

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel

Date **15 January 2019**

Report of: **Welborne Strategic Lead**

Subject: **WELBORNE RAILWAY STATION**

SUMMARY

This report considers the potential to develop a railway station at Welborne Garden Village and the Council's role in that process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Panel consider the report and make any comments or raise any questions for clarification.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Welborne Plan (2015) encourages the development of a railway station to serve the planned new community.
2. The Portsmouth to Eastleigh railway line passes the western edge of the Welborne site with the nearest station at Fareham, some 2 miles to the south of Welborne by the existing road network. This route is currently single track and the opportunities to develop a new station on this line to serve Welborne directly were considered to be limited at the time of the Welborne Plan, due to line access, single track operation, level changes and proximity to the existing Fareham Station. However, the potential and benefits for a railway station serving Welborne were recognised in the Welborne Plan and, as a result, the concept masterplan allows for it and Policy WEL42 states:

“Outline planning applications for the west of the site (north of Funtley) will need to accommodate the future provision of a new rail halt on the Fareham to Eastleigh rail line unless it is demonstrated that it is not technically feasible or viable to deliver this before the end of the Plan period.”

3. The Outline Planning Application P/17/0266/OA, submitted in March 2017 and refreshed in December 2018, makes provision for a site for a new railway station. In addition, a key feature of the applicant's Transport Strategy for Welborne is to encourage sustainable transport choices, reflecting the aspirations of the Welborne Plan.

DEMONSTRATING FEASIBILITY

4. A railway station at Welborne is part of the Council's vision for a well-connected thriving new community and could deliver strong employment and social benefits to the new community. In November 2017, the Council commissioned an initial feasibility study on a new railway station at Welborne, which was carried out by Network Rail.
5. The key aim of the study was to investigate the feasibility of providing a new railway station on the Eastleigh to Fareham line (also known as the Botley line) to identify potential locations that enable the Welborne development to be connected to the railway network.
6. The Eastleigh to Fareham line is approximately 9 miles long and it is proposed that a new station could be located on a 4 mile stretch of single line. It is anticipated that the proposed station would be implemented in two phases as demand is generated by the new community:
 - Phase 1 would include a single station platform serving the current single line.
 - In Phase 2 the single line section would be double tracked and two platforms would serve the station
7. The station would be a category F station in accordance with written guidance from the Department for Transport. This is classified as a non-staffed station and, as there is no mandatory requirement for a station building, a platform shelter, seating and information helpline facilities are proposed.
8. Initial stage cost estimates are between £19M for Phase 1 and £78M for both Phases. These costs are loaded with 66% risk to create a worst-case financial scenario.

Network Rail has a prescribed 8-stage GRIP (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) process. As the project progresses through each stage, risk is reduced and a more refined assessment of the costs will be possible. The final cost of the Phase One station at Welborne has been estimated at between £12M and £15M once risk is eliminated through the GRIP process.

9. The study concluded that a railway station at Welborne was technically feasible and has the potential to be well used. Four potential sites along the existing Eastleigh to Fareham line were considered and the recommended option was within the boundaries of Welborne Garden Village itself.
10. Clearly, this is important evidence to support the Local Planning Authority in asserting Policy WEL42 when determining the outline planning application. However, it also supports the Council's wish to deliver wider benefits to the new community and to work with partners to bring the station forward.
11. Essentially, three key areas need to be progressed in order to move delivery of the new station at Welborne forward: the strategic fit with the existing timetable, the national rail investment process and the funding package.

STRATEGIC FIT WITH TIMETABLE

12. Currently, the Portsmouth to London service on this line runs one train an hour, with 2 trains an hour in peak times. A timetable review is required to determine whether there is enough capacity on the existing network for an additional stop at Welborne.
13. Two options are available to move this piece of work forward:
 - (a) Network Rail has existing plans to review the Eastleigh to Fareham line as part of their strategic focus on improving connectivity in the Solent area. They estimate that they will be in a position to commission the work, which will include a formal timetable review, and complete in Autumn 2019.
 - (b) Alternatively, the Council could commission and fund a formal timetable review at a cost of £10K to £20K, with completion possible by late Spring 2019.
14. Whilst informal indications from both Network Rail and the network provider, South Western Railway, are positive about the outcome of the timetable review being able to support an additional stop at Welborne, ultimately rail services are determined by the terms of the franchise. If the timetable review is unsuccessful in supporting services from a new station at Welborne within the current franchise, or the project is not progressing for other reasons, the Council could lobby the Department for Transport (DfT) and potential bidders to provide a new station and services at Welborne prior to franchise renewal in 2024. The franchise renewal process will begin in mid-2021.

NATIONAL RAIL INVESTMENT PROCESS

15. All new rail network investment projects are required to go through Network Rail's 8-stage GRIP (Governance for Railway Investment Projects) process.
16. All rail investment projects are required to have completed GRIP Stage 2 in order to be eligible for any capital funding from the DfT New Stations Fund. Stage 1 requires an initial assessment and formal review of the project by Network Rail, with Stage 2 identifying the project sponsor and defining the level of Network Rail's involvement in the scheme. The cost of undertaking GRIP Stages 1 and 2 is estimated at £100,000

and any work undertaken now would remain valid until the next national rail franchise renewal in 2024.

FUNDING A NEW STATION AT WELBORNE GARDEN VILLAGE

17. No funding is available from either Network Rail or South Western Railway for undertaking the GRIP process or for developing the new station itself. Moreover, unlike most of Welborne's infrastructure, funding for the new railway station will not be required from the developer.
18. As a result, most of the funding for developing the new station would need to be provided from local public sources such as the Borough Council, the County Council and the Solent LEP. There may be a possibility of funding from Highways England if the scheme is able to demonstrate reduced traffic on the M27 and other parts of the strategic road network. In addition, funding may be available from the DfT's New Stations Fund but this will require match funding from local sources as above, and the timeframe for the next round of funding is not yet known.

RISK ASSESSMENT

19. The key risk is that resources will be expended on progressing the station at Welborne with no guarantee that it will ultimately be delivered. This can be mitigated for the Council by maximising external resources wherever possible.

CONCLUSION

20. It is likely that the Outline Planning Permission for Welborne Garden Village will require land to be set aside for a railway station and there is informal support from both Network Rail and the network services provider, South Western Railway, for an additional stop on the existing service between Portsmouth and London.
21. However, a lengthy and expensive process is required to progress a new station at Welborne. One element, the Timetable Review, is already programmed by Network Rail for completion in Autumn 2019. The other elements, namely the full GRIP process and the capital funding for developing the station, require funding which is not currently available. As a result, further work is required to investigate potential sources of funding for progressing a railway station at Welborne.

Background Papers:

1. Welborne Station Pre-GRIP Feasibility Study 2017

Reference Papers:

1. Investing in the Network – Network Rail
<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Investing-in-the-Network.pdf>

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Sarah Ward (Ext 4669)