

Local Highway Improvements 2025-2026 Programme

To: Highways and Transport Committee

Meeting Date: 14 October 2025

From: Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Place and Sustainability

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2025/047

Executive Summary: This paper provides an update to the committee on the outcome of the Local Highway Improvement (LHI) member panels and officer scoring of the Complex and Non-complex LHI applications for the 2025/26 funding round. It seeks approval of the prioritised lists of projects for design and delivery.

Traditionally the budget for the LHI programme is set at £820,000 each year, however this report identifies £850,000 of additional funding which has been allocated to the LHI programme for 2025/26 and how this will be spent.

Recommendation: The committee is recommended to

- a) Approve the projects detailed in the prioritised lists, attached at Appendix 1 to this report, to be designed and delivered;
- b) Agree that all unsuccessful complex LHI schemes should be added to the Transport Planning Database for prioritisation through the Council's Delivering Transport Strategy Aims programme, as set out in the report;
- c) Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, to remove schemes that prove to be undeliverable, and add new schemes into the programme as required up to the total budget amount allocated in this paper for the LHI programme; and
- d) Note that the Member Working Group will be convened following the committee meeting, as set out in paragraph 3.19 of the report, to review the current process and suggest

changes to be presented to the committee for consideration in due course.

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1. Creating a greener, fairer, and more caring Cambridgeshire

1.1 Ambition 1: Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.

All schemes included in the programme have been considered against the objective of meeting the Council's Net Zero ambitions. Specific scoring criteria are related to environmental improvements such as promotion of public transport which contributes to this goal. The default delivery process is to utilise low carbon options like recycled traffic calming products to reduce the carbon impact. Some schemes within the programme provide active travel improvements which could contribute towards a modal shift within communities for local trips.

Ambition 2: Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable.

All schemes included in the programme have been considered against the objective of improving the safety of all road users within the specific projects which make up the programme. Often requests from the local community relate to improvements to road safety for residents and vulnerable users in their parish.

Ambition 3: Health inequalities are reduced.

The projects delivered through this programme contribute to improving people's health and wellbeing which is one of the key scoring / prioritisation areas, as is active travel. Projects include schemes that improve access to key services such as healthcare provision and enables and encourages users to make a switch from private car to active travel for local journeys.

Ambition 4: People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs.

The projects delivered through this programme contribute to improved transport access to key destinations and services that enable people to live more independently and increase their opportunities and quality of life.

Ambition 5: People are helped out of poverty and income inequality.

The projects delivered through this programme contribute to helping people out of poverty and income inequality as often highway improvements are targeted at active travel, or increased access to public transport for the local community through this process.

Ambition 6: Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality services and social justice is prioritised.

The projects delivered through this programme contribute to improved access to services, jobs, and education at a community level.

Ambition 7: Children and young people have opportunities to thrive.

The projects delivered through this programme contribute to improved opportunities for children and young people, often highway improvements are targeted around schools and leisure facilities by the local community through this process.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Highway Improvement (LHI) initiative provides the opportunity for local community groups, as well as parish and town councils, to promote local highway improvements that would not normally be prioritised nor funded by the County Council. This is mainly because they do not meet the Council's intervention criteria to automatically qualify for funding via one of the existing programmes. Through the initiative external groups are invited to apply for funding of up to £25,000 per project, subject to those groups providing at least 10% of the total cost of the scheme. The schemes are community driven, giving local people influence over bringing forward highway improvements.
- 2.2 Last year, the Council contributed £820,000 towards this initiative, with the rest of the funding being provided by the applicant on a scheme-by-scheme basis. This saw 76 projects prioritised for delivery.
- 2.3 Following approval at the committee's meeting in March 2025 as part of the Capital Maintenance & Improvement Programme Report, a further £850,000 has been allocated for this round. This brings the total budget for the 2025/26 round to £1,670,000. This will result in significantly more projects being prioritised for delivery in this round when compared to previous years.
- 2.4 A new process for scoring and prioritising applications was approved by the Highways and Transport Committee on 5 December 2023. This was based on advice provided by a Member Working Group. Section 3 of this report outlines the processes undertaken to identify the prioritised list of schemes for the 2025/26 round.
- 2.5 For the 2025/26 funding round, applications were received countywide. As Table 1 demonstrates, the LHI process is popular.

District	Number of Applications	Complex	Non-complex
Huntingdonshire	38	17	21
Cambridge City	42	16	26
South Cambridgeshire	47	23	24
East Cambridgeshire	13	3	10
Fenland	20	9	11
Total	160	68	92

Table 1: Applications by district

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 As in previous years, officers completed feasibility studies with applicants in advance of the panel meetings for those Local Highways Improvements which were classified as being complex under the process, in a bid to provide a more consistent stage of development for applications.
- 3.2 During the feasibility process officers have liaised with applicants to refine and scope their applications. This has included a significant number of site meetings and engagement with local members, parishes, and wider communities. During the application window officers held several virtual question and answer sessions with prospective applicants to answer any questions they may have and provide attendees with further information on the Local Highway Improvement Initiative. This engagement was well attended and received by applicants.
- 3.3 The panel assessment meetings remain a member led process, where applicants are invited to present their proposal. Member Panels are used to assess the priorities for funding, based on the available budget for each district area. Political Group Leaders appoint Members based on current political proportionality. A member chair is elected from amongst the Panel Members on the day of the meeting. The panel meetings occurred on the following dates:
- Huntingdonshire – 4 July 2025
 - Cambridge City – 18 July 2025
 - South Cambridgeshire – 11 July 2025
 - East Cambridgeshire – 20 June 2025
 - Fenland – 25 July 2025
- 3.4 Panel members were asked to consider and score applications to determine how the budget should be allocated for each district area.
- 3.5 For those applications classed as non-complex, instead of going through the member panel these were scored and prioritised by officers. Scoring was undertaken initially individually, and then as a group using the prioritisation matrix approved by the Highways and Transport Committee in December 2023. Moderation sessions were then undertaken before a final score for each application was given.
- 3.6 Prior to this committee meeting, the Local Improvements Member Working Group was convened to review the moderated officer scoring for those applications in the Non-complex process. This was undertaken on 10 September 2025.
- 3.7 The outcome of this was that the member working group recommended that the committee approve the current projects identified and ranked above the red line in Appendix 1. This will ensure the programme can commence as soon as possible. The red line on the table indicates the separation between the ranked projects that are allocated funding, and those below the red line which will not receive funding and will not be progressed further in the programme.
- 3.8 As well as those above the red line, the working group agreed that a proportion of the underspend in East Cambridgeshire (£18,000) should be used to fund the Sutton 20mph

project which tied with the lowest funded project in that programme. This project is also located in East Cambridgeshire and enables a combined LHI / 20mph scheme to be delivered more efficiently given a complex LHI project in Sutton has also been prioritised for delivery as part of this year's process. In Cambridge City the Jordans Yard project, which has attracted a Cambridge City contribution of £15,000, will also go ahead given the underspend within the city area, and the level of contribution being made by the City Council specifically for this project. In the City, it is proposed that all remaining funding be rolled forward to the next round, pending further discussions with the City Council regarding increasing their contribution towards this LHI round. The amounts per district are identified in Table 3.

- 3.9 Those remaining unsuccessful complex projects, will be added to the Council's strategic transport project database long list for prioritisation. Whilst this is also a competitively prioritised process with a limited amount of funding, this provides an opportunity for these projects to be progressed alongside other similar schemes. Table 2 summarises those which have been successful in each district area.

District	Funded Complex Projects	Funded Non-Complex Projects	Total number applications received	% funded in each district
East Cambridgeshire	3	10	13	100.00%
Fenland	8	11	20	95.00%
Huntingdonshire	10	21	38	81.58%
South Cambridgeshire	10	23	47	70.21%
Cambridge City	5	19	42	57.14%
	36	84	160	75.00%

Table 2: Breakdown of funded projects by district

- 3.10 The total number of successful projects this year as a percentage is 75%, which is a considerable improvement on previous years due to the additional investment.
- 3.11 Should any applications subsequently prove unfeasible, or the actual cost be less than expected, further applications from the prioritised list may be allocated the available funding later in the year, if these are identified before the end of January 2025. This deadline is imposed to ensure current projects do not overrun into the next programme. If schemes are discontinued after this date, then the funding will roll into the next programme round.
- 3.12 The indicated scheme cost for each individual projects incorporates the estimated cost of designing, managing, and delivering each project, as well as a proportion set aside for risk. This is set at 10% for non-complex, and 23% for complex projects. This is required due to no design or investigation work being undertaken in the feasibility phase of the process to avoid abortive costs.

- 3.13 The actual cost of the feasibility stage, which has recently been completed, has been top sliced from the total budget before the remainder is allocated proportionally by population to fund the indicated prioritised applications and is identified in paragraph 3.15.
- 3.14 The recharge of both the feasibility and officer project delivery costs was agreed by Highways and Infrastructure Committee in July 2017, to better reflect the actual cost to the authority of delivering the LHI Initiative, which is a capital funded programme of work.
- 3.15 The LHI budget for 25/26 has been set at £1,670,000 and has been allocated proportionally for each district area within Cambridgeshire. The population data to enable this has been drawn from the 2021 census. This allocation was approved in the Integrated Transport Block paper which was presented to the committee in October 2024 and the Capital Maintenance & Improvement Programme Paper which was presented to the committee in March 2025. The allocations for each district area are set out in Table 3.

District	Increased 2025/26 budget	Initial feasibility	Complex funding	Non-Complex funding	Carryover funding	Complex Projects	Non-Complex Projects	Total number applications received	% funded in each district
East Cambridgeshire	£215,793	£15,106	£73,107	£88,000	£21,581	3	10	13	100%
Fenland	£252,210	£17,655	£138,55	£96,000	£0	8	11	20	95%
Huntingdonshire	£444,874	£31,141	£245,65	£161,675	£6,400	10	21	38	82%
South Cambridgeshire	£398,615	£27,903	£203901	£161,800	£5,011	10	23	47	70%
Cambridge City*	£358,507	£25,096	£115155	£146700	£71,556	5	19	39	57%
Totals	£1,670,00	£116,900	£776,376	£653,275	£104,548	36	84	160	75%

Table 3: Funding breakdown by district (Cambridge City Council currently contributes a fixed sum of £35,000 per year toward the process)

- 3.16 The delivery of the remaining carryover projects from previous years is ongoing and progressing well, with interested parties being able to review progress on [the dedicated LHI page on the Council's website](#). A high-level summary is included below. To date, 55 projects have been completed with a further 41 at the consultation stage or beyond.

District	Original 24/25 projects, (including carryovers)	Remaining 24/25 projects, (including carry overs)
East Cambridgeshire	9 (+6)	8(+1)
Fenland	9 (+5)	5 (+1)
Huntingdonshire	22 (+8)	10 (+3)
South Cambridgeshire	20 (+10)	10 (+3)
Cambridge City	16 (+9)	14 (+4)
Totals	114	59

Table 4: Projects delivered & remaining by district

Project Stage	Design	Consultation	Costing	Delivery	Complete
Projects at stage	18	16	10	15	55

Table 4.1: Number of projects by delivery stage

3.17 It is important to note that whilst these projects are relatively small in scale, they can appear expensive and can take a considerable amount of time to deliver. Officers seek to achieve best value through the packaging of work wherever possible to achieve economies of scale. The following identifies why LHI budgets and projects can appear costly and take time to deliver:

- As a proportion of the total budget, consultation, audit, project management and design costs are higher than they might be for larger projects. This is because these are all improvement projects which must follow set processes to ensure they are fit for purpose, safe and comply with guidance and legislation.
- Based on experience, officers will spend a significant amount of time relative to the size and value of the project liaising with the applicant, consulting with the community, and often scoping / rescoping an approved proposal several times.
- Like officer costs, mobilisation and demobilisation costs for the contractor are higher as a proportion of the total budget.
- These projects are often multi-disciplined and cross several specialist areas like lighting, drainage, surfacing and general civils.
- There have been considerable increases in the cost of materials such as aggregates and asphalts, plus labour which are all unfortunately integral to delivery.

3.18 The application window for the next LHI application round will be as follows: -

- Application window opens: Monday 10 November 2025
- Application window closes: Friday 16 January 2026
- Feasibility studies undertaken: February – May 2026
- Panel meetings: to be confirmed, (tbc), 2026
- Member Working Group Meetings – tbc 2026
- Report to committee including prioritised list for approval: tbc 2026

3.19 The Local Improvements Member Working Group has confirmed that it would like to review the current process and identify with officers where changes can be made to improve it. This process will commence in November 2025 and will be concluded in January 2026. The intention is to enable the changes to be made as soon as possible following agreement in the working group. Any changes will require a committee decision, which is why the timeline outlined in paragraph 3.18 is still to be confirmed for the evaluation of the 2026/27 LHI applications.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The recommendations outlined in this report have been formulated following the agreed process for the identification of LHI projects for delivery. The individual schemes will be delivered via the Council's Term Services Contract, which is an existing approved procurement route. Where applicable, three quotations will be expected to prove best value prior to delivery. Alternatives to this process, and changes to the programme were previously explored in 2022 and the approach as outlined in the report is the preferred option approved by the committee following a cross-party member review.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

The committee is recommended to approve the lists of prioritised schemes as identified in the appendices for design and delivery through to scheme completion. Approval as requested will allow officers to proceed with the design and delivery of the 2025/26 LHI programme following the approved sifting and prioritisation processes reported to committee in this document. The work will be delivered via an existing procurement route available to the authority.

6. Significant Implications

6.1 Finance Implications

The required resources and budget are available to deliver the programme as identified.

6.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category, some projects will have Traffic Regulation Orders associated with them which will be managed in the usual way. All work will be delivered via an existing contract already procured by the authority and available for use.

6.3 Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. Officers will manage programme and projects risks through standardised risk management approaches.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The Member led Panels adopt a consistent scoring system, as will the prioritisation matrix with each approach prioritising proposals within the district against their district budget. Many of the schemes will improve road safety for vulnerable users such as the young, elderly and disability groups. The LHI initiative empowers community groups to bring forward improvements and gives local people a real influence over bringing forward improvements that benefit their local community. The new approach to prioritisation and

delivery has already been reviewed through the Council's Equality Impact Assessment process, with the assessment attached at Appendix 2.

6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications (Key decisions only)

Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral.

Explanation: No positive or negative impacts identified for works listed in the report.

Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral.

Explanation: No positive or negative impacts identified for works listed in the report, although some of the suggested improvements may contribute positively to increased use of non-motorised transport for local trips.

Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats, and land management.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral.

Explanation: No positive or negative impacts identified for works listed in the report.

Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: negative.

Explanation: Some projects will generate waste from shallow excavations to construct new highway features, although comparative to other programmes this is minimal due to the types of schemes being installed. Where possible bolt down / surface level features will be utilised instead of conventional across the programme to mitigate this.

Implication 5: Water use, availability, and management:

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral.

Explanation: No positive or negative impacts identified for works listed in the report.

Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: negative.

Explanation: Potential increases in air pollution because of some of the schemes listed in the report, for example those utilising vertical or horizontal calming measures such as speed cushions or build outs, could result in increased incidences of acceleration and deceleration in the vicinity of the new features.

Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: neutral.

Explanation: No positive or negative impacts identified for works listed in the report.

7. Source Documents

- 7.1 [Agenda Item 7 \(Capital Highways Maintenance and Improvements Programme\) - 4 March 2025](#)
- 7.2 [Agenda Item 4 \(Integrated Transport Block Funding Allocation 2025-26\) - 1 October 2024](#)
- 7.3 [Agenda Item 5 \(LHI 2024-25 Process Update Report\) - 5 December 2023](#)
- 7.4 [Agenda Item 5 \(Local Highway Improvement Member Working Group Report\) - 4 October 2022](#)