

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

8 October 2019

Subject: Chippenham Housing Infrastructure Fund Bid

Cabinet Member: Councillor Bridget Wayman, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Key Decision: Key

Executive Summary

Wiltshire Council has made application to the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for a £75m grant to enable the delivery of significant infrastructure works in and around Chippenham.

If successful the grant will enable the Council to deliver...

- benefits in traffic congestion and flow across both new and existing road network
- town centre improvements yielding an improved experience for residents and visitors alike
- high quality housing development in the very long term to a set of standards and principles laid down at the outset
- controlled access to land enabling long term future development that aligns to the Council's Vision of creating strong communities, delivers economic growth and protects our most vulnerable citizens

Proposal(s)

Cabinet is requested to note that the Council has made this application for £75m to the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund. In addition, Cabinet is requested to note that, if successful...

- accepting the grant will require negotiation as to its terms and conditions
- the commitment required will be in the very long term
- a great deal of work will need to be done with many different stakeholders to make delivery possible
- a programme of engagement and communications with all parties will be necessary to ensure all views are heard and represented

Reason for Proposal(s)

Although the HIF bid is not due to announce its result until the end of 2019 it is important that the Council begins to consider how best to prepare the ground for delivery, in anticipation that its application may be successful. The views of many different stakeholders in and around Chippenham need to be accounted for as soon as possible, and a great deal of early preparatory work needs to be done now for the Council to be able to accept the grant, and deliver successfully within the timescales indicated.

Alistair Cunningham OBE
Executive Director

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's application to the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for a grant to enable infrastructure works, employment land and housing development around Chippenham. The report asks that Cabinet note...
 - a. that the application has been made
 - b. the importance of the application being made at this time given the development options proposed in the Local Plan Review
 - c. the need for the Council to be ready to act on and implement any development option when the preferred option emerges from the Local Plan review process and is adopted
 - d. all the next steps that will need to be considered when the result of the bid evaluation is announced, which is expected in late 2019.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The Council's submission to HIF talks directly to all three priorities in the Business Plan – growing the economy; creating strong communities and protecting the vulnerable. In addition, if successful the Council will be able to leverage the HIF grant and have a positive impact on all the goals within each priority. Finally, success in the HIF process will demand innovation from the Council in its own delivery mechanisms and the Council will need to drive effective ways of working with partner organisations, all in the very long term.

Background

3. It has been known for some time that development in and around Chippenham is constrained. Housing starts are below the number that is needed to keep pace with demand resulting in house price inflation exceeding the national average.
4. Developers cite the costs of delivering infrastructure as a bar to bringing forward schemes that would overcome this situation
5. Those schemes that do come forward tend to seek a reduction in the percentage of affordable housing below the Council's policy threshold, to render them affordable to the developer.

6. The opportunity for the Council to apply for a HIF grant arose in 2017 and an Expression of Interest was submitted in March 2018 successfully passing to the second stage a few months later.
7. Stage Two demanded that the Council prepare a full business case which was done and that was submitted on time in March 2019.
8. Since then the Council has been, and still is, subject to a detailed interrogation of the business case answering repeated series of clarification questions, conducting evaluation workshops and hosting a site visit
9. Soon the Council's bid will go in to a moderation process against other bids received by MHCLG and a committee drawn from MHCLG, DfT, and Treasury is expected to make a decision in late 2019
10. The result is also expected to be by ministerial announcement at that time.

Main Considerations for the Council

11. The Council's submission is to the Forward Fund of HIF which exists to unlock "*strategic and high impact infrastructure schemes*" (**An Introduction to the Housing Infrastructure Fund – MHCLG – 2017**)
12. The Council's bid is for £75 million to construct a spine or distributor road to the south and east of Chippenham joining up developments to the north-west of the railway adjacent to Wavin Plastics facility & Parsonage Way, then crossing the A4 and proceeding to the Lackham roundabout adjacent to the Wiltshire College entry point.
13. In addition, the bid request includes funds allocated to improvements to J.17 of the M4 to future proof the junction against the levels of development predicated by the new road
14. This new road is intended to be entirely different from the A350 to the west of Chippenham. The A350 is part of the major road network north-south route, whereas the new road will be a spine or distributor road, probably single carriageway and with a proposed speed limit of 40 mph.
15. Other benefits to Chippenham, the Council, and to citizens generally accrue in many ways...
16. Once complete the new road will take traffic that currently routes through Chippenham around the town reducing congestion and improving flow and journey times, at all times of the day
17. The new road will act as a spine or distributor road and will provide access to several parcels of land for necessary developments including, employment land, local & citizen services and facilities, and housing sites as they come forward via the Local Plan process
18. The bid proposes at least 1m sq.ft. of new employment space and approximately 7,500 homes over the life of the next plan period to 2036, and beyond
19. All associated social infrastructure including schools, leisure facilities etc... are included in the bid details
20. If successful the funding will give the Council control in the long term enabling the delivery of high quality developments that directly address Council priorities and goals, as well as generating the capacity to respond to the changing needs of citizens over time.
21. This degree of control will enable the Council to create long term strategic plans for vital matters such as carbon neutrality, environmentally sensitive development, maximum use of green and blue infrastructure, cycle ways,

- socially inclusive development, connectivity between existing and new settlements, among many other features and attributes
22. The town centre, more free of traffic, will become more attractive to investment. Facilities and features that draw people in can be created. These will include more parking to give people the opportunity to stay locally, and an enhanced leisure and retail offer to give residents and visitors alike a better experience.
 23. The Council's bid responds directly to citizens' views expressed in earlier consultation events to the effect that a road is already necessary to alleviate congestion and traffic flow issues
 24. The proposed road crosses land both in the Council's ownership and in the ownership of third parties. All such third parties are aware of and have offered their support for the Council's bid to HIF.
 25. Furthermore, all landowners are currently expressing an intention to engage positively in any equalisation negotiations that will follow the announcement of the results of the bid process, however...
 26. ... the Council recognises that it may have to engage in a CPO process where ultimately necessary to ensure land is available for development.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

At this bid stage there has been no engagement with overview or scrutiny committees

Safeguarding Implications

No safeguarding implications arise at this bid stage

Public Health Implications

No public health implications arise at this bid stage

Procurement Implications

If the HIF bid is successful then a major procurement exercise will need to be undertaken to identify and contract the right road contractor. Discussions with procurement have already begun to prepare the ground for activity as soon as necessary

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

At this bid stage no equalities implications arise

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

27. The bid submission responds directly to specific questions with reference to environmental and climate change considerations and how they are being managed in the context of the overall development. All such matters will be the subject of detailed Environmental Impact Assessments at the appropriate time, and all necessary mitigations will be put in place.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

28. A successful bid to HIF will generate the ability for the Council and others to control high quality relevant development in the long term. The risk if not successful is that ad hoc development may continue at a rate that does not benefit the town of Chippenham, and does nothing to alleviate the current congestion and lack of investment issues.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

29. If successful, the implementation of the programme funded by HIF money will need a robust and effective long term governance regime to ensure compliance to principles and standards laid down at the outset.

Financial Implications

30. If successful the HIF grant will come with financial terms and conditions and acceptance of the grant will require a period of negotiation.

Legal Implications

31. If successful the HIF grant will come with legal terms and conditions and acceptance of the grant will require a period of negotiation.

Workforce Implications

32. There will be implications for the Council workforce and these will be assessed and quantified if the bid is successful

Options Considered

33. Having considered development options available to Chippenham over the coming years it was determined that the best route to high quality long term development was to attempt to secure major grant funding from government. This essentially makes development on this scale viable and allows the Council to exercise control of principles and standards in the long term

Conclusions

34. That the Council in submitting the bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund is attempting to prepare the ground in the best possible way to enable necessary growth at Chippenham
35. That the Council is aware of the options for development currently going through the Local Plan Review Process and is preparing itself as far as possible to be able to deliver any option that emerges preferred and is consequently adopted
36. That, if successful, the targeting of HIF funds to build the new road as described will deliver significant benefits for Chippenham as it exists today as well as for new communities created

37. That, if successful, the Council will engage fully with citizens in a consultation exercise to assist in shaping any new development and in possible improvements to the existing town environment.
38. That agreements with third part landowners will be sought and that if such agreement cannot be reached CPO will be deployed where necessary

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Appendices

Background Papers

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report: