

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Hampshire 2050 and Corporate Services
Date:	24 October 2024
Title:	Andover Western Avenue – Preferred Option
Report From:	Director of Hampshire 2050

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Andover Western Avenue project that Hampshire County Council has been working on with Test Valley Borough Council.
2. The report seeks approval of a preferred highway scheme and to delegate authority for officers to work with Test Valley Borough Council to progress the scheme through detailed design.

Recommendations

3. That the Executive Member for Hampshire 2050 and Corporate Services notes the request from Test Valley Borough Council to make alterations to the highway in Andover to facilitate the delivery of its Andover Masterplan and a new linear park on Western Avenue.
4. That the Executive Member for Hampshire 2050 and Corporate Services notes the letter from the Leader of Test Valley Borough Council that acknowledges the potential for disruption and congestion in the town centre during construction of the Western Avenue scheme and that the scheme may change future vehicle movements through Andover.
5. That the Executive Member for Hampshire 2050 and Corporate Services approves the indicative preferred Highway Scheme as detailed in Appendix 1 and delegates authority to the Director of Universal Services to agree, in consultation and agreement with Test Valley Borough Council, the final preferred scheme.
6. That the Executive Member for Hampshire 2050 and Corporate Services delegates authority to the Director of Universal Services to progress all design and development work necessary to enable completion of detailed design, make minor amendments and accommodate responses made in the planning application for the new park to be submitted by Test Valley Borough Council.

7. That the Executive Member for Hampshire 2050 and Corporate Services delegates authority to the Director of Universal Services to work with the scheme promotor, Test Valley Borough Council, to progress all consents required including but not restricted to delivery agreements, funding agreements, land transfers and rights of easement.
8. That the Executive Member for Hampshire 2050 and Corporate Services approves the allocation of £1.1million of Section 106 held by the County Council as a contribution towards the development and delivery of the preferred Scheme.

Executive Summary

9. This paper considers Test Valley Borough Council request to make changes to the highway to enable its proposals to create a new linear park in Andover. The new park is key to the Borough's regeneration and economic growth aspirations which are set out in the Andover Town Centre masterplan.
10. Hampshire County Council has been working with Test Valley Borough Council to develop concept and feasibility designs for changes to the highway network, including reallocating roadspace to alternative placemaking uses to support economic development. In October 2022 a report to the Executive Lead Member for Transport and Environment Strategy approved the principal of road space reallocation subject to conditions being met.
11. Test Valley Borough Council has allocated funding and then subsequently been successful in a £18.3 million bid to the Government's Levelling Up Fund to make the changes to Western Avenue as well as the construction of a new theatre. The Levelling Up Fund money needs to be committed by March 2026. Hampshire County Council has proposed a £1.1 million contribution to the scheme funding from developer contributions.
12. Test Valley Borough Council is the scheme promoter and is working with Hampshire County Council by commissioning Hampshire Engineering Services to undertake design of the highway changes.
13. It is expected that Test Valley Borough Council will submit a planning application in December 2024 for the new park and associated highway changes.

Contextual Information

14. The Andover Masterplan was adopted by Test Valley Borough Council in September 2020 and proposed several regeneration schemes which would improve the vibrancy of the town. A key priority of the Masterplan was to open up the River Anton, which is largely hidden within the Western Avenue gyratory, and to bring more green space into the town.
15. In October 2022 a report to the then Executive Lead Member for Transport and Environment Strategy confirmed the principal of supporting roadspace

reallocation in Andover Town Centre to enable the plans set out in Andover Masterplan. The principal of support had six conditions that needed to be met; Appendix 2 outlines the extent to which those conditions have been met within this report.

16. Test Valley Borough Council has been working with the local community and development partners to develop a masterplan for Andover town centre that is intended to revitalise the town centre. The proposals within the masterplan include reallocating road space to other uses. One of the proposals recommended in the Masterplan was the removal of the A3057 Western Avenue gyratory to open up access to the River Anton and create a new linear park.
17. Hampshire County Council commissioned consultants Atkins to undertake transport modelling to consider the strategic impact of the proposed Andover town centre masterplan on the highway network. These highway proposals and the scenarios tested all lead to a reduction in vehicle capacity. The modelling demonstrated that removal of highway capacity for motorised vehicles is not likely to lead to congestion as junctions will still be operating within capacity. There is potential for some localised queuing and redistribution of traffic but of an infrequent and low level.
18. In February 2023 Test Valley Borough Council gave approval to fund the delivery the Western Avenue project. Its report identified a budget of £6.5million to be met with £5.5million of Test Valley Borough Council held money (£2million from New Homes Bonus, £1million from CIL contributions, £1million from Regeneration Reserve, £1.25million investment income and £250,000 of Test Valley Borough Council held Section 106) and a £1million contribution from Hampshire County Council Section 106 highways contributions. Hampshire County Council agreed to develop designs for the highway aspects of this project using funding from Section 106 contributions held. In addition, Southern Water is funding a river restoration project on the River Anton adjacent to Western Avenue.
19. In November 2023 Test Valley Borough Council was awarded £18.3 million from the Government's Levelling Up Fund to support the delivery of the Western Avenue project and the design and construction of a new theatre for the town centre.
20. Through 2024 the feasibility design of the preferred scheme has been developed through collaborative working with Test Valley Borough Council and other stakeholders within the red-line boundary of the scheme including Stagecoach and Lidl. The feasibility highway design was costed and this resulted in the need for an additional £3million contribution from Test Valley Borough Council reserves in February 2024 to cover the estimated cost of the Western Avenue project. This gives a total budget of £9.5 million for the highway changes and new park.
21. On October 2nd 2024 Test Valley Borough Council Cabinet agreed a preferred scheme for Western Avenue and authorised progressing design work and submission of a planning application. Test Valley Borough Council is now in a

position to appoint Hampshire County Council to undertake preliminary design of the highway aspects of this preferred option.

22. The preferred scheme for Western Avenue is fully in line with the Local Transport Plan 4 adopted by Hampshire County Council in February 2024. The guiding principle of giving people a choice of high-quality travel options is met through the significant improvements to the walking and cycling network facilitated by the proposals. The guiding principle of providing a transport system that promotes high quality, prosperous places and puts people first is met through the reallocation of highway to provide enhanced public realm and placemaking which will support the regeneration objectives of the County Council.
23. To oversee the project there is a joint working group of potential delivery partners which consists of Test Valley Borough Council, Hampshire County Council and Southern Water. The purpose of this group is to ensure the design and delivery of different workstreams is aligned. There is a senior officers steering group between Test Valley Borough Council and Hampshire County Council which feeds into the Test Valley Prosperity Board which includes Director and Councillor representation from the two Councils.
24. The County Council has received a letter from the Leader of Test Valley Borough Council requesting changes to the highway layout to enable its proposals for a new park and to support regeneration aspirations in Andover. The letter also states the Borough Council's acknowledgement and acceptance of an impact and potential disruption during construction and a reduction in road capacity which may result in some queuing and redistribution of traffic.

Outline of Preferred Scheme

25. The preferred scheme, as agreed by Test Valley Borough Council cabinet, consists of the removal of the A3057 Western Avenue gyratory to create a new linear park, see Appendix 3. The existing southbound highway between West Street and Waterloo Court will be stopped-up and the highway rights extinguished to create a new park in this space. The existing northbound carriageway will be converted into two-way working. In addition, other highway changes are required to facilitate this:
 - New signalised junction between Western Avenue and West Street
 - New priority junction between Western Avenue and Waterloo Court
 - Bus priority lanes on Western Avenue between West Street and Folly Roundabout
 - Creation of a north-south dedicated and segregated cycle route along Western Avenue to the west of the River Anton
 - Re-configuration of the bus station so buses can turn-around in the bus station forecourt

- Conversion of West Street to two-way working to provide access and egress to the bus station, Lidl car park, Chantry Centre service areas and local residents in Portland Grove
26. Design work will also be undertaken on improvements for people walking and cycling along the rest of Western Avenue including in the vicinity of Folly Roundabout.
 27. The public realm aspects of the new park are being designed by consultants for Test Valley Borough Council.
 28. The bus operator would prefer to include a northbound bus only link from the bus station on the former southbound Western Avenue carriageway to improve operations in the bus station and reduce bus journey times. This option is deliverable from an engineering perspective however it does not meet the Test Valley Borough Council aspirations for a linear park along the length of Western Avenue and is therefore not part of the Borough Council preferred scheme.
 29. The design development of the preferred scheme has included junction modelling and any negative impact on traffic from the scheme is expected to be negligible.

Finance

30. Test Valley Borough Council is the scheme promoter and primary funder of the scheme.
31. The current proposed funding package includes £7.3m from Test Valley Borough Council, £1.3m from the Levelling Up Fund and £1.1m from Hampshire County Council held developer contributions. The current total cost estimate for the highway works and new park is £9.5m.
32. The cost of the preliminary design work due to be undertaken will be covered by capital funding that Test Valley Borough Council has already received from central Government as part of the first payment from the Levelling Up Fund.
33. Hampshire County Council has proposed a contribution of £1.1 million towards the project to be funded from developer contributions (s106) we hold. Beyond this ringfenced s106 contribution which will be allocated through the Capital Programme, any further funding would need to be underwritten by the Borough Council.
34. If the cost of the Western Avenue project was to increase through the design and delivery process Hampshire County Council would work with Test Valley Borough Council to either de-scope parts of the scheme or explore additional third party funding sources.

Consultation and Equalities

35. The scheme promoter is Test Valley Borough Council, which has been leading on engagement and consultation. The County Councillor is fully supportive of the Western Avenue scheme and the wider regeneration objectives within Andover.

36. Significant public consultation led by Test Valley Borough Council has taken place in conjunction with the Andover Vision in the production of the masterplan. The Andover masterplan was developed following extensive community engagement with Andoverians. A survey undertaken as part of this received over 3,000 responses with 97% positive support for the improvement plans.
37. Direct stakeholder engagement has been undertaken through the development of the concept design, optioneering and feasibility design. This has included the local bus operator Stagecoach, Sustrans which oversees the National Cycle Network which passes along Western Avenue, and local landowners.
38. In addition, Southern Water is undertaking its own project to enhance the chalk stream habitat on the River Anton, which passes through the middle of the Western Avenue gyratory. Southern Water is part of the wider Western Avenue project team and, together with Test Valley Borough Council, has led on engagement with the Environment Agency and other statutory bodies.
39. Test Valley Borough Council is intending to undertake direct stakeholder engagement with impacted local residents and businesses. Wider engagement will also take place as part of the Andover Vision.
40. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This has showed the scheme will give minor benefits to several protected category groups:
 - Improve accessibility within the town centre, creating more greenspace for local residents of which a high proportion are elderly
 - Enhancing public realm and creating new step free routes which benefit those less able to walk
 - Town centre regeneration will result in greater breadth of services locally benefitting those on low incomes and without access to a car, new job opportunities will also reduce poverty
 - Enhancements to the town centre will better serve the wider rural hinterland reducing the need to travel to urban centres further away
41. There is expected to be some minor negative impacts on some residents with protected characteristics due to the increased bus journey times but these are assessed to be outweighed by the wider benefits as described above.

Climate Change Impact Assessments

42. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.

43. Given that this report is seeking approval to continue scheme development work only; is not seeking authority for the County Council to implement any physical measures or changes, the Climate Change Adaptation and Carbon Mitigation tools are not considered to be relevant to this report. Notwithstanding this, a discussion of how the consideration of potential carbon and climate change impacts are feeding into the scheme development is provided below.

Carbon Adaptation

44. Vulnerability to climate change is a key consideration in the design of the drainage for the scheme. These will be designed to the standards set out in guidance, which include an allowance for likely future changes in rainfall frequency and intensity as a result of climate change. The associated works by Southern Water to de-channelise the River Anton and create improved chalk stream habitats, and by Test Valley Borough Council to create a new park and reduce the area of tarmac to the west of the River will both strongly support climate change adaptation.

Carbon Mitigation

45. This project is looking to support and promote sustainable transport through improved measures for people walking and cycling. The aim of the Masterplan is also to make Andover a more attractive destination for residents in its hinterland so encouraging local living and a reduction in car usage of people travelling to destinations a longer distance away. The objectives of the scheme strongly align with the Local Transport Plan 4 and therefore align with aims to reduce carbon emissions from transport.

Other Key Issues

46. Test Valley Borough Council expects to submit a planning application for the new park and associated highway changes in December 2024. Hampshire County Council, as the Highway Authority, will be consulted on the planning application. The expectation at present is the changes to the highway network will be undertaken as part of Hampshire County Council's permitted development rights.
47. Hampshire County Council and Test Valley Borough Council are the only two landowners within the redline boundary of the scheme. However, with the changes to the highway layout some parts of Test Valley land will need to become highway, while parts of the highway will be de-designated for the linear park. It should be noted that Test Valley own the sub-soil rights to the highway land.
48. The alternative of Hampshire County Council continuing to own the land where the new park will be located would mean increased maintenance costs associated with the public realm. The land owned by the County Council in

the vicinity of Western Avenue has no strategic development value and therefore any authority regarding land transfers should reside with Universal Services.

49. As this scheme is supporting the regeneration and economic growth of Andover Town Centre, is being developed in collaboration with Test Valley Borough Council and will ensure County Council land is maintained efficiently the proposed land transfers are in line with the Hampshire County Council Strategic Asset Management Plan.
50. The exact mechanism of land transfers will be determined during detailed design.
51. Whilst Test Valley Borough Council are the scheme promoter, any decision to implement a highway scheme will remain a decision for the Highway Authority. This means a further Decision Day report to the Executive Member of Universal Services will be required. Appendix 2 of this report lists the County Council conditions of support including progress to date, and these conditions must continue to be met as the scheme progresses.

Conclusions

52. The proposed scheme to create a new park, enhance sustainable transport links and support regeneration of Andover Town Centre strongly aligns with the County Council's strategic, placemaking and transport objectives. Therefore, there is a strong rationale for the County Council meeting the request from Test Valley Borough Council to make changes to the highway.
53. This report agrees a preferred scheme and gives delegated authority to the Director of Universal Services to progress the design and put in place consents required for delivery.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u> Transport Proposals Supporting Economic Development in Andover	<u>Date</u> 3 October 2022
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This has showed the scheme will give minor benefits to a number of protected category groups:

- Improve accessibility within the town centre, creating more greenspace for local residents of which a high proportion are elderly
- Enhancing public realm and creating new step free routes which benefit those less able to walk
- Town centre regeneration will result in greater breadth of services locally benefitting those on low incomes and without access to a car, new job opportunities will also reduce poverty
- Enhancements to the town centre will better serve the wider rural hinterland reducing the need to travel to urban centres further away

There is expected to be some minor negative impacts on some residents with protected characteristics due to the increased bus journey times but these assessed to be outweighed by the wider benefits as described above.