CABINET **9TH JUNE 2005**
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL **14TH JUNE 2005**

PROPOSED UPGRADE OF A14 ELLINGTON TO FEN DITTON – HIGHWAYS AGENCY CONSULTATION
(Report by Director of Operational Services)

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To consider a response to the Highways Agency consultation on the A14 upgrade proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In 2001 the Cambridge-Huntingdon Multi Modal Study (CHUMMS) recommended a strategy of trunk road and local highway improvements combined with the provision of additional high quality public transport.

2.2 The Highways Agency has now published a set of proposals to improve the A14 between Ellington and Fen Ditton and have consulted on these proposals.

2.3 The proposals comprise:

- A new dualled road between Ellington and Fen Drayton, located to the south of Brampton. The proposed line is further south than that suggested at the time of the CHUMMS Strategy;
- Widening the existing A14 to dual 3 lanes between Fen Drayton and Fen Ditton;
- A local access road alongside the widened A14;
- Major interchanges with A1 at Brampton, the existing A14 at Fen Drayton, and the M11/A428 at Girton.

2.4 The current consultation shows that the northbound sliproad on the A1 into Brampton being closed and the connection of Brampton Road to Silver Street in Buckden via a new two-way road alongside the A1, replacing the existing auxiliary southbound lane. However, the Highway Agency have recently produced an alternative which deletes the A14 slip to the southbound A1 and enables the retention of the existing connections between Brampton Road and the A1.

2.5 There are 2 possible options for the A1 – Fen Drayton section:

(a) A dual 3 lane carriageway along the line of the new A14, with the existing A14 being de-trunked, used as a major local public transport route and Huntingdon viaduct being removed around the Brampton Road area and the creation of an at-grade junction at Brampton Road by the Railway Station. This is broadly in line with the CHUMMS recommendations.

(b) A dual 2 lane road along the line of the new A14, with the existing A14 being kept open to traffic as at present and remaining a trunk road, including the reconstruction of the Huntingdon Viaduct.

2.6 The District Council has previously considered the CHUMMS Strategy and the Council's position is attached as Annex A, which was represented to Full Council on 16 February 2005.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 This report will consider the scheme overall (para 3.2 and 3.3) and then will consider specific issues related to the two options (para 3.4, with a SWOT analysis as Annex B).

3.2 In considering the scheme overall, it has been suggested that the Local Authorities in Cambridgeshire in partnership with Cambridgeshire Horizons submit a joint Statement of Principles to the Highways Agency as part of their response to the consultation. This will not prescribe the ability of individual Local Authorities then to make particular comments about the scheme if they wish to do so. The following general principles are suggested:

(a) The proposals to upgrade the A14 and provide additional dual-3 lane highway capacity from the A1/A14 junction at Ellington to the Girton interchange at Cambridge is welcomed and supported.

(b) The need for the additional highway capacity is becoming critical and it is essential that the Highways Agency work with all speed to implement the proposals.

(c) The general line of the new A14 is acceptable in that it the best compromise in terms of the distance between the new road and the settlements of Brampton, Buckden, Godmanchester, Fenstanton, Huntingdon and Hilton (see comments regarding issues of noise and mitigation later in the report).

(d) The limited number of interchanges on the new A14 is to be supported. Any further junctions should be opposed.

(e) The principle of segregating through traffic from local traffic is one that is considered essential.

(f) That the decision on the proposal needs to be based not just on highway network considerations, but also the wider long-term economic considerations for the area.

3.3 In addition to the matters of principle set out above, the following comments are suggested as a response by the District Council:

(a) The implications of the choice for the preferred route will have profound and significant economic effects for both the town of Huntingdon and the whole of the area. It is important that the choice made is not based solely on highway network implications, nor just on the environmental effects. It is important that the economic considerations are also taken into account.

(b) The need to ensure that appropriate noise and visual intrusion mitigation measures are implemented as part of the new road proposals.

(c) The alignment of the A1 from Alconbury to south of Buckden could be realigned westward to alleviate the environmental effects of the upgrade of the A1 on Buckden and Brampton, but that the potential impact on Brampton Wood SSSI needs to be part of the consideration.

(d) The current proposals show the alignment of the new A14 from south of Buckden turning northwards and running alongside the western edge of the A1 to join the A14 to the west of Brampton Hut and the widening of the A1 from Brampton Hut to south of Brampton. This will mean that in this area there will be 10 lanes of highway. The Highway Agency should be asked to consider whether there are alternative methods of dealing with the Brampton Hut Interchange which would enable an all-ways junction to be implemented in that location, thus relieving the need for additional widening of the A1 between Brampton Hut and south of Brampton.

(e) The interchange between the new A14, the A1 and Brampton Hut interchange needs careful consideration and should be fully integrated if at all possible.

(f) A new access to Alconbury Airfield site should be provided directly onto the de-trunked A14.

(g) The existing junctions on the current A14 at the Hemingfords need to be considered in terms of safety works.

(h) The absence of a junction between the new A14 and the A1198 at Godmanchester is supported. If a proposal for a junction were to come forward this should be vigorously opposed.

(i) The issue of the closure of the A1 sliproad northbound, north of Buckden into Brampton, appears to have been resolved by the Highway Agency producing an alternative as set out earlier in this report. This would certainly alleviate the concern of how lorries would access Buckden Tip. It is essential that any proposals do not encourage through traffic either through Brampton or Buckden.

(j) The proposals envisage the new A14 coming back on alignment at Fen Drayton with an interchange to accommodate the junction with the old A14 and then a junction shortly after for the Trinity Foot/Cambridge Services area. However, access to the services is not direct from the proposed A14 and HGVs would have to use the local road between Girton and Fen Drayton. It is suggested that the location of the Fen Drayton Interchange should be further investigated so it could be moved to the Trinity Foot junction thus providing good access to the service areas.

(k) The proposal for the new A14 includes a viaduct spanning the River Great Ouse and from the information available the height of the viaduct seems excessive. It may be a requirement of the Environment Agency, but the Highway Agency should be asked to ensure that the height of the new viaduct is only that which is absolutely necessary.

(l) Whilst the proposals for the Girton Interchange are outside the boundary of the Huntingdonshire area, the current proposal does not include for an all-ways junction between the A14, M11 and A428. This could have implications for the traffic movements associated with the A428 and the Highway Agency should be asked to investigate whether an all-ways junction is possible.

3.4 In considering the two options put forward in the consultation for the trunk road network between the A1 and Fen Drayton, the following points need to be considered (the de-trunking option will be referred to as the CHUMMS Option and the continuing use of the existing A14 as a trunk road will be referred to as the Alternative Option):

(a) Whilst one of the alleged advantages of the Alternative Option is that it is cheaper than the CHUMMS Option by some £30m, the real issue is which option delivers the best long-term highway solution, the most beneficial economic effects in terms of the vitality and long-term viability of Huntingdon, and the capability for development to be accommodated without detriment to the environment. Therefore, the Alternative Option should not be chosen purely on the cost basis.

(b) In any case, whilst the initial capital estimates indicate that the Alternative Option may be cheaper than the CHUMMS Option, in overall terms the difference in cost is only some £30m and at this stage of the process the ability for contractors to improve on these prices mean that the difference is minimal.

(c) Huntingdonshire is part of the M11 Growth Area Corridor which the Government has established to deliver significant levels of growth in the coming decades. Huntingdon will play a significant role, not only in the delivery of new housing, but also for a range of new services and facilities, particularly new retail and commercial development, to serve the needs of the growing population of Huntingdonshire. There are 4 major development sites within the town centre of Huntingdon and a major housing development at Ermine Street. These developments require a significant level of investment in order for Huntingdon to remain a vibrant market town that is able to cope with additional traffic and improve its environmental quality. Work towards the implementation of these sites has been predicated on the assumptions drawn from the CHUMMS Strategy that there would be a new A14 and that the current A14 around Huntingdon and Godmanchester would be de-trunked to become a local road to encourage public transport provision, the development of an integrated public transport interchange and the diversion of existing rat-running traffic in Huntingdon, Godmanchester and St. Ives onto the de-trunked route.

(d) If the Alternative Option is implemented the community of Brampton would be surrounded on 3 sides by major trunk roads, and the communities of Huntingdon and Godmanchester would continue to suffer major noise and visual intrusion as well as pollution. This would particularly apply in later years as the created capacity would reduce due to predicted traffic growth and the impact of new development, including at Alconbury Airfield, taking effect.

(e) The line of the new A14 is proposed to be further south from Brampton than was possibly inferred by the CHUMMS line. This does mean that the communities of Buckden and The Offords could experience more visual and noise intrusion than had originally been expected. However, in terms of the two Options, the difference between a dual 2 and a dual 3 road is marginal. The issue therefore for these communities is whether the line of the road is optimal rather than the number of lanes.

(f) The CHUMMS Option does require that the existing A14 is de-trunked and the viaduct taken down to an at grade junction by the station. In principle, this concept should be supported as it could provide a long-term opportunity for the reorganisation of local traffic movements around and through Huntingdon. This could not be achieved if the alternative option is pursued. However, at the present time there is insufficient information available to enable a firm conclusion to be drawn about whether an at-grade junction at Brampton Road would help to ease the traffic movements or whether it would cause further problems. It is essential that detailed modelling work of this proposed junction is carried out as soon as possible to enable the Council to decide whether this junction has appropriate capacity. Some work is going on at present. However, more detailed modelling is required. This modelling needs to show how the de-trunking of the A14 and the changes at Spittals will affect the through traffic which currently uses the ring road on an east-west movement.

(g) Since the original CHUMMS Study, transport related air quality issues have been identified in Huntingdon that will result in the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for nitrogen dioxide (NO^2) later this year. Having regard to this the CHUMMS Option is much preferred in terms of the expected improvement to air quality within the future AQMA in Huntingdon.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 In any consultation on a new road proposal there will be both benefits and costs to individual local communities. For the District Council, it is important to consider the proposal in the best of interests of the Huntingdonshire community as a whole.

4.2 The effects of the decision on Huntingdonshire will be enormous in the long-term and it is essential that the decision is made on the basis of the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the community. It is not enough for the decision to be based purely on highway network issues.

4.3 In considering the information available and the comments in this report, having regard to all of the social, environmental and economic issues, it is recommended that the Council supports the CHUMMS Option.

5. RECOMMENDATION(S)

5.1 That Cabinet:

(a) Recommend to Full Council that the comments made in this report form the basis of the Council's formal response to the Highways Agency Consultation on the Upgrade of the A14.

(b) Authorise the Director of Operational Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, to agree a Statement of Principles with other Cambridgeshire Local Authorities as a joint submission to the Highways Agency based on the principles set out in this report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Report to Full Council on 6 December 2000 and 26 September 2001.
2. Highways Agency Consultation Papers – April 2005.
3. CHUMMS Preferred Strategy 2000.

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ANNEX A

BY COUNCILLOR NICK GUYATT

FULL COUNCIL – 16TH FEBRUARY 2005

A14 – PROPOSALS FOR UPGRADE Brampton Hut to Fen Ditton

As members will recall from previous replies to questions I promised to keep you informed of changes to the proposals or their progress. Since this Council's last full meeting concerns have increased about the work being carried out by the Highways Agency to asses another option for the A14, which did not form part of the original and extensive consultation on CHUMMS. I together with colleagues from the District Council met the Regional Director of the Highway Agency recently.

At the meeting, the Regional Director outlined the process the Agency was using to develop proposals and explained why they were reviewing this further option.

Whilst we found it useful to understand the process that the Agency were going through, and the time delay being incurred, we expressed our concern at the delay and our real fears that 4 years on from the Preferred CHUMMS Strategy there still seems to be some time to go until we see the Highway Agency producing a further consultation prior to a Public Inquiry.

The problems being experienced on a day-to-day basis on the A14 are well known, and it is the District Council's position that urgent action needs to be taken to address these problems so that in the not too distant future the best possible outcome for the residents of Huntingdonshire can be implemented.

Everyone will know that Huntingdonshire is within one of the Government's growth areas and the District Council is working hard with other Councils in Cambridgeshire and its partners to deliver the growth that is required as part of the Government's ambitious housing plans. However, it is essential that the infrastructure that is needed to ensure that growth can be accommodated without significant detriment to existing residents and businesses, and is delivered in a timely fashion. Failure to do so must be regarded as perverse and may throw into jeopardy this Council's ambitious plans for the redevelopment of Huntingdon.

The District Council has a very clear position on the A14. It has accepted the Preferred CHUMMS Strategy which provides for a new dual 3 highway from the A1 south of Brampton, Godmanchester and Fenstanton and then going back online to Girton, as well as the de-trunking of the current A14 around Godmanchester and Huntingdon to provide a local road to improve public transport provision as well as separating local and through traffic. ***(Text of the Council's Resolutions on the A14 are attached).***

When we met the Highway Agency we made it very clear that we want a solution that:

- will enable the proposed developments in Huntingdon to be deliverable in a way that will enable easy access for everyone;
- maximises future public transport opportunities;
- is long-term and will deliver the most advantages for most people in the context of growth that has to be delivered;
- is delivered as quickly as possible.

We expect the Highway Agency to deliver this solution within the existing timetable.

COUNCIL – 6 DECEMBER 2000

At a meeting of Full Council on 6 December 2000 when it considered the 4 Strategies published for consultation, it was resolved:

(a) that the element of Strategy 4 comprising the construction of a new two/three lane dual carriageway to the south of Huntingdon and then south to Papworth and Caxton Gibbet proceeding eastwards along the A428 to Cambridge be supported;

(b) that the proposed dual carriageway be constructed to motorway standard with an adjacent service road for use by local traffic and, for safety reasons, with a reduced number of grade separated junctions as currently indicated in the plan;

(c) that the state of repair/condition of the elevated section of the A14 between the Spittals Interchange and Godmanchester be investigated to ensure it would remain viable for the period to the opening of the new southern road link;

(d) that improved noise prevention measures be implemented to ease disturbance experienced by local communities currently and in the future;

(e) that the element of Strategy 3 comprising the construction of a light rail scheme between Cambridge and Huntingdon be supported;

(f) that improvements to the A428 between Caxton Gibbet and the A1 (T) be classified as essential;

(g) that urgent short term solutions be sought for the A14; and

(h) that the aforementioned resolutions be conveyed to GoEast as representing the District Council's formal response to the strategies proposed by the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study.

COUNCIL – 26 SEPTEMBER 2001

At a meeting of Full Council on 26 September 2001 it was resolved:

(a) that action should be taken as a matter of urgency to address the problem of the A14 and implement solutions to the local transport infrastructure;

(b) that a comprehensive package of measures should be prepared with a single co-ordinated planning and public inquiry process, as opposed to a piecemeal approach to individual transport improvements;

(c) that given the lack of investment in the transportation infrastructure locally, the Government should commit sufficient funding to implement a comprehensive programme of measures without delay;

(d) that the Council reiterate their support for an amended southern strategy that links with the A428 road;

(e) that in the event of the CHUMMS preferred plan being adopted, the Council support the plan in the interests of expedience only if:-

  (i) the funding of the scheme is accepted by the Government in its totality (both in terms of the public transport and road improvements elements);

  (ii) the need to make appropriate provision for local traffic is recognised;

  (iii) the requirement for further work on the practicability of implementing a guided bus scheme in terms of the District Council's longer term vision for public transport in and around Huntingdonshire similarly is recognised;

  (iv) there is a satisfactory outcome of an examination of the implications of the proposed alignment of the A1 upon local communities;

  (v) an examination of potential traffic congestion on and adjacent to the A14 at the Brampton/Spittals interchange is undertaken;

  (vi) the requirement for bus priority measures at the Caxton Gibbet roundabout is recognised;

  (vii) the need to address satisfactorily those issues raised in Sections 4.5 (implementation issues), 4.6 (road improvement issues), 4.7 (guided bus route), 4.8 (rail), and 4.9 (other public transport) as set out in the Appendix to the report now submitted is acknowledged; and

(f) that improvements to the A428 between Caxton Gibbet and the A1(T) should be classified as essential.

ANNEX B

ALTERNATIVE SCHEME – SWOT

STRENGTHS	**OPPORTUNITIES**
❖ Provides greater trunk road network management capacity. ❖ Provides more trunk road capacity (8 not 6 lanes). ❖ Capital costs appear lower' ❖ Lesser impact on Godmanchester ❖ Limited junctions on new route	❖ If Huntingdon viaduct has to be rebuilt – could provide opportunity for public transport only access to Huntingdon but highway capacity for public transport less as remains trunk road. ❖ Signalisation of Spittals junction. ❖ Creation of direct access to Alconbury Airfield
WEAKNESSES	**THREATS**
❖ Doesn't separate local/through traffic. ❖ Less capacity for public transport usage. ❖ Noise levels for Huntingdon & Godmanchester remain high. ❖ Brampton has 3 x trunk roads around it. No mitigation measures ❖ Reduces scope to get through traffic out of Huntingdon & St. Ives. ❖ No improvement to A1 between Alconbury and new trunk road. ❖ Much reduced improvement to air quality within the future AQMA in Huntingdon.	❖ Conflicts with Huntingdon town centre vision implementation. ❖ Significant detriment for Fenstanton as trunk road remains and second trunk road added. ❖ The junctions along the existing A14 are sub-standard – would these remain eg. at Hemingfords. ❖ Potential greater impact on The Offords and Buckden. ❖ Filling of created spare capacity by general traffic growth and new development impact, including Alconbury Aifrield. ❖ Disruptional aspects to Huntingdon at Brampton Road.

CHUMMS PREFERRED STRATEGY

STRENGTHS	**OPPORTUNITIES**
❖ Gives segregation of through/local traffic. ❖ Upgrade of A1(M) to dual 3 from Buckden to Alconbury. ❖ Provides road 'space' for public transport on existing de-trunked road. ❖ Limited junctions on new route help segregation of local through traffic. ❖ Helps deliver Huntingdon Vision. ❖ Lessens impact on Huntingdon/Godmanchester/Fenstanton. ❖ Significant improvements to air quality expected in the future AQMA in Huntingdon.	❖ Implementation of Huntingdon Vision. ❖ Noise mitigation measures for Brampton along A1(M) and at Godmanchester. ❖ Relieving through traffic from Huntingdon & St. Ives
WEAKNESSES	**THREATS**
❖ Possibly greater costs. ❖ Effect on Brampton of upgrade of A1(M) in terms of noise. ❖ Limited Trunk Road access to Cambridge Services (at Swavesey).	❖ Limited access to Brampton Hut services ❖ Junction between de-trunked A14 at Brampton Road (viaduct) needs to be modelled in detail to ensure network efficiency.