



## South Area Committee

15 January 2018

### Footbridge across Hobson's Brook – Update

**To:** South Area Committee 15/01/2018

**Report by:** John Richards, Senior Engineer/Project Leader

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**Wards affected:** Trumpington

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**Key Decision:** No

#### 1. Executive summary

This report outlines recommendations that require Committee determination in relation to the potential introduction of a pedestrian footbridge across Hobson's Brook near Kingfisher Way.

It outlines a range of benefits for the City Council delivering the project rather than the grant applicant, Accordia Bridge Group, it then seeks a decision from Area Committee on whether to proceed with the project and support the additional funding required.

#### 2. Recommendations

The South Area Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note and support the delivery arrangements now proposed as outlined in the report (see section 4.1).
- 2.2 Support the prioritisation of an additional £25,000 s106 funding contribution needed to deliver the project (see 4.4 and 5.1).

2.3 Notes that progress is also subject to obtaining necessary consents.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Council uses S106 developer contributions to mitigate the impact of development. Generic S106 contributions (agreed before April 2015) for providing or improving open spaces are devolved to the area committees to decide how they should be used. More details can be found at [www.cambridge.gov.uk/s106](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/s106).
- 3.2 The proposal to install a pedestrian footbridge across Hobson's Brook, using S106-funding, was put forward by the Accordia Bridge Group as part of the 2015/16 S106 bidding round. A summary of its application can be found in Appendix C. The aim is to improve the public pedestrian access to, from and through the Accordia development. This will provide a link to the existing footpath that runs up the west side of the brook between Brooklands Avenue and Long Road and will provide a link with Accordia and Bentley Road. The site location plan can be found in Appendix B.
- 3.3 The South Area Committee considered its 2015/16 S106 priority-setting report on 14 December 2015. Based on the information that was available at the time, the Committee agreed to allocate up to £35,000 of devolved informal open space s106 contributions as a grant to the Accordia Bridge Group for the installation of the new pedestrian footbridge, subject to planning permission, project appraisal approval and an agreement to transfer the new asset to the Council.
- 3.4 The planning application (15/2232/FUL) for the pedestrian footbridge received planning permission, subject to conditions, in August 2016. For a summary of the planning process please view the planning report via the link indicated in the background documents.
- 3.5 A detailed business case for the project was considered by Capital Programme Board. It was approved in principle, subject to confirmation of legal considerations; the business case is still to be finalised pending consideration of funding approval for expected additional costs and appropriate legal agreements being put in place. Assuming that this happens, the Capital Programme Board will review the details before sign-off of the business case can be confirmed.

## 4. Considerations

4.1 **Project Management:** The project was initially approved as a grant to the Accordia Bridge Group. However it is now intended that Cambridge City Council, through the Streets and Open Spaces Project Development Team, procure and manage the project development and implementation.

- (a) The City Council would be the organisation procuring the construction of the bridge and entering into a contract with suitable contractors in accordance with the approved planning permission.
- (b) The Accordia Bridge Group for planning purposes would still need as the applicant to adhere to the pre-commencement conditions as outlined in the planning consent.
- (c) With the City Council entering the contract with the building contractors directly, there will no longer be a requirement for a legal agreement for the transfer of the bridge between the Accordia Bridge Group and Cambridge City Council.
- (d) Direct management will also ensure that the bridge will be of an acceptable standard for public safety and future maintenance.
- (e) There will be efficiency and cost savings as a consequence and also the project will be VAT neutral. It is intended the Project Manager from Cambridge City Council will work closely with Accordia Bridge Group representatives to implement the project.

4.2 **Consultation on the S106-funding proposal:** The original project applicants the Accordia Bridge Group undertook a number of consultations during the development of the outline planning permission and during the process for two approved applications for planning consent.

- (a) The project concept was approved by South Area Committee's when it prioritised the project for funding.
- (b) Since the Area Committee's decision in December 2015, a local resident contacted officers in early 2016 to highlight:

(i) opposition to the proposals amongst some local residents and  
(ii) concerns that the Council does not have the authority to build a bridge over Hobson's Brook or to construct on the land on either side at the location.

- (c) Following the concerns raised the Council undertook a public consultation in autumn 2016. This was separate from the consultation on planning application 15/2232/FUL.
- (d) There were 123 responses to the question in the public consultation asking, 'Do you support the use of up to £35,000 of developer contributions towards the proposed footbridge and access improvements'.

Response category	Replies	%	
Strongly support	78	63.4%	<b>73.2% for</b>
Tend to support	12	9.8%	
Tend not to support	7	5.7%	<b>26.8% against</b>
Strongly not support	26	21.1%	

- (e) For more details please see Appendix A - Summary of the Wider Public Consultation Response.

4.3 **Land-owner consents:** The Council's legal team continues to seek the consent of relevant land-owners to the building of the bridge. Negotiations are on-going.

4.4 **Estimated costs:** The legal agreements are taking considerably longer than expected to put in place and, to expedite matters and the Council has had to pay for other parties' solicitor fees and disbursement costs.

- (a) As a result, the project is now likely to cost more than the original £35,000 S106 funding allocation. It is now estimated that a completed scheme could cost in the range of £45,000 to £52,000.
- (b) This is due to additional costs relating to legal fees, the considerable additional officer time required to bring the project

forward and the potential additional costs of the footbridge construction and engineered design to ensure it complies with standards expected in a public open space.

- (c) Recommendation 2.2 seeks Committee approval for allocating up to a further £25,000 (on top of the existing £35,000 allocation), which is £8,000 more than the higher value in the estimated cost range. This is intended as a sensible contingency measure (for example, in case quotes for the work are higher than expected).

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

The Council's careful management of S106 contributions ensures they are used in line with relevant regulations, planning policies and the terms of the relevant S106 agreements.

- (a) Both existing and proposed funding for this project will be taken from nearby S106 contributions from Trumpington ward.
- (b) Even though S106 funding availability is running down in other parts of the city, Trumpington is fortunate to have considerable sums of informal open space S106 contributions available. An allocation of a further £25,000 of contributions from Trumpington will still leave the ward with significant sums for other projects.
- (c) The earliest expiry date for available informal open space S106 contributions in Trumpington ward is in 2023. The current delays to this project present no issue for time-limited S106 funding.
- (d) The current construction pre-tender expectation is that the contractor works will be between £40,000 and £50,000. At this time a full competitive procurement exercise has not been completed. Costs may be higher than expectations, and as such further additional funding may be required to complete the project, if this is the case the project will be further considered by the South Area Committee.

### **5.2 Staffing implications:** This project is being managed by the project development team within Streets and Open Spaces.

- 5.3 **Legal implications:** The project is dependent on consents being obtained from relevant land-owners for building the footbridge on their land.
- 5.4 **Other implications:** Equality impacts, climate change ratings and community safety implications are amongst the factors being taken into account through the business case process.
- 5.5 With Committee support for the recommendations in this report, it is hoped that the project will be able to progress during 2018. If there are any particular difficulties, however, there will be a report back to this Committee later this year.

## **6. Background papers**

- (a) South Area Committee Agenda (14/12/2015) Item 10 – s106 Priority Setting South Area project proposals at
- (b) Summary of the planning process and approval for the Footbridge across Hobson's Brook

## **7. Appendices**

Appendix A – Summary of the Wider Public Consultation Response  
Appendix B – Site Location Plan  
Appendix C – Summary of the proposal from the Accordia Bridge Group in the 2015/16 S106 application round

## **8. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact James Ogle, Officer, Project Officer, tel: 01223 - 457354, email: [james.ogle@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:james.ogle@cambridge.gov.uk).

# Summary of the Wider Public Consultation Response

### 1. Purpose

To summarise the wider public consultation undertaken from 20/09/16 to 21/10/16 for Hobson's Brook Footbridge and based on the analysis of the consultation responses make a recommendation as to whether the project has an overall public support.

### 2. Background

For a number of years there have been discussions about the potential construction of a footbridge across Hobson's Brook, connecting the Accordia Development open space at Kingfisher Avenue with the public footpath network, west of the brook.

This wider public consultation gave local residents and stakeholders a further opportunity to comment on issues not considered through the planning process. A consultation leaflet was distributed to over 500 residences within proximity of the proposed footbridge. This consultation was made publically available online over a 5 week period from 20/09/16 to 21/10/16.

### Consultation Summary

Extensive local consultation has been undertaken for this project prior to this wider public consultation exercise. The initial project sponsors Accordia Bridge Group (ABG) undertook consultations as part of the process for applying for planning permission as well as the initial application for s106 funding.

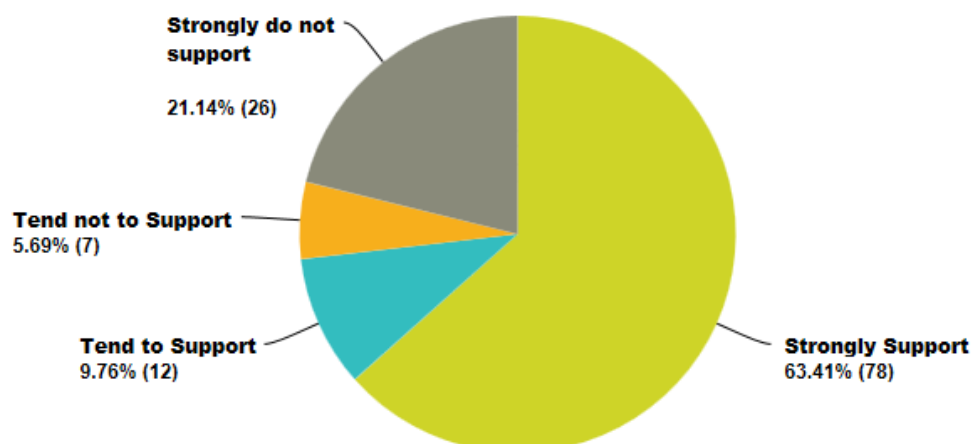
### Wider Public Consultation, September/October 2016

From the various consultation media and response to the wider public consultation there was **123** responses received.

- There were 123 responses to the question asking, 'Do you support the use of up to £35,000 of developer contributions towards the proposed footbridge and access improvements'. 78 of the responses (or 63.41%) strongly supported, 12 of the responses (or 9.76%) tended to support, 26 of the responses (or 21.14%) strongly did not support and 7 of the respondents (or 5.69%) tended not to support the proposed the use of the s106 funding for implementing the scheme.

## Do you support the use of up to £35,000 of developer contributions towards the proposed footbridge and access improvements?

Answered: 123 Skipped: 0



- Of the 123 respondents **73.17%** support the project of these **63.41%** strongly support the project.
- Of the 123 respondents **26.83%** do not support the project and of these **21.14%** strongly do not support the project.
- There were 88 responses to the question asking if responders wanted to make any additional points. Of these 50 responders (or 56.82%) gave supportive comments and 29 (or 32.95%) gave negative comments. 6 responses were neutral (or 6.81%) and 3 un-counted.

### 3. Summary of Consultation Findings to the Wider Public Consultation

The greater response to the wider public consultation was supportive of the bridge proposal with **73.17%**, supporting the use of developer contributions for the implementation of the pedestrian footbridge over Hobson's Brook.

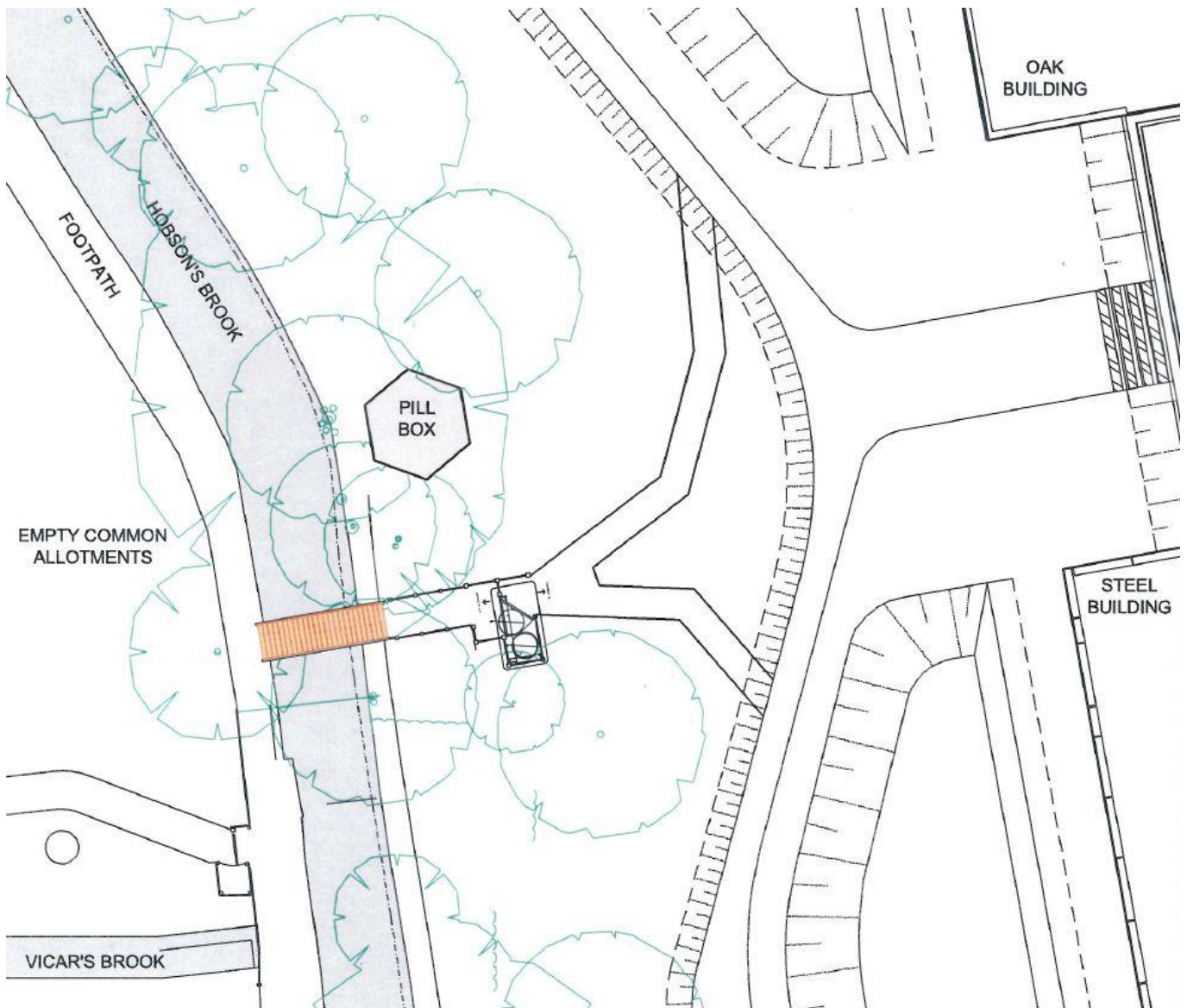
The opinions in the responses were polarised with 84.55% of respondents either strongly supporting or strongly not supporting the proposal. With only 15.45% taking the middle ground of tending to support or tending not to support the proposal.

### 4. Next Step and Recommendation

Following the approval of the planning application for the bridge and the results of the wider public consultation, it is recommended that the South Area Committee consider the response to the consultation and further consider funding the project.



## Proposed pedestrian footbridge across Hobson's Brook: site location plan



## Summary of the proposal from the Accordia Bridge Group in the 2015/16 S106 application round for a footbridge across Hobson's Brook at the Accordia development

**Project:** Footbridge across Hobson's Brook between adopted POS in Accordia on the east bank and public footpath network, allotments and community orchard to the west of the brook.

**Where?:** Linking the adopted public open space in Accordia east of Hobson's Brook (adjacent to The Oak Building, Kingfisher Way CB2 8DA) and the public footpath running north-south on the west side of Hobson's Brook and the wider footpath network.

**Q3. Category this proposal most relates to:**

Informal open space

### Q4. What sort of improvements do you have in mind?

Improving pedestrian permeability between footpath networks and public open spaces east and west of Hobson's Brook. 5.0m long and 1.2m wide pedestrian bridge over Hobson's Brook between Accordia and Empty Common.

This would link the pedestrian network within the Accordia site to the existing paths that run alongside the west side of the conduit and around the west side of the allotments. The width of the bridge would provide good manoeuvrability and easy access to wheelchair users and parents with push-chairs. The path link to the footbridge on the Accordia side would be in permeable rolled hoggins with edging to match the existing paths in the adopted Accordia Public Open Space.

### Q5. Why is this project needed? (ie, what is the current unmet need?)

Whilst the masterplan for Accordia was specifically designed for pedestrian and cycle use with mews, landscaped pedestrian streets and cycle parking integrated into the design, the internal permeability was not extended beyond the site. Important in the integrity of the design was the location,

which it was hoped, would be well connected with paths to the city centre, surrounding neighbourhoods and the countryside beyond.

*Accordia Bridge Group's application for S106 funding in 2015/16*

However, because of the omission of the originally proposed bridge over Hobson's Conduit was omitted to the north, and the planned pedestrian route along the brook was barred by the fence around Brooklands House there were no pedestrian connections on the west boundary. The impenetrable enclosures to the Cambridge University Press and Government Offices to the south and south-east, resulted in pedestrian access was being limited to a single opening to Brooklands Avenue and two on Shaftsbury Road. The development was a virtual cul-de-sac. Pedestrian access along the narrow footway on the south side of Brooklands Avenue is a particular problem. In this respect, the design fails to achieve the permeability and integration with surrounding areas vital to the best principles of Urban Design. This is particularly poignant for residents since excellent walking routes lie west of the conduit.

City Council planners have confirmed that if this site were to be considered for development now, the provision of pedestrian links to the west and south would be considered essential.

**Q6. How would local communities within Cambridge benefit?**

**Permeability:** A footbridge over the conduit would make a substantial contribution to permeability in two important ways: first, it would increase ease of movement at a local level, opening up access for Accordia residents to the green spaces of Empty Common, its amenities, the allotments and in time to a community orchard; and for residents of neighbouring communities to the Accordia shop, play area and garden space; and at a city-wide level, facilitating connectivity for residents of south Cambridge to the railway station, bus routes, Addenbrooke's and the city centre. The footpath on the west side of the brook is on land owned by CCC and the community orchard/garden is a reality and flourishing. The project has the support of the Mayor in her role as promoting access for folk with disabilities and the Exec Cllr for transport within CCC.

**Protection of the wildlife corridor:** We consider that the management plan for the green belt, or corridor, will protect and enhance wildlife and wildlife habitats, especially with the provision for measures to encourage species such as water voles. The bridge will not prejudice this careful plan for the

green corridor. We consider that the new planting and removal of the fencing will hold an appropriate balance between screening the Accordia

*Accordia Bridge Group's application for S106 funding in 2015/16*

development and giving its residents space for recreational and leisure enjoyment of Hobsons Brook corridor.

**Q7. Have any preparations taken place about this proposal?**

Yes, from late 2010 extensive public consultations and discussions with officers. Applications for outline and detailed planning permission which included statutory consultations, both applications granted. The project has the support of a number of elected members.

- Consultation with Cambridge Past, Present and Future and Hobson's Conduit Trust, BENERA (Bentley Road and Newton Road Residents' Association)
- We suggested that voluntary assistance from Accordia residents could provide a valuable addition to the work of maintaining the brook through 'green gym' work-outs. This aspect of our work was to make real progress. In consultation with the city council's Nature Conservation Projects Officer, we drew up a set of biodiversity proposals for the management of the 'green belt' and the protection of species.
- Consultation with Cambridge City Council: We held several consultative meetings with the City Council's community staff. They indicated that they would assist in progressing the scheme if residents on Accordia were in favour. They held a workshop at which the scheme was considered and discussed by all relevant stake-holders
- Consultation with Cambridgeshire County Council: The group consulted Cambridgeshire's rights of way manager about a possible bridge's link to the existing network of foot paths and rights of way for which the County Council was responsible; about managing the water course; and about other technical and practical issues. He took the view that a bridge would improve connectivity in south Cambridge and said that from his department's viewpoint building a bridge would make a positive contribution once other issues – such as safety concerns, wheelchair access, and misuse – were resolved. There was some discussion of long-term maintenance and the possibility that the Council might adopt a bridge. He advised that the County Council had given formal right of way

status to the main foot path proceeding north to its junction with Finches Way, and then round the west side of the allotments.

*Accordia Bridge Group's application for S106 funding in 2015/16*

- Consultation with Cambridgeshire Police: Members of the group held an on-site consultation with the local beat police officer and Cambridgeshire Police's Architectural Liaison Officer, The informal and provisional view was that footbridge across the brook would not create a significant crime risk, and could be sited so that it was visible from the flats and by pedestrians for security. They pointed out that the adjacent area was a very low crime area. They also advised that it would be sensible not to site it by the children's play area.

The above consultations were all before the statutory consultation which preceded the grant of planning permission for the bridge.

**Q8. Are you aware of any opposition to this proposal/potential issues?**

- Concerns of some residents with regard to increased crime, environmental damage and danger from cyclists were all discounted by the Planning Committee when it granted planning permission for the bridge.
- Clare College, the landowner on the west bank, declined to grant licence for bridge abutment on strip of land between bank and public footpath. This can be overcome by moving the bridge a few metres north onto land wholly owned by City Council.
- A revised planning application is in preparation for this, although we understand that if accepted as an s106 project, the work may be permitted development.