

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Study

The importance of improving public transport in the Cambridge to St Ives corridor and its interrelationship in supporting local land-use development has been previously recognised in the County Structure Plan, the Local Development Plan and the Local Transport Plan.

Subsequently, the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS) considered possibilities for a Rapid Transit Scheme (Cambridge to Huntingdon Rapid Transit - CHRT) to serve this route and suggested that such a proposal be evaluated in greater detail. The proposal has since been developed by Cambridgeshire County Council and has reached the point where public consultation is being actively undertaken.

It is important to Huntingdonshire District Council that the benefits of CHRT are clearly targeted at the wide range of corporate objectives supporting the development, regeneration and environmental improvement of the area.

Jacobs Consultancy was appointed by Huntingdonshire District Council to undertake a review of the CHRT proposals. The defined study objectives were to:

- Evaluate the proposal's potential against the objectives of the CHUMMS Final Report;
- Evaluate the proposal's potential against the Councils' corporate objectives;
- Assess the proposal's economic and financial viability, and;
- Comment on the environmental impact of the proposed route.

1.2 The Methodology

In order to undertake the review effectively, the objectives were split into clearly defined work areas, comprising the following:

- Review of Existing Information
- Review of Route Alignment
- Financial and Economic Viability
- Consultation

The proposed scheme was assessed against existing policies and strategies, assessments and site visits made to the route, examinations undertaken of the modelling methodology used and the recent changes adopted, and a consultation exercise is being undertaken with local businesses. As part of this process initial consultations were undertaken with Cambridgeshire County Council and their consultants.

1.3 The Findings

The findings of the review can be summarised as follows:

1.3.1 Review of Existing Information

The CHRT proposals broadly contribute to the goals and objectives or local policies and strategies, including those contained in CHUMMS. However, there are possible negative impacts in certain sensitive areas in terms of impacts upon the environment,

impacts upon natural and heritage interests, impacts on biodiversity and impacts on the countryside.

1.3.2 Review of Route Alignment

CHRT promoters should carefully consider possible impacts upon the built environment, particularly in historic areas. The design and operation of CHRT must carefully consider possible impacts upon the nature reserves around Fen Drayton. The design of CHRT must maximise accessibility to the areas it will serve whilst preserving competitive journey times. We also suggest that CHRT should link the hospital and railway station to Huntingdon town centre.

1.3.3 Financial and Economic Viability

We have audited the Annex E submission made to DfT by Cambridgeshire County Council together with limited additional information provided by them. We can confirm that the overall cost benefit ratio for the project appears positive and generally underpins the viability of the proposed system. There would appear to be no rational case for opposing the project on economic grounds. It must be said that the DfT have commissioned their own consultants to carefully audit the analyses to ensure acceptable justification for the spending of public money.

1.3.4 Consultation

[to be completed, as exercise still underway]

1.4 In Summary

The Jacobs Consultancy view is that,

- The economic viability of the scheme and the limited environmental and other impacts do not justify a formal objection in principal, to the Transport and Works Act Application when submitted, for CHRT.
- However, if the District Council were so minded, whilst supporting the overall concept, an objection could be mounted to ensure that specific mitigation measures are included in the design to address environmental, heritage and urban design concerns.

This approach would gain the most benefit for the interests of the District Council and the local population.