

	Executive Report 8th February 2017	Agenda Item No. 9
Title	A new bridge over the River Avon at St. Nicholas' Park, Warwick, and improvements to the Myton Fields car park	
For further information about this report please contact	Andrew Jones, Deputy Chief Executive Andrew.jones@warwickdc.gov.uk Nick Corbett, Principal Conservation and Design Officer Nick.corbett@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	Myton & Heathcote	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N/A	
Background Papers		

Contrary to the policy framework:	No														
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No														
Key Decision?	Yes														
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes Ref 835														
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No														
An equality and sustainability assessment will be produced as part of any design proposal.															
Officer/ Councillor Approval	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="611 1323 858 1397">Date</th> <th data-bbox="858 1323 1436 1397">Name</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="611 1397 858 1458">Deputy Chief Executive</td> <td data-bbox="858 1397 1436 1458">17th January 2017 Andrew Jones</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="611 1458 858 1518">Head of Service</td> <td data-bbox="858 1458 1436 1518">17th January 2017 Tracy Darke, Rob Hoof</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="611 1518 858 1579">CMT</td> <td data-bbox="858 1518 1436 1579">17th January 2017 Chris Elliott Bill Hunt Andrew Jones</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="611 1579 858 1639">Section 151 Officer</td> <td data-bbox="858 1579 1436 1639">17th January 2017 Mike Snow</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="611 1639 858 1700">Monitoring Officer</td> <td data-bbox="858 1639 1436 1700">6th January 2017 Andrew Jones (co-author)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="611 1700 858 1760">Portfolio Holder(s)</td> <td data-bbox="858 1700 1436 1760">20th January 2017 Councillors Stephen Cross & David Shilton</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Date	Name	Deputy Chief Executive	17 th January 2017 Andrew Jones	Head of Service	17 th January 2017 Tracy Darke, Rob Hoof	CMT	17 th January 2017 Chris Elliott Bill Hunt Andrew Jones	Section 151 Officer	17 th January 2017 Mike Snow	Monitoring Officer	6 th January 2017 Andrew Jones (co-author)	Portfolio Holder(s)	20 th January 2017 Councillors Stephen Cross & David Shilton
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Portfolio Holder(s)	20 th January 2017 Councillors Stephen Cross & David Shilton														
Consultation & Community Engagement															
The proposals have been discussed with the Portfolio Holders Councillor Stephen Cross and David Shilton; with officers of Historic England; Sustrans; Environment Agency; and officers of Warwickshire County Council.															
Final Decision?	No														
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below). Establish the political and financial viability of the proposals, including with key stakeholders.															

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Officers have informally established with Warwickshire County Council and with Historic England that an appropriately designed bridge over the River Avon at St Nicholas' Park/ Myton Fields, Warwick, could potentially provide better connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists into Warwick town centre, including for pupils at schools located off the Myton Road, for current local residents and those residents who will be living in the 5000+ homes being built to the south of Warwick; it could also provide a better sense of arrival for visitors to historic Warwick, with improved car parking and heritage interpretation.
- 1.2 Historic England has informally suggested that a design competition could assist in attracting world-class design talent for the bridge and associated landscaping.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Executive authorises officers to work with all relevant parties to establish the cost and viability of building an appropriately designed pedestrian/cyclist bridge over the River Avon and a better landscaped and functional car park beside it at Myton Fields which addresses the less than ideal access arrangements off Myton Road.
- 2.2 Subject to agreeing recommendation 2.1, a sum of £60,000 is released from the Community Projects Reserve (see separate agenda item) to enable officers to undertake necessary feasibility and business case work including how a competition could secure the appointment of world-class design talent for the bridge and landscaping (including the car park).
- 2.3 Executive notes that Warwick District Council owns a large swathe of green space running along the River Avon and whilst the various land parcels are not contiguous the bridge would further enhance the links between open spaces running between Leamington and Warwick.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Warwickshire County Council (WCC) recently undertook a major public consultation exercise in relation to its highway proposals for Warwick town centre. The proposals support delivery of the Warwick District Council (WDC) Publication Draft Local Plan. At the request of Historic England (HE) and others, a different approach has been applied to the highway proposals, with greater emphasis being given to improving air quality, improving connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, improving the setting of heritage assets, introducing a 20 mph speed limit, and generally enhancing the visitor experience.
- 3.2 A new bridge over the River Avon and joining Myton Fields to St Nicholas Park could potentially help with this objective, and create a new sustainable travel link between Warwick town centre and the schools along the Myton Road, and with the housing area (current and emerging) south of Warwick. The bridge could also provide an opportunity for fresh interpretation of Warwick Castle, St Nicholas' Park, and the River Avon.
- 3.3 The Chief Executives of both the District Council and the County Council have agreed to officers working collaboratively to better integrate town planning (the responsibility of WDC) with highway issues (the responsibility of WCC), and the

idea for a new pedestrian bridge has grown from this multidisciplinary approach.

- 3.4 Following initial discussions between officers of the two authorities, WCC commissioned work to estimate the cost of a bridge. A 'relatively standard' pedestrian/cyclist bridge is estimated to be around £2 million, but given the fact that the bridge will effect the setting of heritage assets of the highest significance it is unlikely that such a bridge would be acceptable; instead an exemplary design will be needed which may be closer to £4 million.
- 3.5 A bridge was proposed over the River Avon at Stratford-upon-Avon, where the river is wider than at Warwick, and WCC advise the cost of this bridge (not built) exceeded £3 million back in 2006. A comparable river bridge in Derby city centre built in 2007 cost £3.8 million. The cost of the bridge proposed at Tintagel Castle (a very different context) is estimated to be £4 million.
- 3.6 Given the uncertainty at the time of writing about the design and construction of the bridge, it is difficult to provide a precise cost range, but the above figures should help to give Members a feel for the scale of the project should they wish to proceed.
- 3.7 Along with investigating the feasibility of a bridge, it is also recommended that work is undertaken to explore improvements and enhancements to the car park at Myton Fields. This area is currently used for car parking on a seasonal basis but it is highly likely that a pedestrian/cyclist bridge would generate significant new footfall with visitors wanting to start their "experience" by parking in Myton Fields and not just in the spring and summer months. An improved year-round car park would also have the advantage of further mitigating the potential for parking issues generated by the enhanced leisure centre in St Nicholas Park.
- 3.8 Investigating car park improvement options at Myton Fields is also apposite in the context of the work ongoing on developing a car parking strategy for Warwick as it will help inform that work. Indeed, officers have already started work to understand the cost of all-weather surfacing at Myton Fields to provide a functional year-round car park.
- 3.9 To undertake this feasibility work it is considered that the following professional services will be required:
- Architects, engineers, surveyors, landscape architects
 - Competition consultants / public relations
 - Project management
 - Cost consultants
 - Ecologists
 - Arboriculturalists

It is estimated that the cost of procuring these services will be in the region of £60,000. Consultation with all interested parties will be needed, including but not limited to Historic England, the Town Council, Chamber of Trade, Friends of St Nicholas Park, Warwick Society, Environment Agency, etc.

- 3.10 HE has (informally) made a positive response to the idea. It has advised that the bridge would need to be of a very high quality design given the sensitive location, and it would be worthy of a design competition to attract the best possible design talent.

- 3.11 HE has suggested the competition could be similar to the one they have run for a new bridge at Tintagel Castle, which required experienced architects and engineers to collaborate in delivering an appropriate design within a given budget (<https://competitions.malcolmreading.co.uk/tintagel/shortlist>). It would be possible to appoint consultants to run the competition, as with the Tintagel example.
- 3.12 The land either side of the River Avon between Leamington and Warwick is largely owned by WDC, interrupted by smallish parcels in private ownership. As a future consideration for Members they may wish to explore whether it would be possible to make the Council's land ownership wholly contiguous between the two towns thereby providing an attractive walk for residents and visitors alike. The bridge proposal would enhance the experience of walking between the two towns.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 The protection of the historic environment is highlighted in WDC's current and Publication Draft Local Plan and also forms part of the National Planning Policy Framework's sustainable development objectives.
- 4.2 St. Nicholas' Park is a locally listed historic park, it is within the Warwick Conservation Area, and it affects the setting of heritage assets of the highest significance, including Warwick Castle (Grade I listed and part Scheduled Monument); St. Nicholas' Church (Grade I listed); and Castle Bridge (Grade II* listed and a Scheduled Monument).
- 4.3 Local Plan Policy DAP4 seeks to protect listed buildings and their setting (HE1 in the Publication Draft Local Plan); policy DAP8 seeks to protect Conservation Areas (HE2 in the Publication Draft Local Plan); and policy DAP11 seeks to protect Historic Parks and Gardens (HE4 in the Publication Draft Local Plan).
- 4.4 St Nicholas' Park is a very sensitive site and that is why HE has informally recommended that a high profile design competition be held, similar to the one they held to appoint engineers and architects to design a major new bridge to improve access to Tintagel Castle (Scheduled Monument), Cornwall.

5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 WCC engineers have estimated the cost of a "relatively standard" new bridge at £1.9m, however, the cost could be significantly greater than this. The feasibility work will enable a clearer picture to emerge both in terms of the cost of a bridge and the improvements/ enhancements required to the car park and potentially St Nicholas Park.
- 5.2 Potential funding sources include the Heritage Lottery Fund; LEP; Section 106 funding, including from the growth area south of Warwick; Warwickshire County Council; and WDC. Part of the viability assessment will be to calculate the potential funding contribution from improved car park usage at Myton Fields, however, there is no presumption at the time of writing this report that WDC should meet the full or part cost of the bridge's construction.
- 5.3 It is estimated that the feasibility work will cost £60,000 and therefore it is recommended that this sum should be appropriated from the Community Projects Reserve.

6. **RISKS**

- 6.1 Given the heritage sensitivity of the site, there is a risk that the public will not support the idea of a bridge or a landscaped car park and may actively oppose the proposals, which could potentially harm the reputation of WDC amongst some groups.
- 6.2 This risk may be countered by undertaking early engagement with the public and amenity groups, and by explaining the role the bridge will play in improving connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, including for pupils attending schools off Myton Road, and for residents of the housing in the area; improving air quality; improving the interpretation of heritage assets; and improving the visitor experience to historic Warwick.
- 6.3 There is a risk that the bridge and landscaping for the car park will be unaffordable, potentially resulting in disappointment and reputation damage to WDC.
- 6.4 This risk can be countered by ensuring key partners are on board from the start, by establishing the available budget up front, and by ensuring that competition entries are properly costed. It also needs to be made clear that there can be no up-front commitment from WDC to fund a bridge.
- 6.5 The proposals / recommendations need to be checked in the context of any land title issues. The Council's solicitor has been requested to review the title and report any risks associated with the proposals/ recommendations.

7. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 Doing nothing is an option, but this will mean that walking and cycling are less attractive options, resulting in increased car use to the detriment of air quality, safety, and visitor's experience of historic Warwick. Walking and cycling may potentially become more dangerous for pupils attending schools off Myton Road, this is because Castle Bridge already accommodates heavy traffic and over 5000 new homes will be built to the south of Warwick, potentially increasing traffic on Castle Bridge.

8. **BACKGROUND**

- 8.1 The website created by WCC to consult on their initial proposals for Warwick town centre, (which do not include the specific proposal of a pedestrian/cyclist bridge over the Avon) can be seen here:
www.Warwickshire.gov.uk/warwicktowncentre