

Supporting a Bid for Step-free Access for Stoneleigh Station

Contact:	Damian Roberts, Chief Operating Officer
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	Yes
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	The Council was approached in October by South Western Rail regarding support for putting forward a bid to the Department of Transport's Access for All programme for Stoneleigh Station – the deadline for submission of bids is 16 November 2018.
Annexes/Appendices (attached):	None
Other available papers (not attached):	The Department of Transport Inclusive Transport Strategy 2018

Report Summary

This report seeks approval to support a bid to the Department of Transport to secure an estimated £5 million of funding to deliver step and obstacle free access to Stoneleigh Railway Station through the national 'Access for All' station improvement programme.

To meet the criteria for a bid, this report seeks approval of a match funding contribution from the Borough Council of up to £500,000 to be allocated from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions.

RECOMMENDATION (S)

- (1) To agree to support the South Western Rail bid to deliver step and obstacle free access for Stoneleigh Station as part of the Department of Transport, 'Access for All' station improvement programme**
- (2) To agree that up to £0.5m of match funding is earmarked from Community Infrastructure Funding (CIL) for this project, should the bid be successful.**

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1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

1.1 The proposal to address accessibility issues at Stoneleigh Railway Station relates directly to three of the four priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan, namely:

1.1.1 Supporting our Community

The Borough has an aging population with a projected increase in the number of people over 85 year's old increasing by some 90% over the next 20 years. There are also more people living in the community with long-term health conditions that impact on their mobility, including in the working age population. The borough is also projecting an increase in the number of young families where accessibility, including when using pushchairs and buggies, is also a significant priority.

1.1.2 Supporting Business and our Local Economy

In an increasingly competitive environment, the ease of access to employment and skills for local workers and businesses is more important than ever. Investment in Stoneleigh Station, the 8th busiest in Surrey, and carrying 1.8 million passengers a year, will make a positive contribution to local businesses and the local economy and will help maximise the economic benefit of future potential investment in Crossrail 2.

1.1.3 Managing our resources

The Council has the opportunity to access circa £5 million investment for the Borough from the Department of Transport if the South Western Rail bid proves successful in return for an estimated 10% match funding contribution. The Council will not incur any costs if the bid is not successful.

2 Background and Context

Accessible stations make it easier for people to access local services and facilities, access employment, education and training opportunities and avoid social isolation. Accessibility benefits everyone - people with a disability or health conditions, people with children, those carrying heavy luggage or shopping and older people. It's also good for the environment leading to fewer car journeys, with less congestion and carbon emissions.

The Department of Transport published a new, Inclusive Transport Strategy at the end of July 2018 and at the same time announced £300 million of investment funds to transform the accessibility of stations across the country. The aim is to deliver "step free and obstacle free access" from street to platform. The programme is called 'Access for All'.

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- 2.1 Epsom and Ewell has four railway stations – Stoneleigh, Ewell West, Ewell East, and Epsom. In addition, Worcester Park, Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner sit just outside the borough. Once the agreed accessibility improvement works are completed at Ewell West Station, out of these seven rail stations, Stoneleigh Station will be the only one that is completely inaccessible for disabled people or anyone else that is unable to confidently navigate stairs. Discussions have taken place over a number of years with the rail operator to address this situation, but to date, insufficient funding has been available.
- 2.2 The Council was approached in October 2018 by South Western Railway (SWR) who are looking to submit a funding bid for Stoneleigh Station to the Department of Transport's Access for All programme. This is a competitive bidding process where not all bids will be successful.
- 2.3 Bids have to be submitted to the Department of Transport by 16 November 2018 and must include match funding in order to meet the criteria set for this programme. South Western Rail have recommended a 10% match funding contribution although, as this is a competitive process and not all bids will be approved, it is possible that other bids made to the Department of Transport will have a higher proportion of match funding.
- 2.4 The Council has approached Surrey County Council and the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for their support for the bid, including a request for a funding contribution. However, if no funding is forthcoming, the full match funding requirement will need to be met by the Borough Council if the bid is to proceed.

3 Addressing increasing local need

- 3.1 In common with other parts of Epsom and Ewell, over 12% of the population in the Stoneleigh and Auriol Wards are disabled and/or have a long-term condition that is life limiting. Almost 27% of households in the area have at least one person with a long-term illness that impacts significantly on their mobility.
- 3.2 The population across the borough is projected to continue to grow faster than Surrey as a whole and faster than the local economic area defined by the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). By 2040 the population in Epsom and Ewell will have increased by a further 12,780 people (16%). The biggest increase will be in the younger age population, including children and young families, and those over 85 years old. The latter is set to increase by almost 90% by 2040.
- 3.3 In addition to the expected population growth the borough needs to identify opportunity sites where further housing growth can go to meeting the objectively assessed housing needs. Stoneleigh is well placed to accommodate some of this need alongside appropriate infrastructure including infrastructure that encourages greater use of public transport.

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- 3.4 Stoneleigh Rail Station is a popular station with an annual footfall of 1.8 million making it the eighth busiest station in Surrey, yet many residents, workers and customers find it difficult or impossible to use. It is the only rail station in Epsom and Ewell that is completely inaccessible for disabled people and anyone else that has difficulty navigating stairs such as those with young children, or those carrying shopping, luggage or using a cycle.
- 3.5 There are clear economic and social benefits of a step-free access to Stoneleigh Station. The soon to be started step free access scheme for Ewell West Station, funded from a previous round of Access for All funding, demonstrates that a strong case can be made for investment in rail stations in the borough. Once that scheme is in place the South Western Rail stations at Worcester Park, Ewell West and Epsom will all be fully accessible.
- 3.6 Crossrail 2 would bring significant capacity improvements on that rail line and with it even greater economic benefit to the local area. However, if the accessibility issues are not addressed at Stoneleigh Station, there is a risk that local residents and businesses will not enjoy the full economic benefit available.

4 Timescales

- 4.1 Funding bids for the Access for All programme need to be submitted to the Department of Transport by the 16 November 2018. It is anticipated that successful bids will be announced by Summer of 2019. The construction works would then need to be completed by 2024 – ie within five years. Construction is anticipated to take the best part of a year to complete, with the station remaining open throughout.

5 Partnerships

- 5.1 The Council is working in partnership with the local rail operator to ensure that Stoneleigh has the best possible chance of being awarded funding from the Department of Transport's Access for All investment programme.
- 5.2 The Council is also in discussion with Surrey County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the local MP to secure their formal support.

6 Financial and Staffing Implications

- 6.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report
- 6.2 As at October 2018, the unallocated 80% Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) balance currently stands at £2.523m. In 2018/19 to date the Council has received income from CIL of £211,000 and has billed for a further £355,000.

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- 6.3 A separate agenda item on this Committee requests the use of £2.245m CIL towards Plan E, which, if approved will reduce the CIL balance from £2.523m to £0.278m.
- 6.4 This Committee could decide to fund the £0.5m contribution from the remaining £0.278m balance, with the remainder to be funded from future CIL receipts.
- 6.5 If the bid is successful, the Council's contribution of up to £0.5 million would not be needed for at least another year, and depending on where it falls in the programme, potentially another two or three years.
- 6.6 If the bid is not approved, then the funding will be available to support other infrastructure schemes in the borough.
- 6.7 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** *The availability of CIL funding to finance other projects could be restricted until additional CIL receipts are received.*

7 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 7.1 The Borough Council's Regulation 123 Statement adopted on 29 September 2015 sets out the list of infrastructure types to be funded from Community Infrastructure Levy. This includes transport improvement schemes. The proposed use of Community Infrastructure Levy set out in this report aligns with this.
- 7.2 The public sector equality duty introduced by the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. The Equality Duty ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work. The 'Access for All' program is designed to support this as well as the requirements imposed specifically under the Railways Act 1993 to protect the interests of users of the railway passenger services or station service by those who are disabled.
- 7.3 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** *These are contained within the body of the report.*

8 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 8.1 The proposals set out in this report are designed to make a positive contribution to making Epsom and Ewell a sustainable place in terms of having a fully accessible public transport system that is safe to use and that meets both current and future needs of local residents.

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9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 The bid for Stoneleigh Station will be entering a competitive process and in the event may not be successful. If this is the case, the Council will continue to look for opportunities to bring forward the accessibility improvements, including exploring any other alternative funding sources that may be available.
- 9.2 The costs of the improvement work at Stoneleigh Station may in the event cost more than the estimated £5 million. If this is the case, the Department of Transport will be asked by the rail operator to fund the shortfall.
- 9.3 There is a risk that using CIL to fund this infrastructure improvement will reduce the CIL funding available for other priority infrastructure improvements that may arise in the future, including education and other transport infrastructure schemes.

Ward(s) affected: Stoneleigh, Auriol and surrounding Wards