

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2455

Title: Strategic London Support and Expertise for Abbey Wood to Ebbsfleet Connectivity Study

Executive Summary:

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is funding a study project into transport enhancement options between Abbey Wood in London Borough (LB) Bexley and Ebbsfleet in North Kent, which could unlock significant levels of growth and contribute to the London Plan's housing target. The GLA is a member of the partnership, which is overseeing the project.

The purpose of this decision is to approve receipt of up to £20,000 from the Government funding allocated to this project for GLA officer staff time to coordinate and contribute strategic expertise related to spatial planning, master planning, housing, economic development, and infrastructure requirements. This will support and help improve the study results. The GLA will enter into a Grant Agreement with LB Bexley, the Accountable Body managing the project budget on behalf of the partnership.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director, Built Environment approves receipt of grant funding of up to £20,000 from the LB Bexley, as Accountable Body, to cover costs of GLA officer time to coordinate and contribute strategic expertise towards the Government-funded Abbey Wood to Ebbsfleet Connectivity Study during the calendar years 2020 and 2021.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Debbie Jackson

Position: Director, Built Environment

Signature:



Date:

22 June 2020

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. In March 2019, the Government announced in its response to the Thames Estuary Growth Commission that it would allocate £4.85m of funding to develop proposals for extending Crossrail east of its current terminus at Abbey Wood towards Ebbsfleet. Capital costs for such a scheme are estimated between just under £1bn and over £3bn. The Mayor's Transport Strategy states that any extension should be 'Government-led' and that there would be no funding available in TfL's Business Plan. However, London could benefit from the growth this investment would unlock in significant parts of the Bexley Riverside Opportunity Area.
- 1.2. The Government's announcement was based on evidence set out in a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC), which considered the costs and benefits of a range of options for extending Crossrail and had been submitted to Government in November 2018 by the Crossrail to Ebbsfleet (C2E) partnership, which includes representatives from the London Borough of Bexley, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, Kent County Council, Dartford Borough Council, Gravesham Borough Council, the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Transport for London (TfL). The SOBC estimated that up to new 40,000 new homes and 22,000 new jobs (over half each in LB Bexley) could potentially be unlocked.
- 1.3. In January 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Department for Transport (DfT) and the C2E partnership agreed a Memorandum of Understanding including an indicative project programme as basis for the preparation of a study to develop and assess proposals for transport enhancements in the C2E corridor. The first tranche of funding (£284,000) was awarded in January 2020. In early May 2020 the second tranche (£1.6m) was received by LB Bexley, acting as Accountable Body for the project.
- 1.4. The aim of the study is to explore for the C2E corridor a range of options for enhancing capacity and connectivity from heavy rail extension of Crossrail to non-rail low-cost options to support modal shift, housing growth, employment growth and regeneration. Within LB Bexley, the intensification of industrial land will be required to help release land for housing around transport hubs.
- 1.5. The project is currently nearing the end of its mobilisation phase with work underway to establish a delivery team to complete consultancy briefs and then select consultants to deliver the following three workstreams:
 - Land and Housing: This workstream will explore the development potential within the C2E corridor based on a spatial framework and site-specific masterplans. Associated employment growth, wider infrastructure requirements and viability considerations will also inform this work.
 - Transport and Engineering: This workstream will analyse and assess potential transport capacity and connectivity options.
 - Funding and Finance: This workstream will develop potential approaches to maximise non-Government funding for the future delivery of transport options.
- 1.6. An Executive Board with representatives from all C2E partners is responsible for the delivery of the project and acts as formal point of engagement with the MHCLG/DfT Client Group, which participates at Board meetings. It is supported by a Technical Group, which acts as a forum for discussion, agreement and coordination of technical approaches and issues across the partnership. A delivery team, which is currently being recruited, will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the project and the liaison with the consultants delivering the workstreams. A Local Authority Board meets quarterly to ensure political buy-in of the project outcomes. The Thames Estuary Growth Board provides a potential strategic point of escalation with Government.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The purpose of this decision is to approve receipt of up to £20,000 from the Government funding allocated to this project for GLA officer staff time to coordinate and contribute strategic expertise related to spatial planning, master planning, housing, economic development, and infrastructure requirements. This will support and help improve the study results.
- 2.2 These study results, enhanced by GLA's contribution, will support a range of London Plan policies, including policies on Housing Supply (H1), Optimising Site Capacity (D3), Industrial Land (E4-7), Opportunity Areas (SD1) and Collaboration with the Wider South East (SD2/SD3).
- 2.3 The focus of the involvement of the GLA is to support the overall governance of the project set out in paragraph 1.6 and, in particular, the Land and Housing workstream. The GLA can play a useful role, improving the study outputs, by contributing strategic expertise related to spatial planning, master planning, housing, economic development, and infrastructure requirements to the project. Officers undertaking master planning for the Opportunity Area Planning Frameworks and officers leading on economic development and industrial land policies will be directly involved.
- 2.4 The objective of the GLA staff time contribution of up to a value of £20,000 (ca. four days of officer time per month over the project period) towards the overall Study project will coordinate and provide strategic support and expertise for:
 - the preparation and follow-up of monthly Board and Technical Group meetings (six meetings per Quarter);
 - the Land & Housing Workstream components, including master planning and housing, as well as wider economic development and infrastructure aspects; and
 - the development of the Thames Estuary wide context (Thames Estuary Growth Board meetings every second month).
- 2.5 The GLA will enter into a Grant Agreement with LB Bexley, the Accountable Body managing the project budget. The GLA will claim officer time from the project budget up to the agreed grant amount.
- 2.6 The GLA staff contribution will ensure enhanced project outputs and reports through the provision of strategic expertise, in particular related to the Land and Housing workstream. The following Programme Objectives will particularly benefit from GLA expertise/support:
 - ambitious and sustainable housing growth and regeneration; and
 - employment growth, intensification and productivity.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. This project explores public transport enhancements between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet. Better public transport addresses inequalities through improved affordable travel opportunities and therefore improved access to jobs, services and recreation, also for older people, households on lower income and a range of Protected Groups under the Equality Act 2010. Better public transport will also unlock housing and employment growth within the C2E corridor and therefore support affordable housing – its shortage affects Protected Groups disproportionately – and regeneration in an area with significant levels of deprivation and where new opportunities for the most disadvantaged groups are particularly important.
- 3.2. In line with the Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, the GLA contribution to the master planning work will also promote the application of inclusive design principles.
- 3.3. The emerging job descriptions for the project's delivery team highlight that the partnership is committed to building a diverse and inclusive team and wants to promote equal opportunities.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1. Key risks and issues are set out below. The likelihood of the first three risks occurring is relatively high, with close monitoring arrangements in place to mitigate all risks them. Given the potential impact on funding, the second risk is being addressed jointly with Government officials.

Key Risks and issues	Mitigation Measures
The implications of COVID-19 are causing some delays during the mobilisation phase - related to the recruitment of the delivery team and the completion of the consultancy specifications.	The whole programme may therefore potentially be extended to Sept 2021. The project's Risk Register is updated regularly and discussed at every monthly Board meeting, so that risks can be addressed without delay.
There is the related risk that Government could divert the remaining project funds (for the Financial Year 2021/22) to other perhaps directly COVID-related priorities, unless they can be spent during this Financial Year.	The issue is being explored further with MHCLG and DfT representatives.
COVID-19 may also have impacts on TfL's capacity to respond to ad-hoc request for input, e.g. from the workstream consultants.	TfL is updating the partnership regularly on its staff resource situation.
Another risk is the potential diversion of staff resources from other priorities, as there are currently internal process barriers to bringing in extra backfill resource.	This risk can be minimised, as support for the project is integral part of the work of relevant staff, relatively modest in terms of scale and it will be monitored closely.

- 4.2. Links to Mayoral Strategies and priorities: As set out in paragraph 2.1, the project could support a range of London Plan policies. It promotes housing and employment growth in one of London's Opportunity Areas (Bexley Riverside) designated within the London Plan (Policy SD1). Jointly with officers from the LB Bexley, the intensification of industrial land, applying the policies in the new London Plan on Industrial Land (Policies E4-7), will be explored. The investigation of public transport improvements in East London and beyond could over time also make a positive contribution to the modal shift targets included in the Mayor's Transport Strategy and air quality and zero-carbon aims of the London Environment Strategy. This project is also specifically referenced as Proposal 86 of the Mayor's Transport Strategy.
- 4.3. Consultations and impact assessments: Experts from a range of different disciplines from across the C2E corridor are involved in the project. Through the GLA staff resource, input of expertise from across a range of departments will be coordinated. An Environmental Impact Assessment as well as public consultation will be carried out to inform the detailed appraisal of the shortlisted transport options.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Approval is being sought for the investment of GLA officer time on the C2E Connectivity project for the calendar years 2020 and 2021.
- 5.2 Costs will be recovered from the Partnership through submitting grant claims to LB Bexley (the accountable body for the study) over the course of the project up to the value of £20,000.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 6.1 The following table shows the broad timeline for key milestones of the overall study programme. GLA expertise will be necessary throughout the programme.

Key Milestones for overall Study Programme	Timeline
Appointment of consultants for different workstream	July 2020
Completion of high-level master planning framework and supporting economic growth and infrastructure studies	December 2020
Completion of detailed assessment of shortlisted transport options	April 2021
Completion of study including housing delivery report	July 2021

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Jorn Peters has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 22 June 2020.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature



Date

22 June 2020