

**Proposal**      Swanley Station Improvements

**Applicant**    Sevenoaks District Council

**Ward(s)**        Swanley St Marys

## Introduction

- 1      At the CIL Spending Board held on Tuesday 8 May 2018, Sevenoaks District Council applied for £750 000 towards improvements to Swanley Train Station.
- 2      The Board agreed to give the full £750,000.00 applied for, on the following grounds:
  - i.      Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
  - ii.     Partnership working with other organisations;
  - iii.    Majority of project cost secured through match funding.
- 3      The Board agreed to give the full £750,000.00 applied for, on the following grounds:
  - iv.     Subject to disabled access from both sides of the station detailed as part of the scheme, listed support of at least one local member, views from the Town Council obtained and ongoing arrangements with Network Rail.
- 4      Officers from the property team have been working with other bodies including national rail and Kent County Council towards progressing this project. They have provided planning officers with an updated report on their progress which includes the following:
  - The project plans have been progressing since the funding approval and plans have been submitted for planning under general permitted development, currently awaiting decision.
  - The total project funding which has been allocated is £2.25 million including the £750k CIL contribution. Without the CIL contribution this partnership project will not go ahead and the significant external funding allocated to the area would be lost with it being unlikely to be available in the future.

- Local members have been asked for comment on the planning application, with further opportunity to view the plans to be arranged following response from planning application.
- Significant work and planning has gone into these proposals which will include changes to the road layout surrounding the station, increased CCTV coverage, as well as improving the look and functionality of the station buildings and extending the retail offerings for customers.
- SDC officers from the Economic Development Team have met with the Swanley Town Council Chief Executive Officer and confirmed that they were supportive of this development to bring investment into the station to support the town as it begins to regenerate and grow. Information about the scheme is to be available in the Swanley link for residents to view.

5 Looking at the supplementary information provided, it is clear that the Council are likely to or have met the following conditions laid out by the CIL Spending Board:

- Support from a local member.
- Views of the Town Council obtained.
- Ongoing arrangement with Network Rail.

6 The main issue here is that the project, when submitted did not include an access for the disabled on both sides of the station. The south side already has access and this provision will be enhanced. However looking into the provision on both sides, the applicant comments as follows:

*“The station currently has stairs to access the footbridge from the Northern side, the extensive feasibility work for this project considered 2 options for achieving step free access. The provision of a ramp from the entrance to the car park onto the overbridge and a small lift shaft to achieve the same and navigate the nine-step change in levels between the entrance and the overbridge.*

*The engineering to achieve either of these options is highly complex as there are set conditions around gradients of ramps (i.e. cannot be more than 1:20 gradient, resting landing at regular intervals etc) and the location of either the ramp or lift shaft involved creating the structure on the side of a deep cutting with the operational railway below. The two potential solutions were evaluated in terms of buildability and only the ramp was considered a viable option for achieving step-free access given the unique position above the operational railway. The cost of the ramp would be over £1million to achieve and was therefore not possible within the budget or*

*timescale available. Other more budget friendly options such as installing stair lifts were discounted as a viable option for the station environment as they have been tried elsewhere on the railway, have not worked well and have now been discontinued.*

*Southeastern currently offers an Assisted Travel service for all users who need further help to access the network owing to their personal circumstances, to circumvent physical barriers owing to the Victorian infrastructure or a combination of both. The Assisted Travel service offers a basket of support options for users including providing additional staff support, loan of a wheelchair while on the station to get from entrances to the train or where there are physical barriers, which cannot currently be engineered out, accessible taxi transfer to areas where step-free access can be provided.*

*To this end, Southeastern would currently offer this service to anyone requiring step-free access from the North Side at Swanley as the road route from one side to another is a long one. The service is promoted at the station on the 'Welcome to Swanley station poster' at each entrance and there are leaflets available from customer services by post or from the ticket office at the station*

*The scheme, (which is being part funded by CIL) encompasses a number of accessibility improvements as follows:*

- Introduction of three parking spaces at South entrance for blue badge holders installed the latest standard in terms of bay dimensions and transfer zones. This replaces the current two spaces, which are not installed to the latest standards and have limited transfer space for users.*
- De-cluttering of booking hall and approaches to overbridge with relocated cycle stands and removal of current tenant space to open up areas*
- Refurbished footpaths down station approach with renewed and compliant drop kerbs with blister tactile paving on the entire route down to the station*
- New drop kerbs with blister tactile paving on Station Approach and Azalea Drive to create step-free route from Station Approach up Azalea Drive and to bus stop including parade of shops*
- Installation of anti-slip stair nosings and warm-to-touch new handrails including new LED lighting on staircase leading the Station Approach towards bus stop and parade of shops on Azalea Drive.”*

- 7 In light of the above, it is clear that SDC and their partners are progressing this project and have fully considered the option to provide access for the disabled on both sides of the station. It is clear from the information provided that due to the change in levels and the cost of that provision the provision to both sides would render the scheme unviable especially if the CIL money is released only if the access for the disabled is provided to both sides.
- 8 The property team have therefore approached the CIL Spending Board to amend the condition of the payment of funds.

### **Officers Assessment**

- 9 Officers have considered the proposal and it is their view that the proposal without the access for the disabled to the north of the station would still provide a project that had strong economic benefits to the community, partnership working with other organisations and that the majority of the project would be secured through match funding. It is therefore considered that the amendment to the condition is acceptable as it does not significantly impact upon the overall improvements to the station or the reason for granting the money in the first place.
- 10 In addition to this as the need to provide access for the disabled to public buildings is covered by other legislation, it is not considered that it is truly within the remit of the Spending Board to insist on the provision of access for the disabled over and above what the law provides.
- 11 Members are reminded that without the CIL contribution it is likely that the redevelopment of the station will not happen and the allocated external funding would be lost as the majority of it is time limited.

### **Conclusion**

- 12 The property team at SDC have requested that an amendment be made to the conditions of a bid that has already been before the CIL Spending Board and awarded funding.
- 13 The proposal has been fully considered and it is recommended that even without disabled access to both sides of the station, the need for the scheme has been clearly demonstrated. It is therefore considered that the bid is still approved for the following reasons and conditions:
  - i) strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
  - ii) partnership working with other organisations;

- iii) majority of project cost secured through match-funding.
- iv) subject to support local support being provided, views of the Town Council obtained and ongoing arrangements with Network Rail.

**Appendices**                      Original bidding proforma and supporting information

**Background Papers**            [Minutes - CIL Spending Board - May 8 2018](#)

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