member review.

5.2 NCC are seeking the land contribution from the Borough Council to be made without charge. This would be the subject of a bid to the Capital programme on receipt of a successful outcome from government.

6. Resource Implications

7.1 Staff: Norfolk County Council officers will work alongside the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk's and WSP officers to put together a comprehensive and transformational bid that will have a beneficial impact on the local community.

7.2 Property: None.

7.3 IT: None.

7. Other Implications

8.1 Legal Implications: Legal implications of further developing and implementing the scheme will be addressed at that stage. There are no legal implications associated with submitting the bid by 6 July 2022.

8.2 Human Rights Implications: None.

8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included): If the decision is agreed and a bid is successful an EQIA will be developed alongside the detailed design process when developing the project.

8.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA): None.

8.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate): None.

8.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate): A key objective of the scheme is to improve conditions for and encourage the sustainable transport modes of public transport, walking and cycling.

8.7 Any Other Implications: None.

8. Risk Implications / Assessment

9.1 There are risks with ensuring we make the bid as strong as possible, but a project management structure is in place to draw on the relevant expertise.

9.2 There is a risk that the bid will not be successful.

9. Select Committee Comments

9.1 The proposal has not been referred to the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee in advance due to tight timescales relating to bidding for the funding and needing appropriate sign off from the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk's committees.

10. Recommendations

1. Cabinet is asked to approve in principle the donation of land to support the delivery of the project, should the County LUF bid be successful.

12. Background Papers

12.1 The Levelling Up Fund Round 2: Prospectus can be found [here](#).

12.2 The Levelling Up Fund Round 2: Technical Note can be found [here](#).

Officer Contact

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