

## Agenda item 4

For decision - Next steps towards a bridge between Edmund Park and Adderwell

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### Summary

This report summarises the reasons why a pedestrian bridge linking Edmund Park and Adderwell is so important. It then provides early information about the bridge and particularly the Section 106 (S106) agreement that is in place to provide funding for the project.

Mainly though, the report introduces a project feasibility study informed by the Friends of the River Frome (FORF) and jointly commissioned by FORF and FTC.

### Background

Edmund Park – the residential area near Southfield Farm – has approval for 450 dwellings. As of March 2019, 250 had been occupied and the building of the next phases and the related infrastructure is continuing.

Ever since the development was first being considered, there's been discussion given to the need for a pedestrian bridge to link Edmund Park with the Adderwell part of town. Now, the likelihood and the plan is that this bridge will join directly with the new residential area that is going to be built in the Adderwell area at the end of Caxton Road on the site of the former Butler, Tanner & Dennis print works. This development has full planning permission for 157 dwellings and a neighbourhood centre.

There are clear reasons why a pedestrian bridge has been talked about from the start and the need for a bridge was identified in the Mendip District Local Plan in 2002 which specifically referred to footpath links crossing the river and railway in Frome.

### The strategic need – a link with the rest of the town to and from Edmund Park

A bridge linking Edmund Park with the existing and planned residential areas near Adderwell Road, and beyond to the town centre, will provide a safer and attractive, mainly traffic-free alternative for walkers and cyclists. Added to this, traffic-free and mainly traffic-free routes provide sporting, health and fitness opportunities. Frome has walking, rambling, running and cycling communities and clubs, all of whom would benefit from a new link in the town.

### Frome's wider walking and cycling network

At this stage, the bridge is being thought of as a pedestrian bridge, meaning that it is unlikely to be designated as or designed as a cycle path. Even so, the bridge will naturally become part of the local walking and cycling network in this part of Frome – including Locks Hill, Culverhill

and Portway. And part of the wider sustainable transport network that is developing across the entire town; something that FTC is directly supporting and encouraging.

Notably, the bridge and the proposed paths leading to and from it will offer access to National Cycle Route 24 and to nearby footpaths which take users, via Rodden Meadow or directly, to the town centre in one direction and into the surrounding countryside and villages in the other. Clearly, the bridge will make a key contribution to essential and functional journeys using Frome's walking and cycling network.

Lastly – and to look at this in another way - without a bridge there's a risk that Edmund Park becomes an isolated community; detached from the town where everyone living there makes more car trips to schools; the medical practice; the train station; the town centre and so on.

## Funding

There is a S106 budget (£110,124) related to this project that can only be used to provide a bridge linking these two parts of Frome. The budget is now with Mendip District Council (MDC) and must be spent, and the bridge completed, by January 2030. Lastly and important to note, MDC has advised us that they would welcome FTC leading on this project.

## Feasibility study

The feasibility study to accompany this report is included at [Appendix 2](#). Following a meeting between FORF and FTC, a combination of Option 1 and Option 2 has been discussed and identified as the preferred option. This would provide access over the river and a mainly traffic-free route between Adderwell and the train station. Potentially, and ideally, we would provide a set of steps to and from the new children's play area that is going to form part of the development off Caxton Road. (Steps to and from the new play area face engineering challenges given the steepness of the banks in this part of Frome; but we have discussed this possibility with the developer, and we are exploring the possibility.)

In short, the full set of paths and the bridge identified in Options 1 and 2 (combined) would clearly benefit the existing and planned residential areas to the south of the river; as well as helping to link the community at Edmund Park with the rest of the town.

## Next steps

The feasibility study accompanying this report gives equal and therefore neutral weighting to the cost of each of the routes that have been identified. As such, the key next step is cost out the preferred option in more detail. It will be necessary to engage an engineer to identify the challenges and propose solutions. To do this we will have to draw down some of the S106 funding from MDC.

We will also need to engage with landowners and interested groups and individuals and there will need to be some more detailed discussions about the future ownership and management of the bridge; noting the possibility that FTC may be offered the opportunity to take this on.

## Recommendations

1. Delegate responsibility to the Environment Manager and the Planning & Development Manager to work with FORF to progress the project to the next key stage; and to report back to the relevant Council committee at a suitable time
2. Recognise FORF's contributions to the project already made