

SALTRAM MEADOW ROUNDABOUT TO COLESDOWN HILL – CONTRACT AWARD

Executive Decision briefing note



PROJECT DETAILS

The Saltram Meadow roundabout to Colesdown Hill scheme continues the high quality, traffic free walking and cycling route further east along the former railway alignment on Billacombe road, which will serve the eastern section of the Saltram Meadow development.

This is part of the Eastern Corridor Strategic Cycle Network (EC SCN) scheme and focuses on enhancing travel on that corridor, improving sustainable connectivity to growth areas with 17,000 new jobs and 15,500 houses planned by 2034. This scheme further improves connectivity provided by Laira Rail Bridge.

Current scheme drawings are available at: www.plymouth.gov.uk/saltrammeadowtocolosdownhill

SCHEME OBJECTIVES

Plymouth's population is forecast to reach 300,000 by 2034, an increase of 17%, with an accompanying increase in economic opportunity. Modelling forecasts show that by 2034, even with currently committed transport schemes and modal shift away from private car to sustainable transport of between 5 and 10%, congestion will worsen. Specifically, congestion is impacting on public transport reliability on the eastern corridor.

28% of Plymouth households do not have access to a vehicle, with this increasing to 50% in some neighbourhoods served by the east-west corridor. An expanding and improving walking and cycling network, linking to new jobs in key growth areas will help create inclusive, low carbon growth, improve productivity and address unemployment which is currently 4.7% – 1.4% higher than the regional average, and 0.3% higher than the national average.

To address this sustainably, and help make Plymouth an attractive place in which to live, work and invest, the Joint Local Plan identifies that major infrastructure investments are needed. With 67% of Plymouth commuters working in the city, and with 38% of car journeys less than 2km, walking and cycling have a key role to play.

With transport representing around 28% of carbon emissions¹, a proportion that is set to increase substantially, investment in walking and cycling to reduce overall car trips through a substantial transfer from private car is essential if we are to meet the Council's pledge to make Plymouth carbon neutral by 2030. This scheme will also help address physical inactivity which is a major problem in Plymouth with just 18.6% of the adult population exercising for 30 minutes three times a week. Physical inactivity is estimated to cost the NHS £4.1 million pa with far greater costs to the wider economy.

PROJECT COST

The project target price submitted by SWH is £871,316.

FUNDING

The contract award is funded from:

- Section 106 developer contributions.

DELIVERY TIMESCALES

The main works for the scheme are planned to start in August, or September 2022, with construction programmed to take 35 weeks.

¹ <http://naei.beis.gov.uk/>

MEMBER AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure approved the submission of the planning application for the scheme in March 2021.

With the approval of the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, a planning application for the scheme was submitted in March 2021, at which point Ward members were updated. Conditional planning approval was granted in December 2021. Subsequently, in March 2022 the Cabinet Member for Transport approved the statutory consultation for the TROs required for the proposed works on the highway at Colesdown Hill. No objections have been received from Ward members regarding the proposed highway works on Colesdown Hill itself.

38 comments from members of the public have been received, of which 31 have objected to the proposals. Objections have also been received from Councillor Rebecca Smith, Gary Streeter MP and Plymouth Cycling Campaign. The overwhelming majority of objections relate to the proposed steps, with a cycle wheeling ramp, connecting the path to Colesdown Hill. The proposed steps represent an interim solution with the longer term plan to continue the path along the route of the former railway line underneath Colesdown Hill, and then back on to Billacombe Road to the east of the junction with Colesdown Hill. This represents our preferred long-term option because it provides a more direct and virtually level route back onto Billacombe road that would be accessible for all users with disabilities.

It has also been suggested that a ramp should be implemented to provide step free access onto Colesdown Hill. However, this is estimated to cost an additional £732,000 in comparison with the steps, and is not affordable within the currently available budget. Furthermore, the gradients on Colesdown Hill itself are less than ideal for those with disabilities, and therefore would not represent a fully accessible route, and so is not our preferred option. Furthermore, it would be challenging to construct this ramp without jeopardising the longer term aspiration to deliver the preferred Option 3, described below.

An alternative approach that has been proposed by Consultee's is that the scheme is paused whilst funding and landowner approval is secured for continuation of the route through the land of the adjacent landowner. However, such an approach would inevitably delay the delivery of not only the interim scheme, but also the preferred longer term solution.

Comments submitted as part of the planning process were considered by the case officer and conditional planning approval was granted in December 2021 (21/00514/FUL).

PROCUREMENT APPROACH

The Council's Term Maintenance Contract (TMC) with South West Highways specifically provides for its use to deliver transport schemes and projects in addition to the core highway maintenance activities.

The scale and nature of the works required for the scheme makes it an ideal candidate scheme for the TMC to be the delivery vehicle.

The use of the TMC has a number of benefits that would support early delivery of the works:

- Capitalise on the collaborative working arrangements that the contractor has established with the Council's Highways department and other key stakeholders and partners
- Access to the competitive price list that was secured through the vigorous and robust tendering assessment that the Council carried out to award the TMC
- Local knowledge
- Co-ordination with other planned works on the local and strategic road networks
- Early contractor involvement to progress the design and identify value savings and reduce risks in both the design and construction stages
- Supports continuity of working between the Council and the contractor to help deliver improvements in performance over the term of the TMC
- Gives confidence to and supports the local economy, helping to safeguard existing jobs and create new ones

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The alternative options to employing the TMC would be to either carry out a formal tendering exercise or use an appropriate framework. Both these options would add delay to any appointment, impacting on the delivery timescale of the works and do not have all of the benefits use of the TMC offers.