

CABINET

13 April 2011

BARING ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (HIGH QUALITY ENVIRONMENT)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

St Giles Hill is one of the very important open spaces within Winchester and is used frequently by residents, visitors and occasionally for outdoor events. The City Council is responsible for the maintenance of the open space area including the management of the trees and grounds.

The main access route to the Hill is via Baring Road which is a private road managed by the St Giles Hill Roads Company run by local residents. The City Council is responsible for contributions towards the maintenance of the road as one of the major frontage holders.

The road has a long history of deterioration due to weathering and requires regular maintenance but, because of the slope and construction of the road, this only provides short-term remedies.

Following recent housing developments in the area the Roads Company have received developer contributions which has encouraged the development of a permanent solution to the condition of the road through improvements to the carriageway followed by adoption by Hampshire County Council who will then be responsible for any future maintenance.

The report describes the work undertaken to date, recommends a way forward and seeks approval of a City Council contribution towards the project of £30,000.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet

- 1 Agree that a contribution of up to £30,000 be made to the St Giles Hill Roads Company on conditions to be settled by the Assistant Director (High Quality Environment) including that the contribution can only be used to carry out the improvements required to Baring Road on the condition that upon completion of the works it is adopted by Hampshire County Council.
- 2 Note that this will be achieved by the allocation of up to £30,000 from the High Quality Environment commissioning budget for 2011/12, and that a request for this budget to be “topped up” will be included in the outturn report in June, for consideration in the context of the overall Council position.

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##### DETAIL:

- 1 Introduction
- 1.1 St Giles Hill is one of the very important open spaces within Winchester and is used frequently by residents, visitors and occasionally for outdoor events. The City Council is responsible for the maintenance of the open space area on the Hill including the management of the trees and grounds.
- 1.2 The area has a strong community focus with residents heavily involved in the management of the area. In 2004 they produced a Neighbourhood Design Statement which was subsequently adopted by the City Council in order to inform planning policy and future development.
- 1.3 Since that time there have been a number of new developments in the area the most recent of which was the redevelopment of the previous County Council children's home at Milesdown to residential use. This development presented opportunities to improve the road network on the Hill funded through section 106 contributions provided by the developer for off site works.
- 1.4 St Giles Hill is unusual in that the road network in the area is privately owned and is run by a limited Company the St Giles Road Company which secures contributions from residents in order to pay for maintenance of the roads when required. The roads maintained by the Company are St Giles Hill, Northbrook Avenue and Stratton Road as shown on the plan at Appendix 1. The City Council has a responsibility towards some of these costs as significant frontage holder within Baring Road.
- 1.5 Whilst the maintenance of Northbrook Avenue and Stratton Road has proved successful over the years, Baring Road has presented a far greater challenge. The road has a significant slope and is made up of shale type material. As a consequence it is very susceptible to weathering and erosion particularly during heavy rain when the top surface is frequently washed out onto Alresford Road. Previous attempts to try and resolve this problem through improved drainage have failed so the residents have been keen to seek a permanent solution to these problems.

## 2. Improvement Scheme Development

- 2.1 In 2007 the City Council was initially approached by St Giles Hill residents via the Roads Company in order to discuss the development of a long term solution to the problems with Baring Road. It was realised that a more radical approach was required and that the funding secured from the Milesdown development presented a major opportunity to pay for the improvements required.
- 2.2 Since that time, the City Council has maintained a good working relationship with the Roads Company and has supported the scheme and the options appraisal of the works required. An important factor in these discussions has been the involvement of Hampshire County Council highways staff who agreed that the road could be adopted at the end of the works, provided they met the required standard.
- 2.3 The possibility of adoption was an issue that had to be discussed in detail with residents as it required agreement and initially not all were in favour, some preferring the private status of the roads which allowed a degree of control over the network. Following detailed discussion at the Roads Company AGM, which was attended by the City Council, agreement was obtained to secure the contributions required from residents in return for adoption. The majority agreed that this achieved the aim of removing any future liability for the road and uncertainty about future maintenance arrangements.
- 2.4 Since this consensus was obtained work has continued on the development of a detailed scheme in conjunction with the County Council and Roads Company representatives. The City Council remained involved in the process, though more as advisors and observers because of the legal status of the Roads Company and their lead role.
- 2.5 It has taken some time to complete the detailed proposal which involved topological surveys and securing final agreement from residents regarding their level of contribution and to receive the necessary funding from the Milesdown development which was completed recently.
- 2.6 Throughout discussions with the Roads Company, it was always indicated that the City Council would consider its financial support for the scheme only at the point when the scheme was finalised and residents' contributions were confirmed. This was due to the uncertainty as to whether there would be final agreement within the Roads Company and residents as to whether the scheme should proceed. This has meant it has been difficult for the City Council to plan for this expenditure. It is for these reasons that this report is now being presented at this stage.

## 3. Scheme Design and Costs

- 3.1 Residents have a good working relationship with Beechcroft Ltd, the developers of Milesdown, who have completed the final design and specification and will be undertaking the tendering and management of the

construction work. This level of co-operation is a good example of partnership working across residents, developers and both local authorities.

- 3.2 The agreed scheme will consist of an improved carriageway for Baring Road which will be between 4.2 and 4.8m wide and will run within the current 4.8m surface. The construction standard will be the same as that used within the Milesdown Place development and will consist of concrete heritage curbs and hard surface. Improved drainage will be provided using soakaways and several traffic calming platforms will be provided with pinch points to slow vehicles. At the same time Northbrook Avenue will be resurfaced but there are no plans to have this road adopted.
- 3.3 The total cost of the scheme is £130,000 which can be partly funded using the £70,000 contribution already received by the Roads Company from Beechcroft Developments plus residents' contributions of £30,000. This leaves a need for a £30,000 contribution from the City Council.

#### 4. Discussion

- 4.1 The current position of agreement on a viable scheme with residents' support and adoption by Hampshire County Council has taken some time to complete and there is now the exciting prospect of getting the works undertaken and resolving the difficulties of inadequate access to St Giles Hill for ever. The City will then benefit from having a high quality open space that easily accessible to all. However this requires the final 'piece in the jigsaw' though the City Council's agreement to contribute their share of the costs.
- 4.2 It is unfortunate that this contribution could not have been agreed earlier, but the significant uncertainties about whether the scheme would proceed or not made this a high risk process if undertaken earlier, as described in paragraph 2.6 of this report. The considerable length of time it has taken to arrive at a solution which has the agreement of residents and agencies demonstrates how difficult this process was to complete.
- 4.3 The City Council has not yet completed the close down of the ledgers for the 2010/11 financial year, and it is possible that there will be underspends that could be applied for this purpose. A comprehensive report on outturn will be brought forward in June. Rather than delay this decision until then it is proposed to apply some of the High Quality Environment Commissioning budget to this, and to request an equivalent "top up" for consideration in the context of the Council's overall budget carry forward requests in June. In deciding whether to support this Members may wish to consider the following:
  - The proposed solution resolves this issue permanently;
  - Resident support which is a vital ingredient in the success of the scheme may wane if a decision is deferred;
  - County Council agreement to adopt Baring Road following completion of the works may change in the future if there are delays;

- The City Council's contribution will ensure that the Beechcroft and resident contributions are secured for this purpose.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

##### 5. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 5.1 The Active Communities Outcome of the Sustainable Community Strategy encourages community involvement in deciding priorities and specifically mentions the aim to help neighbourhoods to use their power to take decisions within their area. This project was generated through community support and leadership in addition to partnership working with other agencies.

##### 6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 The funding required from the City Council is £30,000 which can be met from the Commissioning Budget for High Quality Environment. This will of course reduce the commissioning budget available for the delivery of the change plan and it is therefore planned to seek to replace this budget with a request for a carry forward to be considered in the context of the outturn position and prioritised alongside any other requests, when the outturn is reported in June.

##### 7. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 7.1 The primary risk with this project is to miss the opportunity to get this work completed and resolve the problems of access to St Giles Hill following a considerable amount of work to gain the support of residents and other partners. If this opportunity is missed on this occasion it is unlikely that it will be repeated for some time, if at all.
- 7.2 There will also be a need to ensure that any contribution to the Roads Company to carry out this work is made conditional upon the satisfactory completion of the scheme and adoption by the County Council.
- 7.3 The completion of the project will also ensure that the City Council avoids any future potential financial liability for the maintenance of the road system and whilst at the same time providing a clear benefit to residents and the wider community that use the Hill.

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

#### APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: St Giles Hill Road network

Appendix 1: St Giles Hill Roads

