

Proposal	Bat & Ball Station - Transport and Access Improvements
Applicant	Sevenoaks Town Council
Ward(s)	Sevenoaks Northern

RECOMMENDATION: That the £258,274.00 funding applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “Bat & Ball Station - Transport and Access Improvements” be approved on the following grounds:

- Identified need for the scheme
- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- Majority of project cost secured through match-funding

Introduction

- 1 Sevenoaks Town Council is one of the 31 parish/town councils that operate within Sevenoaks District. Sevenoaks Town Council shares its administrative town boundaries with Seal, Sevenoaks Weald, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Otford and Kemsing.
- 2 The application for CIL funding was received by Officers on 29.11.2017.

Description of Proposal

- 3 The application is focused on Bat & Ball Station, Bat & Ball Road, Sevenoaks. There are four components to the proposal:
 - Refurbishment of the station building to provide a community venue/asset for the community to use;
 - Improved access to platform 1 of the station;
 - The provision of cycle racks adjacent to both platforms 1 and 2; and
 - Enabling access from Otford Road, via the proposed community centre.
- 4 The proposal is closely aligned to the Town Council’s plans for providing a new community centre to the site adjacent to Bal & Ball station, as well as the wider aspirations of the Draft Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan which include better transport and community facilities for this area of Sevenoaks Town.

- 5 It is anticipated that the project would be completed by August 2018. It is noted that the anticipated start date would be February 2018, from the original CIL application submitted in November 2017.

Funding

- 6 Sevenoaks Town Council estimate that the total cost of the works and improvements to Bat & Ball Station is **£1,305,310.00**. A detailed breakdown of costs for each component of the scheme has been provided to support the application, including associated contingency costs and preliminaries to deliver the components of the scheme.
- 7 The application has identified the following additional funding sources and grants to support their application to the Board:
- Heritage Lottery Fund: £755,600.00 (subject to approval)
 - Sevenoaks Town Council: £291,436.00
- 8 Since the submission of the application in November 2017, there appears that no further evidence has been demonstrated as to whether the Heritage Lottery Fund grant has been secured.
- 9 To meet the funding gap for the full cost of the scheme, Sevenoaks Town Council has applied to the Board for £258,274.00 of CIL funding.

Representations and Support

- 10 The application states the following organisations who Sevenoaks Town Council are working in partnership to deliver the scheme:
- Friends of Bat & Ball Station
 - National Rail
 - Southeastern Trains
- 11 The support given by Network Rail and Southeastern Trains has been given in principle, in relation to operational works that need to be undertaken to some of the works described in the proposal.
- 12 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:
- Cllr. Marilyn Canet (SDC Member for Sevenoaks Northern)
 - Cllr. Johnathan Krogdahl (SDC Member for Sevenoaks Northern)
 - Mayor of Sevenoaks Town (Sevenoaks Town Council)

Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid

Principal Criteria met

- Identified need for the scheme
- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- Majority of project cost secured through match-funding

Identified need for the scheme

- 13 The CIL application asks applicants to demonstrate why the scheme is required and to evidence the need. Sevenoaks Town has two rail stations with both serving a number of destinations, mainly London, Maidstone and Ashford.
- 14 The Draft Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan is a Sevenoaks Town Council initiative through the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Plan. The Masterplan looks at how growth and development might be achieved during the new Local Plan period which covers the plan period up to 2035, including the provision of circa. 1,200 new homes, community facilities, new sport and recreation facilities. The Town Council is supporting the development of Northern Sevenoaks through the neighbourhood planning mechanism, which will potentially be included within the Local Plan.
- 15 It is noted that the Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan was put out to public consultation by Sevenoaks Town Council, as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process. Consultation results showed positive support for the Masterplan, with improvements being made to Bat & Ball Station.
- 16 The delivery of the scheme is also supported by potential development which may come forward as part of the Local Plan, as to provide critical infrastructure which existing and future residents will come to benefit from. This includes enhancing better train services to London, Maidstone and Ashford, while provide better opportunities for sustainable travel to places of work, education and community facilities in Northern Sevenoaks.
- 17 Through careful consideration, I conclude that there is a demonstrated need for the scheme for the community.

Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community

- 18 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.
- 19 The applicant has documented each of the potential social, economic and environmental impacts that the scheme could bring within the application.

- 20 An Economic Impact Assessment was commissioned by Sevenoaks Town Council in November 2016. This was largely to support the funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The economic benefits of the station improvements are summarized as:
- The creation of 25 net jobs per annum, following the completion of the refurbishment, resulting in a direct boost to the local economy (approximately £1.2 million Gross Value Added);
 - The refurbishing of the station building will provide social enterprise for local people, allowing the proposed community uses to generate its own funding streams to sustain financial viability; and
 - The number of day numbers using the station have the potential to increase, meaning that more revenue could be collected through tourism and events being held in Northern Sevenoaks.
- 21 The environmental benefits to the scheme are primarily identified as sustainable transport options and increasing the usage of the station and its rail services. The Bat & Ball line serves the Darent Valley, including Otford, Eynsford and Swanley. This increases the opportunities for sustainable transport for residents, as an alternative to using private vehicles for leisure, employment or education trips. It would aid positive impacts on air quality and could reduce traffic congestion on key roads and junctions, namely St Johns Hill and Bat & Ball junction, by encouraging residents to use the rail services to Sevenoaks station.
- 22 The proposals outlined in the application indicate that improvements to the station's environment and station building will improve the community value of the area. In addition to this, by bringing the station building back into use would deter anti-social behaviour and improve the surrounding environment.
- 23 The social impacts and benefits that the proposal are closely linked with the environmental and economic benefits. One of the main focuses of the proposal is to refurbish the existing station building which is a heritage assets, into a community venue/asset to include a cafe and community space for residents to use. This meeting point will allow the community a focal point to work, meet, organise events and connect with wider local infrastructure (e.g. health and social infrastructure).
- 24 Furthermore, the proposal at the station looks to make it more accessible for those with disabilities. Therefore, the access to the station will be linked to the proposed community centre to the north of the station where there will be a greater provision of community rooms and services linked to wider infrastructure in the locality.
- 25 It is clear that there a number of economic, social and environmental benefits that could be realised if the project was delivered. It appears that these benefits would be realised through the course of the Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan with immediate benefits coming from improved access to the station and renovation of station building. Further economic,

social and environment benefits would be attributed following the development of a new community centre.

Majority of project cost secured through match-funding

- 26 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.
- 27 The bid is supported by two significant funding sources. It is noted that at the time of submission, the funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund was applied for, but the application does not conclude whether the funding has been secured, or what the contingencies are if grant funding is not approved from the Heritage Lottery.
- 28 A proportion of the funding will also come from Sevenoaks Town Council reserves.
- 29 The submitted application also requests that the CIL funding applied for is staged into two payments, to co-inside with the timetable for delivering the scheme.
- 30 This is an important component to the funding package that the application has put together to support the delivery of this project to provide additional transport and community facilities to service the surrounding area and will support the development of additional housing as suggested by the Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan and Local Plan.

Other considerations

Planning Permission

- 31 An additional consideration of the criteria in which applications are assessed against is whether a proposal has the appropriate consents in place to carry out the project.
- 32 Sevenoaks Town Council have confirmed that planning permission would be required to carry out the necessary works on the Bat & Ball station building, and permissions have been granted. Further planning applications are to be submitted in relation to the Bat & Ball Centre, access improvements to platform 1 and cycle racks for both station platforms. Details for access from Otford Road is to reviewed following the submission of all planning permission associated to the scheme.
- 33 Members should note that all planning permissions should have been submitted by the end of 2017. No further information on whether those planning applications have been accepted has been provided.
- 34 In addition, Sevenoaks Town Council recognise that additional consents from Southeastern Trains and Network Rail must be secured in order to carry out

works on their operation land. It has been confirmed that agreements in principle have been agreed with Network Rail (works to Platform 1) and Southeastern Trains (Cycle racks on platform 2).

Management of the Proposal

- 35 The management of the proposal has been confirmed in the application and Sevenoaks Town Council would be the principle lead for the management in delivering this scheme, while working with necessary partners to ensure its completion.

Conclusion

- 36 There are a number of benefits that the scheme could bring to Northern Sevenoaks. The proposal seeks to enhance and improve the existing transport links, while creating a new community facility which would benefit the existing community and any future development. The funding gap is modest due to the amount of funding that has been secured through the Heritage Lottery Fund and Sevenoaks Town Council's own reserves. Finally, it is clear that the need for scheme has been identified through the neighbourhood planning process to produce the Draft Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan.
- 37 Therefore, the proposal put forward by Sevenoaks Town Council demonstrates an appropriate use of CIL funding as it is maintaining infrastructure as well as creating a new facility to meet the demands of future development in the local area. As such, the £258,274.00 funding request that has been applied for has been recommended for approval.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Applicant's original pro-forma

Background Papers

None