

Science Park Drive/Access Road Works

Report of the Head of Planning Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended that:

- (a) the scheme shown on drawing 286813E-HLT-Sk153 rev B at an estimated cost of £275,000 be approved;
- (b) any Traffic Regulation Orders required be advertised and, if no objections are received, be made and sealed;
- (c) the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Growth and Cabinet Liaison for Exeter, be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the scheme design, following consultation.

1. Summary

This report seeks approval for works to upgrade Science Park Drive so that the road can be opened as a public highway following completion of the first phase of the Tithebarn Link Road. The public use of the Science Park Drive in this interim period will provide relief to the Honiton Road corridor and Junction 29 and will enable Grampian-style planning conditions to be amended to unlock a significant number of houses and jobs in the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point area, including the planned MET office development at Science Park.

2. Background/Introduction

Devon County Council has been successful in securing Government funding to deliver the first phase of the Tithebarn Link Road. The Tithebarn Link Road will help relieve traffic on Honiton Road / passing through Junction 29 by redistributing traffic between Heavitree Road and Pinhoe Road. The full scheme will connect Cumberland Way in the west to the old A30 at Blackhorse via the existing Tithebarn Lane bridge over the M5. This first phase is being funded by the Local Pinch Point Fund programme and Regional Growth Fund and is due for completion in May 2015. The County Council is progressing designs for the second phase of the link road from the Science Park drive northern access through to the former A30 (via Redhayes); however, this may not be delivered until 2018. During this period, a number of developments with planning permission in the Monkerton area, at Redhayes, at Cranbrook (beyond 2900 dwellings) and on 2nd phase land at Science Park are unable to progress due to Grampian-style planning conditions, which require completion of the full link road to mitigate impacts at Junction 29. Developer contributions have been secured towards delivery of the 2nd phase and a reserved matters application is due to be submitted in March 2015.

In order for growth to continue on a number of sites within Science Park and across the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point area, the County Council successfully negotiated interim public use of Science Park Drive until the completion of the full link road.

There is a need for traffic orders and minor works to the Science Park Drive in order for the road to be opened as a public highway.

3. Proposal

The use of Science Park Drive as a temporary link road was negotiated on the basis of a reduction in the Section 106 contribution towards the link road and a relaxation of the planning conditions which restricted construction on phase 2 land of the Science Park (which includes the proposed MET office development) in advance of the full link road being completed.

The Science Park concept is based on a low speed, 'campus-style' environment. There are several amendments needed in order for the road to be opened as a public highway (see Appendix 1), including:

- Site clearance
- Fencing/gates/concrete barriers
- Drainage (cleaning gullies/ditches)
- Re-alignment of the proposed footway/cycleway
- Traffic calming measures (raised table/speed cushions)
- Traffic signs and road markings
- Road Lighting and electrical works

Together with the first phase of the Tithebarn Link Road, due for completion in March 2015, the planned works to Science Park Drive will deliver a 6.5m, street-lit, 30mph carriageway to the old A30, bypassing Junction 29. The carriageway width is comparable to the full Tithebarn link road, therefore will be sufficient in capacity terms to cope with site traffic and general 'through' traffic. Predictions based on estimated build rates of development suggest that the road will be able to serve a strategic route function on an interim basis.

Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) will be required for a 30mph speed limit and a 24 hour clearway along the length of Science Park Drive between C832 Link Road and Tithebarn Lane. In addition, there are speed cushions and a raised table for the primary cycle route crossing which links towards Redhayes bridge to the west and Cranbrook to the east. These will also need to be advertised.

The recent Tithebarn Green permission includes a commitment in the S106 for Devon County Council to deliver the remaining section of the link road by 2018, after which the County Council will seek to stop up the Science Park drive as a public highway so that it can revert back to a private road and become a campus-style environment.

4. Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

The principle of the Science Park drive being open to the public has been consulted upon as part of the Science Park Section 106 renegotiations and was agreed by East Devon District Council's planning committee in March 2014.

The Highways Agency supports in principle the use of Science Park Drive as a temporary link road for general traffic and has indicated a willingness to amend their planning conditions on the basis that the drive serves a similar function in capacity terms as the proposed 2nd phase of the Tithebarn Link Road.

Should the recommendations be approved, there will be a further consultation period in relation to the proposed Traffic Orders.

5. Financial and Resource Considerations

The total construction costs and professional fees associated with the upgrading of the Science Park Drive to an adoptable standard for a public highway is £275,000. This will be funded using part of the £2.5m Growth Deal 1 funding, which is for expenditure on Exeter Science Park projects in 2015/16. The Exeter Science Park bid received outline business case approval from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and ministerial approval in 2014. The detailed business case was submitted in early January 2015 and an announcement on funding is expected following the LEP's Strategic Investment Panel meeting on 6th February 2015. No works will be commenced until it has received formal confirmation of the funds from the LEP and Exeter Science Park Company.

6. Sustainability and Equality Considerations

The construction of a footway and cycleway alongside Science Park Drive will encourage more sustainable modes of travel. The raised table proposed as part of the upgrade works demonstrates a commitment to this strategy by maintaining a high quality east – west strategic cycle corridor between the city centre and Cranbrook via Redhayes Bridge.

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct; advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

An Impact Assessment has been produced for the proposals and measures have been taken to include a facility for people to cross the Science Park drive on the route of the east-west strategic cycleway.

A copy of the Impact Assessment has been circulated to Cabinet Members and is available alongside this report on the Council's website at:
http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision_making/cma/index_exc.htm.

7. Carbon and Economic Impact Considerations

The public highway use of the Science Park Drive in combination with the 1st phase of Tithebarn Link Road is expected to better manage congestion on the busy Honiton Road corridor, with an improved flow of traffic delivering both journey time and carbon emission benefits. Its temporary use will also enable development to come forward sooner and would generate significant economic benefits in the growth point area.

8. Legal Considerations

Any traffic regulation orders must be advertised in accordance with the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. The proposed traffic regulation orders for this scheme are a 30mph speed limit, a 24 hour clearway along the length of Science Park Drive between C832 Link Road and Tithebarn Lane, speed cushions

and a raised table.

9. Risk Management Considerations

There is a risk that during the Science Park Drive's interim use as a public highway vehicle speeds may be higher than desired along Science Park Drive, particularly in the location of the Blackhorse Lane pedestrian/cycle crossing. To mitigate this risk, it is proposed that traffic calming measures are installed, including speed cushions on the approach to the cycle crossing and a raised table linking both sides of the cycleway. These measures are recommended by DCC Safety Audit team.

There are also concerns that following the interim use as a public highway, proposals to stop up the highway and return the drive to private use are met with objections through the traffic order process. This represents a low risk and the Science Park Company was made aware of these risks through the Section 106 deed of variation legal discussions.

10. Public Health Impacts

The temporary use of Science Park Drive as the link between Tithebarn Lane and the old A30 is expected to have a slight positive impact upon air quality as it will redistribute some traffic away from the Heavitree Road corridor, which has historic air quality problems.

11. Options/Alternatives

The alternative option is to leave the drive as it is until the 2nd phase of the Tithebarn Link Road is complete; however, this would delay a number of key strategic developments, including the proposed MET office development, the Morrisons/Devon and Cornwall Police proposals at Middlemoor, Tithebarn Green and Cranbrook. To do nothing has the potential to stifle the recent success in unlocking economic growth in the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point. The relatively low cost scheme would represent good value for money investment for the development it would facilitate. There would also be minimal abortive costs as a number of the high cost works, including the street lighting will remain at the end of the interim period.

12. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

The upgrade of the Science Park Drive to a public highway for the period between the completion of the first phase of the Tithebarn Link Road and delivery of the full link road scheme is considered essential to maintain momentum on key strategic sites in the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point area. To do nothing would potentially stifle growth and put high value investment in the Science Park at risk.

Dave Black
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Electoral Divisions: Broadclyst & Whimble

Cabinet Member for Economy, Growth and Cabinet Liaison for Exeter: Councillor Andrew Leadbetter

Strategic Director, Place: Heather Barnes

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Jamie Hullah

Room No. Lucombe House, County Hall, Exeter. EX2 4QD

Tel No: (01392) 383234

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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Nil

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Appendix 1 To PTE/15/10

