

## **NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL DECISION**

**DECISION OF:** COUNCILLOR STEVE BRIDGER. THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ASSETS AND CAPITAL DELIVERY.



**WITH ADVICE FROM:** THE DIRECTOR OF PLACE

**DECISION NO:** 21/22 DP 213

**SUBJECT:** APPROVAL OF THE PREFERRED ROUTE FOR BANWELL BYPASS

**KEY DECISION:** Yes

**REASON:** Whilst the bypass sits within the ward of Banwell, the decision will influence two or more wards and therefore the decision is deemed a key decision.

### **BACKGROUND:**

This decision is for the preferred route of the proposed Banwell Bypass. To inform this decision an appraisal of the three proposed route options north of Banwell has been carried out by the Project Team. This included a non-statutory public consultation on the three proposed route options, carried out between 6 July and 16 August 2021, and an appraisal of the impact of the three routes in compliance with government WebTAG guidance.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed approval of North Somerset Council's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) (Forward Fund) bid on the 26th November 2019. The objectives of this bid are to provide infrastructure and educational provision which can support the delivery of existing and potential housing allocations totalling 7,557 new dwellings. 4,482 of the homes are to be located at the existing Weston Villages development sites; the specific numbers and locations of the residual dwellings will be subject to the new Local Plan process.

The Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) will be used to build the new bypass of the village of Banwell, fund online improvements to the surrounding highway network, improve the area's utilities network and provide an expansion of Winterstoke Hundred Academy secondary school in Locking Parklands.

The Capital Programme was increased by £97,067,550, the total HIF grant from Homes England, at the Full Council meeting on 16 June 2020; see Background Papers.

The objectives of the Project are to deliver, within cost, quality and programme targets:

- infrastructure that maximises, underpins and de-risks associated housing development,
- infrastructure that is affordable and provides good value for money,
- infrastructure that meets the needs of all stakeholders including developers and local communities;

- to minimise environmental impacts and maximise opportunities for sustainable travel and biodiversity net gain and
- to ensure the development provides the opportunity to make a positive contribution to the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The Project consists of several elements:

- a new highway to the north of Banwell, connecting into potential housing sites (subject to the local plan) and a separate link to the south east of Banwell Village, connecting the A371 and the A368;
- Flood management and mitigation measures for the bypass including embankments, attenuation basins, swales and compensation areas;
- Green infrastructure to ensure biodiversity net gain;
- Traffic management and public realm improvements within Banwell village;
- Modifications to existing adjacent local authority highway network including extensive active travel improvements to the footway/cycleway networks,
- Strategic utility provision and
- Modifications to the Highways England network at J21.

This decision is associated with the new highway to the north of Banwell, which has the following objectives:

- Improve the local road network to deal with existing congestion issues;
- Proactively engage with stakeholders in a way that is both clear and transparent;
- Ensure the development respects the local area and minimises visual impact upon the surrounding countryside and Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Provide the opportunity to increase active and sustainable travel between local villages and Weston-super-Mare;
- Improve and enhance Banwell's public spaces by reducing traffic severance and improving the public realm;
- Innovative and efficient in reducing and offsetting carbon from the design and construction;
- Ensure the development provides the opportunity to increase biodiversity net gain (BNG) by at least 10% and
- Deliver infrastructure that enables housing development.

These objectives were considered in appraisal of the bypass route options.

## **DECISION:**

1. That Route 2 of the three northern route options be approved as the preferred route corridor for progression of design of Banwell bypass. This is an indicative route and will be refined and optimised through subsequent detailed design.
2. To obtain approval of delegated authority to Director of Place, in consultation with the Councillor for Assets and Capital Delivery, for the final alignment ahead of planning submission.

## REASONS:

The Options Appraisal Report (OAR), supported by the Public Consultation Report produced by the NSC Project Team, indicates that Route 2 is the most appropriate alignment.

The OAR followed the assessment methodology outlined within WebTAG 'Transport Appraisal Advice' that considers the social and cultural, environmental and economic impacts of scheme in an assessment of options. The OAR started with a high-level appraisal of a long list of options that consisted of:

- Do-nothing
- Reduce the need to travel
- Public transport and sustainable choices
- Road improvements through Banwell
- Bypass of Banwell, Churchill and Sandford
- Southern bypass of Banwell
- Northern bypass of Banwell
- National Grid haulage route

A northern bypass of Banwell is the one that aligns best with WebTAG criteria and scheme objectives, so was taken forward for further detailed assessment. Further detail on the assessment of the long list options is provided in the OAR attached to this Decision Paper.

A detailed WebTAG assessment of the shortlisted option of a northern bypass of Banwell was carried out to determine the most suitable route. Three routes were considered as shown in Figure 1.

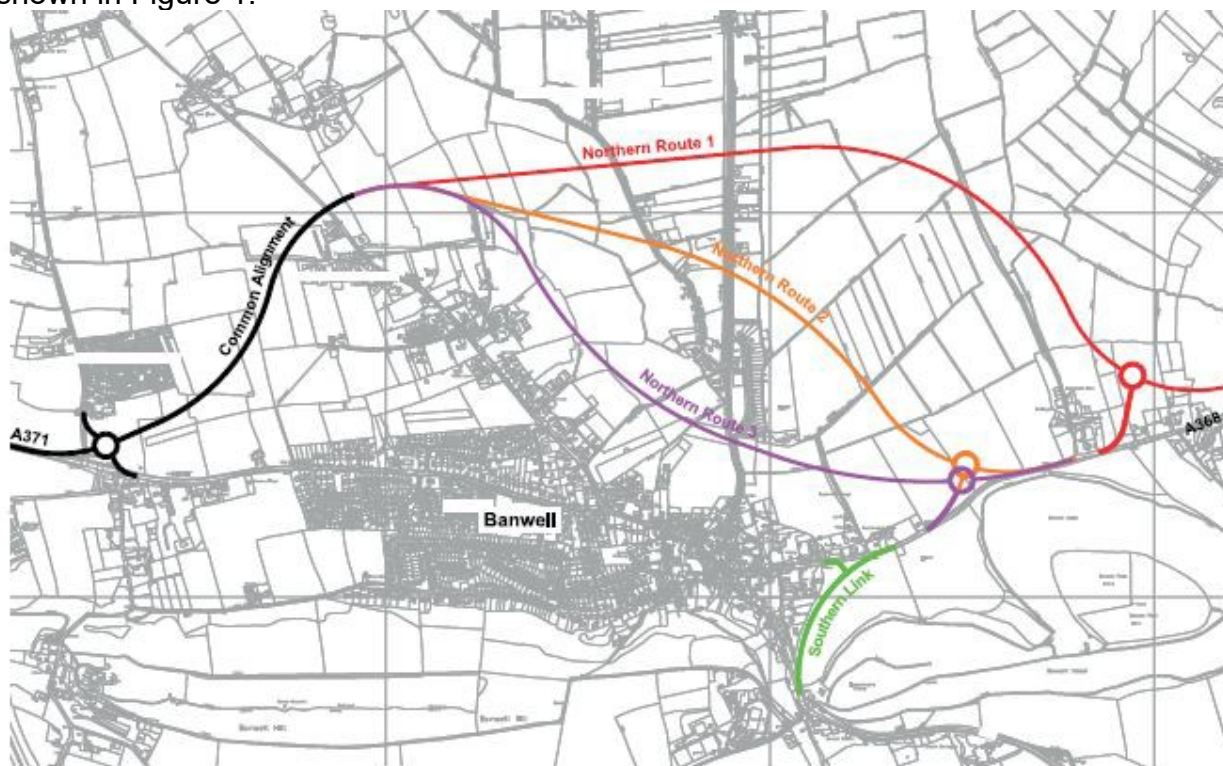


Figure 1: Three northern bypass route options.

The WebTAG assessment criteria used in this assessment fall under the headings of environmental, social and cultural, economic, public accounts and Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) and distributional impacts. Each of these criteria were assessed against a seven-point assessment scale from large adverse impact to large beneficial impact, the results of which are shown in Appendix D of the OAR.

In addition to a detailed assessment of the northern route options, consideration was given to the layout of the bypass, such as speed limit and cross section. This enabled the three options to be assessed equally, as the most favourable of these layout approaches was determined prior to the detailed assessment being carried out and applied across the options.

The results of the assessment showed that Route 2 is the most favourable option when assessed against impacts of the bypass and scheme objectives.

Whilst this decision is seeking approval to proceed design along route 2, which is the route safeguarded in the Local Plan, this route is indicative and is still subject to some change as design progresses over the coming months. Some alterations are anticipated as a result of further survey work, feedback from the public through the consultations and design development.

#### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED:**

A long list of eight options were considered before arriving at the solution of a bypass north of Banwell. This was deemed the most appropriate solution as it had low environmental impact and was the best solution for facilitating new housing when considered against other options; more detail is available in the OAR attached.

Three route options were considered for the bypass to the north of Banwell – Route 1, 2 and 3 – as shown in Figure 1. These were assessed in detail in the OAR using WebTAG assessment criteria. Routes 1 and 3 were discounted for the following key reasons:

Route 1: the longest of the route options, this route would have the greatest carbon impact, both embodied carbon in construction and emissions once operational, and the largest land take requirement. It also has the potential for the greatest impact on flooding as it has the longest length of highway in the floodplain of the options considered. Route 1 is the least direct route of the options considered, so has the potential for greatest impact on the surrounding road network, particularly Winscombe to the south as traffic may continue to use the existing route through Banwell as it is more direct. Also, being the longest route option, route 1 has a large impact on biodiversity due to habitat loss.

Route 3: this route is the closest to Banwell village, so has the greatest noise and air quality impact on existing residential areas. It also separates properties at Riverside from Banwell, so has a negative impact on community. Whilst route 3 causes less habitat loss than route 1, it is closest to the North Somerset and Mendip Hills Bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Banwell Ochre Caves Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), so has the potential for impacting biodiversity.

Whilst there are still potential impacts as a result of route 2, such as impact on the Bat SAC, Banwell Football Club pitches and the traditional orchard at Riverside, these impacts can be reduced or avoided through careful design. In addition, the results of the public consultation that ran from 5 July 2021 to 16 August 2021 will help inform the most

appropriate mitigation strategy for minimising any negative impacts of route 2. On balance, across all the categories of assessment and achievement of scheme objectives, route 2 represents the most favourable option. This is supported by the findings of the public consultation, as 46% of respondents considered route 2 to best achieve the stated scheme objectives.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

### **Costs**

There are no specific costs associated with this decision. However, the subsequent design work that will be carried out on Route 2 forms part of the £2,798,860.00 Stage 1 Professional Services Contract approved by decision number 20/21 DP 329; see Background Papers.

### **Funding**

Funding of the design work on the route is to be funded by the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Grant awarded by MHCLG. The Grant provides £ 97,067,550 of capital funding and under the terms of the Grant Funding Agreement dated 24 August 2020 the grant monies will be received incrementally at the timeframes specified in the Grant Agreement under a Forward Funding arrangement.

£66,720,376 of the total grant is allocated to Banwell Bypass and improvement works, with the remainder allocated to the Winterstoke Hundred Academy School Expansion.

North Somerset Council has secured funding for Banwell bypass up to completion of preliminary stage totalling £17,336,518. A further £49,383,858 will be granted to the Council for construction subject to grant agreement conditions as stated above.

## **LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The council will need to acquire land in order to construct the Banwell Bypass – this decision will allow work to determine the land required. It is hoped that all the land required for the bypass will be acquired by negotiation and agreement, but the council can and may have to use its CPO powers if agreement cannot be reached with landowners. The development of the scheme once the preferred route is confirmed will determine the extent of land required to deliver the scheme. The decision on the use of such powers will be subject to a further and specific council resolution. The project team have procured external land agency and legal service contracts to support and enable delivery of the bypass.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The assessment of the route options considered climate change and environmental implications. Route 1, the northern-most route, would involve significant construction in the flood plain and route 3 is closest to Banwell village so would have greatest impact on noise and pollution in the residential areas. Also, a Carbon Options Assessment has been undertaken for the shortlisted route options and formed part of the options appraisal. This assessment includes embodied and user carbon emissions based on the information available at this stage in the project. The outcome of this assessment showed that route 1 has the greatest quantity of embodied carbon, with route 3 having the least and route 2 slightly more than route 3. The emissions assessment indicated that the increased carbon emissions from 2026 to 2038 would be 9% for routes 1 and 3 and 8% for route 2.

The design of the bypass will minimise climate change and environmental implications of the bypass, including encouraging active travel, minimising carbon in construction and appropriate speed limits. PAS2080 carbon management in infrastructure guidance will be followed to ensure that carbon is considered through the entire lifecycle of the project. However, such approaches to delivery of the scheme will be carried out regardless of this decision.

## CONSULTATION

A six-week public consultation, from 5 July to 16 August 2021, has been carried out to inform this decision. A total of 1135 responses were received to the consultation survey and a further 37 written responses. The survey results showed that 79% of respondents support the need for a bypass at Banwell, and 46% of respondents considered that route 2 best meets the scheme objectives.

The public were asked to comment on the current situation, specifics such as the bypass cross section, speed limit and junction options along with what improvements they would like to see for the village of Banwell and surrounding area.

Further detail on the results of the public consultation is included in the Consultation Report in Appendix 2.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Key risks associated with this decision are:

Risk	Risk Type	Mitigation
Should the route option decision be delayed by objection or challenge there is a risk that key milestones will be delayed.	Threat	A robust option assessment approach, including consideration of a 'long list' of options, following WebTAG guidance and supported by public consultation to reduce the probability of challenge.
If ground conditions, including the historic landfill, prove to be more onerous than expected there is a risk that additional mitigation measures will be required, increasing project costs.	Threat	Additional ground investigation will be carried out following preferred route announcement to reduce the probability of this risk occurring and covered by risk contingency as a fallback.

## EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Have you undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment? Yes

An initial screening exercise has been carried out to identify protected characteristics that the Equality Act 2010 requires us to consider, in relation to the highway infrastructure. As part of the project design and development phase a full EQIA will be carried out for highway work.

The protected characteristics most pertinent to the highways are age, disability and religion or belief. Provisions will be made to maximise equality between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Potential solutions to be included in the next stage of the design include:  
for the Bypass;

- Simple road layouts that are easy to understand and navigate through;
- Gentle slopes on footways to aid mobility;
- Crossing points to ensure established routes to places of worship are maintained;
- Technology within signal-controlled crossing points to indicate to those with disabilities that the signal for pedestrians to cross is active.
- Tactile surfaces to assist those with visual impairments

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

The provision of key enabling infrastructure and the improvement of the transport network widely support the Corporate Plan objectives in creating a thriving and sustainable place to live, and empowering people.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Banwell Bypass Options Appraisal Report

Appendix 2: Banwell Bypass Consultation Report

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Director Decision 20/21 DP 329 to award contract for the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Banwell Bypass & Highway Improvements – Design and Construction Contract – Stage 1 Professional Service Contract:

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-02/20-21%20DP305%20signed.pdf>

Procurement Plan:

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-08/DE106%20Procurement%20Plan%20HIF%20Banwell%20Bypass%20signed.pdf>

COU18 Dated 08 May 2018

[https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/Data/Council/201805081800/Agenda/25%20Housing%20Infrastructure%20Fund%20\(Forward%20Fund\)%20Business%20Case%20Development%20and%20Submission%20Approval.pdf](https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/Data/Council/201805081800/Agenda/25%20Housing%20Infrastructure%20Fund%20(Forward%20Fund)%20Business%20Case%20Development%20and%20Submission%20Approval.pdf)

Corporate Plan 2020-2024

[https://nsomerset.sharepoint.com/sites/the-source/authoring/Documents/Corporate%20Plan%202020\\_24.pdf#search=corporate%20plan](https://nsomerset.sharepoint.com/sites/the-source/authoring/Documents/Corporate%20Plan%202020_24.pdf#search=corporate%20plan)

Housing Infrastructure Fund (Forward Fund) Commissioning Plan Approval:

<https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/Data/Council/201906251800/Agenda/19%20Housing%20Infrastructure%20Fund%20Commissioning%20Plan%20Approval.pdf>


COU 8 Acceptance of Housing Infrastructure Fund (Forward Fund) Grant Heads of Terms with Conditions (Agenda Item 9):

<https://n-somerset.moderngov.co.uk/Data/Council/202006161430/Agenda/09%20HIF%20Forward%20Fund%20Acceptance%20of%20Grant.pdf>

Housing Infrastructure Fund (Forward Fund) Business Case Bid Submission Approval:

SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER(S):

Signed:  Executive Member for Assets and Capital Delivery

Date: 7 October 2021

WITH ADVICE FROM:

Signed:  Director of Place

Date: 7 October 2021