

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Valley Gardens Governance &amp; Southern Section Update</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> October 2014</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director Environment Development &amp; Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Jim Mayor</b>	<b>Tel: 294164</b>
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>Jim.mayor@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All [If not All, insert affected wards]</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 At July ETS Committee, members agreed that a Business Case should be submitted to the Local Enterprise Partnership for Local Growth Fund funding that would enable delivery of the northern section (Phases 1+2) of Valley Gardens.
- 1.2 At the same Committee, members agreed that “***A report in relation to future project management will be brought to the next Committee***” and the Senior Project Manager confirmed that whilst the proposed scheme arrangement necessitated the loss of 16 trees, work was ongoing to reduce this impact as scheme detail was refined.
- 1.3 Following Committee, on July 7<sup>th</sup> the Government announced that an additional funding allocation of £6m was being made available for Valley Gardens Phase 3 (the southern section), subject to a robust business case being submitted to and approved by the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- 1.4 This report proposes a Project Management Board structure, suggests a design amendment that would minimise impact on open space and trees and seeks Committee approval to commence work on a Business Case that could enable the council to access funding for Valley Gardens Phase 3.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Committee agrees a Project Management Board arrangement to enable cross party involvement in project delivery through to implementation.
- 2.2 That Committee agrees that a Business Case should be prepared that could enable the council to access approximately £6million Local Growth Fund funding to enable delivery of the Southern section of Valley Gardens.
- 2.3 That Committee agrees amendments to the preferred option previously presented at Committee to enable delivery of the Northern Section of Valley Gardens with reduced impact on open space and trees.

### **3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **Project Management Board**

- 3.1 Should the Business Case for Valley Gardens Phases 1 & 2 be successful, funding will be available to enable implementation of improvements between 2015 and 2017.
- 3.2 Whilst the principles of the scheme presented in the Business Case will remain unchanged, it is likely that details will develop and change as designs continue to be refined. Examples are the specific arrangement of junctions, or choice of plants.
- 3.3 It is not practical to deliver the project within funding timescales if all decisions relating to potential project amendments are made at Committee. At the same time it is important that members from all parties have an opportunity to maintain regular engagement with the project proposal as it develops. For this reason it is recommended that members from each political group should sit on a Project Management Board, which will make decisions relating to scheme progression and delivery. A suggested structure for the Project Management Board is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.4 Under the proposed arrangement, members would have the opportunity to refer any project related matters to ETS Committee for a decision if considered necessary by at least two of the three political representatives.
- 3.5 In addition, the Senior Project Manager will bring regular update reports to ETS Committee.

#### **Valley Gardens Phase 3**

- 3.6 On July 7<sup>th</sup> the Government confirmed availability of £8m funding for Valley Gardens Phase 1&2 (the northern section) subject to the Local Enterprise Board approving the Business Case submitted by the council in line with ETS Committee recommendations on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014.
- 3.7 At the same time, the Government announced its intention to allocate an additional £6m in funding to enable the southern section (Phase 3) of Valley Gardens (from Pavilion Parade to Aquarium Roundabout) to be delivered from 2017, subject to production, submission and approval of a robust business case to the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- 3.8 To date no further work has been undertaken to develop this section of the concept scheme (included as Appendix 2) since its approval by Transport Committee in March 2013. It is therefore difficult to accurately forecast the actual cost of physical improvements and so the extent of any council contributions required as match funding to unlock the Government's proposed contribution (generally a local contribution of 20% of total scheme cost is required, including preparation costs).

- 3.9 The estimated cost of developing a business case (which would incorporate accurate scheme costings) is £75,000. This money would come from the Local Transport Plan. Money invested in preparing the business case would count towards the necessary 20% local contribution to unlock the additional funding should members decide to pursue the project to implementation.

### **Reducing Impact on Trees and Open Space**

- 3.10 Design decisions relating to the northern section of Valley Gardens have sought to balance a desire to maximise public space, minimise impact on trees (specifically Elms) and maintain existing vehicular movement capacity.
- 3.11 The preferred option approved by Committee incorporates a two lane bus / taxi / access route along the west side of the Gardens, and two northbound and two southbound vehicular routes on the east side.
- 3.12 The simplified arrangement reduces the barrier effect currently created by vehicular infrastructure. Approximately 30% of redundant carriageway can be reclaimed under the arrangement without reducing vehicle capacity, providing enhanced footway space around and a small increase in public open space within the garden areas.
- 3.13 However, the proposal currently necessitates the loss of 16 trees (albeit of relatively modest value). Most of these trees are impacted by new sections of road built within Victoria Gardens in order to maintain two northbound and two southbound lanes along the length of Valley Gardens, within the constraints of the existing eastern building line and significant Elm trees.
- 3.14 The option assumes a northbound and southbound lane is required along the entire length of Valley Gardens for each of the A23 and A27 in order to maintain existing capacity. However, since July Committee, further detailed, independent modelling work shows that because double lanes are only required for finite distances on approaches to signalised junctions (to hold traffic queuing at lights), it is possible to deliver a traffic neutral scheme without building new sections of road in Victoria Gardens.
- 3.15 The revised approach would still enable existing traffic capacity to be maintained through Valley Gardens, but because the refined proposal can be built within existing kerb-lines, impact on trees is significantly reduced and public spaces are maximised. The scheme would also be cheaper as new road do not need to be built (the exact saving would be determined as design detail progresses), with some of that saving benefitting the council (given that 20% of total scheme costs comprise local contributions).
- 3.16 Conversely, moving northbound traffic out of Victoria Gardens would result in a reduction in air quality along the building edge between Richmond Parade and Edward Street. The precise extent of the impact on Air Quality is unknown without further modelling (and would also be impacted by wider measures such as freight management), but overall, either proposal offers Air Quality benefits on the existing situation.

- 3.17 A further comparison / explanation of the currently agreed scheme and suggested refinement is attached as appendix 3.

#### **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Referring all project decisions to committee would prevent Valley Gardens Phases 1&2 from being delivered within the funding window. The proposed project management board arrangement enables members from each party to engage with the project decision making process, and refer any items for a decision at Committee as and when considered necessary.
- 4.2 The provisional Government funding for Valley Gardens Phase 3 is not transferable to another scheme in the city. As such the only decision is whether Committee wishes to invest £75,000 in the short term and an additional local contribution of up to £1.425m in the longer term to secure up to £6m external funding for improvements to the environment between and including Pavilion Parade and the Aquarium Roundabout.
- 4.3 Committee has the choice of either progressing Valley Gardens Phases 1&2 in the form previously agreed, or agree that the refined proposal should be pursued. Agreeing the revision would not impact on the Local Enterprise Partnership's consideration of the submitted business case as the scheme benefits are maintained under the revision. There would also be an opportunity to test the arrangement ahead of construction, so that the additional lanes could be re-added if proven necessary. Pursuing the previously agreed arrangement would result in lost opportunities to maximise open space, reduce impact on trees and reduce project costs, although Air Quality along the eastern façade between Richmond Parade and Edward Street would be better under the existing preferred scheme. It is not possible to progress landscaping details until the carriageway arrangement is fixed. Therefore, if a decision on a preferred approach is delayed, ability to deliver the project within the funding window will be compromised.

#### **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The Valley Gardens proposals have been informed by a detailed consultation process, as described in Section 11 of the draft Business Case agreed by Committee in July 2014. At Transport Committee in March 2013, members considered messages of support for the scheme from a wide range of city stakeholders, demonstrating the many benefits that can be realised through the improvements. Consultation and dialogue with the community will continue as the project progresses through further design refinement, trials and implementation.

#### **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Improving Valley Gardens is a longstanding objective of the council. If Committee does not pursue the opportunity of accessing Government funding for the southern section of Valley Gardens, a similar opportunity may not arise to improve this area of Valley Gardens and realise associated benefits.
- 6.2 It is not practical to deliver the northern section of Valley Gardens within funding timescales if all decisions relating to potential project amendments are made at

Committee. At the same time it is important that members from all parties have an opportunity to maintain regular engagement with, and make decisions about, the project proposal as it develops. The suggested Project Management Board arrangement provides a means to maintain member involvement in all aspects of project delivery and decision making whilst enabling the project to progress as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining opportunities for key decisions to be referred to Committee where members deem appropriate.

- 6.3 The recommended highway refinements enable the scheme to be delivered in a way that maintains vehicle capacity whilst minimising impact on open space and trees, at reduced cost to the proposal previously agreed. Although the revisions create some localised worsening of Air Quality, the overall scheme retains Air Quality benefits for the Valley Gardens area.

## **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The total capital cost of the (Phase 1&2) scheme is estimated at £10.006m. Of this £0.370m has already been funded from existing allocations for Valley Gardens within the Local Transport Plan budgets for 2013/14 and 2014/15. This leaves £9.636m planned to be spent over 2015/16 and 2016/17. It is expected that £8.000m will be funded from the Local Growth Fund and £1.636m will be provided from local resources as matched funding. This matched funding element consists of £1.345m from the Local Transport Plan (LTP) allocations and £0.291m from Section 106 contributions and other sources.
- 7.2 If funding is agreed by the LEP and the scheme goes ahead then the project will need Policy & Resources Committee approval to be added to the capital programme. This can be done through the budget monitoring (TBM) reports.
- 7.3 It is possible that the enhanced public space will result in increased maintenance liabilities. If this is the case the cross-sector Management Group will need to be tasked with identifying ways of containing these within existing budgets.
- 7.4 The cost of preparing a business case for Phase 3 funding is estimated at £75k and it is planned to fund this from the LTP allocation for 2015/16. It is expected that this could be funded by the lower costs resulting from the design changes to Phases 1 and 2 (paragraph 3.15).
- 7.5 The matched funding contribution required for Phase 3 is expected to be in the region of £1.425m and this would need to be identified as part of preparing the business case. At this stage it is expected that most of this will be funded from within LTP allocations for 2017/18 and 2018/19 although there is no certainty about the level of LTP funding available from Government for 2015/16 and beyond. So far though, the allocations have been substantial.
- 7.6 The costs of the Project Management Board will be from within existing revenue budgets.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Jeff Coates*

*Date: 09/09/2014*

### Legal Implications:

7.7 There are no legal implications arising from this report

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Elizabeth Culbert*

*Date: 10/09/14*

### Equalities Implications:

7.8 An Equalities Impact Assessment is planned but has yet to be completed. The overall aim of the Valley Gardens proposal is to make the movement and place functions of Valley Gardens as inclusive as possible by redressing current environmental conditions that discourage use by all groups, and is arguably especially unpleasant for older and younger people.

### Sustainability Implications:

7.9 The (Valley Gardens northern and southern) proposals improve Air Quality, Noise Quality and introduce Sustainable Urban Drainage System features that enable the area to better accommodate future flash flooding events. The proposals provide an enhanced environment for the National Elm Collection and create an Arboretum to protect that heritage into the future, whilst additional planting and reduction in severance created by current transport infrastructure will enhance the area's biodiversity. Achieving a better balance of space between different movement modes also encourages sustainable transport choice. Overall the scheme objectives support those of Biosphere, as explained further in the full Business Case previously agreed by Committee.

### Any Other Significant Implications:

7.10 Corporate / Citywide Implications: The project directly supports objectives of the Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan, the City Plan, Local Transport Plan, Conservation Area and Enhancement Plan, Biosphere, Air Quality Management Area, Seafront Strategy, One Planet Living, Public Space Public Life, the London Road SPD and the LR2 Study.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

1. Project Management Board structure.
2. Valley Gardens south concept scheme
3. Comparison between the currently agreed Valley Gardens North scheme and the suggested refinement.

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. n/a

## **Background Documents**

1. Valley Gardens Public Realm Analysis October 2011
2. Valley Gardens Concept Scheme Delivery Plan July 2013
3. Valley Gardens (northern section) Local Growth Fund Business Case