

Report to: Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board

08 February 2018

Lead officer: Chris Tunstall – GCP Interim Director of Transport

Rural Travel Hubs

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To present a feasibility report on the development of Rural Travel Hubs in South Cambridgeshire.
- 1.2. To seek approval to proceed to phase two of the project. Phase two will involve the preparation of full business cases for the pilot sites, a detailed analysis of planning considerations, refined costings of construction and an outline of the evaluation methods to review the success of the pilots.
- 1.3. This supports the Greater Cambridge Partnership's transport vision of 'creating better and greener transport networks, connecting people to homes, jobs, study and opportunity'.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Executive Board;

- 2.1. Note and take into consideration the results of the feasibility report, future parish consultation with residents, local knowledge and planning considerations to approve Oakington and Sawston as pilots to be taken into Phase 2 as part of the Rural Travel Hubs project.
- 2.2. Agree that in respect of Whittlesford:
 - a) A Master Transport Planning exercise to be undertaken at a cost of £50,000 which can be met out of existing funding,
 - b) That a contribution of £70,000 be made for the provision of additional cycle parking for 200 bikes.
- 2.3. Note that the three villages in the above recommendations would form part of the first wave of Rural Travel Hubs. Based on the evaluation of the success of these pilots, further waves of Rural Travel Hubs could be investigated in the future.

3. Officer comment on technical issues raised at Joint Assembly

- 3.1 A question was raised as to why the feasibility report gave the impression of a low confidence in the success of the proposals by the consultant.

Officers confirmed that the feasibility report was to consider the concept of a Rural Travel Hub, and as such represents very high-level recommendations. Phase 2 of the Rural Travel Hubs project includes the development of business cases and will therefore provide more certainty of the potential success of the pilot Rural Travel Hubs.

- 3.2 There was a specific concern raised about Whittlesford and that the travel hub would act as a free car park for the railway station. A similar concern was raised regarding Sawston and that for both villages the travel hubs would not benefit residents directly, effectively becoming railway station car park extensions with increased number of cars in villages and thus potentially being at odds with objectives and priorities of the GCP.
- 3.3 The officer response to concerns about Whittlesford was that there is going to be a Master Transport Planning exercise that will take a holistic look at the issues surrounding the area to develop a strategy that will most effectively resolve any issues identified (see section 4.7). In respect of the point raised for Sawston, it was pointed out that the site was only one possibility. The engagement with local residents as part of Phase 2 of the project will provide officers with a detailed understanding of how a travel hub should be integrated into the village to benefit residents.

4. Key issues and considerations

- 4.1. In March 2017, the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Executive Board approved £100k to progress a feasibility study into the potential of RTHs.
- 4.2. Skanska were appointed as the consultants to undertake most of the feasibility study under a framework contract already held with the County Council. The feasibility work commenced in June 2017.
- 4.3. The key objectives for Skanska and the Rural Travel Hubs feasibility study were:
- a. To provide a community-led understanding of what a Rural Travel Hub is and their purpose
 - b. Identification of rural communities' travel connections to Cambridge City
 - c. Develop an outline specification and criteria for Rural Travel Hubs based on community views
 - d. Identify areas within South Cambridgeshire that may benefit from the provision of a Rural Travel Hub
 - e. Provide a recommendation to establish at least two sites that could be used as a pilot study for Rural Travel Hubs
 - f. Consider the high-level planning issues that would be relevant to any planning application.
- 4.4. Section 11 of the feasibility report (provided in **Appendix 1**) details the site prioritisation methodology and nine criteria used to rank the sites. Taking all factors into consideration, Oakington (adjacent the Cambridge Guided Busway), and Whittlesford are identified as the top two sites. A further eight sites are listed in order of their criteria based score.
- Oakington**
- 4.5. The Oakington site is owned by Cambridgeshire County Council. It is anticipated that this would enable quicker land acquisition discussions and therefore a faster delivery of the pilot. It is also in the green belt; therefore work will need to be done to demonstrate the very special circumstances which justify a Green Belt location such as more evidence to demonstrate the benefits of the sites and local transport needs.

Whittlesford

- 4.6. The Whittlesford site is in the countryside outside the village framework; therefore consideration will need to be given to safeguard the rural character. During the course of this research it has been agreed that a master planning exercise will take place for Whittlesford station and its surrounding area, including the three adjacent science hubs. This will involve taking a holistic look at the issues and opportunities whilst involving all the stakeholders, landowners, neighbourhood plan group and Parish Council to develop a plan for the whole area.
- 4.7. The Master Transport Planning exercise will take into consideration the Cambridgeshire rail corridor study and any ongoing need for the rural hub. The cost of the study is anticipated to be £50,000 and will take 6 to 8 weeks to complete. It is envisaged that the results will be available early to mid-March 2018. The brief is provided in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.8. We have been approached by Greater Anglia regarding the opportunity to provide a significant number of secure cycle spaces at the Station. DfT currently have grant funding available for this type of station enhancement. The proposal is to utilise an existing under-utilised area of station land to provide for a mix of secure and non-secure, well lit, CCTV monitored cycle parking area for 200 bikes. The cost of which is estimated to be £700,000. The conditions of the grant funding is that a 10% third party contribution must be obtained and Greater Anglia have been in discussion with us with regard to this contribution of £70k. This aligns well with our mode shift objective and is recommended for support.

Sawston

- 4.9. Given that there could be delays, for planning or master planning reasons, in bringing forward either of the top two sites. It may be prudent to consider a third pilot at Sawston (a very close third ranked hub) to safeguard against this. The proposed location at Sawston will need to be considered in light of the ongoing projects including delivering improvements to the South Eastern Corridor (A1307), which also has the potential for the development of a park and ride at Linton, and aspirations of the Parish. This can all be taken into consideration if it is agreed this site moves into phase two.
- 4.10. An initial costing for each of the sites has been included in the feasibility report. It should be noted that whilst these costings may be high they could well be reduced depending on specification and exact designs. More detailed costings would be developed in phase two of the project if approved by the Executive Board in February.
- 4.11. The report has undertaken initial assessment of the benefits and disbenefits of Rural Travel Hubs in 'Section 6' of the feasibility report. This will inform the development of the business cases going forward. At this stage it is anticipated that further work to refine current designs to facilitate the preparation of business cases can be met within current budget allocation. The budget will be monitored carefully going forward. Any likelihood of overspend will be reported back to the Board.

5. Options

- 5.1. Taking into consideration the results of the feasibility report, parish consultation, local knowledge and planning considerations, it is the officers' view that Rural travel Hubs be explored further at Oakington, Whittlesford (as part of the Transport Master Planning exercise) and Sawston by developing full business cases for each site.

6. Next steps and milestones

- 6.1. The GCP Executive Board in February 2018 will be recommended to approve Oakington, Whittlesford (as part of the Transport Master Planning exercise) and Sawston as the three pilot sites, to progress to phase two of this project.
- 6.2. Phase two will include the preparation of full business cases for Oakington and Sawston sites, developed with the local communities, Parish Councils and local Members to ensure proposals meet local needs. They will address planning considerations such as green belt, design, access and conservation, refine the costs and outline the monitoring and evaluation methods that will be used to review the success of the pilots.
- 6.3. Following local engagement the business cases will be updated accordingly and presented to the Assembly and Board in late 2018 when the Board will be asked to approve further funding for the development of the sites.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial and other resources

The Scheme development is funded by Greater Cambridge Partnership through City Deal funding. The initial allocation of £100k by the Executive Board in March 2017 for this project should be sufficient to complete Phase2.

7.2. Legal

No significant legal implications have been identified at this stage although they may emerge as the project moves towards the statutory process stage.

7.3. Staffing

Project Management is undertaken by officers of the Greater Cambridge Partnership. Consultants have yet to be appointed to complete Phase2 of the project, although it is likely it will be Skanska.

7.4. Risk management

A full project risk register forms part of the Project Plan.

7.5. Equality and diversity

There are no equality or diversity implications in this report.

7.6. Climate change and environmental

The proposed measures have the potential to reduce congestion and improve air quality in the longer term through encouraging a shift towards sustainable transport modes.

7.7. Consultation and communication

Officers anticipate engagement with the statutory and local stakeholders through the future design phases of the scheme.

List of appendices

Appendix 1	Rural Travel Hubs Feasibility Study Report November 2017
Appendix 2	Whittlesford Masterplan brief
Appendices within appendix 1	Please refer to the documents section on the following web page https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/transport/transport-projects/rural-travel-hubs/