

Forward Plan reference number: FP/AB/259

Report title: Queensway Gateway Road Project Update	
Report to Accountability Board on 14th February 2020	
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Date: 27 th January 2020	For: Information
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SELEP Partner Authority affected: East Sussex	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Accountability Board (the Board) to receive an update on the delivery of the Queensway Gateway Road project (the Project).

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Board is asked to

2.1.1. **Note** the latest position on the delivery of the Project; and

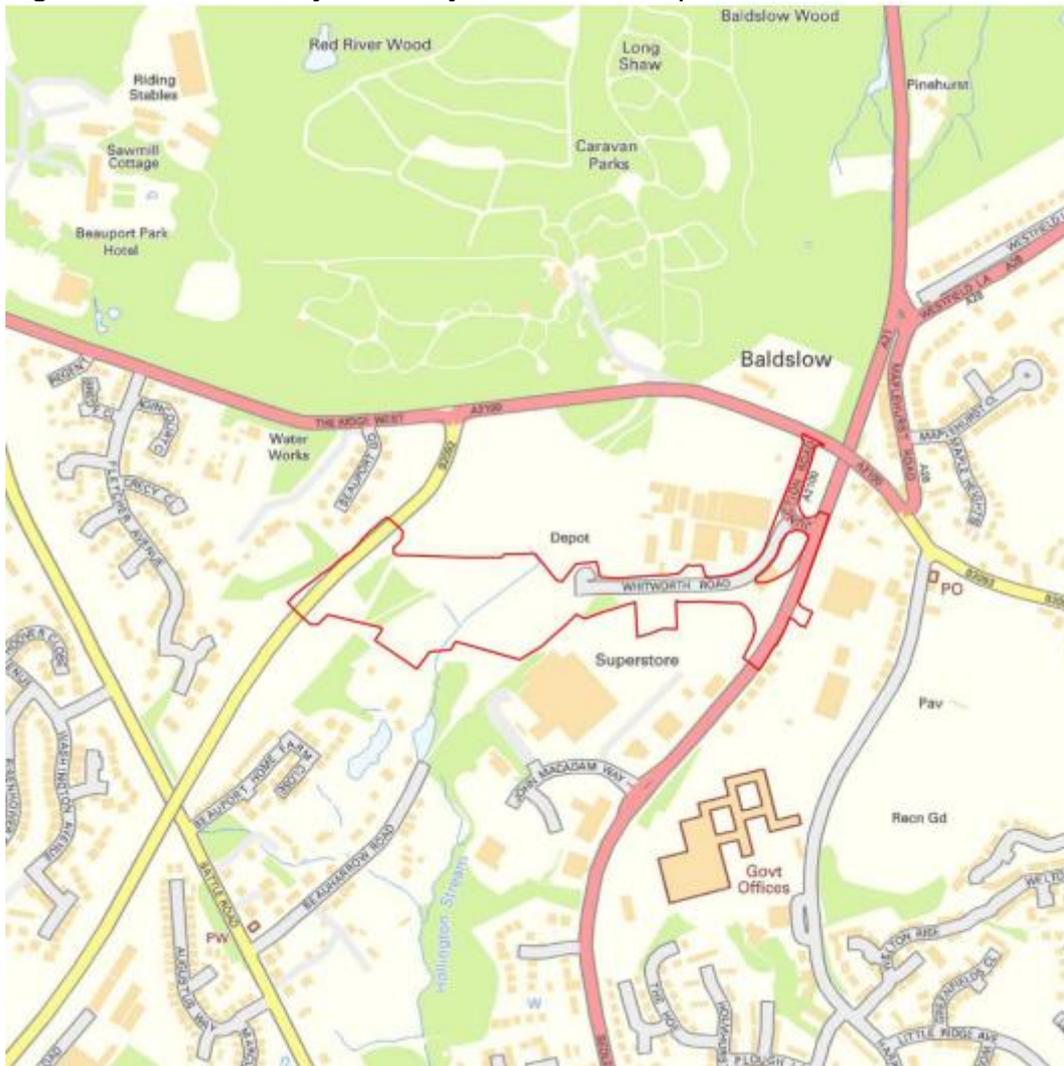
2.1.2. **Note** that the Board will be provided with a further update on the Project at its next meeting on 15th May 2020.

3. Queensway Gateway Road (the Project)

3.1. The Project was approved by the Strategic Board on 20th March 2015, prior to the establishment of the Accountability Board. The Project has an LGF allocation of £10m.

3.2. The Queensway Gateway Road scheme comprises a single carriageway road link between A21 Sedlescombe Road North and Queensway. The road will connect with Queensway running south of its junction with the Ridge West, crossing the Hollington Stream valley on an embankment and then running south of Whitworth Road to join the A21 at a new junction north of the existing Sainsbury’s store, as shown in Figure 1 below. The road will include roundabout junctions at either end and a roundabout junction with Whitworth Road facilitating access to employment sites to the north and south.

Figure 1 – Queensway Gateway Road location plan



- 3.3. The road will connect the Bexhill Hastings Link Road (BHLR) to the A21, redistributing traffic from the BHLR and The Ridge heading towards the A21. The opening of the BHLR will change the balance of traffic movements in the Hastings and Bexhill area, increasing traffic volumes along the Ridge and Queensway. By relieving congestion, the Queensway Gateway Road will improve strategic connectivity in the Bexhill Hastings Growth Corridor, improving employment development potential in Queensway and employment and housing growth potential in North Bexhill.
- 3.4. The Queensway Gateway Road provides access to designated employment development sites within the Bexhill Hastings Growth Corridor which would otherwise not be brought forward.
- 3.5. The new road allows land to be released for employment development, as set out within Hastings Local Plan 2004 and Hastings Planning Strategy. Specifically, the road opens up the development potential of key sites south of The Ridge, with capacity for up to 12,000sqm of employment floorspace.
- 3.6. The key objectives of the Project are:

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- 3.6.1. to support the development and employment potential of the Bexhill Hastings Growth Corridor;
 - 3.6.2. to improve strategic access between the A21 and Queensway/BHLR and thereby strategic access to employment and housing sites in North Bexhill and Hastings; and
 - 3.6.3. to alleviate congestion at junctions to the A21 enabling the BHLR to perform to its full potential as a driver of economic growth.
- 3.7. It is expected that the Project will lead to the creation of 900 new jobs. In addition, the development of Queensway Gateway Road and the BHLR are expected to directly contribute to the delivery of at least 60,000 sqm of new employment workspace and construction of 3,100 new homes in North Bexhill by 2028 as a result of improved connectivity.

4. Project delivery update

- 4.1. The original Project Business Case set out the intention to complete the Project by November 2016. However, delivery of the Project has been slower than anticipated due to planning delays in acquiring the land required to complete the entire route.
- 4.2. The Project is being delivered in phases with the first phase having started early in 2017. In March 2019, the western section of road was completed (70% of the total length of the road) and was opened for access to local businesses only.
- 4.3. The final section of the road, to connect the already completed sections with the A21, requires the purchase of remaining properties on the route. These acquisitions are under negotiation, however, there is currently no clear timeline as to when the acquisitions will be completed. This issue has delayed the completion of the Project and is identified as a significant risk to delivery.
- 4.4. In light of the delays encountered with the required acquisition, a temporary connection to the A21 is being progressed which will enable vehicles to use the road for access to the A21 as an interim solution until the permanent connection can be delivered. The temporary solution should have the resilience to deliver significant transport benefits and will provide the traffic management infrastructure to complete the on-line works on the A21.
- 4.5. The delivery programme set out within the original Project Business Case indicated that land acquisition would be completed by March 2016, with the Project complete by the end of November 2016. Whilst there have been substantial delays to the delivery of the Project, in comparison to these dates, it is still expected that the overall scheme can be delivered within the £12m funding package currently available.

- 4.6. The Project has an LGF allocation of £10m. LGF spend reported to the end of Q3 2019/20 by East Sussex County Council totalled £9.368m, with further spend on the next section of the permanent road link and the associated professional fees profiled for Q4 2019/20. It is expected that the balance of approximately £0.22m will be spent in 2020/21.
- 4.7. Sea Change Sussex will be funding the remainder of the works to be delivered as part of the Project, including the temporary connection.
- 4.8. It is anticipated, that following completion of the permanent connection, the Project will still deliver the benefits as set out in the Business Case and will enable the development of designated employment land within the Bexhill Hastings Growth Corridor.

5. Next steps

- 5.1. Given the strategic importance of the Project, Sea Change Sussex will continue to work towards permanent Project completion. This will be achieved through progressing three main workstreams:
 - 5.1.1. Delivery of the temporary connection with the A21 - Sea Change Sussex is currently working with Hastings Borough Council, East Sussex County Council and Highways England to progress the necessary approvals for the temporary connection. East Sussex County Council are in technical discussions with Sea Change Sussex regarding the temporary solution. Once it has been agreed, it is currently expected that the temporary solution will be in place in Spring 2020. Completion of the temporary connection will allow traffic to use the road as a through route, thereby reducing the volume of traffic currently using the Ridge and helping to address local congestion issues.
 - 5.1.2. Completion of the acquisition negotiations – In order to allow the permanent connection to progress it is essential that the required acquisitions are completed. Sea Change Sussex are working closely with East Sussex County Council who have agreed in principle to promote a Compulsory Purchase Order for the remainder of the required land. In parallel negotiations will continue with the existing property interests to acquire the requisite land required for the delivery of the permanent road connection. Sea Change Sussex are committed to completing the required acquisitions as soon as possible in order to minimise any further delay in the delivery of the permanent connection with the A21.
 - 5.1.3. Delivery of the permanent connection with the A21 - work will continue to progress toward the completion of the permanent connection to the A21 and final completion of the project. At this stage it is not possible to give a definite timeline for the completion of the permanent solution as it is dependent upon the outcome of the

ongoing acquisition negotiations. However, the use of the Compulsory Purchase Order process should ensure that the Project is completed within the 2021/22 financial year. Delivery of the permanent connection will ensure that the required infrastructure is in place to allow the employment sites to be brought forward for development, whilst also permanently addressing congestion issues in the area.

- 5.2. Despite the additional works required to complete the Project, the overall cost of the Project remains below than the original £15m estimated project cost. This has been achieved due to Sea Change Sussex being able to construct the new embankments using material available of circa 50,000m³ from other Sea Change project sites, most notably the North Bexhill Access Road during the 2017-2019 period, thus exploiting the benefits of several projects working in parallel.
- 5.3. The Project currently has an overall risk score of 'amber/red' (i.e. 4 out of 5, with 5 being high), and as a result updates will continue to be provided to the Board, until the Board are satisfied that the overall risk score for the Project has reduced.

6. Financial Implications (Accountable Body comments)

- 6.1. Should there be continued delays in the delivery of the final phase of this Project, there are increased risks associated with the overall Project completion within the Growth Deal period.
- 6.2. Delivery of the Growth Deal forms part of the Annual Performance Review assessment undertaken by Government in advance of confirming the annual LGF funding allocations. Any slippage experienced by this Project will detrimentally impact on this delivery assessment, placing a risk over the outcome of this assessment.
- 6.3. To mitigate the risk of slippage, the Board is advised to keep under review the delivery progress of this project and to take this into account with regard to any further funding decisions made. It should be noted that the full benefits of this Project that support the value for money assessments and subsequent funding decisions, are dependent on successful delivery across all phases of the Project.
- 6.4. It should be noted that any future LGF funding award will be subject to the funding having been received by the Accountable Body and will be transferred under the terms of the SLAs or Grant Agreements in place with the Sponsoring Authority.

7. Legal Implications (Accountable Body comments)

- 7.1. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

8. Equality and Diversity implication

- 8.1. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when a public sector body makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 8.2. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.
- 8.3. In the course of the development of the project business case, the delivery of the Project and the ongoing commitment to equality and diversity, the promoting local authority will ensure that any equality implications are considered as part of their decision making process and where it is possible to identify mitigating factors where an impact against any of the protected characteristics has been identified.

9. List of Background Papers

- 9.1. Business Case for the Queensway Gateway Road project
- 9.2. Strategic Board Agenda Pack 20th March 2015, including decision to award funding to the Project

(Any request for any background papers listed here should be made to the person named at the front of the report who will be able to help with any enquiries)

Role	Date
Accountable Body sign off Stephanie Mitchener (On behalf of Nicole Wood, S151 Officer, Essex County Council)	06/02/2020