



## Report to Cabinet

<b>Date:</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> December Cabinet</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Aylesbury Link Roads, Housing Infrastructure Fund negotiation, and South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR) Phase 1 and 2 - Project Update, Delivery and Funding</b>
<b>Relevant councillor(s):</b>	Leader of the Council
<b>Author and/or contact officer:</b>	<b>Richard Lumley, Service Director, Strategic Transport &amp; Infrastructure</b>
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	Aylesbury South-East; Aylesbury South West; Aylesbury West; Aylesbury North West; Aylesbury North; Aylesbury East; Aston Clinton & Bierton; Wendover, Halton & Stoke Mandeville; Stone & Waddesdon

### Recommendations:

#### Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note and endorse the approach the Council is taking to negotiate with Homes England, HS2 and the Department for Transport to use external funding to help deliver the Aylesbury link roads. This includes negotiating extra flexibility of the £172m Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to ensure delivery continues.
2. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Planning Growth & Sustainability in consultation with the Leader and s151 officer to:
  - a. finalise the budget for the project (and HIF programme), following further target cost considerations, and subsequently varying HIF financial contributions in conjunction with Homes England.
  - b. agree the HS2 funding contract for the Bridge Assurance in Phase 1 of works.



## 2. Background

- 2.1 The Council is taking a lead role in enabling link roads to unlock housing delivery:
- a) Co-ordinating and requiring the provision of relevant new roads by developers in its role as local planning authority.
  - b) Delivering new roads to mitigate HS2 and accommodate increased traffic in the future.
- 2.2 Resource costs have particularly burdensome as they provide the base costs for the project eg bitumen prices up almost 30% since February, and steel prices are now 200% higher than in early 2020 (steel section prices £1400 per tonne).
- 2.3 The Council is not alone in this, it is a nationwide issue. For example the Carlisle Southern Road Link has doubled in price from £75m in 2020 to £150m today.
- 2.4 Senior Council Officers met with Homes England in June 2022 to highlight the cost escalation, and also to propose a way forward that will ensure that the new link roads can still be delivered at no extra cost to the Council. It was agreed with Homes England that the Council cannot commit more of its own funds to these projects.
- 2.5 The Council approached Homes England to provide additional funding for the projects due to the inflationary cost pressures. Homes England have stated that they are not currently in a position to provide any further funding and have stated that any savings must be used first to support any underfunded projects.
- 2.6 Figure 1 shows progress to date in delivering the link roads, and current estimated completion dates. These are subject to a combination of planning consents, securing funding, and / or developer delivery.

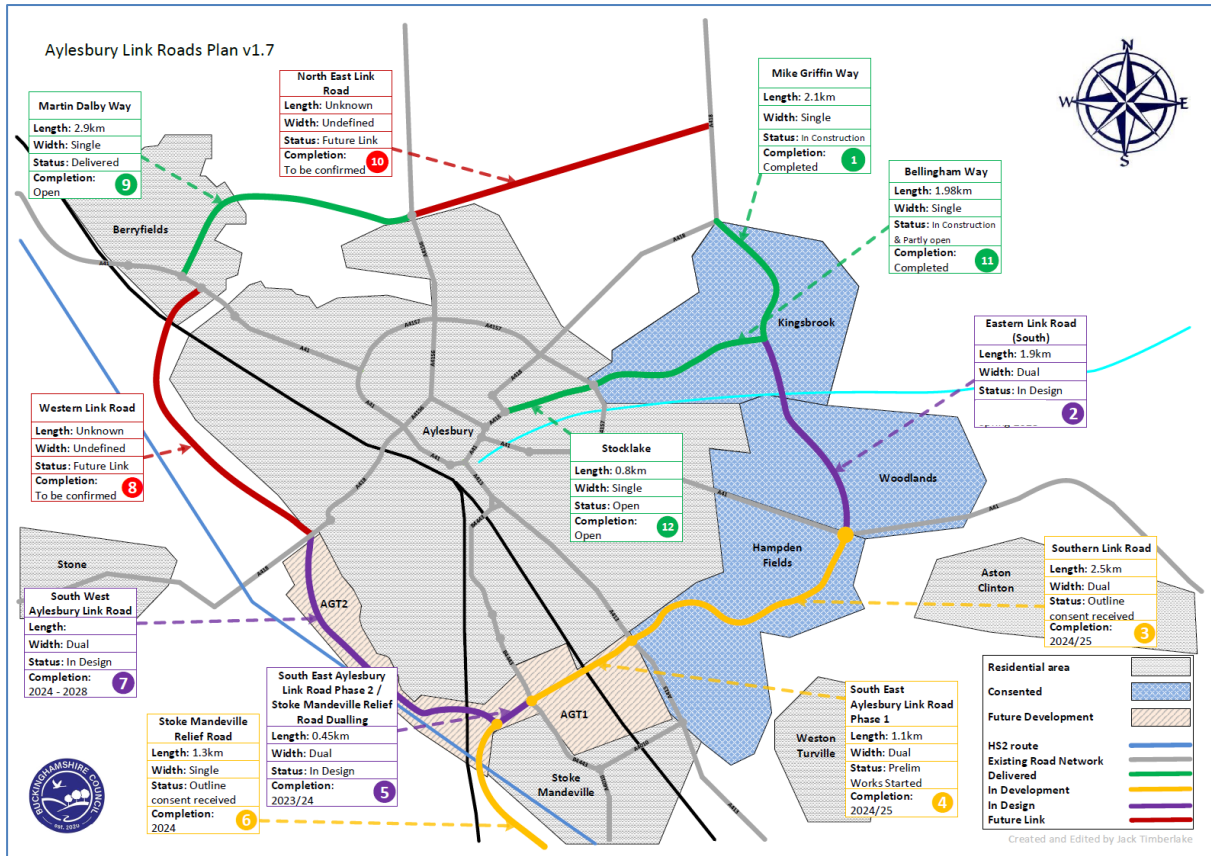
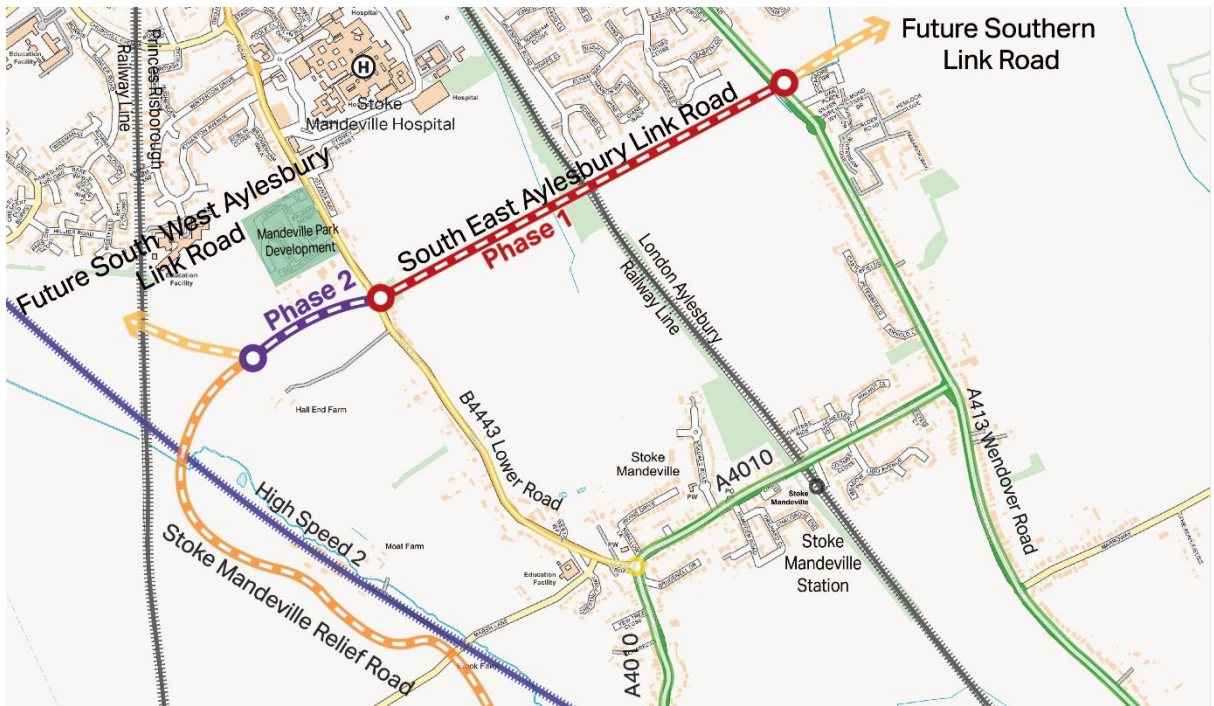


Figure 1: Link Roads map. Completion dates are current estimates, subject to change.

### 3. South East Aylesbury Link Road

3.1 The South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR) project is the construction of approximately 1.7 kilometres of dual carriageway including 3 new roundabout junctions. The project is being delivered as one project but in two phases. This new road will join the A413 Wendover Road with the B4443 Lower Road (SEALR Phase 1) and the B4443 Lower Road to a new roundabout junction (Phase 2) with both the Stoke Mandeville Relief Road (SMRR) and the South West Aylesbury Link Road (SWALR). This is shown in the plan below (fig.1).



**Figure 2: Approximate SEALR route**

- 3.2 Both phases of the SEALR form part of the Aylesbury Orbital Link Road as identified in the Aylesbury Transport Strategy and the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan. The delivery of SEALR in its entirety will complete a significant section of the Aylesbury Orbital Link Road.
- 3.3 On 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021, Buckinghamshire Council’s Cabinet agreed with HS2 Ltd. to deliver SEALR Phase 2. SEALR Phase 2 will replace a section of the single carriageway Stoke Mandeville Relief Road with a dual carriageway road and a new roundabout providing access to the future South West Aylesbury Link Road (SWALR).
- 3.4 **Design update (Phase 1):** The SEALR Phase 1 detailed design was completed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021.
- 3.5 **Design update (Phase 2):** For Phase 2, the preliminary design was recently completed and the detailed design started in October 2022 with planned completion due in February 2023.
- 3.6 **Planning update (Phase 1):** SEALR Phase 1 received planning permission in July 2021. A total of 22 planning conditions were put in place, which are being actively managed to ensure compliance. Pre-commencement conditions were signed off by the planning authority prior to early works beginning on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022.
- 3.7 **Planning update (Phase 2):** The Phase 2 main planning application submission was 18 October 2022, with a decision expected to be taken in early 2023.

- 3.8 In order to progress the UKPN ducting for Phase 2, planning permission for only this element of the diversion work was obtained on 7 July 2022. A licence was recently agreed to undertake these works with the landowner and these works have started.
- 3.9 **Land update (Phase 1):** The Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), Side Roads Order (SRO), and the replacement public open space (POS/Section 19 application) inquiry took place from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at The Gateway offices. All the proceedings are available via the Buckinghamshire Council webcast page (available [here](#)).
- 3.10 **Land update (Phase 2):** There is no Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) in place for SEALR Phase 2. There are two landowners on the Phase 2 scheme. The project team is in active dialogue with both landowners and is seeking to acquire the land by agreement and negotiations to this end are continuing in a positive manner.
- 3.11 **Early works undertaken to date:** The following early works have been completed on Phase 1 to date:
- a) Archaeological investigations and vegetation clearance in the fields east of Wendover Road.
  - b) Archaeological investigation and vegetation clearance along the 25m wide corridor required for the UK Power Networks to allow the undergrounding of the 33kV cables.
  - c) The central island on A413 Wendover Road has been removed to allow for the creation of the works access into the SEALR site and to minimise the impact of temporary traffic management on traffic flows.
  - d) Site accesses into the fields east and west of Wendover Road and to the field east of Lower Road have been created and site compounds established.
  - e) Ducting for the UK Power Networks underground cable has been installed underneath B4443 Lower Road & A413 Wendover Road with completion of the cables being installed, powered and the switch from overhead to underground expected to be in December 2022.
  - f) An existing, derelict structure in a plot of land to the east of Lower Road has been cleared of asbestos and demolished.
  - g) Haul roads and associated hardstanding has been installed from Wendover Road and Lower Road to the site of the new railway bridge to facilitate the under-track crossing (UTX).



- h) The UTX for the 33kV cable diversions has successfully been completed with the ducting at depths of up to 12m.
- i) Ducting to the remainder of the UKPN corridor is nearing completion for Phase 1.
- j) Archaeological investigation of the remaining areas of Phase 1 is continuing.

#### **4. Legal and financial implications**

- 4.1 The scale of the delivery and the need to coordinate multiple developers and other external funding is extremely challenging. Cost inflation, energy prices and unseen issues means that cost estimates have risen substantially over the past year, and there is now not enough funding to meet all our infrastructure commitments.
- 4.2 Resource costs have particularly burdensome as they provide the base costs for the project eg bitumen prices up almost 30% since February, and steel prices are now 200% higher than in early 2020 (steel section prices £1400 per tonne).
- 4.3 Financial implications: these are set out in Appendix B.

#### **5. Corporate implications**

- 5.1 Corporate Implications are set out in the confidential appendices.

#### **6. Consultation with local councillors & community boards**

- 6.1 The SEALR project team has met with local elected members on a number of occasions. The chair of the Aylesbury Community Board regularly attends local member briefings with the project team.

#### **7. Communication, engagement & further consultation**

- 7.1 SEALR Phase 1 held 2 public consultation events in 2017 and 2018 and the public were consulted as part of the planning process for Phase 1. SEALR Phase 2 held an online public consultation throughout February 2021. A statutory consultation period will take place when the SEALR Phase 2 planning application is submitted. No further public consultation events are scheduled to take place.
- 7.2 E-bulletins for the project are produced and distributed to a mailing list. These e-bulletins inform on project progression and key events. These e-bulletins started in 2018 and, to date, 36 e-bulletins have been produced and distributed, the latest in November 2022. There are over 400 subscribers to the e-bulletins.

7.3 The project has a dedicated webpage that is updated regularly. This is available [here](#).

## **8. Next steps and review**

8.1 If Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Leader, s151 officer and Corporate Director then they will review the target costs in early 2023 and Spring 2023 and, subject to those reviews, will confirm award of the contracts or not.

## **9. Background papers**

Appendix 1 (Confidential SEALR paper)

Appendix A (Equalities Impact Assessment)

Appendix B (Confidential financial information)

Appendix C (Confidential HIF finances)

## **10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please contact the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider please inform the democratic services team [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).