

APPLICATION D

Proposal Swanley Station Improvements

Applicant Sevenoaks District Council

Ward(s) Swanley St Marys

RECOMMENDATION: That the £750,000.00 funding applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “Swanley Station Improvements” be approved on the following grounds:

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community
- Partnership working with other organisations
- Majority of project cost secured through match-funding

Introduction

- 1 In 2015, Kent County Council approached Sevenoaks District Council to whether there were any infrastructure projects which the District Council would like to deliver. This was part of the Local Growth Fund, which is administered by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). Sevenoaks District Council worked on a number of bids including improvements to wayfinding at key locations in the District and transport hub refurbishments (e.g. Sevenoaks Bus Station).
- 2 The following report focuses on the refurbishment and access improvements to Swanley Station.
- 3 The application for CIL funding was received by Officers on 01.12.2017.

Description of Proposal

- 4 The scheme includes the refurbishment of the station building, improvement to the forecourt, the provision of 20 sheltered and secure cycle spaces, provision of a bus and taxi drop off/pick up point, improved signage and implementation of a one way system.
- 5 Additionally it is proposed to improve pedestrian and cycling routes from the Town Centre including assessing the feasibility of an additional footbridge across the railway lines to reduce travel times to and from the station.

6 It is anticipated that the project would be completed by 2020/21.

Funding

7 Kent County Council as part of its business case to the SELEP estimated that the total cost of the improvements to Swanley Station would be approximately £2,250,000.00.

8 The application has identified the following additional funding sources and grants to support their application to the Board:

- Local Growth Fund: £1,500,00.00

9 Members should note that this funding was allocated as part of a business case that Kent County Council put forward to the SELEP, on the basis that the District Council would match fund £0.75 million with the Community Infrastructure Levy.

10 The managers of the LGF funding are seeking confirmation that the SDC match funding of £0.75 million will be available for the project. If the match is not available then the LGF funding will likely to be reallocated to other projects within the County.

11 Therefore Sevenoaks District Council has applied to the Board for £750,000.00 of CIL funding.

Representations and Support

12 The application states a number of organisations who Sevenoaks District Council are working in partnership to deliver the scheme:

- Kent County Council
- Southeastern Railway
- Network Rail

13 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:

- Kent County Council
- Southeastern Railway
- Network Rail

14 The application is also supported by a number of county and local plans and strategies including:

- West Kent Local Sustainable Transport Fund - Tackling Congestion 2016-2021 package.

- Growth without gridlock: A transport delivery plan for Kent (2010)
- Local Transport Plan for Kent 2011-16
- Sevenoaks District Cycling Strategy:
- Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport 2010-2026:
- Sevenoaks Core Strategy 2011-2026

Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid

Principal Criteria met

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community
- Partnership working with other organisations
- Majority of project cost secured through match-funding

Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community

- 15 One of the key criteria for the assessment of bids is that proposals should demonstrate the economic, social and environmental benefits of the scheme. This includes whether there are significant benefits for the economy, community and social impacts and how the proposal benefits the environment and mitigates any impacts.
- 16 A Master Vision for Swanley and Hextable was produced by Sevenoaks District Council to determine a number of growth scenarios that could regenerate Swanley town centre and the surrounding area to provide housing, employment and infrastructure requirements to meet the needs of the community. This piece of work is an evidence base for the emerging Local Plan.
- 17 The application recognises that there is potential for future growth in Swanley town centre, both for residential and economic opportunities. There is an expectation that the growth of the town will generate additional passengers and the project will seek to enable further sustainable access rather than increase the number of vehicle movements giving lifts to the station. Swanley station also lies in the London Travel Area in Zone 8, meaning that the community benefits from TfL's Oyster payment system.
- 18 There are significant economic and environmental benefits to the scheme. The proposals seek to address improving access as well as reducing traffic congestion to and from the station. Additional benefits which have been considered include:
- Reduce 'drop off/pick up' vehicle movements to the station, reducing traffic congestion around the town

- Seeks to enhance the customer experience through creating a safer and more attractive passenger environment.
- Encourage further growth of pedestrian and cycling users, and enhance the interchange with bus services
- Improving air quality through encouraging sustainable transport alternatives to and from the station

19 There are also significant social benefits to the proposal. With a potential increase in passengers, the improvements will make the station as more attractive environment, enhancing the customer experience while minimising the risk of anti-social behaviour through better design. It is also important that the station is accessible to all. Currently there is no step free access on the north side of the station, meaning that those who require step-free access must travel to the south side of the station. Improvements and enhancements will be looked at as part of the scheme, through the provision of a new footbridge. Feasibility work is being undertaken to provide the necessary design and costs of this work.

Partnership working with other organisations

- 20 Another key criterion for assessing the application is determining how the project will be delivered and whether any additional partners are included in the project delivery.
- 21 There is clear evidence in the CIL application to demonstrate partnership working to deliver the scheme. The proposal was originally supported in the business case to the Local Growth Fund by the four organisations; Sevenoaks District Council, Kent County Council, Network Rail and Southeastern Trains.

Majority of project cost secured through match-funding

- 22 The Council has determined that the purpose of CIL funding is to be a “top-up”, to be used in meeting any funding deficiencies or gaps in order to deliver the project. This funding should only be used for “capital” investment, as opposed to being used for “revenue” spend.
- 23 Funding has been secured through the Local Growth Fund. The business case secured £1.25 million of funding for the project, on the basis that the District Council would match fund £0.75 million with the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 24 The managers of the LGF funding are seeking confirmation that the SDC match funding of £0.75 million will be available for the project. If the match is not available then the LGF funding will likely be reallocated to other projects within the County.
- 25 No other funding proposals have been put forward as part of the scheme. There is no evidence to suggest whether local town and parish councils have been approached to contribute to the funding of this scheme.

Other considerations

Planning Permission

- 26 The assessment criteria states that preference of CIL funding will be given to those which have permissions or consents in place before funding is given.
- 27 Sevenoaks District Council has indicated that some works may require planning permission. Network Rail has permissive powers to carry out works on land owned by them. It should be noted that the application states that the plans for the station improvements are being finalised and the relevant consents will be sought (where applicable).
- 28 Any additional consent that are required as part of the scheme will be sought as part of the scheme implementation programme. The extent of the land required to implement the station improvements lies within the control of Network rail and Southeastern. As partners in the scheme, there are no perceived land ownership issues.

Management of the Proposal

- 29 The station improvements will be subject to maintenance obligations already existing with and between Network Rail and Southeastern. Separate funding arrangements are in place as per the existing maintenance obligations between Network Rail and Southeastern Trains.

Conclusion

- 30 The proposal to improve Swanley Station is considered as a local infrastructure project. The economic, social and environmental benefits add weight to the needs of the project and add value to the community. The proposal has match funding secured through the Local Growth Fund, but is dependent on whether CIL funding is secured and confirmed. The project is supported by a number of partners and will be managed by existing agreements between Network Rail and Southeastern Trains.
- 31 Therefore, the recommendation made is that the Board consider fully funding the request made by the applicant for £750,000.00.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Applicant's original pro-forma

Background Papers

The Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme