

# CABINET



Report subject	<b>Wessex Fields Development Site</b>
Meeting date	30 September 2019
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This paper informs the Cabinet of the current status of the Wessex Fields programme which aims to create and retain high quality jobs, reduce congestion and support the re-development of Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospital. It sets out the reasons for taking this opportunity forward, the key milestones to date and the reasons for the proposed changes. The paper recommends an agreed way forward to ensure progress towards unlocking the employment site for development, and to ensure the retention of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP) funding.</p>
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>(a) Note that Phase 1.1 (of Phase 1), as previously agreed with DLEP, is progressing to meet the current programme and funding requirements;</b></li><li><b>(b) Agree that Phase 1.2 (of Phase 1) will only progress to the boundary of the development site at this time, and not through the site as previously proposed;</b></li><li><b>(c) Agree that Phase 2 will not progress at this stage, until the future use of the site is determined</b></li><li><b>(d) Agree that a public consultation event is held in the coming months to consider views on how the site could be developed, including potential use of the site and access to and from it;</b></li><li><b>(e) Use the information from the consultation to evolve the current master plan for the development site.</b></li><li><b>(f) Explore means to more directly address the congestion on Castle Lane East and other links surrounding the wider Littledown employment area, including working with employers on travel plans, and better joined up support for active travel.</b></li></ul>

Reason for recommendations	The recommendations support the Council's drive to respond to the climate emergency, to recognise that new roads induce further traffic, and to listen to the public's concerns and take appropriate action. The recommendations also support the Council's key priorities to encourage well-being, sustainability and investment.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Mark Howell (Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Culture) Councillor Andy Hadley (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Infrastructure)
Corporate Director	Bill Cotton (Corporate Director of Regeneration & Economy)
Contributors	Julian McLaughlin, Director for Growth and Infrastructure Chris Shephard, Director for Development Gary Powell, A338 BIG Programme SRO Claire Clark, A338 BIG Programme Project Manager Mike O'Gorman, A338 BIG Programme Project Manager
Wards	Littledown & Iford, Muscliffe & Strouden Park
Classification	For decision

## Background

1. The Wessex Fields Link Road Scheme forms part of the A338 Bournemouth International Growth (BIG) Programme package of schemes. The BIG Programme is a £45m plan to improve connectivity, ease congestion, protect existing jobs and create new ones in and around Bournemouth Airport and Wessex Fields. To date has delivered improvements to Blackwater East Junction, and to the A338 southbound between Blackwater Junction and Cooper Dean Roundabout. At present, construction works are taking place on the Blackwater West Junction improvements scheme.
2. The Wessex Fields Scheme consists of four separate packages of work: The Cooper Dean Widening project, Wessex Fields Phase 1.1, Wessex Fields Phase 1.2 and Wessex Fields Phase 2. The split of works is displayed on the drawing A338 Wessex Fields Phasing Plan (appendix 1.) The Cooper Dean Widening project is complete and work commenced on Wessex Fields Phase 1.1 in early September 2018. This scheme was developed to unlock the employment site known as Wessex Fields by providing direct access to and from the site from the A338.
3. A decision was made by Bournemouth Borough Council in November 2016 to submit a planning application for Phase 1 (Phases 1.1 and 1.2) and Phase 2 of the scheme, on the understanding that Phase 1 would be funded by the DLEP

and Phase 2, whilst it has no funding in place, would be suitably progressed should the opportunity arise.

4. A decision was also made by the Council to purchase the Wessex Fields development site, land which is allocated for employment use, for £2m. Given that the funding was allocated to the Council by Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership to help create 500 new jobs and protect the 10,000 existing jobs in the immediate area, it was felt that there were significant advantages in progressing with the purchase of this land. For example:
  - It allows the Council to retain 100% of the uplift in value in this land arising from the construction of a publicly-funded road scheme.
  - It overcomes any planning policy issues about securing developer contributions and negates the risk that these contributions could be eroded as a result of viability assessments conducted as part of the planning process.
  - The Council is better able to control development on this land, the mix of uses and, potentially, the type of occupiers.
  - The Council can ensure that land is available, at market value, for other public sector uses, e.g. the hospital or ambulance trust.

BCP Council recognise these advantages, and the opportunity to ensure that the site is developed for social as well as economic good.

5. The first planning application was submitted in December 2017 (ref: 7-2017-9177-DH.) In May 2018 an Addendum was submitted to take on board additional comments and amendments in response to feedback received from the Statutory Consultees and Local Planning Authority (LPA). Further amendments were subsequently made, notably the retention of the Cob Barn and the realignment of the link road through the site to move it away from the boundary of the Retired National Nurses Home (RNNH). As a result, rather than submit a further addendum, it was considered more straight forward to submit a new application (ref: 7-2018-9177-DL) and withdraw the previous application.
6. A recommendation to grant approval was made at Planning Board on 28 January 2019. This was subject to a decision by the Secretary of State as to whether to call the application in. The application was not called in and the decision notice was issued by the LPA on 28 March 2019. Following the grant of planning consent, a claimant application was made for permission to apply for a Judicial Review (JR) of the planning decision. The JR response from the High Court was received on 11 July 2019 whereby the application for permission to apply for a JR was refused. Following the refusal, a further request for a face to face hearing was made by the claimant and an oral hearing took place on 4th September, to further consider whether a Judicial Review should take place. At this hearing the request for permission to apply for a JR was refused.
7. The delivery of Phase 1 (consisting of Phase 1.1 and Phase 1.2) of the Wessex Fields Link Road was programmed to be completed no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March

2021. This constraint represents the end of the funding window for the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP) Bournemouth International Growth (BIG) Programme. Funding for Phase 1.1 has been agreed with DLEP. The remaining budget is expected to partly finance Phase 1.2, with the funding source(s) for the remainder of the project to be confirmed.

8. Based on the required completion date for Phases 1.1 and 1.2 of the project, the construction of Phase 1.1 of Wessex Fields commenced in early September 2018. Key tasks for Phase 1.2, including detailed design, undertaking compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) securing the remaining funding, and procurement planning also need to commence as soon as possible. Delays to these tasks will increase the risk of the project completion date extending beyond the constraint of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
9. As well as the DLEP funding constraint date, the Project Team are coordinating construction with Wessex Water, who are completing works that interface with the Wessex Fields scheme. Wessex Water commenced their works at the end of July 2019 ahead of the start of construction for the Wessex Fields Link Road in September 2019. The completion of the Wessex Water element is dependent upon Phase 1.1 Wessex Fields commencing as planned. Any delay to the Wessex Fields construction will delay the completion of Wessex Water works, which in turn will delay the completion of Wessex Fields Phase 1.2 beyond 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

### **Project Review**

10. The creation of the Unity Alliance and subsequent change of leadership of BCP Council has prompted a review of this project by Members. The declaration of a climate emergency, the need for more transparency, and community engagement and ownership of key plans, has driven a forensic analysis of this programme since June 2019. This paper recommends changes to the programme that take account of these drivers whilst still looking to achieve the original aims. These changes are to:
  - To unlock the site for development by continuing with Phase 1.1 linking the site to the A338 and to proceed with Phase 1.2 to the site boundary
  - Hold a public consultation event to engage the community in the future development potential of the employment site, in order to evolve the current vision and masterplan prior to construction of roads through the site pursuant to the outcomes of the consultation.
  - Seek alternative options focusing on sustainable travel for Phase 2, once the future use of the site is determined

### **DLEP Funding**

11. DLEP agreed £8 million funding to deliver the Cooper Dean Widening works and access to the Wessex Fields site from a new southbound junction on the A338. The Council developed a scheme to deliver the latter, which it divided into

Phases 1.1 and 1.2. The latest estimate for delivering these works is £12.5 million. This figure is likely to reduce following the completion of the Cooper Dean Widening works, once all of the costs have been finalised, but will still be greater than the £8 million of approved funding. To date, £5.3 million of funding has already been spent to deliver the project to its current stage. Costs include the construction of Cooper Dean Widening, design fees, planning fees and land acquisition. No funding was agreed for improvements to Castle Lane or Phase 2 of Wessex Fields as part of the funding grant.

12. The remaining DLEP funds within the budget will ensure the completion of Phase 1.1, however further funding arrangements are required for Phase 1.2, even to only construct it to the site boundary. Once the actual costs for Phase 1.1 and the Cooper Dean Widening have been agreed, there may be some funds available to construct this part of Phase 1.2. As the recommendation is now to only implement Phase 1.2 to the boundary of the development site, whilst further consideration is given to how the site will be used, there will need to be further discussions with DLEP to secure whatever the funding gap is. How the remaining part of Phase 1.2 (inside the site boundary) is delivered and funded will depend on the future use of the site.

### **Sustainable Transport Opportunities**

13. In addition to the sustainable measures already agreed as part of the planning approval, further consideration can be given to both promoting smarter travel choices, encouraging a shift in transport mode from car use to cycling, walking and public transport, and the improvement of routes to the site from the major anticipated origin and destinations.
14. There are further opportunities as part of the recommended public consultation and the evolution of the site masterplan. A masterplan and vision have been produced for the Wessex Fields site which considered at a conceptual level the need for sustainable transport facilities, and which adhered to current Council planning policies.
15. Other scheme proposals for the area have also been developed as part of the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) bid and the Local Transport Plan (LTP.)

### **Summary of financial implications**

16. The Cooper Dean Widening scheme and BIG Programme A338/Blackwater Improvement scheme have been designed and constructed to link to Phase 1.1 and 1.2 of the Wessex Fields scheme. Further funding would need to be secured at a later date to meet the costs of any future design work and subsequent planning applications required, if the future use of the site dictates that a different road design is required.
17. Funds will have to be secured to run the consultation process, which will depend on the scale and nature of this.

### **Summary of legal implications**

18. There may be legal implications should the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP) funding not be fully spent in line with the agreements that have been negotiated between the Council and the DLEP.

### **Summary of human resources implications**

19. The project team currently delivering the A338 BIG Programme will continue to work on the scheme to deliver Phase 1.1 and Phase 1.2 up to the boundary of the site. This team could also be utilised to deliver any further changes required following the consultation process. However, a funding source will need to be secured in order to allow this.
20. Resources will have to be identified to progress the consultation and to collate the results of this into a report that can be considered further by Members.

### **Summary of environmental impact**

21. The Environmental Statement submitted with the Planning Application sets out in detail the environmental impacts of the scheme for Phase 1 and Phase 2, and the required mitigation to address those impacts where applicable. These have been fully assessed by the LPA prior to the recommendation to approve.
22. Further specific details on how the natural environment will be protected throughout the works have been agreed via the discharge of pre-commencement planning conditions for the scheme.
23. Any subsequent change to the proposed road infrastructure, following the consultation process, would have to go through the planning process again and the environmental impacts would have to be re-assessed along with the required mitigation.

### **Summary of public health implications**

24. There are no public health implications as identified in the Environmental Statement.

### **Summary of equality implications**

25. An Equalities Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) has been completed for the proposed scheme. This identifies that the scheme will provide positive outcomes for user groups attributed to one or more of the defined protected characteristics. Positive outcomes include improved access to the Royal Bournemouth Hospital and employment opportunities within the Wessex Fields development site.
26. The assessment has identified negative outcomes for the scheme including loss of privacy for occupants of the Retired National Nurses Home (RNNH) on Riverside Avenue. An action plan has been developed to mitigate against negative impact, including implementing noise mitigation measures and commissioning a sustainable transport plan for the Wessex Fields development.

27. Any subsequent change to the proposed road infrastructure, following the consultation process, would have to go through the planning process again and an Equalities Impact Needs Assessment (EINA) would have to be completed again.

### **Summary of risk assessment**

28. Failure to implement Phases 1.1 and part of 1.2 of Wessex Fields could lead to the realisation of a number of risks to BCP which are both financial and reputational.
29. With only part project completion there is the financial risk that DLEP will request part of, or full funding spent to date on design fees, planning fees and construction activities to be repaid.
30. Failure to deliver jobs on the Wessex Fields site could lead to reputational damage for BCP with DLEP. This could result in DLEP re-profiling funds to pipeline schemes outside of the BCP Council area. For future DLEP funding and other central government funding the ability of BCP to deliver schemes may be questioned.
31. There could also be reputational damage with the public and the business community based on previous extensive consultation and communications relating to the planning application process. However, it is recognised by the new administration that the planning application process was unpopular with some members of the public. This has been in progress since Spring 2017 and continues to date. Not progressing the scheme may be damaging to future relationships, ambition and discussions across a wide range of partners, stakeholders, businesses and the public. The governance of the project has been ongoing since early 2017 with key stakeholders, with the expectation of the delivery of the scheme.
32. The development land was purchased by the Council, and without the opportunity to develop, there will be no opportunity to recoup this cost. The employment site is unique within BCP and therefore the associated benefits of these cannot be achieved elsewhere.
33. If the project continues as per the recommendations, the main programme and financial risks for delivery of the project are regarding land acquisition and the need to make Compulsory Purchase Orders and a Side Roads Order. To mitigate any possible delay to the project work on this, the Orders and land acquisition need to progress as soon as possible.
34. Due to the current delays of the project commencing, there is an increased risk of works being delayed further and an increase in cost due to severe weather events and possible flooding on site. To mitigate this as far as possible, works for Phase 1.1 of the project commenced on site as planned in early September 2019.

## **Background papers**

Wessex Fields Link Technical Review (22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019)  
Planning Application Ref: 7-2018-9177-DL – Published Works  
Wessex Fields EINA

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – A338 Wessex Fields Phasing Plan