

Assurance Panel Summary

Scheme Details

Project Name	A61 Active Travel Route		
Grant Recipient	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council		
MCA Executive Board	Transport and Environment	MCA Funding	£5,200,172.86
% MCA Allocation	100%	Total Scheme Cost	£5,200,172.86

Appraisal Summary

Project Description

The Applicant has identified this scheme to respond to growing demand for cycling to work, education and for leisure and health purposes. The applicant highlights that there are some major deficiencies in the quality and amenity of infrastructure for non-motorised users along the A61 area. Specific issues include:

- Lack of off-road “safe” cycle routes;
- Poor quality physical infrastructure that doesn’t facilitate cyclists, such as inaccessible and unsafe crossings;
- Lack of linkages to other routes;
- Poor connections between residential areas and local amenities;
- Lack of signposted cycle routes;
- Poor quality cycle parking.

The A61 Active Travel Scheme is a package of measures which seeks to promote walking and cycling connectivity between Barnsley and Royston via Smithies.

The Scheme comprises:

- Sections of on and off-road routes;
- Improvements to pedestrian crossings into Toucans;
- Wayfinding signage;
- Improvements to public realm;
- Resurfacing of existing sections of the routes.

The scope of activities required for the delivery of the A61 Active Travel scheme comprises:

- Detailed design of the preferred option, the inclusion of off and on-road pedestrian and cycling provision and associated highway improvements;
- Incorporating improvements to public realm including Green Infrastructure into the scheme;
- Consultation events with key stakeholders in relation to the design and construction of the scheme to gauge opinion;
- Resolution of any issues arising;
- AMAT appraisal;
- Data collection;
- Scheme evaluation and monitoring following completion of the scheme;
- Preparation of the Full Business Case;
- Internal Governance – Cabinet reports, Ward Member briefings etc;
- Air Quality Surveys;
- Procurement and construction, including contract administration, supervision and compliance with Construction Design Management (CDM) Regulations;
- Promotion and implementation of any Traffic Regulation Orders required;
- Liaising with the local Cycle Forums and area Committees;
- Liaising with key businesses / stakeholders / residents on the route about traffic management.

Strategic Case

The applicant has included references to the key policy documents which we would expect to see to demonstrate alignment with the Strategic Objectives of the MCA and BMBC. While specific references to the relevant sections are made, the contribution this scheme makes to the policies has not been clearly set out. A stronger description of the strategic alignment would describe specifically what the scheme will deliver against a number of the key policy and strategy documents. The FBC will require a more detailed assessment of how the scheme itself works to address specific aims and objectives in each of these strategy/policy documents.

The Applicant does however provide five clear and SMART objectives that are consistent with the nature of the scheme and the MCA's Strategic objectives. In section 3.6 the applicant sets out clear objectives and defines targets against which the scheme can be measured.

The applicant has set out a clear 'Do Nothing', and alternative 'Do Minimum' and 'Do All' options alongside the Preferred Option, highlighting the effects of not proceeding, investing in a smaller scale scheme or the challenges in delivering a larger scale scheme. Alternative options have been appropriately discounted.

Map 7 Appendix B shows two potential routes for the Preferred Option – an off-road route around Lee Lane and via a new housing development. The former is the preferred option but site planning approval is still required. An update should be provided for the FBC.

The Applicant has been clear on the consequences of the scheme not going ahead, that it would infer a lost opportunity to deliver better active travel connectivity within Barnsley and associated economic benefits.

An update should be provided for the FBC, including working with the MCA Exec Team during further design to work through how the route will meet SCRMC cycle design standards.

Value for Money

The Applicant has undertaken proportionate modelling, using the Department for Transport (DfT) Active Mode Appraisal Toolkit (AMAT), consistent with WebTAG guidance.

The Applicant presents a Core BCR of 1.21 : 1 and has undertaken sensitivity testing to consider the key areas of risk. The Applicant has tested:

- a 10% increase in costs, reducing the core BCR of 1.21 : 1 to 1.10. A 20% increase would be needed before the BCR falls below 1 : 1.
- a 25% decrease in take-up of Active Travel below the central forecast uplift of 323%. This would bring the core BCR of 1.21 below a 1 : 1 return at 0.96 : 1.

This testing of active travel take-up includes the consideration the potential effects of COVID-19.

Costs are estimated on an appropriate basis at OBC stage, drawing on costs from previous schemes and applying a sensible allowance for optimism bias and inflation.

The applicant has undertaken appropriate and proportionate options analysis to determine the Preferred Option.

Overall the approach taken is appropriate, but there are some detailed methodological concerns with the analysis which has been undertaken which will impact the value for money assessment and will need to be resolved before and FBC can be approved:

- The Applicant should apply a base level of active travel in the modelling for Bar Lane to Royston and Mapplewell New Lodge and Royston Housing developments. These are currently set to zero as the routes are not yet established. However, the baseline should refer to active travel trips made between these destinations and around the area using alternative routes.

- The Applicant has only modelled benefits and costs for the Preferred Option. This will need to be extended to the Do Minimum for the FBC.
- No modelling of wider impacts has been undertaken. Beyond the benefits assessed using the AMAT, the scheme stands to deliver improved connectivity and access to the town centre (increasing access to key facilities and jobs), wider environmental benefits to the surrounding areas and wider well-being benefits. The Applicant should explore these wider benefits qualitatively as part of the FBC, particularly given the marginal BCR value.
- Sensitivities will need to be updated given any changes applied to the modelling (i.e. changes to costs and/or to baseline active travel).
- The applicant will revisit the cost of the scheme and update the QRA. The applicant should use this opportunity to reduce the total cost of the scheme, by controlling risks in the QRA and undertaking a value engineering exercise.

Risk

The key risks from a delivery perspective pertain to the effect of COVID-19 restrictions on scheme delivery, land acquisition related to path widening, mine works surveying and consultation. Sensible mitigating actions have been proposed. Nonetheless, the Applicant will need to provide a detailed update on these risks for the FBC.

Uptake of Active Travel is a key risk to the project in terms of Value for Money. The applicant should explore what activities can be put in place or leveraged from complementary activity to underpin the success of the scheme. E.g. promotional activity.

A risk allowance of circa. £564,000 is included in the core scheme costs, accounting for unforeseen cost overruns. This is based on a detailed Quantitative Risk Assessment provided as Appendix E. This risk allowance is significant and reflect uncertainty for land and ground investigations. The approach is prudent for this stage of the project.

Delivery

The Applicant has set out the planned approach for procurement of the core scheme works and for planning consultancy in appropriate detail for the OBC. Details are yet to be finalised and the final tender documents are still being developed. The Applicant must ensure that the procurement route is confirmed for the FBC alongside a detailed description of the preferred approach and clear timetable/milestones.

The milestones that have been set out are proportionately detailed and sensible.

The Applicant needs to set out an outline timetable for any planning application and reference to completed and required consultation within 7.1.

Legal

The Applicant has provided a strong response on State aid, confirming that the scheme should not be subject to State aid obligations.

Recommendation and Conditions

Recommendation	Approval to progress to FBC and draw down further scheme development funds
Payment Basis	Payment on defrayal
Conditions of Award (including clawback clauses)	

The following conditions must be satisfied before contract execution.

None at this stage. Inclusion of condition are subject to submission of the Full Business Case.

The following conditions must be satisfied before drawdown of funding.

None at this stage. Inclusion of condition are subject to submission of the Full Business Case.

The following conditions must be included in the contract

None at this stage. Inclusion of condition are subject to submission of the Full Business Case.

Record of Recommendation, Endorsement and Approval

Barnsley Digital Innovation Hub

Appraisal Panel Recommendation		Board Endorsement		MCA Approval	
Date of Meeting		Date of Meeting		Date of Meeting	
Head of Paid Service or Delegate	Ruth Adams Deputy CEX	Endorsing Officer (Board Chair)		Approving Officer (Chair)	
Signature		Signature		Signature	
Date		Date		Date	
S73 Officer or Delegate	Simon Tompkins Finance Manager	Statutory Finance Officer Approval			
Signature					
Date					
Monitoring Officer or Delegate	Steve Davenport MCA CA Solicitor				
Signature					
Date					
		Signature:			
		Date:			