

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet

4 October 2013

LEAD OFFICER: Director of Planning and New Communities

A14 IMPROVEMENTS: RESPONSE TO HIGHWAYS AGENCY CONSULTATION

Purpose

1. To agree the Council's response to the Highways Agency consultation on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement scheme.
2. This is not a key decision because it is responding to a consultation. It was first published in the 5 September 2013 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Cabinet agrees the response to the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement set out in paragraphs 19 – 39 of this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. Improvements to the A14 are important for the delivery of the growth agenda, the economy, village amenity and to improve journey times and road safety for the travelling public. The road has a significant impact on the environment and economy of the district, therefore it is recommended that the Council responds to the consultation on a range of issues.

Background

5. The A14 plays an important role as an east west transport corridor, as well as linking the M11 to the A1 for northbound traffic. It is also used by a considerable amount of local traffic. The A14 is running over capacity, and suffers regular congestion with knock-on traffic diversion through the district's villages. The lack of capacity impacts on growth plans for the Cambridge area, in particular Northstowe where 1500 homes are being built with the existing capacity.
6. The principle of the A14 improvement was included in the remit of the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS) in 2001. A series of public consultations were carried out by the Highways Agency (HA) leading to publication of draft Orders for the A14 Ellington – Fen Ditton scheme and the proposed start of a public inquiry in 2010. A meeting of the Portfolio Holders for Planning, New Communities and Environmental Services (10 December 2009) agreed the Council's response to the draft orders, to support the A14 improvement scheme in principle and urge the delivery of the scheme as soon as possible, along with a range of more detailed comments to be addressed by the scheme.
7. The Government's 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review cancelled the planned implementation of the £1.1 billion scheme, as it was deemed unaffordable at the beginning of the economic downturn. In response to this the Department of Transport initiated an A14 Study to explore options for the corridor, along with an

'A14 Challenge', which sought views of the public and key stakeholders on solutions for the A14 corridor.

8. In response to the A14 Challenge Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland, and East Cambridgeshire issued a joint response emphasising the importance of the route to national and local economic prosperity, and the need for a radical multimodal policy rather than piecemeal solutions. Priorities for highway upgrading were the lengths between Girton and Huntingdon, an offline new road between Fen Drayton and Brampton, removal of the Huntingdon viaduct, and improvements between Fen Ditton and Girton to address queuing from the online carriageways. Delivery of infrastructure could require tolling, with appropriate offline access roads for local traffic.
9. Cabinet in June 2013 considered a report on the delivery of Northstowe. The report indicated that detailed work was proceeding on the basis of a tripartite funding split between central Government, the affected local authorities and income to be derived from tolling. A report on the scheme and funding details would be presented to Cabinet at a later stage. Cabinet agreed in principle the Council's support for the A14 Improvement Scheme and authorised officers to proceed to negotiate an Agreement with the County Council for this purpose, subject to a detailed scheme to be reported to Cabinet and Council in due course.
10. **This report to Cabinet seeks to agree a response to the current consultation but does not address the financial agreements, which will be considered by Cabinet separately.**
11. The Highways Agency have carried out appraisals of options, and developed proposals for a Huntingdon to Cambridge Improvement Scheme. They are consulting on the scheme until 13 October 2013. They intend to make a Preferred Route announcement in late 2013, followed by further public consultation. The project is classified by the Planning Act 2008 as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), which will require a Development Consent Order application, anticipated in late 2014. This would be considered by the Planning Inspectorate (anticipated to take 6 months). Construction would commence in 2016, and take 3 to 4 years to complete.
12. The proposed Scheme is fundamentally the same as the abandoned 2010 Scheme with these principal differences:
 - (a) Upgrading the dual lane section of the A1 north of the new A14 to dual 3 lanes
 - (b) the A1198 partial junction on the Huntingdon Southern Bypass would include emergency only east facing slip roads
 - (c) from the end of the Huntingdon Bypass to the Girton interchange the A14 would be upgraded online
 - (d) between Bar Hill and the Girton interchange, the A14 would be 4 lanes in each direction (the 2010 Scheme proposed 3 lanes as now)
 - (e) Between Bar Hill and the A1, the A14 would be dual 3 lanes as in the 2010 scheme
 - (f) the design of the Swavesey interchange has been simplified but remains in the same location as previously proposed
 - (g) the Bar Hill junction has been redesigned as a full junction with the A14 (previous scheme was a partial junction) and would become the last junction with the A14 before the Girton interchange
 - (h) there is no junction proposed at Dry Drayton

- (i) the Girton interchange has been simplified but still allows for the same movements as now and as proposed in the 2010 Scheme
- (j) The parallel dual carriageway local roads between Fen Drayton and the Girton Interchange are replaced by one single carriageway road on the north side of the A14 between Fen Drayton and the current Dry Drayton junction at which point it crosses to the southern side of the A14
- (k) Lolworth is accessed via an overbridge from the parallel road on the north side of the A14 between the Swavesey and Bar Hill junctions
- (l) A single carriageway road on the south side of the A14 between Conington and the Swavesey interchange

Considerations

- 13. The 2012 A14 Study came up with six options proposing various elements of improvement. Options include schemes which focus on the area around Cambridge, exclude local access roads, or maintain the Huntingdon viaduct. One option considered the alternative of upgrading the A428 / A1198 as an alternative route. The best performing two options included a Huntingdon southern bypass and include the proposed scheme.
- 14. The proposed scheme comprises:

Element 1 – Huntingdon Southern Bypass, (A1 to Swavesey)

- New offline route from Ellington to A1 at Brampton (Dual 2 lane), and then Dual 3 lanes to Swavesey;
- No connection for traffic joining/exiting the A14 from A1 south. Traffic to/from the A1 south would be expected to use the A428 Girton to St Neots;
- Crosses A1198 north of Papworth Everard with west facing slips and emergency east facing slips;
- Tolling between Ellington and Swavesey;
- Separately the Highways Authority (HA) is also proposing to widen A1 Brampton to Ellington;
- Old A14 to be de-trunked;
- Viaduct over railway at Huntingdon will be demolished;

Element 2 – A14 online improvement

- Online widening Swavesey to Bar Hill to Dual 3 lane, and Dual 4 lane Bar Hill to Girton;
- New single carriageway Local Access Road Fen Drayton to Girton – north side of the A14 between Fen Drayton and Dry Drayton; and south side of the A14 from Dry Drayton to Cambridge;
- Lolworth accessed by an overbridge from the Local Access Road;
- Junctions onto main A14 at Swavesey (relocated north of the existing junction and providing access for A14 traffic to the existing Cambridge Services) and Bar Hill (No longer a junction at Fen Drayton);

Element 3 – Girton Interchange

- New simplified interchange to improve traffic flows and merging issues;
- Provides access to the Local Access Road;
- Maintains existing traffic movements (no additional movements e.g. A428 to A14 west, A428 to M11 south);

Element 4 – Cambridge Northern Bypass

- Widened to Dual 3 lane Histon to Milton (to link with existing 'pinch point' 3 lane scheme Girton to Histon);
 - Improvements to Histon and Milton Junctions to reduce queuing on A14.
15. Most of the funding will come from Central Government and tolling of the new Huntingdon South Bypass between Swavesey and the A1, but the local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnership in Greater Cambridge have been asked to contribute a total of £100m between them towards the costs of construction. South Cambridgeshire's contribution is still to be decided.
16. Due to the scale and cost of the scheme the government believes users should make a direct contribution to the cost of the scheme through tolling. The consultation states that it is essential to the business case. The HA have looked at a range of options, including their impact on traffic diverting to other routes, and have identified the new offline section between Swavesey and Ellington for tolling. Tariffs would be £1 to £1.50 for cars (current costs) per trip, and around double this for larger vehicles. Alternative un-tolled routes for heavy traffic would be A428 to A1, or A roads through St Ives / Huntingdon. Light vehicles could also use the former A14 route through Huntingdon. Tolling would apply from 06:00 to 22:00, and be charged through number plate recognition. The HA considered tolling Ellington to Girton, but this would need a dual carriageway local road, and would significantly increase the cost of the scheme. Views are sought on the way tolling is carried out, and the length of road covered.

Options

17. Alternative approaches relate to the form of the response. Cabinet is recommended to address the following issues:

Principle of the scheme

18. The Council has previously stressed the urgency of improvement of the A14 to the District.
19. **Recommended Response:** Reiterate to the Highways Agency the importance of addressing improvements to the A14 as soon as possible. Improvements to the A14 are necessary in order to deliver the local growth agenda, protect village amenity and improve journey times and road safety for the travelling public.

Alternative Schemes

20. Previously the Council has supported a similar online route from Fen Ditton to Fen Drayton with a Huntingdon Bypass along a similar alignment, and de-trunking of the existing route between Fen Drayton and the A1. The Joint Response to the A14 Challenge recommended a scaled down version of the previous scheme.
21. **Recommended Response:** The A14 study shows that the alternative route utilising the A428 / A1198 (option 6) would be less effective and have greater negative impacts on existing communities, and is therefore not supported.

Tolling

22. The Joint response to the A14 Challenge indicated that a scheme could involve tolling if it would secure delivery given the state of national public finances, but there

would need to be appropriate un-tolled access roads to allow local traffic to reach the settlements in the corridor.

23. **Recommended Response:** The principle of tolling is not addressed in this report but the Highways Agency does need to consider impact on surrounding routes e.g. A428, particularly in combination with growth plans set out in the Proposed Submission Local Plan. The Agency should also consider the options for improvements to increase capacity on the A428 between Caxton Gibbet and the A1, which is also a priority.

Local Access Road

24. The previous scheme incorporated a dual carriageway Local Access Road from Fen Drayton to Girton, in a number of places using the existing A14, with the new route being constructed alongside. The new scheme has a single carriageway Local Access Road, which runs on the northern side of the A14 from Fen Drayton to Dry Drayton, and then crosses to the southern site before merging with the Girton Interchange. A short stretch of single carriageway road connects Conington to the Swavesey interchange. A single carriageway road reflects the suggestion of the Cambridgeshire Authorities to the A14 Challenge.
25. The new scheme also proposes upgrading the A14 to 4 lanes in each direction from Bar Hill to Girton rather than retaining dual 3 lanes as now and as proposed in the 2010 Scheme.
26. **Recommended Response:** Provision of a Local Access Road is important to ensure local people can access settlements in South Cambridgeshire when the A14 has fewer junctions than at present and to improve traffic flow on the A14. The HA should include cycling, walking and horse provision along this route, linking into cycling improvements planned in association with Northstowe.

A1198 Junction

27. A junction with only west facing slips (with eastern emergency slips) was proposed by the previous scheme, and supported by the Council. This approach has been continued in the new scheme.
28. **Recommended Response:** Support the approach to west facing slips (with eastern emergency slips) at the A1198 junction.

Bar Hill Junction

29. The Bar Hill junction would provide access to the local access road and the main A14. The Council previously expressed support for retention of the existing over bridge at Bar Hill as a route for non-motorised users, and this has been included in the current scheme.
30. **Recommended Response:** Support the retention of existing over bridge at Bar Hill as a route for non-motorised users

Dry Drayton Junction

31. The junction would provide access to the Local Access Road only, not to the main A14. Road users joining this junction would have the choice of following the Local

Access Road to the Girton Interchange, or north to the Bar Hill Junction where they could join the A14.

32. The HA have indicated to Officers that 10,000 units at Northstowe has been included in the A14 modelling, including the first phase of 1500, to understand how the scheme would work when the new town reaches its eventual size.
33. **Recommended Response:** Request that the HA continue to work with the District and County Councils and as appropriate with the Homes and Communities Agency regarding the relationship of the scheme with Northstowe through the detailed design stages. Support improved connections for Lolworth which will improve safety.

Girton Interchange

34. The proposal addresses many issues with the existing junction, but does not provide additional movements (e.g. A428 to M11 or A14). The Council has previously accepted this due to evidence provided by the HA of the benefits compared to the costs. However with the A1303 between Madingley Hill and M11 being used by trunk road traffic causing substantial delays to local traffic, and the development proposed along the A428 at St Neots, Cambourne and Bourn Airfield, the Highways Agency should look again at linking the A428 west of the Girton Interchange to the M11 south.
35. **Recommended Response:** The HA should consider additional movements at the Girton interchange, particularly A428 to A14, and A428 to M11, particularly in light of growth plans in the A428 corridor. Alternatively, the Highways Agency should upgrade the A1303 to accommodate trunk road traffic.

Histon and Milton Junctions

36. The scheme indicates improvement of Histon and Milton junctions to provide improved capacity and to reduce queuing back onto the bypass. Previously the Council expressed the importance of cycling across the Histon Junction. It is understood that the Highways Agency's plans for the Milton junction do not take account of the traffic from the new town proposed at Waterbeach in the draft Local Plan.
37. **Recommended Response:** The Housing Agency should consider general opportunities to improve the functions of these junctions, including for traffic not using the A14. Improvements to the Histon junction should consider the needs of cyclists between Cambridge and Histon, and seek to improve safety. Consideration should be given to designing the A10/A14 Milton interchange to accommodate traffic from the proposed Waterbeach new town.

Other Issues

38. A number of issues remain to be explored through the more detailed design of the scheme.
39. **Recommended Response:** The Highways Agency should:
 - Consider the impact of planned growth in adopted and proposed submission local plans;

- Continue to work with the Council on local environmental issues such as noise, lighting, air quality, ecology, heritage, and landscape impact as the scheme progresses. The HA are urged to fully consider impacts on existing communities, and planned developments along the route, and work with the Council to determine appropriate mitigation measures, including to mitigate impacts during the construction phase. Given that HGV traffic is likely to increase after 10 pm when tolling ends, particular consideration should be given to the merits of laying a quiet road surface on the Cambridge Northern Bypass which lies close to existing residential in locations such as Orchard Park;
- Fully consider the impact on non-motorised routes, and seek to maintain and improve accessibility;
- Consider impact on flooding and drainage, and reduce risks elsewhere where practicable, and fully address maintenance of infrastructure. This includes working with the Council's Drainage Manager in relation to Award Drains;
- Support recycling of materials from development sites e.g. Northstowe;
- Design the scheme to aid future maintenance, in particular edge of road drainage should utilise an open 'v' gully (similar to that used on A428).

Implications

40. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

41. As detailed earlier this report to Cabinet seeks to agree a response to the current consultation, and does not address the financial agreements, which will be considered by Cabinet separately.

Legal

42. The Council will have a role in the Development Consent Order application, including commenting on the Statement of Community Consultation.

Staffing

43. As there are significant issues for the District, officers will need to continue to be involved in the A14 scheme as it evolves, including involvement in the Development Consent Order Process which will require input from Development Control and Planning Policy Officers.

Risk Management

44. Development of Northstowe as a whole is dependant on the A14 improvements. Lack of development progress could lead to the authority being unable to deliver its housing needs, resulting in the Council having to meet the shortfall in the short term from developments in existing villages or undermine the strategy in the Proposed Submission Local Plan.

Climate Change

45. Modelling (in the A14 Study) indicates an increase in carbon emissions as a result of the highway improvements due to increased speed and travel distances.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

46. None.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 2 - We will work with partners to create opportunities for employment, enterprise, education and world-leading innovation

47. Capacity of the A14 is an important issue for the economy of the area.

Aim 3 - We will make sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents

48. The A14 is a key part of the transport infrastructure of the area, and impacts on quality of life.

Background Papers:

The A14 Huntingdon to Cambridge Improvement consultation documents can be found on the Highways Agency website: <http://www.highways.gov.uk/roads/road-projects/a14-cambridge-to-huntingdon-improvement-scheme/>

Joint response to the A14 Challenge by Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland, and East Cambridgeshire:

Letter: <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/DBCAF02B-417D-4332-9399-055F10D8C0B0/0/120208ResponsetotheA14ChallengeFV.pdf>

Statement: <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/D11F87FC-3AEE-4B16-B27B-27DEF56FCC7B/0/120208A14ChallengeJointResponseFV.pdf>

Planning and New Communities Joint Portfolio Holders' Meeting 10 December 2009
<http://modern.gov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=872&MId=4980&Ver=4>

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