

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Valley Gardens Preferred Preliminary Highway Design</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup> November 2016</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director Economy, Environment &amp; Culture</b>		
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 Enhancing Valley Gardens has been an objective of Brighton & Hove City Council for a number of years. The longstanding recognition of the need to improve Valley Gardens is reflected in a number of the city's core, strategic documents. These include past and current Local Transport Plans [LTPs] and the approved, City Plan Part 1. In 2014, the role of the corridor was further emphasised when it was designated as one of the city's 4 Priority Development Areas in the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership's [LEP's] Strategic Economic Plan, which sets out its ambitions, investments and proposals for realising sustainable economic growth by 2021.
- 1.2 The key principles of the Valley Gardens proposals are to simplify the existing highway network making the journey through Valley Gardens less complicated and more legible for all users, improving cycle and pedestrian networks and improving safety and air quality within the project area.
- 1.3 The Valley Gardens project Business Case sets out the various local and regional benefits relating to personal safety, sustainable transport, environment and the economy. The Business Case also sets out how Valley Gardens can play a vital role in planning for the future if delivered as part of a package of wider strategic improvements across the city including the Intelligent Transport Systems.
- 1.4 In June 2015 an Independent Review was commissioned to ensure the proposed scheme would accommodate general traffic movements and to respond to concerns raised by key stakeholders. This report provides the Committee with an overview of the project history and an update on the project following the Independent Review. The report explains how the council's computer-based, city centre (Paramics) transport model has been used to inform the Review's outcomes and conclusions; the details of the recommended, preferred design option; and the proposed next stages of the project.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee notes and accepts the outcome of the Independent Review of the project.
- 2.2 That the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee approves the preliminary Highway Design as the Preferred Design/Scheme for Valley Gardens (Phase 1 & 2), as set out in Appendix 2 and authorises officers to progress to the detailed Highway Technical Design stage, including preparation of Traffic Regulation Orders.
- 2.3 That the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee support ongoing design work for the public/green space and agrees to consider proposals, including those for the Mazda Fountain, at a future Committee meeting.

## **3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Valley Gardens project is a strategically important scheme for the city and wider economic areas of both the Greater Brighton City Region and the Coast to Capital LEP. It is recognised within the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan one of the city's 4 Priority Development Areas, in addition to the Lewes Road Corridor, the Seafront, and the New England Quarter. At a more local level the need to improve Valley Gardens is highlighted in the City Plan and within the Local Transport Plan.
- 3.2 The Valley Gardens design brief for Phases 1 & 2 was established by the council's former Transport Committee in July 2012. Early concept designs were developed and considered at Committee in 2013. In October 2014 the Environment, Transport & Sustainability [ETS] Committee approved the refined Highway Design which included a change from two lanes to one lane of general traffic in each direction on the east side of the scheme, thus retaining the Elm trees along Grand Parade.
- 3.3 The Valley Gardens Concept Scheme formed the basis of the Business Case that was submitted to the LEP in mid-2014. It was successful in securing £8m worth of Government Local Growth Fund [LGF] from the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership [LEP] when it was considered and approved by the LEP area's Local Transport Body in early 2015.
- 3.4 In March 2015, the ETS Committee agreed that the Landscape and Highways Design should commence under the guidance of the Project Management Board.
- 3.5 In June 2015 an Independent Review of the Valley Gardens scheme was requested and commenced to demonstrate the proposed scheme was fit for purpose and to respond to concerns raised about the emerging Highway Design. The Review was expected to provide greater reassurance about the proposed traffic layout and how it will operate on a typical, daily basis during the week.
- 3.6 The Review was carried out between July–October 2015. The Review concluded and confirmed that the modelling used in the original Business Case was valid; however, it also recommended that additional modelling should be carried out incorporating the current highway layout. Specifically, the proposed

scheme should be re-tested using the city centre (Paramics) transport model with updated (2015) traffic data to ensure that the Valley Gardens' proposals to be taken forward could be assessed alongside the latest traffic layouts in the area, including the changes introduced as part of the Edward Street/Eastern Road and Lewes Road schemes.

- 3.7 Additional transport modelling work was carried out and the outcomes presented to Members in June 2016. The modelling results showed that that reduced journey times can be expected for some north-south journey movements. However, for some movements journey times are expected to increase as some drivers/vehicles will have to pass through additional signalised junctions. Modelling results suggest that the signalised junctions at St Peter's Place and Edward Street/Grand Parade are the key network constraints.
- 3.8 Since June 2016 officers have been working with Highway Design consultants Project Centre Limited (PCL) and Transport Modellers AECOM, to further develop and refine the proposed highway design to optimise traffic movement through Valley Gardens particularly at the key junctions. Both local and strategic transport modelling has been carried out and as a result of this modelling, proposals include both one and two lane sections for general traffic movements along the east side of the gardens.
- 3.9 Transport modelling is used to provide officers with an indication on how driver behaviour/traffic movements, and other associated factors, could be affected by proposals. The most recent City Centre (Paramics) modelling data for Valley Gardens show the changes in predicted journey times for northbound and southbound movements within Valley Gardens for the weekday morning and evening peak hours (8.00-9.00am and 17.00 to 18.00pm respectively) for both buses and general traffic.
- 3.10 The city centre modelling (Paramics) results show that, for the main 8 general traffic routes that private vehicle drivers (car, van, lorry etc.) would use to pass through the area, it is predicted that journey times for 4 routes could increase and 4 could reduce. The overall, average journey time change for all 8 general traffic routes through the scheme area is an increase of just over 2 seconds. For the 8 bus movements that were tested it is predicted that journey times on 4 will increase and 4 will decrease. The overall, average difference in journey time for all tested bus movements is an increase of less than 21 seconds. The modelling is still showing that the signalised junctions at St Peter's Place and Edward Street/Grand Parade junctions are the key network constraints within Valley Gardens.
- 3.11 During October 2016 targeted workshops were carried out with key members of the Transport Partnership (part of The Connected City). These workshops provided an opportunity for transport stakeholders, such as those with an interest in walking & cycling and bus and taxi operators, to participate in the ongoing discussion of the highway design.
- 3.12 At the Transport Partnership meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> November, feedback from the consultation workshops was presented alongside the proposed design and a 'visual simulation' (moving images) of the city centre (Paramics) model outcomes.

- 3.13 This Committee is being presented with the preferred preliminary Highway Design so that it can consider and approve progression on to the detailed Highway Technical Design stage. The detailed Highway Technical Design will progress the micro-detail of the highway design including detailed information such as highway geometry confirmation, drainage and street furniture plans and highway dimensions required for; Traffic Regulation Orders, detailed construction cost estimates and construction phasing plans.
- 3.14 Since the Independent Review, officers have focused on the Highway Design element of the project. Once this design is agreed by this committee, Transport officers will commence the development of the design for the public/green space areas that will become the central spine of Phase 1 & 2 of the Valley Gardens corridor, in partnership with City Parks, Premises and Events Teams. The key principles for the public/green space design will be to encourage people's use and enjoyment of the area; to facilitate better and safer movement throughout the Gardens for walking & cycling; to provide high impact, low maintenance features which can facilitate a range of events, while contributing to improvements in air quality, community safety, and flood risk management. Particular consideration will be given to the future of the Mazda Fountain as part of this work.
- 3.15 Key benefits of Phases 1& 2 of the Valley Gardens scheme are many and varied; the full list of these benefits are set out within the Phase 1& 2 Valley Gardens Business Case submitted to the LEP in 2014. The scheme will assist in improving road safety, air quality, and flood risk management. The proposed, Preferred Scheme offers a more legible highway layout improving accessibility to public transport services and ease of movement throughout. Better and safer walking and cycling links throughout the scheme area will also be delivered, alongside a more attractive and enjoyable public space for all to enjoy. The scheme will also provide up-to-date traffic signals equipment and renew existing, poor condition, highway infrastructure, while at the same time enabling the remodelling and enhancement of the public/green space and event space.
- 3.16 Wider economic benefits of the scheme include the enhancement of the tourism offer by enhancing existing very popular attractions such as the Royal Pavilion. The scheme is expected to support the creation of new jobs and support new developments while increasing the potential retail rateable value of frontages.
- 3.17 The footprint of the Valley Gardens Phase 1 & 2 project stretches from north of St Peters Place junction to just south of Church Street and includes both Highway and Green Space between the western Highway boundary of Marlborough Place, Gloucester Place, St Georges Place and York Place, and the eastern highway boundary including Grand Parade and Richmond Place. The extent of the project boundary can be seen in Appendix 1
- 3.18 The proposed preliminary Highway Design is set out in Appendix 2. The design aims to simplify the operation of the current highway network within the extent of the project boundary. The proposal provides north and southbound general traffic lanes on the eastern side of the gardens and creates a new two-way public transport corridor with priority lanes for bus, taxi and coach operators on the western side of the gardens. The proposal allows private vehicles limited access to the public transport corridor/priority lanes to access existing westbound

connections at Trafalgar Street and Gloucester Street and to access properties along the western corridor. Church Street can also still be accessed from the southern end of the scheme.

- 3.19 The operation of the priority lanes in the public transport corridor will be positively enforced using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras at key points to manage and enforce restricted general vehicle movement through the corridor. To ensure the corridor operates effectively parking restrictions will be put in place. Additional timed loading bays will be provided to facilitate loading and access.
- 3.20 The eastern corridor will allow general traffic to travel both north and southbound with restricted access to Kingswood Street for left turning vehicles only. The junction currently does not allow for right hand turn movements so this restriction is not deemed to have a significant impact on users.
- 3.21 Detailed junction modelling (Linsig) has been carried out at St Peters Place junction and Edward Street Junction to improve signal timings. The proposal also includes a removal of the Ditchling Road right hand turn at St. Peters Place junction and the opportunity to provide bus priority measures travelling northbound through St. Peters Place junction.
- 3.22 Pedestrian and cycle facilities have been improved throughout the gardens with a dedicated two way, off carriageway cycle facility proposed on the eastern side of the scheme and a wide shared-use facility along the length of the western side of the green.
- 3.23 Access to the gardens will be assisted with the removal of excessive guardrail along the length of the western corridor and pedestrian crossings provided at key points along the route. Appendix 3 provides a visual impression of the current v's proposed scheme layout at St George's Place.
- 3.24 The preferred preliminary design is subjected to a series of Road Safety Audits which will be carried out independently of the Highway Design Team and will be used to further refine detailed Technical Highway Design
- 3.25 The key project milestones are included in Appendix 4; this includes the development of the Technical Highway Design, Green Space design, Road Safety Audits, and preparation of measurements for the advertisement of Traffic Regulation Orders, procurement and construction.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Highway Design proposals have been developed which considering alternative options for the delivery of Phase 1 & 2 of the Valley Gardens scheme. Scalability was considered during the development of the Business Case. This included scaling-up to include the implementation of Phase 3 of the Valley Gardens project providing a continuous project along the A23 from the A259 Grand Parade junction to The Level. Although funding for Phase 3 has been approved in principle by the Government, it has not yet been fully approved as it requires the further submission of a full Business case to the LEP/LTB. Any

funding bid and then decision would be likely to be made once significant progress is made with Valley Gardens Phases 1&2.

- 4.2 At ETS Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014, key changes to the initial, proposed design were approved. A key change was to reduce the two northbound and two southbound lanes to one lane in each direction, in places. The rationale for this change was based on initial modelling which showed two lanes for general traffic were not required throughout the scheme and key benefit of this amendment was to protect the existing Elm trees, which are part of the National Elm Tree Collection.
- 4.3 Further fundamental alternative design solutions have not currently been considered at this stage although there is some additional north and southbound two-lane sections for general traffic and junction improvements within the current proposed design proposed following the review process.
- 4.4 Any significant Highway Design changes required as part of the Highway Technical Design stage will be reported to Committee however if this is required there is likely to be an additional delay to the project timelines and generate pressure from the main funding body, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- 4.5 The design of the green space is to be reconsidered in light of restricted maintenance budgets. It is proposed that green space designs will be developed once the highway design is approved.
- 4.6 The existing Highway network within the Valley Gardens area is in need of significant funding for maintenance alone. Current Highway maintenance costs are estimated to be in the region of £1.7m for Phases (1 & 2) area and a further £1.3m for the Phase 3 area. If the Valley Gardens project is not progressed, this funding will be required from existing maintenance budgets, or secured following successful bids for other potential sources of funding.
- 4.7 A 'do nothing' option is likely to result in the City Council repaying the ringfenced £2.8 million already received from the LEP. The remaining amount of the £8m (£5.2m) would also be expected to no longer be available to the City Council. The further £6 million agreed in principle for Phase 3 of Valley Gardens would also be likely to be retracted.

## **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Substantial community engagement and consultation has been carried out to develop the concept designs for Valley Gardens through various workshops and targeted community and stakeholder engagement. Appendix 5 identifies a number of these carried out since the commencement of the project.
- 5.2 More recently during October 2016, Transport Partnership members were invited to focused workshops giving them an opportunity to discuss the Highway Designs. Proposed designs were also presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016 Transport Partnership meeting. At this meeting a commitment was made to work with public transport operators to seek to reduce journey times for buses, coaches and taxis using the priority lanes during the busy peak periods, by identifying a range of potential mitigation measures.

- 5.3 Appendix 6 provides the Communication plan for the Phases 1 & 2 of the Valley Gardens Scheme at key stages of the project. Using a range of media and targeted meetings, the council intends to continuously engage with interested parties. It is intended that this strategy will be developed further as the project progresses.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 As a result of the Independent Review, the city centre model was re-run to provide officers and councillors with an indication of how the road network could operate following the introduction of the proposed, Preferred Scheme. The main results of this transport modelling have been outlined within this report alongside the overall benefits that Phases 1 & 2 of the Valley Gardens scheme are expected to deliver.
- 6.2 The conclusions that have been reached by officers following the Independent Review are that the preliminary Highway Design, as presented, is consistent with the original objectives of the scheme and aligns with that included in the approved Business Case; the Design has not been significantly altered from that which was included in the approved Business Case for the LGF allocation from the LEP; and is sufficiently robust to enable the Design to be progressed to the Detailed Highway Technical design stage. Following this, further work can be undertaken on the design of the public/green space within the Valley Gardens corridor.

## 7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The approved capital budget for the Valley Gardens project from 2015/16 onwards is £9.787m, funded from Local Growth Fund grant (£8.000m), Local Transport Plan (LTP) capital programme (£1.373m) and Section 106 and other external contributions (£0.414m). The cost of design fees associated with the recommendations in this report will be funded from the approved capital budget.
- 7.2 Any variation between project costs and the approved budget will be reported as part of the council's budget monitoring process and any budget re-profile will require Policy, Resources and Growth Committee approval. Additionally, any profiling adjustment will need to be reported to the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- 7.3 The Local Enterprise Partnership have approved funding of up to £8.000m Local Growth Fund grant towards the capital costs of the project, which is subject to compliance with grant conditions based on the original scheme business case. £2.800m of the total £8.000m Local Growth Funding has been received to date and is ring-fenced for this project. In the event that the project does not proceed, this funding will be repaid to the Local Enterprise Partnership.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Steven Bedford*

*Date: 16/11/16*

#### Legal Implications:

- 7.4 Under the Highways Act 1980 the Council as highway authority has a general power to improve highways. The Council's powers and duties under the Highways Act 1980 and the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 must be exercised to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of all types of traffic including cyclists and pedestrians. As far as is practicable, the Council should have regard to any implications in relation to: access to premises; the effect on amenities; the Council's air quality strategy; facilitating the passage of public services vehicles; securing the safety and convenience of users and any other matters that appear relevant to the Council.

*Lawyer Consulted: Stephanie Stammers*

*Date: 14/11/16*

#### Equalities Implications:

- 7.6 The developed design will be in line with industry best practice guidance to ensure all proposals are accessible to all members of society. The overall aim of the Valley Gardens proposal is to make the movement and place functions of Valley Gardens as inclusive as possible by redressing current environmental conditions that discourage use by all groups, and is arguably especially unpleasant for older and younger people.

#### Sustainability Implications:

- 7.7 The Phase 1 & 2 Valley Gardens proposals will include measures that will improve sustainability in a number of ways within the corridor. The measures outlined in this report will promote, encourage and provide for, greater use of sustainable transport, and particularly overcome some of the current barriers to greater levels of walking, cycling, and bus use. The measures also contribute to the objectives of the Brighton & Lewes Downs Biosphere. The proposed scheme will also seek to deliver improved Air Quality within part of the city's largest Air Quality Management Area and address some of the contributory factors to the identification of the area by the Government as one of the city's 'Important Areas' for noise. It is also intended that a key element of the scheme will be measures that will help improve the city's sustainable urban drainage systems.

#### Any Other Significant Implications

- 7.8 The Corporate / Citywide Implications; The project directly supports objectives of the Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan, the City Plan, and Local Transport Plan, Conservation Area and Enhancement Plan, Biosphere, Air Quality Management Area, Seafront Strategy, One Planet Living, Public Space Public Life, the London Road SPD and the LR2 Study.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Scheme boundary
2. Proposed Preliminary Highway Design



3. Visual Impression of Proposals
4. Proposed Project Milestones
5. Consultation History
6. Communications Plan

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. None.

### **Background Documents**

1. Valley Gardens Phase 1& 2 Committee Reports (2014-2015)
2. Valley Gardens (Phase 1& 2) Business Case – 2014
3. Technical Report related to Independent Review 2015
4. Local Transport Plan (2015)
5. City Plan Part 1 (2016)
6. AECOM – City Centre Transport Modelling report (draft)2016

