

North Somerset Council

Report to the Executive

Date of Meeting: 06 December 2023

Subject of Report: Independent review of Clevedon Seafront and Hill Road Scheme

Town or Parish: Clevedon

Officer/Member Presenting: Cllr Hannah Young, Executive Member for Highways and Transport

Key Decision: No

Reason: No key decision arising.

1. Recommendations

Executive to:

1. Note the outcome of the independent review by AECOM of the Clevedon Seafront/ Hill Road scheme as set out in the report attached as Appendix 1, including the results of the technical assessment, policy review and review of the economic impacts of the scheme;
2. Note the level of public and stakeholder engagement in the review and the strength and range of views expressed through the review process as set out in Section 5 of the report;
3. Agree to proceed with implementation of the recommendations of the Stage 3 Road Safety Audit, as proposed in Section 9.5 of the report, which are required to address immediate road safety issues and assist in managing people's behaviours or misunderstanding of how the scheme should work; while noting the need to ensure value for money given not all of the recommendations will be required if wider scheme changes to The Beach are made;
4. Note the recommendations of the review as set out in Section 9 of the report to retain the one-way system and the changes to Hill Road as implemented;
5. Commission the Director of Place to develop options for funding and implementation of the recommendations in Section 10 of the report for more substantial changes to the current scheme on The Beach and, in particular, to consider:
 - the technical evidence and public and stakeholder concerns set out for each recommendation;
 - community support for implementation of the recommendations;
 - the requirement for more detailed design and costings for the revised scheme for The Beach; and

- in consultation with the Director of Corporate Services/ s151 officer, the value for money of proceeding with scheme changes to The Beach and the potential impacts on the council's ability to progress with other priority schemes given there is currently no funding available for this.
6. Request that there is further engagement with Active Travel England on the outcome of the review to consider and confirm their position;
 7. Request that there is further engagement with the relevant Ward members and Clevedon Town Council on the next steps following issuing of the independent review report;
 8. Request that the Executive Member for Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Director of Place, brings a further report to a special Executive meeting in March 2024 with the outcome of the work related to recommendation 5 above and to propose a way forward.

2. Summary of Report

Consultants AECOM were commissioned by the council in July 2023 to undertake an independent review of the Clevedon Seafront and Hill Road Public Realm scheme and to make recommendations for any changes to the scheme to address public concerns around safety and accessibility following both a technical review of the scheme and a period of public and stakeholder engagement. The report, which was published on 20 November, is attached as Appendix 1 and includes a series of recommendations for consideration. An executive summary is also attached as Appendix 2.

3. Policy

The project brief outlined that AECOM as the independent consultant should review the scheme against the following council policies.

- Joint Local Transport Plan 4
- West of England Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2020 – 2036)
- Active Travel Strategy
- Highways Asset Management Strategy
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- North Somerset Economic Plan
- Clevedon Conservation Area
- Pier to Pier Way

This review of key policies is set out in Section 6 of the consultant's report.

4. Details

An independent review into the Clevedon active travel scheme intended to improve pedestrian and cycle access in the Seafront/Hill Road area was commissioned following public and business concern about the safety and impact of the scheme. Consultants AECOM were appointed in July 2023 to undertake this review.

4. 1 About the scheme to be reviewed

The scheme was designed to support the council's commitment to providing sustainable travel routes to encourage more cycling and walking as well as reducing car travel and had a number of specific objectives:

- Reallocation of road space for walking and cycling – to include a design that is suitable for significant numbers of cycles and non-standard cycles.
- Provide a cycle route that is coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive.
- Mitigate any negative impacts on disabled people or those with protected characteristics.
- Enable people to safely access local attractions and shops whilst maintaining social distancing.
- Economic recovery by enabling more people to safely visit local shops and by making it a more attractive destination.
- Enhanced public realm through reallocation of road space, parklets, and enhanced street furniture.
- Encourage active travel.
- Reduce dominance of the car.

The first stage of the scheme focused on the Hill Road area and included:

- the widening of pavements on the north side of the road
- new crossing points
- road resurfacing
- new road markings
- a one-way system
- a contraflow cycle lane
- a 20mph limit

The second stage of the scheme focused on works to The Beach and provided:

- a new 20mph limit
- public realm improvements
- new crossing points
- a segregated cycle lane forming the start and end point of the Pier to Pier Way

In May 2023 the council confirmed its commitment to review the scheme on the basis of the levels of concern that had been expressed including an independent technical review led by external consultants. The independent review was asked to establish at a high level whether there is a case for reversing or changing elements of the scheme, to make recommendations, and identify high level potential costs for making any changes.

4.2. Review process

The review process was launched with a public meeting in Clevedon on 20 July 2023. The meeting was led by the Leader Cllr Mike Bell, Executive Member for Highways and Transport, Cllr Hannah Young with Vicky Presland, AECOM Project Director in attendance. Given the level of public interest a follow up public meeting was also held on 7 August.

AECOM undertook a technical and policy review of the scheme which included:

- an on-site and video evidence review of how the scheme was being used;
- a six-week public and stakeholder consultation through an online questionnaire and face-to-face drop in event;
- meetings with a range of stakeholder groups including accessibility groups, Save our Seafront, The Pier Trust, sailing and rowing clubs, local schools and local bus providers.
- an assessment of the implemented scheme against its original objectives as set out in section 4.1 above.

The impact of the scheme on local business was also examined and the review also considered:

- the outcome of the scheme inspection by Active Travel England – original funder of the scheme – carried out in June 2023.
- the outcome and recommendations of the Stage 3 post implementation road safety audit which was commissioned by the council in July as part of standard practice for any scheme where changes to road space are made.
- The outcome of the review by Audit West into the development and implementation of the scheme which was reported to Executive on 6th September 2023.

Over 2,700 completed questionnaires were received and analysed alongside other feedback from the consultation process, including the detailed comments and concerns raised through the stakeholder meetings, drop-in and focus groups. The review report details the consultation process and outcomes, including analysis of the questionnaire responses, in Section 5 of the report.

4.3 Review findings and recommendations

The conclusions of the report set out in Section 9 support:

- Retention of the one-way system and the changes to Hill Road;
- Implementation of the recommendations in the stage 3 road safety audit to assist in managing people's behaviours and misunderstandings of the scheme;
- A number of changes to be made to the Beach which are set out in detail in Section 10 of the report.

In Section 7 the report explains that, due to lack of recorded evidence, it is unable to draw a conclusion on the original scheme objectives to encourage active travel and reduce dominance of the car; however, it concludes that the changes made through the Hill Road element of the scheme do meet the scheme's other original objectives, but only one of these objectives is met in The Beach area, with three objectives partially met and two unmet.

The report does not conclude that there is a direct link between the loss of footfall experienced by some local businesses and the implemented scheme given the wider economic factors impacting on many towns and high streets. This is set out in Section 8 of the report.

There are 13 specific recommendations in Section 10 focussed on The Beach where the review concludes that changes have had the most impact and generated the most concerns. The most significant of these recommendations are:

- removal of the two-way cycle lane;
- return to angled parking for most of the parking provision on the western side of The Beach;
- introduction of a contraflow cycle lane on the eastern side of The Beach;
- provision of a dedicated coach pick up/drop off space and a bus layby;
- provision of a formal pedestrian crossing at the northern end of The Beach;
- improvements to the layout and arrangement of the mini roundabout at the junction of Alexandra Road and Marine Parade.

The report also recognises that any changes to the scheme that undermine the active travel objectives of the original scheme could impact on any future local funding from Active Travel England given their support for the scheme and that this will need to be considered by the council.

5. Consultation

The public consultation ran for 6 weeks from 14 August to 25 September and consisted of the following stages:

- Online engagement via an [online questionnaire](#). Paper copies were also supplied by Clevedon Library or posted on request, to make this as accessible as possible.
- Marketing of the online questionnaire was led by AECOM. This included emails to a comprehensive stakeholder mailing list, posters around the project area with QR codes directing the public to the questionnaire and information about the review was sent directly to properties on Hill Road, The Beach and the surrounding area. NSC, where appropriate, also shared the consultation across its communication mediums, including regular press releases.
- A public drop-in event on 6th September 11am – 8pm Clevedon Community Hall.
- Online 121 appointments offered w/c 4th September.
- Interviews with businesses and stakeholders on the 23rd August.
- Focus group meetings including with 'Save our Seafronts' and the 'Disability Access Group'.
- Interviews with bus operators.

More detail on the consultation process and the outcome of the consultation is set out in Section 5 of the review report.

A public meeting was also held in Clevedon on 20 November 2023 where AECOM presented the findings of the report and their recommendations. The presentation provided to the public meeting is attached as Appendix 3.

6. Financial Implications

There is sufficient funding within existing capital budgets to deliver the recommendations from the Stage 3 Road Safety Audit. These recommendations are supported by AECOM although it is noted in Table 1 of the review report that some of these recommendations may not be required if the more substantial changes proposed for The Beach are delivered.

Indicative costs for delivering the scheme changes proposed in Section 10 of the report are set out in Section 11 of the report and have been provided by AECOM using a standard industry methodology. These have not been fully tested at this stage and provide indicative costs only. If the council is to proceed to deliver the recommendations in full, further work will be required to review the costings provided, consider value for money and identify capital funding for these as there is no new capital funding available at this stage.

7. Costs

Implementation of the recommendations set out in the Stage 3 Road Safety Audit will be charged to the council's capital programme and will cost circa £20k. Funding for this sum can be identified from existing capital budgets.

In Section 11 of their report AECOM have identified indicative costs of circa £373k to implement the proposals for changes to The Beach as set out in Section 10 of their report. These costs have not been tested and Section 11 of the AECOM report acknowledges that there are a number of exclusions from these costs, for example costs of night working or road resurfacing. No decision on the implementation of the AECOM recommendations for changes to The Beach will be made until the work set out in recommendation 5 of this report has been carried out.

The costs of delivering the independent review by AECOM, including the public engagement, was £39k and these costs were charged to the council's annual revenue budget and funded from reserves.

8. Funding

Funding to deliver the Stage 3 Road Safety Audit changes can be secured from existing capital budgets. However, funding for the proposed changes to The Beach would need to be identified as new funding at the appropriate time.

The independent review was funded by existing revenue and reserves funding.

Officer time to undertake the work set out in recommendation 5 of this Executive report will need to be provided from existing resources and may impact on existing work programmes.

9. Legal Powers and Implications

None arising directly from this report.

10. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

None arising directly from this report.

11. Risk Management

Any recommendations that are considered for implementation by the council will need to follow our risk management framework. In line with this a full risk appraisal will be developed alongside the work requested through recommendation 5 in this report to inform the March 2024 Executive report which will set out a recommended way forward

At this stage the following risks and potential mitigations have been identified:

Risk	Inherent risk score	Residual Likelihood	Residual Impact	Residual Risk Score	Comments
Delay to implementing the recommendations of the Stage 3 Road Safety Audit undertaken in July 2023 could impact on the ability to address the on-going road safety issues, particularly given the evidence through the public consultation and on-site observations by AECOM of on-going misunderstanding and misuse of the scheme.	HIGH	2	3	LOW/MED	It had been agreed to delay implementation pending the outcome of the independent review however recommendation 3 of this report proposes proceeding with the implementation of the Road Safety works. These will be included in the work programme of the relevant team and a programme for implementation established as soon as possible. This will also include an assessment of whether the recommendations that might not be required if wider changes to The Beach are taken forward, also need to be delivered in the interim to ensure all road safety issues are being addressed.
The ability to be clear when communicating future financial impacts of potential options with the local community and decision-makers, given that the proposals and	HIGH	2	2	LOW/MED	Before any future decision can be made on whether to proceed or not with this scheme then additional technical and design work will need to be undertaken to further develop and test the proposals. There is no unallocated officer

Risk	Inherent risk score	Residual Likelihood	Residual Impact	Residual Risk Score	Comments
potential changes to The Beach in Section 10 of the review report and illustrated in Appendix E are only high-level assessment of an indicative scheme, as are the associated costs that are set out in Section 11.					resource currently available for this and reprioritising resource within the Highways Design teams has the risk of impacting on the delivery of current work programmes. The Director of Place will ensure any need to reprioritise work and impacts on the existing programme are understood and supported by the Executive Member for Highways and Transport.
There is a potential reputational risk to the council if it is not able to fund or deliver the changes recommended through the independent review, given the investment of time and money in this and the level of public interest.	HIGH	3	4	MED/HIGH	The recommendations in this report propose a way forward, which will include a review of options for funding and the value for money of proceeding, with a report coming back to Executive in March 2024 with further recommendations. This activity will be supported by continued engagement with the relevant Ward Members and the Town Council.
Given there is no currently available capital funding to progress with wider changes to The Beach there is a risk that, in order to implement these changes (if that is the decision of the Executive in March 2024), funding may need to be reallocated from the existing capital programme which could impact on the delivery of other schemes already in the programme.	HIGH	3	3	LOW/MED	As part of implementing recommendation 5 in this report there will be a review of the possible options for funding future changes including value for money and implications for the existing capital programme and this will be clearly set out in the report to March 2024 Executive.

Risk	Inherent risk score	Residual Likelihood	Residual Impact	Residual Risk Score	Comments
Changes made to reverse elements of the scheme may affect the council's relationship with Active Travel England (ATE) and also the ability to secure additional funding from them and for wider cross-transport schemes in the future. This is supported by grant determination agreements.	HIGH	3	3	MEDIUM	The Director of Place will maintain regular contact with ATE and support their processes including local authority capability assessments, which will be used to assess future funding both for specific active travel schemes as well as wider allocations for cross-transport funding streams. The assessments will include a review of local leadership levels for active travel and delivery track record of past schemes. Given that removal or scaling back of a past scheme could be detrimental to the council's assessment score, this aspect will be taken forward in line with Recommendation 6 of this report.

12. Equality Implications

As outlined in the AECOM report

13. Corporate Implications

An independent report was commissioned from Audit West which resulted in a number of recommendations being made and accepted by the council to improve its processes (see background papers). These have been subject to a separate report and will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Executive member.

There is no currently unallocated resource within the Highways Design teams to undertake the relevant workstreams identified in recommendation 5 of this Executive report and this is likely to require the re-prioritisation of existing work programmes which may impact on the delivery of other projects.

14. Options Considered

Not applicable to this review.

15. Author:

Lucy Shomali – Director of Place

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – AECOM Clevedon Seafront/Hill Road Independent Review Final Report – November 2023

Appendix 2 – Executive Summary

Appendix 3 – AECOM Presentation to Public Meeting 20 November 2023

Background Papers:

Report to the Executive – 06 September 2023 – Independent Review of Clevedon Seafront Scheme