

**A14 ELLINGTON TO FEN DITTON IMPROVEMENT –
HUNTINGDON VIADUCT TECHNICAL STUDY
(Report by Director of Operational Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the outcomes of jointly commissioned Technical Study on the implications of the retention or removal of the Viaduct. The study was jointly-funded by the District & County Council's, the Highways Agency, the Eastern Region Government Office, EEDA (East of England Development Agency) and Cambridgeshire Horizons and carried out by WS Atkins.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At their meeting on 6th September 2001, Cabinet considered the outcomes and recommendations of the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS) and the emerging support for the Preferred Plan. This plan included the provision of a new 3-lane dual carriageway with the existing A14 downgraded to a local road and the removal of the existing A14 Viaduct in Huntingdon.
- 2.2 Full Council subsequently considered this matter on 26th September 2001, including a number of issues arising from Cabinet, and endorsed a formal response to the Regional Planning Panel of the East of England Local Government Conference.
- 2.3 In the first-half of 2005, the Highways Agency followed up the CHUMMS Preferred Plan with a consultation on a range of options for the new A14 which were again considered by Cabinet on 9th June and Full Council on 28th June 2005. A formal response of this Council was sent to the Highways Agency. A key issue arising from this consultation was the future of the Huntingdon Viaduct and whether or not this should be retained or removed as part of the alternative proposals relating to the provision of either a 2 or 3-lane dual carriageway on the line of the new A14.
- 2.4 That formal response outlined that the choice of preferred route would have profound and significant effects on both Huntingdon and the wider area and stressed that the importance of any choice being made must not be solely based on highway network implications or just environmental effects but that economic considerations must also be taken into account. The response also stressed that the real issues are which option would deliver the best long-term highway solution, ensure the vitality and long-term viability of Huntingdon and allow the solution to be accommodated without detriment to the environment.

- 2.5 The response also details a range of specific issues requiring further consideration. This includes the view of the Council that a junction should not be included on the new route where it crosses the A1198 and that any such proposal would be vigorously opposed.
- 2.6 In terms of the Huntingdon Viaduct, the Council stressed that it continued to support the removal of this structure, the de-trunking of the route and connection to the local road network in line with the original CHUMMS Preferred Option. This was based on the long-term opportunities that reorganisation of traffic movements around Huntingdon could provide and that these could not be achieved with the Alternative option. The need for the Technical Study and detailed modelling for the Viaduct options was stressed in order that both this Council and all other affected parties could make sound and reasoned decisions regarding which option should be pursued.

3. THE HUNTINGDON VIADUCT TECHNICAL STUDY

- 3.1 To assess the potential impact of the viaduct removal, it was necessary to undertake extensive traffic surveys and construct a detailed traffic model covering the whole of Huntingdon and the surrounding area. The model incorporated the latest information on development proposals in line with the Structure Plan, current Local Plan, Urban Design Frameworks for sites in Huntingdon and the draft Core Strategy. The model replicates current traffic demand and forecasts future traffic patterns. A series of tests were carried out to examine a range of alternative new road links and options in and around the area of the viaduct, which could be necessary if the viaduct were to be removed and the existing A14 route was connected into the local road network once a new A14 was in place.
- 3.3 The model has demonstrated that the remaining old A14 between Godmanchester and Spittals does little to assist the main local movements in and around Huntingdon but does carry out a crucial role as a river crossing (of the Great Ouse) for local HGV movements. For this reason the river bridge needs to remain.
- 3.4 A range of links have been identified which could be provided to create more highway space and better integration with local roads offering more choice in the routing of journeys within Huntingdon including:
- From the North, a link from the Spittals Interchange along the line of the existing A14 to Brampton Road (Spittals Link),
 - From the South, a link along the line of the existing A14 where it crosses the River Great Ouse at Godmanchester to Brampton Road, at the eastern (town) side of the railway (Common Link),
 - The West of Town Centre Link Road (WOTC), from Brampton Road at the eastern side of the railway bridge to Ermine Street. This is linked to development proposals currently being

formulated as part of the District Council 'Huntingdon Vision' process,

- A short link from the Common Link crossing Mill Common to join the Ring Road in the vicinity of St Mary's Street (Pathfinder Link),
- A relocation of the rail station access to the eastern side of the Station from Brampton Road to a new point on the Common Link.

3.5 The study found that with this range of links:

- There is the potential for further traffic growth within the town and around the ring road
- The design of the junctions on Brampton Road and their physical separation is critical to the effectiveness of the scheme while also creating an attractive link for local traffic and is important in discouraging through traffic,
- A key issue will be the capacity of the railway bridge at Brampton Road and the number of traffic lanes that can be accommodated together with the provision for cyclists and pedestrians.

4. THE STUDY OUTCOMES

4.1 In summary, the Study has concluded that the original CHUMMS option, including the removal of the viaduct, is viable and that the highway network in Huntingdon can be modified to the benefit of the town and surrounding area. The best performing option(s) of the Study potentially offer significant benefits compared to the Alternative option, which indicate the potential for reduced traffic flows and delay especially on the Ring Road and in Godmanchester.

4.2 In terms of the various options that have been investigated, the Study includes a Preferred Option, known as the 'Best Performing Option', and a simplified new road layout plan is attached at Annex A.

4.3 While the District Council did not support the provision of a junction between the new A14 and the A1198 as part of the CHUMMS and subsequent consultation, the County Council did ask Atkins to examine the likely impact of providing a set of east facing slip roads from the proposed A14 to the A1198 at its intended crossing south of the Wood Green Animal Centre. The County Council thought that such a limited junction might offer advantage to some traffic that might otherwise travel through the centre of Huntingdon. In the event, it appears from the model that this is unlikely to happen and such a junction is most likely to attract extra traffic from the south along the A1198, which would not be desirable.

4.4 A considerable amount of work was undertaken in the environmental assessment of the options and in summary there are clear

environmental advantages with the CHUMMS strategy option versus the Alternative strategy option. Subject to further detailed refinement, there appear to be no major detrimental environmental impacts with the options considered.

- 4.5 In terms of timescale, the Secretary of State's programme for completion of the new A14 scheme is given as being between 2011 and 2015. As a result of this Study and on the assumption that the Secretary of State pursues the CHUMMS option, work on the Viaduct removal could not start until the new A14 south of Godmanchester and Brampton is in place. Given that removal of the viaduct would be a lengthy process, including the need for "railway possessions", the timescale for completion of the full CHUMMS strategy could be a further two years after around 2017. An exception is the West of Town Centre link which could be potentially provided earlier in conjunction with redevelopment and regeneration of that part of the town.

5. OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES

- 5.1 There would also be significant benefits to the town in terms of releasing the potential for future development and for the delivery of the overall Huntingdon Vision project being led by the District Council. This is an important consideration for the future integration of development with its transport impacts and for how this necessary growth could be accommodated within emerging development plans.
- 5.2 The land to the west of town centre is one area identified with potential that will allow Huntingdon to grow beyond the constraints of the ring road and add to the vitality and viability of the town centre with additional sites released for mixed uses including housing, business, parking and possibly retail.
- 5.3 The Huntingdon Ring Road and the surrounding roads have been designated as an Air Quality Management Area and this is also a major consideration. The aim of any AQMA Action Plan is to identify a programme to address the issues. Without the viaduct it is considered at this stage in the process that a significant reduction in traffic flows would significantly aid the delivery of any emerging Action Plan.
- 5.4 The range of links should also:
- Allow some traffic relief on the Medieval bridge and within Post Street and Cambridge Road in Godmanchester
 - Circumvent the need for additional traffic lanes on the ring-road in the town centre to be constructed as proposed in the Market Town Strategy
 - Provide additional options for traffic movements around Hinchingsbrooke Park

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 As part of this Study, discussions have taken place with emergency services and the public sector land owners simply to gain their initial views.
- 6.2 A presentation was made on 11th May on the outcomes of the Study to local Members of the County and District Council's whose Wards encompass the Study area.
- 6.3 It is intended to bring to a subsequent Cabinet meeting the revised Vision for Huntingdon. The Vision will incorporate the road proposals described in this study.
- 6.4 Once the Vision has been considered by Cabinet there will be an exhibition held at a location in the town where the public will be given the first opportunity to see how the future of Huntingdon could develop should the Secretary of State accept the preferred route supported by this Council. The Vision document will be used to inform the allocations that will form part of a Development Plan Document and Action Plan to be published in the middle of next year.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The Consultant's Huntingdon Viaduct Technical Study has concluded that the CHUMMS Strategy is viable and that the highway network within Huntingdon could be satisfactorily modified to accommodate the removal of the viaduct.
- 7.2 The potential timescale for the works examined in this Study is not definite since they could not be implemented before completion of the new A14 and are dependent on the Secretary of State's Preferred Route Announcement. While physical works are likely to be some years away, such an announcement in the near future would enable design work to begin promptly on the main scheme as a whole.
- 7.3 The Secretary of State's decision and a Preferred Route Announcement, when he may take the opportunity to select one of the strategies, is currently held in abeyance awaiting the outcome of a case in the Court of Appeal. Any further legal challenge would have the potential to delay any announcement.
- 7.4 Environmentally the CHUMMS option is generally considered to be beneficial to Huntingdon when compared to the Alternative option and more fundamentally it is considered that the CHUMMS option will also stimulate a raft of other redevelopment and regeneration opportunities described above.

- 7.5 Finally, it needs to be recognised that this Study does not seek to determine any part of the final form of the Ellington to Fen Ditton Improvement Scheme. Its purpose is to inform the Highways Agency in its decisions on that scheme.
- 7.6 If the Secretary of State decides to proceed with the "CHUMMS" option, he should be urged, in consultation with the County and District Councils, to undertake further analysis and design work to determine the optimum local highway link and junction layout and to jointly promote the local highway links along with the other statutory orders for the wider A14 scheme.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the following;

i) The District Council notes and welcomes the conclusions of the Atkins' A14 Huntingdon Viaduct Study. This has examined the potential of removing the existing A14 viaduct as part of the Highways Agency's upgrade of the A14 from Ellington to Fen Ditton and has concluded that the CHUMMS Strategy is viable and that the highway network in Huntingdon could be modified to accommodate the removal of the A14 viaduct and provide significant benefit to traffic flows in and around Huntingdon.

ii) The District Council commends the report to the Secretary of State for his consideration as part of the decisions on the options for the development of the A14 improvement scheme.


iii) The District Council supports the principles of the CHUMMS option strategy as presented at the Highways Agency's Public Consultation in 2005 and would urge the Secretary of State;

1. to develop further the detail of new highway links and junctions which would be required to successfully implement that part of the strategy in Huntingdon as part of the A14 scheme in consultation with the County Council and Huntingdonshire District Council, and

2. to take forward and promote the necessary statutory orders for such links along with those that will be necessary for the wider A14 scheme and its associated local access roads.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CHUMMS Report August 2001
Cabinet Agenda & Minutes 6th September 2001
Full Council Agenda & Minutes 26th September 2001
Highways Agency Consultation Documentation March 2005
Cabinet Agenda & Minutes 9th June 2005
Full Council Agenda & Minutes 28th June 2005
District Council response to Highways Agency 4th July 2005
WSAtkins Huntingdon Viaduct Technical Study Report April 2006

Contact Officer: **Stuart Bell – Transportation Team Leader**
 **(01480) 388387**
e.mail stuart.bell@huntsdc.gov.uk