

**South Cambridgeshire District Council
Record of Executive Decision**

This form should be used to record key and other decisions made by individual Lead Cabinet members. The contact officer will ensure that the signed and completed form is given to Democratic Services as soon as reasonably practicable after the decision has been taken.

A key decision shall not be taken unless notice of the item has been published at least 28 days before the decision is to be taken except where:

- a General Exception notice has been published under Rule 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules and the Chairman of Scrutiny and Overview Committee has been informed in writing; or
- a Special Urgency notice has been published under Rule 16 of those Rules and the Chairman of Scrutiny and Overview Committee has agreed the decision is urgent.

Unless permission has been obtained from the Chairman of Council and the Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee that this decision may be treated as a matter of urgency under Rule 12.19 of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Procedure Rules, this decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of five working days after the publication of the decision, unless called in under Rule 7 of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules or Rule 12 of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Procedure Rules. Where consent has been obtained to exempt the decision from call-in, this will be specified below.

Lead Cabinet Member	Lead Cabinet member for Planning
Subject Matter	Joint Response to Network Rail's Ely Area Capacity Enhancements 2 consultation
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Date Taken	Friday, 26 November 2021
Contact Officer	Stuart Morris, Principal Planning Policy Officer, Claire Spencer, Senior Planning Policy Officer (stuart.morris@scambs.gov.uk, claire.spencer@scambs.gov.uk)
Date Published	Friday, 26 November 2021
Call-In Expiry/Exempt from call-in	Friday, 3 December 2021
Key Decision?	No
In Forward Plan?	No
Urgent?	No

Purpose / Background
<p>Purpose To agree the Council's joint response with Cambridge City Council to Network Rail's Ely Area Capacity Enhancements 2 consultation.</p> <p>BACKGROUND The Ely area capacity enhancement (EACE) programme proposes to upgrade the railway to allow more trains to run through Ely.</p> <p>The railway through Ely is operating at full capacity. This means that Network Rail cannot increase the number of services through Ely because the existing layout of the tracks, junctions, signals and existing speed restrictions across key bridges in the Ely area acts as a bottleneck on the network.</p>

The aim of the EACE programme is to improve connectivity for passengers by providing an uplift in services to key destinations. Demand for rail freight is also growing and increasing capacity through Ely will support a shift from road to rail thereby providing a faster, greener, safer and more efficient way of transporting goods across the country; helping to remove lorries from roads and reduce congestion.

Earlier in 2021, Network Rail consulted on the options for upgrading the railway in the Ely South area, the results of which will be presented in 2022. This round of public consultation includes the options for remodelling the track at Ely North junction, Queen Adelaide level crossings options; and options for upgrading or closing other level crossings across the wider Ely area.

Details of the consultation are available at Network Rail's Ely Area Consultation webpage: <https://phase2b.elvareacapacity.com/>

FEATURES OF THE CONSULTATION RELEVANT TO GREATER CAMBRIDGE

Features of the consultation relevant to Greater Cambridge comprise:

- Overall approach – enhancements at Ely North junction supporting growth in wider area
- No proposed interventions at Chesterton Level Crossing (Fen Road)
- Changes proposed to two level crossings in Waterbeach including Bottisham Road/Bannold Road but more materially Burgess Drove, where there are two options consulted on: 1 – Remove vehicle crossing rights but retain access for pedestrians and cyclists; 2 - Close Burgess Drove Level crossing

PROPOSED RESPONSE POINTS

The proposed key response points and reasons supporting these are as follows. The proposed full response is provided at Appendix A.

- The need for capacity enhancements at Ely North junction to be sufficient to cater for all planned growth, noting national and local priorities to support more sustainable travel
- Request to reconsider the consultation's proposal not to make any further intervention planned at Chesterton Level Crossing, given the significant current impact of downtime there and potential for further downtime with the additional planned growth in services.
- Burgess Drove Level Crossing: Of the two options proposed, support option 1 - Remove vehicle crossing rights but retain access for pedestrians and cyclists, to support the Councils' access to food growing and access to nature priorities, noting that the level crossing provides access for village residents to allotments and the River Cam. In addition, note Burgess Drove residents' views that upgrading the crossing would be preferable and likely less costly than upgrading and maintaining Burgess Drove surface (the proposed mitigation for closing the crossing to vehicles).

Declaration(s) of Interest

Record below any relevant interest declared by any executive Member consulted or by an officer present in relation to the decision.

One of the officers who has assisted in preparing the response is a Waterbeach resident. As such, all aspects of the consultation response relating to Waterbeach have been drafted by a different officer who has no personal interest in the decision.

Dispensation(s)

In respect of any conflict(s) of interest declared above, record below any dispensation(s) granted by the Council's Standards Committee.

None

Consultation <i>Record below all parties consulted in relation to the decision.</i>

Other Options Considered and Reasons for Rejection
The council has the option of not responding to the consultation.

Final decision	Reason(s)
<p>For the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development and Lead Cabinet member for Planning Policy and Delivery agree the response to Network Rail's Ely Area Capacity Enhancements 2 consultation as set out in Appendix A.</p> <p>A parallel decision is being considered by Cambridge City Council to be agreed, and delegated authority is given to the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development to agree any minor amendments to the response agreed by the City Council that are consistent with the response at Appendix A.</p>	<p>To provide the Councils' comments to this consultation in recognition of the opportunities it provides to influence Network Rail's Ely Area capacity enhancements.</p>

Signed	Name (CAPITALS)	Signature	Date
Lead Cabinet Member	Signed copy available upon request from Democratic Services (democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk)		
Chief Officer			

Further Information
<p>Appendices</p> <p>Appendix A: Proposed joint response by South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council Councils to Network Rail's Ely Area Capacity Enhancements 2 consultation.</p> <p>Councils' joint response to the previous Ely Area Capacity Enhancements consultation</p> <p>Joint response by South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council Councils to Network Rail's consultation on the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme</p> <p>The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP), on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, thank Network Rail for the opportunity to comment Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme. The comments provided are high level and the GCSP recognises that Cambridgeshire County Council's response (as the highway authority) will provides detailed comments on technical aspects.</p> <p>The GCSP support the proposals to increase capacity for passenger and freight services through the Ely area. Increasing the use of rail for these journeys will reduce the amount of road traffic through the region, with associated benefits to affected communities, reduction in carbon emissions, improved air quality, improved access for communities to</p>

services and facilities. It would enable a greater number of trips to Cambridge and other locations on the line, including Waterbeach new town, to be undertaken from Ely by rail as a sustainable mode of transport. The improvements should support the local, regional and national economies and with the delivery of future growth. However, the Councils would also encourage further investment in improvements that would increase the number of services.

Network Rail should ensure the full impacts, across the whole EACE area, are duly considered and appropriately mitigated. There are a number of level crossings across the EACE area which could be impacted by the increase in rail traffic, particularly as a result of longer barrier down times.

In particular the GCSP would draw attention to the need to address the existing issues with the Chesterton Level Crossing on the northern fringe of Cambridge. Chesterton Level Crossing bisects Fen Road which provides the only vehicular access to residential and business uses, including a large Traveller community. The crossing is controlled by means of a full barrier. On weekdays there are currently at least six train movements an hour in each direction, resulting in the barrier being down for around 33 minutes out of each hour. This is having a negative impact on the Fen Road community and potentially leads to frustration and possibly encourages high risk behaviour with the associated implications for public safety. Any future increase in frequency in trains running along this line will likely further exacerbate the problems. The impacts of further increased downtime on both safety (at the crossing and in terms of emergency access) and community and economic wellbeing need to be fully recognised and an appropriate response identified and implemented.

The GCSP urge Network Rail to continue to work with the local planning authorities and the transport and highway authorities at the earliest opportunity to explore measures to address the Chesterton Level Crossing, in the short-term as well as the longer-term as the EACE scheme progresses. If Network Rail were to determine the crossing should be closed alternative vehicular access would need to be provided. The Planning Authority and County Council have sought to understand options to address this existing issue and would welcome further engagement with Network Rail's team to explore the feasibility of alternative access options available. EACE scheme development and future funding bids must in our view consider this issue further.

It is crucial that the impacts on existing and planned communities are considered and it is vital that all affected communities and businesses across the whole EACE area (not just in the Ely area) are fully engaged as Network Rail progress through future stages. This includes ensuring consultation methods are fully inclusive to everyone, and target 'hard to reach' groups.

The GCSP would urge Network Rail to accelerate planning and delivery of the EACE scheme to provide clarity and greater certainty for the local planning authorities in delivering future growth in Greater Cambridge and Cambridgeshire, and to realise the benefits to local communities.

The GCSP looks forward to working with Network Rail going forwards to deliver this important scheme.