

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Proposed Walking and Cycling Route on the Former Gedling Mineral Line

Date: 8 October 2020

Author: Service Manager Community Relations

Wards Affected

Gedling, Netherfield, Colwick, Trent Valley

Purpose

To update Cabinet on the feasibility work that has been undertaken regarding a future walking and cycling route along the former Gedling Mineral Line.

For Cabinet to approve officers to proactively work with Network Rail, City and County partners to undertake:

- detailed design work taking into account site constraints and improvements needed
- consultation with local residents on design work
- business planning for the future development of the former mineral line.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- 1)** Cabinet note the feasibility work that has been undertaken regarding a future walking and cycle route along the former Gedling Mineral Line.
- 2)** Cabinet approve that officers can proactively work with Network Rail, City and County partners to undertake:

- more detailed design work taking into account site constraints and improvements needed
- consultation with local residents on design work
- business planning for the future development of the former mineral line.

1 Background

- 1.1 Aspirations to develop the former mineral line between Netherfield and Gedling Country Park emerged during the compilation of and consultation on the Netherfield Locality Plan. The Plan included a proposal to explore the development of the former mineral line as a walking and cycling route connecting local communities and green space. This was managed through the Netherfield Locality Steering Group and is part of a wider physical regeneration programme adopted by that Group, some of which has already been delivered, such as the Ley Street Play Area and Trim Trial and the Cinder Path re-design. These proposals support outcomes for improved health and social wellbeing within the Netherfield and surrounding area. To date all coordination of planning work and securing of external funding relating to the former mineral line has been led by the Council, seeking support from other partners and funders as required.
- 1.2 The former mineral line is currently owned by Network Rail, but as an organisation it would not be in a position to redevelop the route for walking and cycling in isolation. The route has been designated as a proposed tram route and cycle and walking greenway within the Local Planning documents and work has previously been commissioned to explore the feasibility of such proposals being developed along the line.

Feasibility Studies

- 1.3 There has already been comprehensive feasibility work regarding the former mineral line. The Council, working alongside the Netherfield Locality Steering Group, has previously secured external funding to commission feasibility studies that consider a transformation of the line that enables wider community use. An initial study in 2014, by Nottinghamshire County Council's Landscape Architect Team, considered its use as a walking and cycling recreational route. A subsequent study in 2016, by the Major Programmes team at Nottingham City Council, considered this concept alongside a proposed tram extension along the route.

- 1.4 This collaboration with City and County partners to date has been positive. In order to proceed with the proposals in this report further strategic collaboration and commitment between the Council and its City and County partners will be required.
- 1.5 The feasibility studies show that the combination of a tram and a recreational route is possible. An impact assessment was also undertaken and this together with the original strategic plan show the linkages between the proposed cycling and walking route and other community assets such as local parks, schools and business premises. Appendix A gives an overview of these linkages. There is also the opportunity for wider strategic transport connectivity that both the tram and recreational route can offer. In particular linking to the existing rail network at Netherfield, Nottingham and to the HS2 East Midlands Hub and would support any future aspirations for transport hub development for the Netherfield area.
- 1.6 Appendix B provides the Economic Impact Assessment of the proposals undertaken in 2016, by Mott McDonald. This Assessment was a preliminary analysis of potential outcomes that a new walking and cycling greenway along the route might offer. These included:
- once all local housing development is complete, the greenway is forecast to be catering for approximately 275,000 walk and 155,000 cycle trips per annum, equivalent to 750 and 425 unique trips per day respectively;
 - the potential for a substantial local reduction in car use;
 - over a 60 year period, the greenway is expected to provide £11.3M of decongestion benefits for other road users by removing up to 1.15 million car-kms per annum;
 - over 60 years, the reduction in car use is forecast to provide £880,000 of benefits from fewer road traffic accidents;
 - a forecast to provide £260,000 of environmental benefits over a 60 year period;
 - increased walking and cycling brings about increases in quality of life, both physically and mentally, and in the long term reduced rates of mortality - a healthier population also imposes fewer costs on the NHS;
 - the increase in walking and cycling is forecast to deliver £3.8M in benefits, providing approximately £5.8M of total health benefits from the increase in physical activity;
 - the NHS will also experience lower costs from a healthier population, with anticipated savings of £360,000 across the 60 years;
 - an attractive, safe and sustainable route for residents accessing local schools, including the new school, to be built at the Colliery

- site;
 - access to leisure and community centre facilities such as Gedling Country Park, Willow Park, Ley Street Open Space and other parks and allotments in the area;
 - a direct and safe route through which employment opportunities can be accessed, including access to both Carlton and Netherfield railway stations;
 - a significant increase in the value of housing in the area and therefore housing development viability.
- 1.7 Additional research, coordinated through a work programme that as included the Netherfield Locality Steering Group, Gedling County Park and the Gedling Borough's Heritage Brought Alive project, has also identified the rich industrial and social heritage associated with the former mineral line. This includes the "Pit of Nations" at Gedling Colliery, the line's passenger use as part of the Great Northern Railway and the prominence of Netherfield as a railway town following development of the strategically important locomotive depot and marshalling yards at Colwick, which served the nation's thriving coal industry in the early 20th Century. This rich heritage offers the opportunity for the route to be a key heritage trail within the Borough for future generations to enjoy.
- 1.8 As part of the feasibility work, on site field trips were organised for members of the Netherfield Locality Steering Group. The purpose of these was to increase understanding of the issues, work required and benefits relating to operating a cycle and walking greenway. Guided visits to sites across the County were undertaken and routes included the former Gedling Mineral Line itself and greenways in Newark, Bilsthorpe and Teversal.

Gedling Borough Heritage Way

- 1.9 Since this time the Council's ambition to design a Borough wide Heritage Way walking and cycling route has been included in the Gedling Plan. That programme aims to enhance well-being of residents through community engagement, volunteering, physical and social activities, educating on our rich heritage and enhancing our visitor economy by linking key heritage assets. The proposal to develop the Netherfield to Gedling Country Park route would form a key phase of the Heritage Way concept.

Project Application to D2N2 in 2019

- 1.10 In 2019, the Council made a project application to D2N2, following a call out for strategic projects which could be considered for the Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) medium term programme. This application

requested funding of £503,300, as part of a total project cost of £1.5M. The application was assessed and that point was deemed as not applicable for LEP funding at this point in time and requires further work. In particular feedback from the LEP highlighted the project offered low delivery against the LEP strategic outputs, was conceptual at this stage and that further work to clarify key deliverables is needed. This feedback should be considered when assessing future funding applications, as should the considerable health and heritage benefits that future proposals could offer.

Interim Project – Cinder Path extension

- 1.10 The Council is currently commissioning Via East Midlands to undertake detailed design work for a section of the former mineral line from the Cinder Path to the rear of Manvers Street, Deabill Street and Pearson Street and out onto Victoria Road in Netherfield. The detailed designs will look at addressing issues of lighting, security to the rear of properties and the pathway itself. This project falls into the work programme of the Netherfield Locality Steering Group. As an extension to this commissioned work there is the opportunity for a virtual “fly-through” tour along the whole mineral line route to be produced, as well as other consultation materials showing how local residents would be able to use the route and how those nearby might be affected. As well as offering the opportunity to consult with residents and future users of the site, this design work will also provide useful evidence for future funders.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that Cabinet note the feasibility work that has been undertaken regarding a future walking and cycle route along the former Gedling Mineral Line.
- 2.2 It is proposed that Cabinet approve officers to proactively work with Network Rail, City and County partners to undertake:
- more detailed design work taking into account site constraints and improvements needed
 - consultation with local residents on design work
 - business planning for the future development of the former mineral line.

2.3 Next Steps

It is recommended that ongoing collaboration should be initiated by bringing our key strategic partners, such as Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council and Network Rail, together for a further

discussion on how best to proceed any future work related to the former mineral line.

- 2.4 Due to the considerable feasibility work already undertaken the next steps should include consideration and progression of more detailed design planning, undertaking consultation with residents and consideration with these key strategic partners of a business plan and funding strategy to develop the route. Any detailed design work needs to consider the constraints and improvements required that have been identified by feasibility studies to ensure accessibility and safety for all members of the community.
- 2.5 It is essential that any design proposals are consulted on widely with the community. This should include those residents who live in close proximity to the former line. A consultation can utilise the design work to showcase the benefits of the greenway, but also highlight mitigation measures regarding community safety, encroachment and other concerns that local residents may have. The proposed virtual “fly-through” tour being considered would support this. The format of any consultation will need due consideration of current coronavirus restrictions, but could consist of online consultation and a consultation booklets for neighbouring residents.
- 2.6 Both the design work and subsequent public consultation can be used to inform the outline business plan and funding strategy development. Although a tram extension and the walking and cycling greenway are two separate major projects, the feasibility work has identified their compatibility so the development of a joint business case for both the tram and the greenway could be considered. Alternatively a plan to develop the cycle and walking route in advance of any tram construction is also deemed achievable with a view to reinstating it later as tram construction is implemented. Both concepts appear in Local Planning documents.
- 2.7 These strong links between the cycling and walking route and a proposed tram route, linking to the City Centre and beyond, reflect the need to work alongside Nottingham City Council as a neighbouring strategic transport planning partner. Likewise, collaboration with Nottinghamshire County Council, as the lead transport planning authority for our area, is essential to enable further development of the route.
- 2.8 Network Rail as the current landowner are also key if any future ownership and management of the site is to be considered. For this project to proceed agreement would need to be reached between partners as to which organisation takes over land ownership or management of the route. Ongoing maintenance liabilities associated with the line will need to be considered carefully as part of this. Network Rail has undertaken some maintenance of the line this year, but considerable work to continue

manage and maintain it in preparation for further development is required.

- 2.9 It is envisaged that obtaining external funding will be necessary in order to further progress the project. Appropriate sources of funding would need to be considered by partners to both produce and inform a viable business case.
- 2.10 Cabinet and Senior Leadership Team members may wish to consider the opportunity to visit other converted greenways, in a similar manner to those organised previously arranged for the Netherfield Locality Steering Group. Site visits can help enhance understanding regarding the implications and benefits of such a project.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not to approve further collaboration with partners to consider the options available. However, exploring a recreational walking and cycling along the route offers a long-term strategic opportunity to meet the following Gedling Plan 2020-23 actions:

- Identify and facilitate delivery of key interventions in agreed locality areas
- Develop and implement a long term strategy for the improvement of Gedling Country Park
- Deliver in partnership sustainable transport links to reduce congestion and improve air quality including the tram extension, bus park and ride etc.
- Create a new network of walkways and cycleways around the borough
- Work with the Metro Partners and D2N2 to secure funds for key infrastructure priorities
- Explore and further develop plans for the Gedling Borough Heritage Way
- Work with owners to identify and secure opportunities for external funding for key historic assets
- Develop and implement a Carbon Reduction Strategy aligned with key partners across the borough
- Agree and implement a range of actions to deliver the approved Sport and Physical Activity Strategy

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 External funding of approximately £45,000 has previously been sourced and allocated to commission the feasibility work to date.
- 4.2 The design work on the Cinder Track extension section in Netherfield and the virtual tour of the whole route will be paid for using funding already received from Jigsaw Homes, supported by established Locality budgets.
- 4.3 The economic assessment undertaken in 2016, which can be found at Appendix B, anticipated capital cost for a new greenway on the former mineral line as approximately £1.5M, with an optimism bias adjustment of 44% (which adjusts for overly optimistic analyses of projects to help to mitigate the likelihood that costs may be higher than at first expected).
- 4.4 Although an adjustment for optimism bias has been included, it should be noted the assessment was undertaken four years ago. During this time construction costs have increased significantly, therefore, the adjustment may not be sufficient. A full business case will need to be developed which will refresh and update all costs.
- 4.5 The assessment also assumed ongoing operating costs of £100,000 per annum will be required to maintain the greenway to the required quality. It is not yet known who will be expected to fund this ongoing cost and will be part of discussions over management and maintenance of the land with partners.
- 4.6 The viability of such costs would need to be carefully considered as part of business plan development. The 2016 assessment did estimate the total estimated benefits of the project as £18.9M, providing a Net Present Value (NPV) for the scheme of £15.7M. However, these benefits will not directly be received in monetary terms by the Council, instead the benefits or savings will be received by other partners, such as the NHS, Emergency Services and the upper tier Highways Authority.
- 4.7 Finances to enable such a project to proceed would need to be sourced externally. Any commitment for the Council to lead on further project development would require a business case to be submitted to the Council's internal Programme Board for consideration. Feedback from the 2019 D2N2 project application should be considered when assessing future funding options and sources.
- 4.8 Whilst Funding would be sourced externally it is likely that a match funding/pump priming contribution would be expected, which is likely to raise a future financial pressure for the Council. As the mineral line is not expected to have any facilities that would generate an income for the Council, it could not contribute to any repayments of borrowing, therefore

the sources of any match funding by the Council may be limited.

- 4.9 Developing further proposals, an appropriate model and business case for a walking and cycling greenway along the former Gedling Mineral Line will require dedicated officer time and commitment.
- 4.10 Any further works, including detailed design, are subject to the development of a Business Case and appropriate budget approval.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 This report explores further collaboration with our partners to consider the most appropriate model for developing future proposals. The legalities of land acquisition, management and maintenance will need to be fully considered as part of any partner collaboration. Any decision on such matters would be brought back to Cabinet for consideration.
- 5.2 The commissioned work on the Cinder Track extension and consultation preparation is managed through an agreed contract between the Council and Via East Midlands.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 Any future project would require an Equality Impact Assessment to be undertaken. Consideration to date has identified the following positive impact on protected characteristics.
- 6.2 Age: The route will provide accessible greenspace for all ages to enjoy and in particular offer an alternative route for families to access local schools and open spaces in the area. It is located in an area of new housing development where an increase in family housing is expected and a new primary school is required.
- 6.3 Gender: Proposals will be assessed in terms of community safety, considering lighting and other safety measures to ensure the route feels safe and accessible for both males and females at different times of the day all year round.
- 6.4 Disability: A new route will need to provide accessible entry and exits points for those with physical disabilities and other impairments. With the potential of many access points along the routes, the greenway will provide easy access to nature and the sensory opportunities that offers.
- 6.5 Other Groups: The route will provide an alternative direct access cycle route to Gedling Country Park from Netherfield, one of the Council's highest areas of deprivation. It would also offer a direct and safe route through which employment opportunities can be accessed in the local area, into Nottingham and beyond through the offer of connected transport

links. It will offer free access to green space, nature, exercise and travel to work opportunities for those on low incomes. Neighbouring local residents will be consulted on any future proposals to ensure their needs and views are considered.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

7.1 Road traffic imposes significant adverse impacts on the local communities through which it passes, creating local air quality issues, through particulate matter (PM10) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), and noise. At a global level, road traffic provides a significant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. The Economic Impact Assessment at Appendix B forecasts the greenway to provide £260,000 of environmental benefits over a 60 year period.

7.2 It can be assumed that a new walking and cycle route can contribute to reductions in carbon emissions in the Borough by offering a sustainable transport route for this part of the Borough. The opportunity to link local communities to schools, green spaces and other services across the Gedling and Netherfield area via a safe cycling and walking route provides an alternative option for local residents and families to using the car. Combining the walking and cycling proposals with any future tram route will further enhance the route's status and capacity to reduce carbon emissions for this part of the Borough.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Analysis Plan of Gedling Branch Plan

8.2 Appendix B: Gedling Mineral Line Greenway Route Assessment, Mott McDonald, 15/04/16

9 Background Papers

9.1 None.

10 Reasons for Recommendations

10.1 To seek collaboration for a long-term project that delivers many Gedling Plan strategic actions.

10.2 To work towards identifying external funding opportunities to support the transformation of the former Gedling Mineral Line.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by: Principal Finance Business Partner

Date: 22/09/20

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by: Solicitor

Date: 28/09/20

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer