

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet Member Technical Services  
Cabinet

**DATE:** 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009  
17<sup>th</sup> December 2009

**SUBJECT:** **Thornton Switch Island Link Layout Approval and Public Exhibition Proposals**

**WARDS AFFECTED:** Park, St Oswald, Netherton and Orrell, Molyneux, Manor, Sudell

**REPORT OF:** Andy Wallis Planning & Economic Regeneration Director

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**EXEMPT/  
CONFIDENTIAL:** N/A

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY:**

To advise Members of the progress of the Thornton Switch Island Link Scheme and to approve the proposed scheme layout, the proposals for public exhibition in advance of the planning application and the initial approaches to landowners to open discussions about land acquisition.

**REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:**

To keep Members fully apprised of progress and to seek approval for scheme proposals, that they should be presented to the public and so that initial discussions about land acquisitions can be started.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**Cabinet Member Technical Services:**

- **Notes the report and supports the recommendations to Cabinet.**

**Cabinet:**

- **Members note the progress of the Thornton to Switch Island Link.**
- **Cabinet approves the proposed scheme layout.**
- **Cabinet approves the proposal for a public exhibition of the scheme plans to be held in advance of the submission of the planning application.**
- **Cabinet gives approval for initial discussions to be held with landowners about land acquisition for the scheme.**

**KEY DECISION:** Yes

**FORWARD PLAN:** Yes

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** Following the expiry of the 'call in 'period for the minutes of the meeting

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

**IMPLICATIONS:**

**Budget/Policy Framework:** The budget remains as previously approved by Cabinet in May 2007, and included in the approved Capital Programme.

**Financial:** This is for a Sefton Council contribution of up to £5.912m, to a total scheme cost of £21.4m

<b><u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u></b>	<b>2006/ 2007 £</b>	<b>2007/ 2008 £</b>	<b>2008/ 2009 £</b>	<b>2009/ 2010 £</b>
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<b><u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u></b>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

**Legal:** N/A

**Risk Assessment:** "Based on the project plan, full scheme approval will not be until December 2011. Current expectations are that the scheme will receive full approval in due course. However, there is a risk that the scheme may not receive full approval. In this event any costs incurred by the Council may be classed as abortive. Capital accounting rules require that abortive costs are charged to revenue which would require them to be funded from General Fund balances."

**Asset Management:** N/A

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS**

FD 251 – The Finance and Information Services Director has been consulted and his comments have been incorporated into this report.

**CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:**

<b><u>Corporate Objective</u></b>		<b><u>Positive Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Negative Impact</u></b>
1	Creating a Learning Community		✓	
2	Creating Safe Communities	✓		
3	Jobs and Prosperity	✓		
4	Improving Health and Well-Being	✓		
5	Environmental Sustainability	✓		
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	✓		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	✓		
8	Children and Young People		✓	

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT**

Cabinet Report – 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009 – Thornton to Switch Island Link Acceptance of Early Contractor Involvement Tender

Cabinet Report – 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009 – Thornton Switch Island Link Commissioning Report/ Revised Project Management/ Programme & Scheme Cost Profile

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1** On the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009, Cabinet approved the award of an Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) contract to design, develop and construct the Thornton Switch Island Link scheme to Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering Ltd. The contract includes Balfour Beatty's partnership with Jacobs as design engineers. On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009, Cabinet approved the revised governance arrangements for the scheme and the revised programme and funding profile.
- 1.2** The client management and governance of the scheme is through the Planning and Economic Regeneration Department Strategic Transportation Planning Unit with Capita Symonds engaged as the Client's Agent to provide the client (the Council) with technical and project management support.
- 1.3** The proposed scheme programme outlined in the Cabinet report on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2009 identified the completion of preliminary design in December 2009, the holding of a public exhibition in February 2010 and the submission of the planning application in April 2010.
- 1.4** The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a update on the progress of the scheme and to seek approval for:
- The scheme layout proposals (or preliminary design), which will form the basis of the planning application.
  - Holding a public exhibition of the scheme proposals in advance of the planning application so that members of the public will be informed about the scheme and have the opportunity to raise any concerns they have before the application is submitted.
  - Opening discussions with landowners about the possible future acquisition of land for the scheme.

## **2.0 Scheme Progress**

- 2.1** The project team have been developing the design of the Thornton to Switch Island Link scheme and undertaking the environmental assessment since the summer. Regular weekly working group meetings and monthly progress meetings have been held between Sefton Council, Capita Symonds, Balfour Beatty and Jacobs.
- 2.2** A series of further surveys have been completed, mainly in September. These included :
- Ground investigation and topographic surveys
  - Traffic surveys
  - Use of footpaths and tracks
  - Baseline noise surveys
  - Bat, water vole and badger surveys
  - Landscape and land use
- 2.3** The traffic model used to predict the impacts on traffic is also being updated, so that it will meet Department for Transport (DfT) requirements. The new traffic data collected in September will be used to update the model and other modifications needed to satisfy the DfT are being incorporated. This work is making good progress and the model calibration and validation process is under way.
- 2.4** A detailed environmental assessment scoping report has been prepared by the design and environmental consultants, Jacobs. This provides details of all the environmental assessment work that will be undertaken for the scheme. In conjunction with the Planning Department, this report has been provided to statutory consultees and key stakeholders as the basis for providing a formal scoping opinion. The report has been published on the scheme website.
- 2.5** In accordance with the approach and detailed methods described in the scoping report, the environmental assessment has been started. Detailed assessments of the potential impacts of

the scheme on air quality, noise, landscape, land use and agriculture, water quality, hydrology and flood risk, soils, ecology and cultural heritage are being undertaken and will be reported in the Environmental Statement that will be submitted with the planning application.

**2.6** A series of meetings and discussions have been held with key stakeholders, specifically :

- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Government Office
- Highways Agency
- Vehicle Operations Service Agency (VOSA)
- Merseyside Archaeological Service
- Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service
- Sefton Council Environmental Protection Department

**2.7** The design consultants have developed the engineering details of the scheme and a proposed layout for the scheme is described in the following section.

**2.8** The Project Board have also accepted and endorsed the recommendation that the scheme is registered for the Civil Engineering Environmental Quality Assessment and Awards Scheme (CEEQUAL). This scheme draws on current guidance and environmental good practice, providing an incentive and protocol for assessing, benchmarking and labelling the environmental quality of projects. Achieving a CEEQUAL award will provide evidence to stakeholders and other parties of the good environmental practice adopted for the scheme.

**2.9 Recommendation**

**Members note the progress of the Thornton to Switch Island Link.**

**3.0 Scheme Proposals (Layout)**

**3.1** The design consultants Jacobs have been developing the design of the scheme, in conjunction with the rest of the project team. The scheme has been designed in accordance with the Highways Agency "*Design Manual for Roads and Bridges*", which is the industry standard for new roads. Specifically, the scheme has been designed as a wide single carriageway (WS2) standard. Details of the scheme proposals are given in Annex A and are summarised briefly below. One of the key reasons for this report is to secure Members' agreement to the scheme proposals (i.e. layout approval).

**3.2** The proposed alignment of the scheme, as shown in Annex A, remains largely the same as that approved by Members in May 2009. There has been a minor re-alignment in the vicinity of Chapel Lane in order to reduce the number of landowners directly affected and to move the link slightly further from The Lodge. The scheme has been designed to follow the existing topography as far as possible, so that the environmental impacts are minimised and so that it can be drained effectively. There are a few sections where the link road will be on a small embankment and others where it will be in slight cutting and these are illustrated in the alignment plans and typical cross sections provided in Annex A.

**3.3** Design proposals for all the junctions along the route have been developed and these are described in Annex A. Wherever possible, the scheme has been designed to accommodate all turning movements. A new roundabout will be provided at the western end of the scheme, linked to Park View and a full traffic signal controlled junction will be provided at Brickwall Lane. Traffic signals will also be provided at Chapel Lane, permitting access to and from Brook House Farm. The junction with Switch Island is critically important for the scheme and discussions are ongoing with the Highways Agency to make sure that the proposals will enable traffic to enter and leave the new link efficiently. An indication of the proposals for Switch Island is included in Annex A. These proposals also allow for the existing VOSA site to be accommodated.

- 3.4** Various drainage collection options have been considered taking into account the lengths of sections to be drained, existing topography and options for discharge. It has been determined that the best approach is to use a kerb and gully system, similar to that in existing highways, and to carry the drainage in pipes to outfall locations. The scheme has been split into four sections for drainage purposes and an outfall location for each section has been discussed with the Environment Agency. The drainage systems will include pollution control facilities and an attenuation pond will be constructed at each outfall location so that the discharge rates required by the Environment Agency can be achieved. The drainage systems and pond locations are shown in Annex A.
- 3.5** Provisions for existing bridleways, footpaths and tracks have also been developed and these have been discussed with the Sefton Public Rights of Way Forum and presented to Thornton Parish Council. Details of the proposals are given in Annex A. It is proposed to stop up Holgate and Chapel Lane to vehicular traffic to the south of the proposed new link road but retain access for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians by providing signal controlled crossings at both locations. To the north of the link road, it is proposed to stop up Back Lane and replace it with a bridleway, but still retaining access for land owners and farmers. Footpaths at the Thornton end and between Brickwall Lane and Chapel Lane are proposed to be diverted alongside the new link road, as shown in Annex A.
- 3.6** Full details of the Environmental Masterplan will not be available until all the environmental impact assessment work has been completed, but an indication of some of the key issues along the route is given in Annex A. More detailed proposals will be provided at the public exhibition and with the planning application, but the initial indications are that environmental mitigation measures will be required at different parts of the route to address concerns about landscape character impacts, visual impact, bats, great crested newts and noise. In addition, the Masterplan will also identify opportunities for landscape and habitat improvements in the vicinity of the new link road.

### **3.10 Recommendation**

**Cabinet approves the proposed scheme layout (preliminary design).**

### **4.0 Public Exhibition**

- 4.1** Public support for the scheme is strong and the project team is keen to ensure that it remains so. As a means of giving the public a chance to see the proposals and raise any questions and concerns that they may have, it is proposed to hold a public exhibition of the scheme proposals early in the New Year, in advance of the planning application being submitted.
- 4.2** It is proposed to hold public exhibitions of the scheme proposals on the afternoons and evenings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2010. One exhibition will be held in Netherton (St Benet's Church Hall) and the other in Thornton (St Frideswyde's Church Hall). Members of the project team from the Council, Capita Symonds, Balfour Beatty and Jacobs will be available to explain the scheme and answer questions. The exhibitions will be publicised as widely as possible in the local area.
- 4.3** In addition to the public exhibitions, it is proposed to offer individual discussions and consultations to the residents most affected by the scheme proposals (i.e. on Chapel Lane, Rothwells Lane and Holgate). Individual discussions will also be offered to the local landowners and farmers who would be affected. Reports will be presented to all the relevant Area Committees and offers will be made to the Parish Councils for one of the project officers to attend their meetings and explain the scheme proposals.
- 4.4** The public exhibitions will provide an opportunity to inform members of the public about the proposals in advance of the planning application and also give them a chance to raise any concerns that they may have. It will also enable the project team to identify and assess issues raised by the public and to address those concerns within the planning application where appropriate.

#### **4.5 Recommendation**

**Cabinet approves the proposal for a public exhibition of the scheme plans to be held in advance of the submission of the planning application.**

#### **5.0 Land acquisition**

**5.1** Although the details of the proposed alignment are largely finalised (as presented in Annex A), the final extent of the land required for the scheme will still depend on the extent of the environmental mitigation proposals and the assessment of the viability for continued agricultural use of parcels of land severed by the scheme. Nevertheless, the bulk of the land required for the scheme has been identified.

**5.2** It has always been the intention to secure land through agreement with existing landowners, but Compulsory Purchase Orders will be prepared for the land needed for the scheme. These will be published alongside the planning application, but only enforced if required. Given the progress of the scheme to date and the proposal to submit the planning application in April 2010, it would be prudent to make some initial approaches to the existing landowners about the possibility of securing land purchase by agreement. This process would be undertaken by Capita Symonds on behalf of the Council.

#### **5.7 Recommendation**

**Cabinet gives approval for initial discussions to be held with landowners about land acquisition for the scheme.**

**ANNEX A : LAYOUT APPROVAL REPORT**