
Meeting: Executive
Date: 2 October 2012
Subject: Woodside Link
Report of: Cllr Nigel Young, Executive Member for Sustainable Communities - Sustainable Planning and Economic Development

Summary: This report sets out progress in delivering a new road from Houghton Regis to the proposed new Junction 11a of the M1. It examines the costs and benefits of delivering such a scheme and seeks Executive's approval to progress it.

Advising Officer: Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Paul Cook, Head of Transport Strategy and Countryside Services

Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All southern Central Bedfordshire wards
Function of: Executive
Key Decision Yes
Reason for urgency/ exemption from call-in (if appropriate) N/A

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

The Woodside Link contributes to the Council's priorities as follows:

- i. The Woodside Link is a crucial piece of transport infrastructure needed to promote employment, facilitate growth and improve the quality of life and of the environment in Central Bedfordshire. The road will support the delivery of improved infrastructure, in particular the M1-A5 link road and detrunking of the A5, thereby underpinning the regeneration of Dunstable town centre.
- ii. The road will reduce the numbers of heavy vehicles in residential streets, thus improving air quality and reducing noise in these areas, promoting health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
- iii. The construction of the link road will provide better infrastructure in the area.

Financial:

1. The total cost of the scheme is currently estimated at around £42 million, although there are risks of around £10 million associated with this figure. Work is being undertaken to reduce this figure and to find sources of funding. However, should the Council choose to fund this scheme at this price, the revenue costs of borrowing such a sum would be around 8% per annum.

- 2 There is a need for an additional £450,000 capital this year to bring forward the scheme so as to be able to apply for planning permission in early 2013.

Legal:

3. Current legal advice suggests that the Council may have to apply for development consent from the Planning Inspectorate as the road may qualify as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. This will take between one year and 18 months from the submission of the application.
- 4 As part of this process, the Council will need to be able to ensure that all of the land necessary for the road is able to be acquired and that indicative funding can be found.

Risk Management:

5. A risk assessment has been carried out on the delivery of this project. Appropriate action will be taken to mitigate the identified risks.
6. Risks identified include:
- Failure to obtain planning permission on a timely basis.
 - Failure to deliver the Local Transport Plan.
 - Failure to deliver the Council's priorities, including sustainable growth, homes and employment.
 - Environmental risks associated with the construction.
 - Financial risks, including the failure to secure adequate financing and failure to secure reductions to the overall cost of the scheme.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

7. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

8. The Woodside link will enable sustainable growth in Central Bedfordshire. This will be of benefit to all. Additionally, by reducing air pollution and noise in existing residential areas, the road will bring benefits to all residents living in those areas.

Public Health:

10. The link will promote public health in a number of ways, including:
- an improvement in air quality and a reduction in noise in existing residential areas;
 - improved accessibility to jobs and facilities throughout the area; and
 - improvements to health by providing footpaths and cycleways along parts of the route and provision for crossing by non motorised users; and by reducing traffic in existing urban areas, so making it possible to promote walking and cycling in those areas.

Community Safety:

11. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on councils to do all they reasonably can to reduce crime and disorder locally and improve people's quality of life as a result. The duty requires the Council to consider and do all that is reasonable to support the reduction of crime and disorder in our area.
12. The delivery of Woodside Link will provide benefits to local communities including new housing and opportunities for increasing employment in the area. To maximise these benefits the Council will ensure that it fully considers the impact on community safety as part of the planning application process.

Sustainability:

13. Building the road will facilitate homes and employment, reducing the need to travel, promoting sustainability and bringing air quality and noise reduction benefits. However, construction of the road will have an impact on the local environment. This is being assessed as part of the application.

Procurement:

14. The design and planning of the link is being procured under the existing Highways Contract.
15. Ways of procuring the construction of the road and associated works have yet to be decided. The possibilities include a separate competition or else use of an existing contract, such as that offered through the eastern highways alliance.

Overview and Scrutiny:

16. This matter has not been considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

RECOMMENDATIONS:**The Executive is asked to:**

1. **agree to the submission of a planning application for the construction of the Woodside Link road and to commence consultation on the proposed scheme in November 2012;**
2. **agree that council officers continue preparatory work into the acquisition of the land required for the scheme, including compulsory purchase if that proves necessary;**
4. **agree to the addition of £450k to this year's capital programme to cover the costs of design and planning application development for the scheme;**
5. **agree that this scheme should be included in the review of the capital programme which is currently taking place and will be recommended to Council; and**
6. **instruct officers to do all they can to secure funding for the scheme.**

<i>Reason for Recommendation(s):</i>	<i>The detailed design for the Woodside Link Road and consultation on the proposals is now required to meet with the timescales of the Highways Agency and developers of the land to the north of Houghton Regis.</i>
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Executive Summary

17. The Woodside Link is a key piece of transport infrastructure needed to promote employment, facilitate growth and improve the quality of life and of the environment in Central Bedfordshire.
18. The proposed construction of the road is contained within the Local Transport Plan and the Medium Term Plan.
19. Much work has been carried out to take forward the road. This has included an accelerated programme of delivery which is now needed. The point has now been reached, where, in order to deliver the road, planning permission will need to be obtained.
20. This report sets out the progress made in delivering the Woodside link, seeks permission to apply for that planning permission and requests additional funding to develop the scheme further.

Background

21. The Council's Plan for Central Bedfordshire includes a commitment to significant improvements to its town centres including Dunstable and Houghton Regis. Central Bedfordshire is also making provision for nearly 30,000 new houses to be built over the next twenty years or so. More than 7,000 of these new houses can be provided in the area to the north of Houghton Regis.
22. This planned growth to the north of Houghton Regis is also expected to bring wider benefits to the area, such as new and improved educational, leisure and community facilities.
23. The Council's Draft Development Strategy identifies the need for more employment land across Central Bedfordshire, but with particular need in the south. Land for employment has been identified north of Dunstable adjacent to areas of existing employment. However, this already gives rise to significant levels of lorry traffic passing through residential areas.
24. The key to unlocking the housing and employment opportunities, dealing with the issue of inappropriate and rising levels of heavy traffic lies in the provision of the A5 to M1 Link road, a new junction 11a on the M1 and construction of the Woodside Link Road.

25. The delivery of the Woodside Link is essential to achieving the planned growth. The road will provide a strategic artery through the growth area to the wider transport network. Transport modelling has shown that, without the Woodside Link, traffic levels in the area would rise to unacceptable levels when growth occurs. The road is therefore essential to sustainable growth.
26. The resultant de-trunking and downgrading of the A5 through Dunstable would facilitate and underpin the regeneration of the town centre and complement the impact of the Dunstable to Luton busway, currently under construction.

Implementation Proposals

27. The A5 to M1 Link and the new M1 junction (11a) is being taken forward by the Highways Agency.
28. Central Bedfordshire's Local Transport Plan lists the Woodside Link as a major scheme for completion in 2017 and the start of it is included in the Council's plan – "Delivering your Priorities".
29. The road would connect Houghton Regis and the industrial estates in Dunstable to the new junction (11a) on the M1 north of the town. By providing a new, more convenient link between the industrial areas and the trunk road network, the road will promote employment and provide greater opportunities for residents throughout the area. The construction of the new link road is likely to facilitate and require the placing underground of two major power lines, one of 132kv in the south and the other of 33kv in the north.
30. In order to progress the road, development consent may need to be obtained. Legal advice is that the road probably falls under the category of a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project as it is being built in connection with the M1 and the planned A5-M1 link, for which the Secretary of State is the Highway Authority. Therefore, an application could have to be made to the Planning Inspectorate, a body reporting to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.
31. Consultation on options for the Woodside Link was carried out by Bedfordshire County Council and reported to the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee in March 2009. This recommended a route connecting the industrial estates in East Dunstable to the new Junction 11a of the M1 and was subsequently confirmed by Central Bedfordshire Council as part of the Local Transport Plan in April 2011.
32. Consultation on the more detailed proposal will need to commence in November 2012 to marry in with the timescales of the Highways Agency and the potential developers of the land to the north of Houghton Regis. The council will also need to make a resolution to use compulsory powers of acquisition for the land required to build the Woodside Link. At this stage, however, all that needs to be done is that officers start the process of making it possible to compulsory purchase land should this prove necessary.

Housing and economic growth

33. The Woodside Link is one of a number of transport infrastructure measures identified through modelling as being essential to allow growth to take place to the north of Houghton Regis. The other key elements include:
- the Dunstable to Luton busway, currently under construction;
 - measures to support and promote sustainable growth within existing urban areas, which are currently being delivered through the Council's Local Area Transport Plans and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund; and
 - the A5-M1 link being taken forward by the Department for Transport.
34. All of these measures reduce congestion and promote the economy within Central Bedfordshire and all have been put forward or are being promoted on the basis of accommodating needed housing growth to the north of Houghton Regis. This growth area is contained within the Council's draft development strategy, which proposes 7,000 houses and related employment in the area: one quarter of the entire housing allocation for Central Bedfordshire.
35. Growth to the north of Houghton Regis will also bring wider benefits to the area, such as new and improved educational facilities, leisure and community facilities and jobs. The housing it will provide will serve the needs of future generations of Central Bedfordshire residents and is very much needed.
36. The delivery of the Woodside link is essential to this growth. The road will provide a main artery going through the growth area connecting employment sites and residential areas to the existing urban area and to the wider transport network.
37. Transport modelling has shown that, without the Woodside link, traffic levels in the area would rise to unacceptable levels should planned growth go forward. The road is therefore essential to sustainable growth.

Dependencies between the Woodside Link and the A5-M1

38. The government recently completed an inquiry into the A5-M1 link to the north of Houghton Regis. The results of this inquiry are pending, but the government has previously said that, subject to certain specified conditions being met, they intend to commence works leading to the construction of that road in 2014, completing it in 2016.

39. The A5-M1 link is even more important to Central Bedfordshire than Woodside. It will:
- i. remove a major trunk road from the heart of Dunstable, with all of the economic regeneration, road safety, air quality and noise reduction benefits this will make possible;
 - ii. provide much faster and easier access to the motorway network throughout the southern part of Central Bedfordshire;
 - iii. make it possible for Central Bedfordshire to introduce restrictions to freight movement in villages to the north of the link road, bringing with it considerable improvements to the quality of life of many of the parishes in the area; and
 - iv. with other transport measures, make growth to the north of Houghton Regis possible.
40. The Roads Minister has announced the government's intention to build the A5-M1 link subject to a £45 million contribution from developers and a £5 million contribution from Central Bedfordshire Council. Central Bedfordshire's contribution has already been made available, following Executive approval for this on 7 December 2010. A legal agreement between the developers for Houghton Regis north and the Department for Transport has been drawn up, setting out the terms under which the developers will make their contribution. A key condition in this agreement is that the developers will only make funding available once a "satisfactory" planning permission has been received from Central Bedfordshire for land north of Houghton Regis.
41. Part of this "satisfactory planning permission" is that the land is capable of implementation and development. However, transport modelling shows that, without the Woodside link, this would not be the case. This is recognised within the agreement between DfT and the developers, where the Secretary of State acknowledges its "critical importance" to the developers.

Getting agreement for the Woodside Link is therefore a key component of the "satisfactory" planning permission.

Timescales

42. The Local Transport Plan puts a timescale of 2017 for the completion of the road. This would fit in well with the planned completion of Junction 11A of the M1 and of the A5-M1 link by the end of 2016.
43. However, the connection between the Woodside link, the A5-M1 link and the growth area to the north of Houghton Regis means that it is essential to obtain planning permission for the link no later than the end of 2013. Moreover, in order to take opportunities for early development to the north of Houghton Regis, in particular to bring forward employment there, the completion of the northern part of the road would best be completed by 2015, with the southern part then continued in 2016.
44. An accelerated timescale for the road is therefore envisaged as follows. Note that this timescale is subject to further discussions with the Planning Inspectorate about precise planning timescales and with United Kingdom Power Network about the undergrounding of electric cables and may well change.

45.	Date	Measure
	Nov 2012	Consultation on the Woodside link
	Feb/March 2013	Formal planning application to NIP for the road
	May 2013	Public inquiry into the road
	Dec 2013	Planning decision
	2014	Putting electric cables underground and commencement of construction of the northern part of the route.
	2015	Completion of the northern part of the route and putting cables underground for the southern part of the route and commencement of the southern part of the road
	2016	Completion of the southern part of the road and the joining of the route up to the new Junction 11a of the M1

Costs of the Woodside Link

46. The current estimated cost of the work is £42 million at 2012 prices. There is some £10 million of risk in addition to this. Based on the timescales shown above, in broad terms, the spend profile is as follows:

47.	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 and beyond
	£0.75	£0.75	£8	£16	£12	£4.5

48. Of this, the first two years are for development costs: detailed design of the scheme and the costs of obtaining planning permission.

49. Central Bedfordshire Council has already agreed to fund some £300,000 this year for the link, consisting of capital spending and a GAF contribution. In order to deliver this accelerated timescale, a further £450,000 will be needed this financial year.

Financing the Woodside link

50. At present, it is not clear exactly how the link will be financed. A number of approaches are being considered and will be the subject of future reports, either directly related to the Woodside Link or more generally finance based. Routes being explored include:

- i. developer contributions to the scheme, either directly as part of section 106 agreements or more indirectly through CIL;
- ii. Government grants and bids for funding;
- iii. LEP grants and bids;
- iv. deals with government, for example through a City Deal or Tax Incremental Funding, whereby the scheme could be funded by future additional business and council tax receipts; and
- v. capital funding for the scheme by Central Bedfordshire Council.

51. Steps are also being taken to reduce the overall cost of the scheme and to look again at the requirements for facilities from the new development to the north of Houghton Regis.

52. In reality, it is unlikely that the scheme can be wholly funded by external sources, so if the Council wish to take the scheme forward, the Council will need to be prepared to fund at least some of it.
53. A decision is needed now to agree the additional funding for the scheme to take it forward to the point where planning permission can be applied for. This is for an additional £450,000 of capital funding. For the rest, a further £750,000 will be needed in 2013/14 to complete the planning process, but the decision on this can be taken as part of next year's capital budget allocation. Larger amounts of money will be needed after April 2014 once planning permission has been achieved. At that point, it is envisaged that a much clearer picture as to any external funding will be available.
54. The Council's Constitution requires all capital requirements to be included in its Capital Programme and it is planned this project will be included in a review of the programme currently underway. A revised Capital Programme will be included for approval at the earliest opportunity which is the full Council meeting scheduled for 29 November 2012.

Other matters

55. The application process requires that a number of other issues are sorted out concurrently. One of these is the ownership and possible acquisition of land needed to build the road. To this end, officers have started a process which may eventually lead to the compulsory purchase of land, should this prove necessary.

Summary

56. The Woodside Connection is a key piece of transport infrastructure that will bring great benefits to the residents of Central Bedfordshire, promoting employment, reducing congestion and improving air quality, and making it possible to deliver other key pieces of infrastructure, including improved educational, leisure and community facilities and the A5-M1 Link.
57. The scheme needs to be brought forward from previously envisaged timescales because of the dependencies associated with it and to accelerate economic growth and promote jobs. To do this, planning permission must now be sought. Executive are therefore asked to approve the process which will lead to a successful planning application for the road.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Map showing the route of the proposed Woodside Link.

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

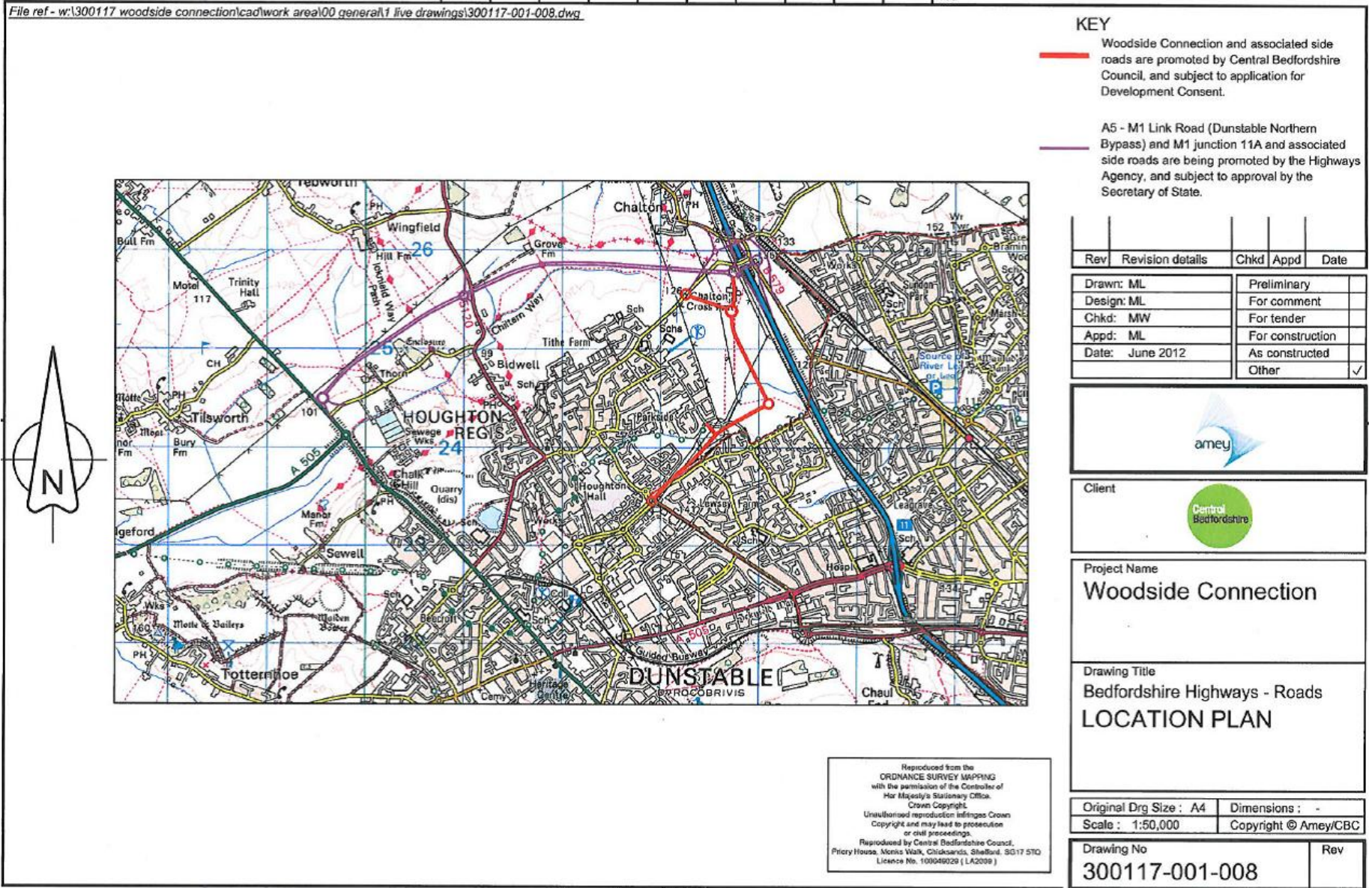
1 Section 274 agreement between the Secretary of State for Transport and Central Bedfordshire Council http://www.persona.uk.com/A5dunstable/deposit-docs/New_DD/DD-155.pdf

2 Section 278 agreement between developers of Houghton Regis north and the Secretary of State for Transport. http://www.persona.uk.com/A5dunstable/deposit-docs/New_DD/DD-156.pdf

3 Central Bedfordshire report to Executive, 10th December 2010.
<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/modgov/documents/s20502/101207%20Executive%20report%20-%20GAF%20and%20A5-M1%20link.pdf>

Appendix 1: map of the Woodside Connection

File ref - w:\300117 woodside connection\cadwork areal00 general\live drawings\300117-001-008.dwg



KEY

Woodside Connection and associated side roads are promoted by Central Bedfordshire Council, and subject to application for Development Consent.

A5 - M1 Link Road (Dunstable Northern Bypass) and M1 junction 11A and associated side roads are being promoted by the Highways Agency, and subject to approval by the Secretary of State.

Rev	Revision details	Chkd	Appd	Date
Drawn: ML			Preliminary	
Design: ML			For comment	
Chkd: MW			For tender	
Appd: ML			For construction	
Date: June 2012			As constructed	
			Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



Client

Project Name
Woodside Connection

Drawing Title
**Bedfordshire Highways - Roads
LOCATION PLAN**

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