

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon – Response to Highways Agency Development Consent Order Pre-Application Statutory Consultation

Meeting/Date: COMT – 9th June 2014
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) – 17th June 2014
Cabinet – 19th June 2014

Executive Portfolio: Strategic Planning & Housing

Report by: Head of Development

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

This report follows on from the non-Statutory consultation report in October 2013 and is the Council's planned response to the current Statutory consultation.

The A14 improvement project remains fundamental, to the delivery of the sustainable growth agenda across Huntingdonshire and to address current congestion and safety issues.

The scheme now subject to public consultation, is similar to that reported last October but incorporates some important changes. Firstly, the previously suggested tolling element of the scheme has now been dropped and the proposed alignment of the route in the Brampton area is significantly changed.

The remainder of the proposal continues to contain many features that this Council has been lobbying for over many years, including the proposed off-line A14 route to the south of Huntingdon and Godmanchester, the upgrading of the A1 between Alconbury and the A14 and the removal of the Huntingdon Viaduct.

Recommendation(s):

recommended that Cabinet agrees the response to the Highways Agency, as outlined at Annex B, stating our support for the scheme as proposed, including our reiteration that our approved local financial contribution is conditional on;

- The overall scheme including the removal of Huntingdon Viaduct and the creation of an improved new local road network for Huntingdon; and

- That construction works commence by late 2016

1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree the Council's response to the current formal consultation by the HA on the proposed A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council remains a key partner in the development of the current proposals and it is vital that we continue to be engaged in order to deliver the best possible solution for Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 The first major initiative relating to this scheme was the publication of the CHUMMS (Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study) Report in 2001 with subsequent proposals published to provide an 'Ellington to Fen Ditton Improvement Scheme'.
- 2.3 Various challenges were made to the HA proposals and a Final Proposed Scheme was eventually published. In 2010, as part of the Coalition Government Comprehensive Spending Review, the Scheme was withdrawn as 'unaffordable'.
- 2.4 The results of the subsequent 'A14 Challenge' were reported in November 2012 and in June 2013, as part of the Spending Review, national funding was allocated, including an agreed local contribution of £100m.
- 2.5 Government announced on 4th December 2013 that tolling would no longer form part of the proposed scheme.

3. CURRENT PROPOSAL/ANALYSIS

- 3.1 The proposed off-line section of the route to the south of Huntingdon remains fundamentally the same as the previous scheme with the exception of the altered alignment of the A1/A14 corridor west of Brampton.
- 3.2 For a detailed description of the route, please refer to Sec. 2b at Annex C.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

- 4.1 To be reported verbally

5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 5.1 The key risk for the Council is a failure of the scheme to proceed. The recommendations included within this report reflect this and a formal response now is crucial to meeting this need.

6. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES INC. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The new scheme is rated as being of national importance and the HA will be required to obtain a Development Consent Order (DCO) which would give the necessary powers to deliver the proposed scheme. An application is made in draft form to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), who then appoint Examining Inspectors to consider the application and following completion of this process, the SoS then decides whether to confirm the DCO, based on the Examining Inspectors evidence.

7. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION/LEGACY

- 7.1 If the DCO is approved, construction work would commence in late 2016 and take 3 to 4 years to complete. A full timeline is shown at Annex A.
- 7.2 Annex B provides the suggested framework of our response to this current stage of Statutory Consultation and Annex C provides a comprehensive explanation of the more detailed elements of this consideration.
- 7.3 It is expected that the HA will make a 'Preferred Route Announcement' in order to protect any proposed route from conflicting developments following the completion and closure of this current consultation.
- 7.4 The submission of the draft DCO to PINS is currently scheduled to be made towards the end of October 2014 and if the timetable at Annex 2 remains on track, it will be considered by the Examining Inspectors in Spring 2015. Within six months, the Inspectors will prepare their report for the SoS, who then has three months to consider that and reach a decision.
- 7.5 Between now and October 2014, ongoing work will refine the design and ensure that all local conditions are taken into account including such matters as landscape mitigation, noise and air quality measures, land contamination, drainage, heritage and non-motorised user (NMU) access.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 This has been extensive and entirely appropriate across all sections of the community within the A14 corridor as part of the current consultation that closes on 15th June 2014.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

(Comments from the Head of Finance)

- 9.1 The financial contribution by the Council remains at a capped figure of £5M, paid in equal sums of £200K/annum over a period of 25 years following completion of any agreed scheme.

- 9.2 As the project moves towards the draft application for the DCO, there may be other legal costs associated with presenting this Council's case as part of that process. This is accounted for within our current MTP.
- 9.3 The new scheme is supported by a local finance package of £100M including contributions from various partners including this Council, the County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This Council has agreed our contribution, as above, with two essential caveats;
- i. That any contribution is reliant on construction works commencing by 2016; and
 - ii. That any scheme includes the final removal of Huntingdon Viaduct and its replacement with a new local road network creating greater accessibility for Huntingdon

10 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

(Summary leading to the Recommendations)

- 10.1 This Council has been an active participant in the development of the A14 project since the CHUMMS study was published in 2001. The creation of a new A14 would allow several new development opportunities to proceed to support economic and employment growth and a new off-line route would ease serious traffic congestion within Huntingdon and St. Ives and surrounding communities.
- 10.2 Air Quality, Noise and Environmental impact issues currently exist within urban areas of Huntingdon and other areas and a new offline route is the only opportunity to address those.

Recommendation(s):

it is recommended that Cabinet agrees the response to the Highways Agency, as outlined at Annex B, including a statement that the Council's local financial contribution is conditional on;

- The overall scheme including the removal of Huntingdon Viaduct and the creation of an improved new local road network for Huntingdon; and
- That construction works commencing by 2016

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CHUMMS Study – August 2001

A14 Wider Study Challenge – Joint Cambridgeshire Local Authority response

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Public Consultation Briefing – September 2013

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Technical Review of Options – September 2013

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Public Consultation on Route Options 2013
Consultation Report – December 2013
A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Public Consultation April 2014
Cabinet Reports – 2001 to 2013

CONTACT OFFICER

Stuart Bell – Transport Team Leader
Tel No. 01480 388387
Email stuart.bell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk