

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet

8 May 2014

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 Development Consent Order Pre-Application Statutory 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 March 2014 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Cabinet agrees:
 - a) the response to the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement set out in paragraphs 15-17, 20-22, 26-28, 32, 34, 38-39, 41, 43-47 of this report.
 - b) delegated authority is given to the Director of Planning and New Communities in consultation with the Leader and Planning Policy and Localism Portfolio Holder, to finalise the response to the Highways Agency in line with any additional views agreed by Cabinet at the meeting.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. Improvements to the A14 are important for the delivery of the growth agenda, the economy, 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 addressing a range of issues, following up the response to the previous consultation made in October 2013.

Executive Summary

5. The Highways Agency is carrying out Pre-Application Consultation on the A14 Huntingdon to Cambridge Improvement Scheme, between 7 April and 15 June 2014. It forms part of the pre-application public consultation needed to support a Development Consent Order application. The proposed scheme has been changed in a number of ways since the last consultation in 2013, in particular road user tolling is no longer proposed, widening is to be done asymmetrically, amendments have been made to junction layouts, and the route of the local road has been realigned.
6. The report proposes to respond to the Highways Agency on a number of issues, in particular highlighting the importance of the scheme, the need to take account of and coordinate with development planned in the area, and the need to continue to work with the Council on local environmental issues.

Background

7. This Pre-Application Consultation marks the next stage in the A14 Huntingdon to Cambridge Improvement Scheme proposed by the Highways Agency (HA).
8. The history of the A14 improvement scheme was detailed in the previous report to Cabinet on 8 October 2013, but a brief summary is provided below:
 - Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS) in 2001 recommended improvements;
 - The A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton scheme reached the public inquiry stage in 2010, but was cancelled by the Government's 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review before this took place;
 - The Department of Transport initiated an A14 Study (undertaken in 2011 and 2012) 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. Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland, and East Cambridgeshire District Councils issued a joint response in 2012 emphasising the importance of the route;
 - The Chancellor's autumn statement in November 2011 announced introduction of the Pinch Point Programme, as part of the UK Government's growth initiative. £22 million was provided to make short term improvements to the A14 between Girton and Histon to relieve congestion. Preparatory works started in April 2014;
 - Cabinet in June 2013 agreed in principle the Council's financial support for the A14 Improvement Scheme;
 - Highways Agency Consultation on Cambridge to Huntingdon Scheme took place in Autumn 2013, and Cabinet October 2013 agreed a response;
 - Highways Agency publish a Consultation Report in December 2013, responding to issues raised during the 2013 consultation;
 - Council February 2014 agreed the Medium Term Financial Strategy, which includes provision for a local contribution for the completion of the A14 improvement scheme of £5 million. Other contributors include Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership, and a number of other local authorities in the region.
9. The Highways Agency last carried out a consultation in Autumn 2013. This considered alternative routes, and identified the preferred option, which included road user tolling. The Council's response was agreed by Cabinet of 4 October 2013. The response highlighted the importance of delivering the scheme as soon as possible, sought exemption from the tolling for local residents, and raised a number of issues regarding elements of the proposed scheme.
10. The current Pre-Application consultation takes place between 7 April and 15 June 2014. It forms part of the pre-application public consultation needed to support a Development Consent Order application.
11. 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 autumn 2014. This would be considered by the Planning Inspectorate, through an Examination in Public. There will an opportunity to comment on the application at the pre-examination stage. Construction would commence in late 2016, and take 3 to 4 years to complete.

Considerations

12. The proposed Scheme remains similar to that subject to consultation in 2013, but there are some key differences:
- No Tolling – The 2013 consultation proposed tolling between Cambridge and Huntingdon. This has now been dropped. Majority of funding will come from Central Government (up to £1.5 billion), with Local Authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership contributing £100 million. The route has been tested to ensure it remains the best option even without tolling;
 - A1/A14 Brampton Interchange – A new road layout provides better connections between the A1 and A14;
 - Asymmetric Widening – Where on-line widening is taking place lanes will be added on one side only and moving the central reservation, rather than adding a lane to both sides. This offers improved safety and less disruption during construction;
 - Amended Junction Designs – Changes are proposed at Brampton, Swavesey, Bar Hill and Girton junctions, to improve their function;
 - Amended Local Access Road – The new local road between Fen Drayton and Girton has been realigned to provide a more efficient route than the previous design. In particular it runs closer to the existing A14 route between Bar Hill and Swavesey, running south of the Buckingham Business Park rather than to the north.
13. It is recommended that the Council responds to the consultation addressing the issues identified below. Officers are preparing further comments on minor or technical issues on the evolving scheme. It has not been possible to complete this process in time for this report. Comments will be agreed with the Leader prior to the close of consultation in June.

General Principle of the scheme

14. The Council has previously stressed the urgency of improvement of the A14 to the District.

Recommended Response:

15. South Cambridgeshire District Council would like to highlight 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, and improve journey times and road safety for the travelling public.
16. In principle the route option with on-line widening from Milton to Swavesey, a Huntingdon southern Bypass, and detrunking of the route between Fen Drayton and the A1 is supported. The Council supports the rejection of alternative route alignment options, in particular the use of the A428 / A1198.
17. In response to the decision to remove tolling, the Council is pleased that local residents would no longer be charged to use the road.

Taking Account of Planned Growth

18. The core transport modelling used to test the impacts of the proposed Scheme takes account of developments which are defined as 'near certain' or 'more than likely'

according to Department of Transport guidelines. This effectively means sites with planning permission, such as the first 1,500 dwellings at Northstowe.

19. A high growth traffic forecast has been run to take account of the full scale of development at Northstowe and Alconbury. Other emerging development sites, such as those at Waterbeach, Bourn Airfield, Cambourne West and are at an earlier planning stage and not been included in this forecast. However the developments are referenced in the Preliminary Environmental Information Report, and the Preliminary Traffic Report states that new traffic modelling will be carried out, taking account of the Local Planning Authorities' latest views on future planning growth in the region.

Recommended Response:

20. The A14 scheme should support the delivery of Northstowe. The Highways Agency should continue to work with the Northstowe developers, and District and County Councils, regarding the relationship of the scheme with Northstowe through the detailed design and construction stages. The phasing of improvements should be coordinated, to achieve maximum benefit and minimise disruption. The scheme should consider the impacts of subsequent phases of Northstowe as well as phase 1, and support their delivery. Phase 2 is being considered through the planning process now, and the planning application for phase 2 is anticipated to be determined around mid 2015. By the time the A14 scheme is under construction, phase 2 will be under construction and the A14 scheme needs to be constructed to accommodate it.
21. Although the proposed new developments in the Submission Local Plan are at an earlier stage in the planning process, it is important that sensitivity testing is carried out, to ensure it will not prejudice the delivery of the emerging development strategy in terms of a detailed design that is adaptable to future developments. Traffic modelling should consider the full scale of planned developments, as well as the early phases of development. This should include Northstowe and the developments included in the Submission Local Plan at Waterbeach, Bourn Airfield, and Cambourne West. The design and implementation of the proposed scheme should be coordinated with planned developments.
22. On the Cambridge Northern Bypass the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework allocates development between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road immediately south of the A14 (NIAB / Darwin Green). The plan seeks environmental noise attenuation in the form of landscaped earth mounds / bunds rather than noise barrier fencing. The identification of a drainage pond at Woodhouse Farm specifically for the A14 could affect the implementation of the NIAB / Darwin Green scheme. The HA should coordinate with the Council and the developers to deliver the best solution for this area in terms of noise mitigation and drainage.

Local Access Road

23. The proposed scheme includes 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. 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.
24. Non-Motorised User (NMU) provision is planned along the length of the Local Road from Girton to Swavesey. On the plans provision continues north of Swavesey to the start of the detrunked section. The HA are exploring links between the Swavesey junction and Fenstanton, from where it is possible to use alternative routes to St Ives

and Huntingdon, such as the Thicket Path. A cycleway along the de-trunked A14 would be a matter for the County Council.

25. The level of traffic anticipated by the HA traffic modelling indicates that both carriageways of the de-trunked route west of Swavesey would need to be retained to serve St Ives, Huntingdon and surrounding villages. The detrunked road would be maintained by the County Council.

Recommended Response:

26. Provision of a Local Access Road is important to ensure local people can access settlements in South Cambridgeshire conveniently when the A14 has fewer junctions than at present and to improve traffic flow on the A14.
27. The proposed NMU route along the length of the Local Road is supported. The route offers a particular legacy opportunity to promote non-motorised transport modes, including walking, cycling and horse riding. This should deliver segregated cycling provision, of an appropriate width and junction standards to accommodate high volumes of cyclists safely, reflecting best practice standards. It should be linked to existing and planned cycle routes, including for North West Cambridge, the NIAB developments, and Northstowe. At the northern end, the link to Fenstanton / Fen Drayton should be provided.
28. The latest design of the local road brings it closer to the main A14 near the Buckingway Business Park. This will require careful landscape treatment, particularly between the two roads. Further detail is needed to understand the impact, to ensure a quality environment for local users, including non-motorised users.

Other NMU Routes

29. Through the last consultation the Council stressed the importance of supporting non-motorised users, and that this should be a consideration along the whole route during the design process. This includes reinstatement of historic footpaths which were severed by the A14. Provision is made for this in the scheme. Where rights of way are crossed by the proposed new Huntingdon Southern Bypass alternative access is provided across bridges, requiring path realignment in some cases. Swavesey and Bar Hill junctions include bridges specifically for non-motorised users.
30. In its previous response the Council urged the HA to pay particular attention to the provision of cyclepaths past and through the Girton interchange, to improve current routes as well as provide new links. This should include linking up the historic footpaths between Coton / Madingley and Girton. An NMU route north of the Girton interchange, between the Dry Drayton junction and linking to the footpath and bridge over the A14 on the south west of Girton has been included. The Madingley 6 Bridleway is proposed to be diverted, tracking the route of the new A14 link, to join the NMU route on the new local road. This is a change from the previous iteration which had a bridge taking the path under the local road to the Bulls Close underpass.
31. Previously the Council expressed the importance of cycling across the Histon Junction. A separate cycle bridge at Histon is not proposed by the scheme. The HA indicate that this would be a County Council issue, as the local highway authority. The potential for a pedestrian / cycle bridge for the Histon junction was explored through a study in 2010. A bridge solution proved unviable, both in terms of cost and distance from the slip roads, meaning most cyclists would continue to use the

junction. Improved crossings have since been provided on the junction, and the Guided Busway provides an alternative traffic free route.

Recommended Response:

32. Provision for non-motorised users will be a key legacy of the A14 scheme. Efforts to maintain existing routes and reconnect routes severed by the original A14 are supported, in particular the inclusion of bridges for non-motorised users at Swavesey and Bar Hill junctions. Any improvements to the Histon junction should consider the needs of cyclists, and seek to improve safety.

A1198 Junction

33. At the A1198, a junction with west facing slips (with eastern emergency slips) is planned onto the new Huntingdon southern bypass. The Council's previous response supported this approach subject to the modelling demonstrating they are necessary. The HA advise that not having a junction would increase traffic in Huntingdon and surrounding routes, and increase the distance travelled to access the A14. The Preliminary Traffic Modelling shows that traffic on the A1198 will be lower in the long term with the scheme than without it.

Recommended Response:

34. The Council will support provision of west facing slips if the modelling demonstrates they are necessary. The Highways Agency is urged to explore further the impact of providing these slip roads on traffic generation and impact on local villages, including as a result of planned developments.

Girton Interchange, and the Histon and Milton Junctions

35. The proposed scheme does not provide additional movements (e.g. A428 to M11 or A14). Through the last consultation the Council urged the HA to consider additional movements at the Girton interchange, principally A428 to A14, and A428 to M11, particularly in light of growth plans in the A428 corridor. Alternatively, the Highways Agency was urged to upgrade the A1303 to accommodate trunk road traffic.
36. The HA have investigated the impacts of additional movements, which would require additional levels of bridges at the interchange. This would add significantly to cost, and would delay the whole process while further consultation was carried out. They consider it outside the remit of the current scheme. The HA plan to produce an A428 Route Based Strategy, which will be used to prioritise future transport schemes. The Proposed A14 Scheme has been designed in order not to prejudice the addition of alternative movements were they to be added in the future.
37. The scheme indicates improvement of Histon and Milton junctions to provide improved capacity and to reduce queuing back onto the bypass, by providing additional lanes on the existing bridges.

Recommended Response:

38. Additional movements at the Girton Interchange should be addressed as part of the current scheme. If it is not included, the Route Based Strategy for the A428 should be brought forward urgently and address the issue, particularly the link between the A428 / A1307 and the M11 and have regard to the strategic scale of development proposed in the A428 corridor in South Cambridgeshire and beyond. The Highways

Agency should also consider the options for improvements to increase capacity on the A428 between Caxton Gibbet and the A1.

39. The HA should consider general opportunities to improve the functions of the Histon and Milton junctions, including for traffic not using the A14. Improvements to the Milton junction should not prejudice the delivery of Waterbeach New Town, identified in the Submission South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and which is likely to require junction improvements.

Borrow Pits

40. Borrow pits will be used to locally source materials to aid the construction of the scheme. There are six borrow pits proposed along the route. The majority are located within the Mineral Safeguarding Areas as defined in the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy. Some proposed in previous schemes are no longer included, and the proposed borrow pit east of Fen Drayton has been amended. There is a new area north of Boxworth (replacing a site north of Trinity foot), proposed to be restored to agriculture or where not possible native grassland.

Recommended Response:

41. It will be important that the environmental impacts of borrow pits are fully explored, and particularly mitigation measures during their use. Future purpose and management of these areas should be identified from the outset where not being returned to agriculture. The Highways Agency should explore fully the opportunities they provide for biodiversity and amenity, including consulting with local communities.

Other Issues

42. The Council has liaised with the Highways Agency during the development of the scheme and will continue to do so for this important project. It is noted that a significant amount of environmental information has been collected through the previous scheme and the new scheme. A number of issues remain to be explored through the more detailed design of the scheme.

Recommended Response:

43. The Highways Agency should continue to work with the Council on local environmental issues such as noise, artificial lighting, air quality, contaminated land, drainage and water environment (including SCDC award drains), ecology, heritage, and landscape impact as the scheme progresses including consideration of the inter-relationships between these issues and cumulative effects. The HA are urged to fully consider impacts on existing communities, and planned developments along the route, and work with the Council to consider opportunities to avoid or reduce environmental effects at source, and to enable the most effective mitigation of those adverse effects that cannot be avoided, including the mitigation of direct and indirect impacts during the construction phase. Further information is required in order for the Council to consider the details of the proposed scheme. The treatment and purpose of a number of areas indicated on the 'Proposed Scheme General Arrangement' maps needs to be clarified and resolved, in particular areas identified as 'special category land', and 'ecology mitigation areas'.
44. The Highways Agency should demonstrate that arrangements have been made for the long-term ownership, maintenance and replacement of infrastructure included in the scheme.

45. The Highways Agency should make arrangements for post scheme completion / implementation monitoring of local air quality and traffic noise impacts in partnership with the Local Authorities. In addition, the Highways Agency should provide for the suitable relocation of air quality monitoring equipment where current locations are no longer suitable due to implementation of the scheme.
46. The Preliminary Environmental Information Report identifies that overall the landscape is considered to be of low to moderate value and sensitivity, with more attractive high value landscape in parts of the river valleys, Milton Country Park at the eastern end of the proposed Scheme, and around some of the villages. This is a sensitive landscape on the edge of a city with a Green Belt, designated specifically to protect its historic character and setting. The Scheme needs to consider the wider impacts on Cambridge and the setting of the historic city, as well as the villages along the route, to reflect the local landscape character. This should include exploring off site planting and mitigation where appropriate.
47. There needs to be effective coordination of drainage measures and treatments associated with planned developments, to ensure effective mitigation. The scheme should support and utilise the recycling of materials from development sites.

Options

48. Alternative options would be not to respond to the consultation, but given the importance to the district this is not recommended. The Council could make a different response, or add additional comments.

Implications

49. 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

50. The consultation material recognises the Council's financial commitment to the project of £5million (see paragraph 6). This contribution will be funded from anticipated New Homes Bonus receipts.

Legal

51. The Council will have a role in the Development Consent Order application, and will be asked to comment when the scheme is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

Staffing

52. 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.

Risk Management

53. The A14 scheme is important to the delivery of development in the district, including Northstowe.

Climate Change

54. 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)

55. A number of Council services have been consulted in the preparation of this report, including New Communities and Planning and Environmental Health.

Effect on Strategic Aims

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

56. Capacity of the A14 is an important issue for the economy of the area, and the delivery of the development strategy for the area.

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

57. 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/>

This includes:

- Scheme brochure
- Exhibition panels
- Preliminary Environmental Information
- Preliminary Traffic Information
- Scheme Drawings

Highways Agency - Public consultation on route options 2013 – consultation report
December 2013

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/265311/A14_Cambridge_to_Huntingdon_Consultation_2_.pdf

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>

Cabinet 4 October 2013

<http://scams.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=293&MId=6207&Ver=4>

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