



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

24TH SEPTEMBER 2019

CABINET

LLANHARAN BYPASS

REPORT OF GROUP DIRECTOR PROSPERITY, DEVELOPMENT AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR A MORGAN.

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to;
- Update Cabinet on the current progress related to the development and delivery of the major transportation project: Llanharan Bypass.
 - Update the Cabinet on the public consultation exercise and in particular the route selection process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1.1 Note the progress made and contents of the report.
- 2.1.2 Confirm Option 2 – Eastern Route (as identified at Appendix A) as the preferred route option for further development.
- 2.1.3 Agree to removal of the safeguarding of route SSA18.1 (western, Option 1, see Appendix A) i.e. through the Welfare Ground in the Local Development Plan.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The construction of the Llanharan Bypass is integral to the regional strategic highway network of the Borough. It is also linked to the Strategic Opportunity Area (SOA) Llanilid on the M4: Driving the Regional Economy and is important to the wider economic opportunities for the western area of the County Borough and the Cardiff Capital Region.

- 3.1.1 Two potential routes for the eastern link to the A473 were included and safeguarded in the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP). Following initial scheme development and public consultation, there is confidence that the eastern option is deliverable and this option received overwhelming public support. It is therefore recommended that the western option (through the Welfare Ground) is no longer pursued and that resources are focused on developing and delivering the eastern option.
- 3.2 The project will have transportation and regeneration benefits including:
- Removal of congestion from the existing A473 section through Bryncae and Dolau, Llanharan
 - Bring environmental relief to the properties fronting the existing section of the A473 through Bryncae and Dolau, Llanharan
 - It will improve reliability and journey times especially for public transport.
 - It will facilitate and further unlock development of SSA9 former OCC site Llanilid.
 - It will facilitate new active travel links and enable the introduction of measures to enhance active travel within the communities that are currently suffering the detrimental impacts of high traffic volumes.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The scheme will provide a bypass to the A473 to the east of Llanharan from the existing first phase of the bypass constructed as part of the Llanilid Studios development to a point west of the existing petrol service station located alongside the A473 opposite Llanharan House (approximately). The proposal is to create a 7.3m wide carriageway with Active Travel provision.
- 4.2 The A473 is recognised as an important transportation corridor linking the M4, Cardiff, Bridgend and South East Wales to RCT. This was recognised by the Welsh Government who have worked in collaboration with RCT and provided funding as part of a WeITAG (Welsh Transport Appraisal Guidance) Stage 1 Strategic Corridor Assessment of the M4 for 2016/17. The A473 was recognised as an important sub corridor and the subsequent report and findings were endorsed by the Welsh Government. This resulted in further funding provided by the Welsh Government in 2017/18 to undertake the Stage 2 of the assessment. The Welsh Government are now taking the WeITAG process through to Stage 3 as part of their national pinch point programme to relieve congestion at certain points along the strategic national highway network.

- 4.3 The bus corridor along the A473 through Llanharan is one of the strategic bus corridors in RCT. It serves Llantrisant / Talbot Green, which is a Strategic Opportunity Area as identified in the Wales Spatial Plan. The corridor crosses the A4119 corridor at Talbot Green and is projected to cater for a significant increase in both peak and off-peak traffic to Cardiff and throughout the M4 corridor, as within the Local Development Plan Llanharan is identified as a key settlement and growth area.
- 4.4 In addition to this, on the 21st September 2017, the Council approved five Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOAs) and in particular Llanilid on the M4: Driving the Regional Economy. In doing so, the Council has committed to developing and delivering projects that will achieve the primary aspirations of this Strategy, namely enabling significant economic growth and jobs.
- 4.5 The Llanilid / M4 Corridor is the only inward investment site of this scale in the Cardiff Capital Region and is a critical opportunity for major transformational growth in the economy of the region. To unlock the full potential of this area, infrastructure is key. The 550ha site could deliver significant jobs to the Cardiff Capital Region. The mixed-use site provides opportunities for the full spectrum of Class B business development whilst the potential link to the Pencoed Technology Park could provide further opportunity sites for larger investments on the M4 site. The completion of the Llanharan Bypass is key to the development of the site and is an integral part of the infrastructure to develop the SOA.
- 4.6 The first phase of the Llanharan Bypass (a length of 650m) i.e. from Dragon Studios was constructed in 2009 as part of the Llanilid Film Studios development.
- 4.7 The second phase of the Llanharan Bypass (a length of 850m) has been brought up to finished earthworks level / profile. As part of a current planning application, this section is due to be completed by house builders when the 800th dwelling has been completed.
- 4.8 The third phase of the Llanharan Bypass, which will be delivered by the Council, is a length of 1.6km and will connect to the existing A473 adjacent to Llanharan House. This will necessitate a new bridge crossing the main Cardiff to Swansea railway line. Consideration is also being given to the realignment of the existing A473 from the roundabout at Dragon Studios west to the Auto Sales near Junction 35 of the motorway.
- 4.9 Preliminary design has commenced on the Bypass route including completion of the WeITAG Stage 1 assessment on the project with geotechnical / site investigation programmed for later this year.
- 4.10 Ecological surveys have commenced and are ongoing, they will need to be for a full 12 months to ascertain the impact of the proposed highway.

Dormice and bats have already been noted along the route and there will need to be ecological mitigation measures implemented as part of the project to offset any detriment caused by the project. An Environmental Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken for the project and submitted as part of the planning process.

- 4.11 Planning consent 01/2815 provided outline consent for a film studio development with associated production facilities. Also included was leisure facilities, hotels, offices, etc as part of the overall development. Further consents 04/0342 for 5 silent stages, 04/1509 for highway infrastructure, 05/1032 for highway interchange, 05/1088 access infrastructure, 07/2152 construction of 248 dwellings are the salient planning consents for the SSA9 Llanilid site. The first phase of Persimmon's reserved matters (Ref: 18/0334) for 216 residential units was approved on 24 April 2019.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required. The Llanharan Bypass will enhance existing movement along the strategic highway network and hence between communities.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Consultation has commenced and will continue with the stakeholders and parties affected by the Llanharan Bypass and these include the Council's departments, statutory bodies, statutory undertakers and third parties whose land is required for the proposals.
- 6.2 A public consultation for this scheme with particular reference to the public viewpoint on the final leg of the Llanharan Bypass was undertaken with two public exhibitions on the 29th of March and 5th April and a two week-long consultation online. A website was also live during the two weeks of the exhibition with a comments box to allow feedback on the consultation information.
- 6.3 The public consultation was gauging the support for the Bypass and also the route of the final leg of the Bypass. Option 1 (SSA18.2 western route) located the route through a section of the Welfare Ground, which is a highly valued green space, whilst Option 2 (SSA 18.2 eastern route) was located further east from the Welfare Ground and totally avoided this. The options are shown on Appendix A to this report.
- 6.4 Over 450 people attended the two exhibitions, with a total of 477 written responses including the responses from the website. In total 449

supported the Llanharan Bypass proposals with 453 supporting Option 2 as the final leg of the Llanharan Bypass (four responses did not include a preference on the options as presented). A number of issues / concerns were raised during this process and it should be noted that the preliminary / detailed design will consider the response and, where appropriate and reasonable, mitigation measures will be incorporated.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 The preliminary design is currently ongoing for the project, however the WeITAG Stage 1 assessment has indicated that the initial cost estimate is in the range of £17-£20m which is inclusive of risk at 40%. As the project progresses through the detailed design stage, the estimated costs will be further refined.
- 7.2 A total of £350k funding has been received from the Welsh Government between 2018/19 via the Local Transport Network Fund for the project.
- 7.3 A total of £1.65m funding to date has been committed by the Council via its investment programme.
- 7.4 On 25th January 2018 the Cabinet agreed in principle to a £300m investment programme over the next 5 years and included in that was a sum of £65M for Highways and Transportation Infrastructure projects including Llanharan Bypass.
- 7.5 The Council has also secured £0.1M from Welsh Government Local Transport Funding for 2019/20 for a major economic infrastructure package (4 number projects) which includes the Llanharan Bypass. Further bids will be submitted in due course.
- 7.6 A substantial proportion of funding is likely to be secured from the new development that will benefit from this key infrastructure project.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The legal implications in respect of potential Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) and Side Roads Order (SRO) will be considered in a later report to follow once the precise land footprint for the project has been identified.

9 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

9.1 The Llanharan Bypass supports a number of the authority's own plans, policies and strategies that relate not only to transport, but the wider local agenda:

9.1.1 Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Llanharan Bypass will help achieve the well-being goals and objectives of the Act. Measures along this transport corridor to reduce journey times and improve reliability will help to improve access to key employment sites in the western and eastern part of the corridor. Increasing the proportion of employed residents will support economic growth in the area, help raise household income levels, tackle inequality and generate greater prosperity for communities. A reduction in traffic congestion along the A473 corridor will deliver wider environmental benefits including potential reductions in traffic related carbon emissions, possible improvements to local air quality and a more attractive public realm. Investment in the A473 corridor together with the bus operators will encourage greater passenger usage on bus services and help to maintain its commercial viability. This, in turn, will ensure that the bus service continues to play an important connectivity role, linking those communities with high levels of deprivation and low car ownership with areas of buoyant economic activity and a wide range of jobs, services and facilities. Improvements to local walking and cycling provision will encourage more active travel journeys. This will help promote good health and well-being for everyone and build healthier communities and better environments.

9.1.2 Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan

Replaces the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) and a number of different partnership plans that were previously produced, including the Community Strategy, Children and Young Peoples Plan, Health Social Care and Well Being Strategy, Community Safety Plan and Local Housing Strategy. The Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan has been produced by an overarching partnership of organisations in the public and voluntary sectors. The aim is to promote thriving communities, healthy people and a strong economy. These are closely aligned to the Welsh Government's 'Programme for Government Priority Areas'.

9.1.3 Local Development Plan (LDP)

The LDP provides the framework for the development and use of land within Rhondda Cynon Taf. It sets out the objectives and priorities relating to the development and use of land and the policies and proposals for implementing them.

Core Policy CS8 – Transportation, includes specific reference to the A4119/A473 corridor. It is recognised that the corridor is a strategic transport corridor and this corridor area is subject to high demands for

economic and housing developments. This policy safeguards the provision improvements to this corridor via a strategic transport corridor management system.

Policy SSA18.1 Major Road Schemes – A473 Llanharan Bypass.

Policy SSA9 – Former OCC Site Llanilid, Llanharan – 1950-2100 dwellings, 2500m² net retail floor space, medical centre, library / community facility, a new primary school and associated public open space.

9.1.4 The South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan (January 2015)

This plan identifies the issues and opportunities for transport in the South East Wales Valleys area. The Llanharan Bypass will complement proposals set out in the plan's medium term programme for improvements.

9.1.5 Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOA's)

The current context of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Valleys Taskforce means that it is more important than ever to identify where there are key strategic opportunities to work with partners to deliver economic growth in Rhondda Cynon Taf. As such, RCT has identified key strategic opportunity areas to maximise the benefit of economic regeneration and ensure RCT is successful in the global competition for investment. SOA's are geographical areas where resources are focused to provide opportunities for the private sector to invest and create new jobs. Each SOA aims to provide a comprehensive and focused package to encourage investment and enterprise. On 21st September 2017, the Council approved five Strategic Opportunity Areas (SOAs) and in particular Llanilid on the M4: Driving the Regional Economy. In doing so, the Council has committed to developing and delivering projects that will achieve the primary aspirations of this Strategy, namely enabling significant economic growth and jobs. Part of this Strategy identifies the A473 as an integral part of the Development Opportunity, recognising the major impact of developing the Llanilid site.

9.1.6 One Wales: Connecting the Nation (Wales Transport Strategy 2008)

The project will have a positive contribution to some of the high level outcomes which will need to be achieved in order to help deliver the above plan. In respect of social outcomes, the project will improve access to education and training and lifelong learning and will improve access to shopping facilities in Talbot Green. The Bypass will remove traffic congestion away from built up communities, reducing the impact of transport on the local environment. A number of the economic outcomes will also be supported by the project including improved access to employment opportunities for residents of nearby communities.

9.1.7 **National Transport Plan (2010, updated 2011)**

The Llanharan Bypass is in accordance with the National Transport Plan (NTP). The NTP sits alongside the Local Transport Plan to deliver the aims and outcomes of the Wales Transport Strategy. The NTP sets out Welsh Government interventions to deliver the aspects of transport policy for which it is responsible. It sets out proposals to deliver a transport system as integrated as possible and to ensure the transport system is used efficiently and sustainably. The NTP reflects a balanced approach to the development of the transport network, recognising that it must continue to support economic growth and promote social inclusion, while playing its full part in tackling climate change.

9.1.8 **Wales Spatial Plan (2008)**

The Llanharan Bypass is in accord with the Welsh Government's Wales Spatial Plan (WSP). A key theme of the WSP is 'Achieving Sustainable Accessibility'. The Plan sets out area strategies for spatial areas within Wales, including one for SE Wales – The Capital Region.

The vision for this area is 'An innovative skilled area offering a high quality of life – international yet distinctively Welsh. It will compete internationally by increasing its global visibility through stronger links between the Valleys and the coast and with the UK and Europe, helping to spread the prosperity within the area and benefiting other parts of Wales.' The WSP recognises that a fully integrated, high quality transport system is necessary for this to happen. The vision sees South East Wales as a 'networked city region' of strong, sustainable and interdependent communities spreading the prosperity of Cardiff and Newport to the neighbouring valleys. The strategy envisages that new development will be focused on 14 key settlements in SE Wales with growth being distributed evenly to avoid overdevelopment in the south and support the regeneration and viability of key settlements outside the main cities.

The Llanharan Bypass will provide improved access to 1 of the South East Wales Capital Region's 14 key settlements identified in the WSP. Llantrisant is also identified as 1 of 3 Strategic Opportunity Areas in this region, which offer the potential regional benefits from their sustainable development.

9.2 The proposals to construct the A473 Llanharan Bypass will make a significant contribution towards the Corporate Priorities "Building a Strong Economy" and "Improving our Communities". The proposal has a significant impact on improving accessibility and connectivity which is recognised as a fundamental factor in linking the labour market with employment opportunities and supporting economic activity.

9.3 The project directly addresses the Corporate Plan commitment to invest in highways infrastructure and to improve the transport network.

- 9.4 On 21st September 2017 Council approved the Strategic Opportunity Areas and in particular the Llanilid on the M4: Driving the Regional Economy.
- 9.5 The Llanharan Bypass will help support the delivery of a Wales of cohesive communities, a prosperous Wales and a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language.
- 9.6 Llanharan Bypass is closely aligned to the well-being and regeneration objectives of the Welsh Government's Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan, the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Our Valleys, Our Future Plan of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys in terms of:
Tackling pollution and improving air quality by improving traffic flows.
Tackling poverty and benefitting the local economy by offering better access to existing and potential new employment sites.
- 9.7 **Climate Change**
The requirement to reduce carbon emissions is set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 and also in the Environment Act (Wales) 2016. More recently, Welsh Government produced Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales and in May 2019, the Committee on Climate Change recommended new emissions targets for the UK: net zero greenhouse gases by 2050 (Wales is set at 95% due to a disproportionate impact from the farming industry).
- 9.71 Every construction project involves some capital expenditure of carbon but the well-being of our communities relies on development which must take place in accordance with sustainable principles, to provide the infrastructure, services and facilities needed for society, business and industry. The Council is taking appropriate steps to ensure that the proposed scheme minimises its carbon impacts.
- 9.72 Llanharan Bypass will help to reduce and ease congestion on the existing highway network which will in principle, help improve the air quality and reduce the emissions into the atmosphere from vehicles. The additional capacity will also improve the reliability and reduce journey times of public transport which should improve patronage and viability of public transport services which are under threat due to the negative effects of congestion. Growth in public transport usage should offset some of the demand for private vehicles trips on the highway network. The project will also provide a dedicated Active Travel community route with links to the community, thereby providing sustainable alternative means of transport and promoting a healthier lifestyle for residents. The community route will aid in the reduction of shorter journeys of under 1km which are often undertaken by private vehicles. The project has been designed with a speed limit of 50mph which again will aid in the

free flow of vehicles and the potential reduction of carbon emissions (note similar speed limits have been set on the A470 to minimise tail pipe emissions). Scheme design will also look to try to balance the cut and fill so that there are minimal vehicle journeys during construction. In principle there should be a decrease in the carbon footprint as a net result of operational reductions in carbon emissions off-setting carbon generation during construction of the scheme.

- 9.73 During the tendering and subsequent assessment process, prospective contractors will be required to answer a number of questions on sustainability during construction, including use of materials, employment of local sub-contractors, minimisation of waste, recycling, carbon reduction, etc. as part of the overall tender assessment process. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) will be agreed with the winning contractor and monitored during the construction contract to ensure that these are met and the contractor delivers as agreed.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Llanharan Bypass will bring local benefits and improved connectivity within the region delivering greater economic opportunities.
- 10.2 The Llanharan Bypass will improve journey time reliability, reduce journey times, reduce congestion and provide environmental relief to communities along the A473 at this location.
- 10.3 The Llanharan Bypass will act as a catalyst for the Strategic Opportunity Area, especially SSA9 (Llanilid development).
- 10.4 The Council notes the results of the public exhibition and consultation and the Council will focus on the delivery of the scheme via Option 2 as shown on Appendix A thereby avoiding the highly valued green space and protecting the Welfare Ground.
- 10.5 Development of the project will now focus on the option 2, the Eastern Route.