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(SERVICE SUPPORT)	
CABINET	15TH FEBRUARY 2007
FULL COUNCIL	21ST FEBRUARY 2007

A14 ELLINGTON TO FEN DITTON – FURTHER PUBLIC CONSULTATION
(Report by Head of Planning Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider and respond to the latest Public Consultation by the Highways Agency regarding the proposed improvement of the A14 between Ellington and Fen Ditton.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The proposed improvement of the A14 has been the subject of a number of previous studies and consultations, the fundamental study being the 2001 Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS). In its final report of August 2001, CHUMMS recommended a strategy of trunk road and local highway improvements combined with the provision of additional high quality public transport.
- 2.2 The CHUMMS proposals were considered by Full Council on 26th September 2001. The resolutions agreed at that meeting are attached at Annex A. Key issues of that resolution were that action needed to be taken as a matter of urgency to address the problems of the A14, that a comprehensive package of improvement measures should be prepared and that Government should commit sufficient funding to implement the overall comprehensive package.
- 2.3 In 2005, the Highways Agency subsequently published a set of proposals to improve the A14 between Ellington and Fen Ditton. This took the form of public consultation on two strategies for the new road, namely the CHUMMS strategy and an Alternative Proposal.
- 2.4 The principle proposal within the CHUMMS strategy was for the provision of a new road south of Huntingdon and Godmanchester. This would be three lanes in each direction, the existing A14 would become a local road allowing direct access to Huntingdon Station with less traffic using the Godmanchester town bridge, the removal of the A14 viaduct over the East Coast Main Line (ECML) and the connection of that route into the local road network. The proposals also included plans to widen the A1 to three lanes in each direction

between the new Brampton Interchange and Brampton Hut and to consider future widening of the A1 to three lanes between Brampton Hut and Alconbury.

- 2.5 The Alternative Proposal was for a proposed new road south of Huntingdon & Godmanchester, two lanes in each direction, between Ellington and Fen Drayton which would only take east-west traffic. North-south traffic would continue to use the current A14 through Huntingdon and Godmanchester and the existing Viaduct over the ECML at the railway station would be rebuilt. It was also concluded that there would be no requirement to widen the A1 as it would carry very little additional A14 traffic.
- 2.6 These proposals were considered by Full Council on 29th June 2005, and a number of resolutions were agreed and a copy of these were contained in the formal response of the District Council to the Highways Agency dated 4th July 2005. This is attached at Annex B.
- 2.7 As will be noted, this response was extensive but the principle issues included;
- the need for measures to ameliorate noise and mitigate visual intrusion on all the communities affected by the routing of the proposed A14 upgrade including effort to reduce the excessive height of the viaduct over the River Great Ouse
 - the implications of the choice of preferred route would have profound and significant economic effects for both Huntingdon and the whole area
 - that any choice should not be solely based on highway network implications or environmental effects and that it was important that economic considerations also be taken into account
 - measures to mitigate the effects of the A1 at Brampton and Bucken including A1 realignment and a fully integrated interchange between the A1, Brampton Hut and the new A14
 - support for the non-provision of a junction between a new A14 and the A1198 at Godmanchester
 - while the Alternative Option was alleged to be a cheaper cost-option, that the real issue was which option would deliver the best long-term highway solution, the most beneficial economic effects and future capability for development to be accommodated
 - that the Alternative Option if implemented, would result in Brampton being surrounded on three sides by major trunk roads and that Huntingdon and Godmanchester would continue to suffer major noise and visual intrusion as well as pollution
 - that the line of the new A14 is further south than inferred by the CHUMMS line meaning that the communities of Buckden and The Offords could experience more visual intrusion and noise than was originally expected

- the CHUMMS option requires the A14 to be de-trunked and the A14 viaduct taken down to an at-grade junction at the railway station. While this concept was supported in principle, it was outlined that at that time there was insufficient information to enable a firm conclusion to be made and it was considered essential that detailed modelling work be undertaken to determine if such an arrangement were feasible
- 2.8 Following the 2005 consultation, the process was then subject to a legal challenge to the Highways Agency. It is understood that following agreement between the parties involved, that this current further consultation would be undertaken. However, the Highways Agency have clearly stated that any decision on a Preferred Route will be based on both this latest consultation and comments made as part of the 2005 consultation.
- 2.9 In addition, following the 2005 consultation and the comments of the District Council relating to the uncertainty relating to the A14 viaduct as outlined above, a specific Technical Study was commissioned to investigate the implications of its retention or removal. This was jointly funded by the District and County Council's, the Highways Agency, the Eastern Region Government Office, EEDA (East of England Development Agency) and Cambridgeshire Horizons.
- 2.10 The outcomes of this Study were reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny (Service Support) in June 2006 advising that the Study had concluded that the original CHUMMS option for the removal of the viaduct would be viable. This reported that the highway network could be modified to accommodate a new access into Huntingdon from the revised road layout arising from the downgrading of the old A14.
- 2.11 Discussion took place as part of both reports into future public consultation and it was noted at that stage that this was a technical study and, if accepted, as part of any future A14 proposals, that any emerging proposals would be subject to future public consultation as part of the wider A14 proposals.
- 2.13 Cabinet resolved to note the Study and commend it to the Secretary of State for consideration as part of the decisions of the (future) options for the development of A14 improvements. It was also resolved that the principles of the CHUMMS Options Strategy, presented as part of the Highways Agency 2005 consultation, be supported and that the Secretary of State be urged to develop further details of new highway links in Huntingdon as part of the A14 scheme. This would include the promotion of the necessary statutory orders for such links along with those required for the wider A14 scheme and associated local access roads.

- 2.14 Finally, as part of the options emerging from the original CHUMMS study, Members are reminded that a public transport option was a key recommendation of that report for the A14 corridor. This has been taken forward as a Guided Busway, which has now received Transport & Works Act consent. Funding has been made available by Government and work has now commenced on-site and it is expected that the route will be open early in 2009. The busway will be supported by the provision of on-street bus priority measures between Huntingdon and St. Ives.

3. THE CURRENT CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Following the resolution of the legal challenge to the 2005 public consultation, the Highway Agency has now launched a 'Further Public Consultation' on possible routes for a new road between Ellington and Fen Drayton. The consultation period runs from 1st December 2006 to 9th March 2007.
- 3.2 The current consultation now outlines three alternative routes for consideration, Orange, Brown and Blue plus 3 variations to the Blue option. The key issues of each route are described in Annex C. For the purposes of this consultation, the Highways Agency have advised that comments made during the 2005 consultation will also be taken into account in reaching a decision. They also advise that for the purposes of this consultation, a 3-lane dual carriageway has been assumed, which would include the removal of the Huntingdon viaduct, although a decision on whether or not the road should be a 2 or 3 lane dual carriageway will be made after the consultation is complete. The section of carriageway between Ellington and the A1 would be 2-lane dual carriageway under any scenario to be considered.
- 3.3 The Highways Agency also advise that their proposals for improving the A14 to the east of Fen Drayton have not changed from that shown as part of the 2005 consultation and therefore they are not part of this further consultation.
- 3.4 In developing the current consultation, the Highways Agency outline that as part of the CHUMMS study, some 24 combinations were investigated, with 18 being rejected for a variety of reasons. Within the 6 options remaining, a number of different combinations and junction arrangements were subject to 'Stage 2 Environmental and Scheme Assessment Reports' with more being rejected on safety, environmental or engineering grounds.
- 3.5 As part of the 2005 consultation, only one option for the route of the new road was shown (essentially what is the Orange route in respect of this consultation), together with an indication of a number of the rejected options. The current consultation now includes these previously rejected options as well as an additional alternative

possible route through the Buckden landfill site (part of the Brown route).

- 3.6 Copies of the consultation leaflet will be available at the meetings and this is also a background paper to this report. This describes the line of the routes in some detail and key characteristics are also contained in Annex C.
- 3.7 Costs for building the whole route between Ellington and Fen Ditton are estimated to be as follows;

	Orange	Brown	Blue	Blue Variation 1	Blue Variation 2	Blue Variation 1 & 2
Total (£ million inc. VAT)	£639m	£714m	£640m	£649m	£617m	£620m

4. KEY AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 This consultation is supported by various pieces of technical work relating to scheme assessment, traffic and economic reports and route options and technical appraisal reports. These are all available as Background Papers to this report.
- 4.2 Key issues arising from that work are also outlined in Annex C. These will enable Members to gain a wider appreciation of the factors which may influence the Highways Agency. It must be stressed that these are lengthy, detailed reports and cannot be repeated verbatim.
- 4.3 **Forecasting Approach.** This outlines the methodology when looking at a ‘Do Minimum’ and a ‘Do Something’ scenario. A 2014 opening year is now being considered with a design year of 2029 for forecast traffic flows. 15 years post-opening is a national design standard.
 - 4.3.1 Forecasting analysis has taken into account economic evaluation, environmental assessment, scheme design, based on required carriageway standards to 2029, as well as landscape and drainage assessments.
- 4.4 **Scheme Proposals.** This highlights some of the key issues arising from the routes now being presented and changes that have been made since the 2005 consultation, including those introduced as a result of the additional scheme options.
- 4.5 **Engineering Assessment.** This outlines some of the key engineering aspects identified with the options now being presented, including departures from standard where required. This includes the new Brown option for crossing straight over the Buckden landfill site where significant issues to accommodate a route would need to be addressed.

- 4.6 **Environmental Assessment.** All route options are anticipated to lead in varying degrees to a reduction in the number of people annoyed by road traffic when compared to the 'do minimum' scenario. However the report also notes that the options proposed will also introduce noise to areas that are presently relatively tranquil. The Council would seek to ensure that any option selected results in the least significant potential harm to the immediate environment
- 4.7 Annex D is a report of the District Council's Environmental Health team on the Air Quality, Noise and Land Contamination issues associated with the proposed routes. Key issues on air quality at Brampton and Fenstanton are outlined and that all routes would be likely to lead to the revocation of the current Air Quality Management Area in Huntingdon.
- 4.8 In terms of Noise, it is reported that there is little to differentiate between the Orange or Brown routes but that the Blue route would affect more residential properties. In terms of potential Land Contamination, the report states that the significant issue for the consultation is associated with the Brown route where it would cut across the Buckden landfill site.
- 4.9 Annex C also includes background information relating to Landscape, Townscape and Visual Effects as well as Ecology & Nature Conservation, Cultural Heritage, Water Quality & Drainage and Rights of Way. In considering these issues the Council would consider it vital to mitigate any impact within any eventual design.
- 4.10 **Economic Assessment.** Detailed work has been undertaken for all the route variations based on construction and operating costs as well as benefit/cost ratio assessment over a 60-year appraisal period. The benefit/cost ratio assessment includes consumer and business benefits, private sector provider impacts and accident benefits compared to local and central government funding.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 As was stated in our response to the 2005 consultation, any new road proposals will obviously result in potential benefits for some communities and potential costs for others. Many of the comments provided at that time still apply and will still be considered by the Highways Agency.
- 5.2 On that basis, it is important that the Council consider what it resolved in respect of its 2005 response and to consider the further options within this current consultation and to consider which proposal would be in the best interests of Huntingdonshire as a whole.

- 5.3 In terms of this consultation, the Highways Agency is asking those consulted to indicate a preferred option, a second choice and a least favourable option with the ability to expand on the responses given, to suggest alternative route combinations and to make any additional comments. Although this approach is understood, a process of elimination is recommended with a view to obtaining a single preferred choice as this would clearly assist any representation to be made by the Council at any future Public Inquiry.
- 5.4 Having regard to the consultative information now available, the various issues outlined in Section 4, those contained in Annex C and D, and our previous comments made as part of the 2005 consultation, it would appear that the Orange route, with possible modifications around Brampton in order to achieve the best possible environmental solution, will be our preferred option. It is considered that this option is the one which most closely follows the existing landscape and topography and presents the greatest opportunity to achieve the least overall impact.
- 5.5 While there are areas of the Orange route where intrusion and impact takes place, such as the proposed viaduct over the River Great Ouse and ECML, this is applicable to all options now being considered. It is felt that the Orange route provides the best solution to provide extensive mitigation against those impacts, subject to sufficient funding being made available as part of any final recommendations of the Highways Agency to the Secretary of State. This was a specific recommendation of the Council's 2005 response to the Highways Agency in respect of the impact on both Buckden and The Offords.
- 5.6 As part of our 2005 consultation response, the potential detrimental impact on Brampton was reported. As part of this consultation, the Council considers that there may be merit in amending the line of the Orange route between Ellington and the A1 to follow the line suggested in the Brown route. While it is felt that this may help to minimise the impact of the scheme on Brampton, it may be that retaining the Orange route on the line suggested, and by providing substantial environmental mitigation measures, that this may provide such relief for Brampton from the effects of the A1 as well, where none currently exist. The Council should suggest that a detailed modelling study is undertaken by the Highways Agency to determine the best option.
- 5.7 In any recommendation of the Orange route, the Council would need to support that consideration again be given to the need to investigate any required improvements to the A1 between Alconbury and the new junction with the A1. Any such investigation should consider the need for widening and improvement measures in accordance with the same forecasting approach adopted for this consultation.

- 5.8 The Council also consider that if the Orange route were to be adopted, that this should be built to a minimum 3-lane dual carriageway standard in accordance with the original CHUMMS strategy. This should be supported by the removal of the existing Huntingdon viaduct in line with that strategy.
- 5.9 Likewise, based on the same information, it would appear that the Blue route with Variation 2, would be our least favoured option due to the impact on both Brampton and Fenstanton for varying technical reasons. This particularly relates to air quality and noise issues where it is felt that current data provided by the Highways Agency is insufficient to find favour with such a route. Additionally, the Council considers that from the limited information available, that the constrained nature of Variation 2 will make the implementation difficult to achieve, including during the construction phase and in maintaining existing traffic flows. Specific concerns relate to the constrained nature of the proposed junction at Galley Hill and the likely layout of the local road provision, which may affect any future public transport options on this corridor relating to public transport recommendations arising from CHUMMS.
- 5.10 In terms of the Brown route and the specific element relating to the crossing of the Buckden landfill site, this raises serious cause for concern for the reasons outlined in this report and the accompanying technical data. It is evident that there are significant issues including the extent of existing and possible future contamination, removal of existing fill and reduction in the lifespan of the landfill site. Given the Environment Agency view that the least risk of pollution would result from avoiding the north and south landfill areas, it is considered that the Council cannot support this route.
- 5.11 On the completion of the last consultation, the four affected District Council's, the County Council and ten other leading stakeholders agreed a common statement of support for the A14 scheme. It is considered that a similar approach should be possible this time to lend weight to the overall recommendations and conclusions of the parties.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is recommended that
- (a) Overview and Scrutiny (Service Support) and Cabinet consider the issues outlined in this report and;
 - (i) recommend to Council that the Orange route be supported as part of the current A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton Further Public Consultation, subject to the Highways Agency consideration of the best

- alignment and environmental solution for Brampton between the Orange and Brown routes to the west of the A1, as outlined in the report;
- (ii) that the Blue route, including Variation 2, be rejected on the grounds of their detrimental unacceptable impacts on both Brampton and Fenstanton, and;
 - (iii) that the Brown route be rejected on the grounds of the potential impacts on the Buckden North and South landfill and associated issues that may arise from the adoption of the element of the route.
- (b) That Council authorise the Director of Operational Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Environment & Transport, to submit a formal response to this Consultation to the Highways Agency based on the outcomes of their meeting
- (c) That Council authorise the Director of Operational Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Environment & Transport, to agree a Statement of Principles with other Cambridgeshire stakeholders as a joint position statement for submission to the Highways Agency.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CHUMMS Final Report – August 2001
 Full Council Report – 29th September 2001
 Highways Agency Alternative Proposal Public Consultation 2005
 Full Council Report – 29th June 2005
 A14 Huntingdon Viaduct Study – May 2006
 Cabinet and Service Support Reports Huntingdon Viaduct - June 2006
 A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton – Further Public Consultation leaflet (1st December 2006 to 9th March 2007)
 A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton – Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report
 A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton – Initial Route Options & Technical Appraisal Report
 A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton – Traffic & Economics Report
 A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton – Stage 2 Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) CD 1 & 2

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