

ANNEX C – DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

1. BACKGROUND

- a. The Council has been a key partner in the development of the current proposals, which are now subject to formal public consultation. It remains vital that this Council continues to be engaged in this project in order to influence and help to deliver the best possible solution for Huntingdonshire, particularly in relation to final design and ensuring that maximum measures are provided to mitigate, as far as possible, any adverse impacts of the scheme
- b. As Members will be aware, there has been significant history relating to the planned improvement of this route with perhaps the first major initiative being the publication of the CHUMMS (Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study) Report in 2001. This recommended a multi-modal approach to address the transport issues within the corridor, including the provision of a Guided Busway, rail freight improvements between Felixstowe and Nuneaton, demand management measures within Cambridge as well as a range of various road-based options.
- c. Proposals were subsequently published by the HA to provide an 'Ellington to Fen Ditton Improvement Scheme', including a new off-line route south of Brampton, Huntingdon and Godmanchester, rejoining the A14 at Fen Drayton, then on-line improvements to Girton and eastwards to Fen Ditton.
- d. Various challenges were made to the HA proposals and certain variations were subsequently proposed inc. different lane provision (3-lane and 2-lane options) and variants to build a new southerly route while also proposing keeping the existing route through Huntingdon open as a Trunk Road.
- e. A Final Proposed Scheme was eventually published and subject to detailed design with Statutory Procedures moving forward until 2010 when, as part of the Coalition Government 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, the Scheme was withdrawn as being 'unaffordable'. The previous 'Route of Protection' was also withdrawn but at the same time, Government announced a new A14 Study and an 'A14 Challenge' led by the Department for Transport (DfT) with a commitment given to re-examine the transport needs on the corridor and to explore alternative options and working arrangements with partners.
- f. During Summer 2012, a policy commitment to the improvement of the A14 was announced by Government, which stated that the scheme would include tolling and the need for local contributions to be secured in order to reduce the overall cost to Government.
- g. In response to the A14 Challenge, this Council, together with its partners at the County Council, South Cambridgeshire, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, issued a

joint response emphasising the importance of improvements to the route to both national and local economic prosperity and the need for a radical, multi-modal solution rather than a piecemeal approach. The statement outlined that without this, the County's contribution to the economic and financial prosperity of the nation would be severely threatened at all levels.

- h. The results of the 'A14 Challenge' were reported in November 2012 and in June 2013, as part of the Spending Review, national funding was allocated by Government and predicated on the inclusion of tolling as part of the overall scheme and a local contribution of £100m.
- i. Following the completion of the non-statutory consultation held during September and October 2013, and in responding to representations made during that process, Government announced on 4th December 2013 that tolling would no longer form part of the proposed scheme.

2. CURRENT PROPOSALS / ANALYSIS

- a. The proposed off-line section of the route to the south of Huntingdon remains fundamentally the same as the scheme that was cancelled in 2010 and which was subject to non-statutory consultation in 2013. However, one significant change since last year, is the planned altered alignment of the A1/A14 corridor west of Brampton. It is now proposed that the A14 will run on the current A1 alignment west of the village with the busier A1 moving further west on a new route. The key elements of the route are described below;
- b. From the A14 east of Ellington and the A1 Alconbury heading south, the key issues are;
 - Upgrading of A1 between Alconbury and new A14 at Brampton/Buckden from dual 2-lane to dual 3-lane carriageway on a new alignment west of the current A1, south of Brampton Hut flyover
 - A14 2-lane dual carriageway between Ellington and A1 at Brampton/Buckden on the current A1 north/south alignment
 - East of A1, new off-line A14 3-lane road through to Bar Hill
 - An A1198 partial junction at Godmanchester (west facing slip roads)
 - From what will become the old A14 at Fen Drayton to Swavesey, a new two-lane dual carriageway local road and then from Swavesey to Girton, a new single 2-way carriageway local road, which will run on the north side of the existing route (the existing A14 eastbound lane) and connect to the Girton Interchange.

Westbound from Fen Drayton / Fenstanton, the old A14 will be 'de-trunked' and become a local dual carriageway through to Huntingdon.

- Full junctions at Swavesey and Bar Hill connecting the local road network to the A14
- From Bar Hill to Girton, the A14 will be dual 4-lane
- Girton Interchange remains a simplified layout (compared to the cancelled scheme) and will provide and improve all existing traffic movements
- Widening of the Cambridge Northern by-pass from dual 2-lane to dual 3-lane between Girton and Milton (Note – an additional 3rd lane between Girton and Histon is currently being provided as part of the HA Pinch-point programme during 2014)
- The scheme continues to include the removal of Huntingdon Viaduct and the creation of a new road network connecting to Huntingdon Town Centre and Brampton Road. The current indicative layout is broadly the same as that for the cancelled scheme, although detailed design discussions continue with partners in order to seek the most appropriate solution.

3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES INC. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- a. The withdrawn scheme was being promoted under the terms of the Highways Act 1980 but given the national importance of the current iteration, it will now be authorised under the terms of the Planning Act 2008, as amended by the Localism Act 2011. Using this mechanism, a Parliamentary Statement is used by the Secretary of State (SoS) to declare the scheme a nationally significant infrastructure project and if unchallenged, it becomes national policy to construct the scheme.
- b. The key element of this process will be for the HA 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 the level of consultation that has been undertaken, including all comments and any objections. Through this process, the powers exist to call for or take additional evidence. When the application is accepted, PINS has a limited pre-examination period to call for representations and a similar period to conduct its investigation and report to the SoS.
- c. Within this new procedure, there is significant emphasis on written evidence with Inspectors only holding 'Open Floor Hearings' for matters on which they consider need clarity. One area that reduces the need for this are 'Areas of Common Ground' that the Council has been asked to agree with the HA relating to the scheme, as well as other

partners such as the County Council and South Cambs DC who will be following the same approach.

- d. In accordance with the requirements of this Act, the District Council will need to report on;
 - The adequacy of the consultation process relating to the proposed scheme
 - To report on matters in favour and against the scheme. We do not balance those, that being a matter for the appointed Inspectors
 - To lodge our own objections to the scheme, if any, based on the proposals submitted as part of the draft DCO
- e. Following completion of this process, the SoS then decides whether to confirm the DCO, based on the Examining Inspectors evidence, or whether to make amendments.

4. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN AND TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION & LEGACY

- a. It is still estimated that, if the DCO is approved, that construction work would commence in late 2016 and take 3 to 4 years to complete. A full timeline to the commencement of construction is shown at Annex A.
- b. There is no doubt that the removal of the tolling element of the scheme has also removed uncertainty relating to the wider impact of the scheme on the surrounding road network and it is anticipated that this will significantly lessen the level of objection raised during this consultation stage. Based on the content of this report and other evidence available as part of this consultation, including formal liaison between the HA, this Council and other Tier 1 stakeholders, including the County Council and South Cambs DC, Annex B provides the suggested framework of our response to this current stage of Statutory Consultation.
- c. Since the completion of the non-statutory period of public consultation held during September / October 2013, it is important to note that significant work has been going on 'behind the scenes' in order to bring the current consultation to this stage. The HA and their J2A consultants have been undertaking significant levels of partnership work with a range of partners and seeking their views and input to the scheme now before you. This has been a vital stage of the process for this Council as a Tier 1 stakeholder/partner to the HA in seeking the best possible solution for Huntingdonshire. During this process, regular internal briefing sessions were held between Officers and the (then) Deputy Executive Leader, who's Cabinet Portfolio included Strategic Planning, Housing & Transport, to keep him fully apprised on progress.

- d. A further important step in the process, is for the HA to make a 'Preferred Route Announcement' in order to protect any proposed route from conflicting developments. This will now take place following the completion and closure of this current consultation stage so as not to prejudice any outcome of this consultation stage.
- e. The submission of the draft DCO to PINS is currently scheduled to be made around 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, together with supportive statements and objections. Within six months, the Inspectors will prepare their report for the SoS, who then has three months to consider that and reach a decision. The current timetable suggests that this would be made by early 2016 with a commencement on the ground towards the end of 2016.
- f. Between now and October 2014, the HA/J2A partnership will continue to produce and refine the design of the scheme, including the production of all necessary assessments needed to inform any final decision, which will ensure that all local conditions and need are fully taken into account. It is imperative that the importance of this stage is fully understood as this represents the opportunity for the District Council, and other partners, (as in 7.3 above) to ensure the best possible solution for Huntingdonshire. While this will result in significant levels of HDC officer time being needed across a number of technical disciplines to undertake this work, this does represent value for money in securing the most appropriate solution for the wider community.
- g. Additionally, this work will ensure that matters such as landscape mitigation, noise and air quality measures, land contamination, drainage, heritage, non-motorised user (NMU) access etc. are all properly agreed. Annex B outlines the types of issues in greater detail and includes such measures as seeking the best possible mitigation for Brampton from the effects of the proposed A14/A1 to the west as well as villages along the new off-line route between the existing A1 and Fen Drayton, such as The Offords, Hilton and Fenstanton.
- h. In addition to securing the above matters, discussions continue between the HA/J2A and partners relating to legacy opportunities arising from the scheme. Both CHUMMS and the A14 Challenge made legacy recommendations and also noting that the scheme itself would be a positive legacy bringing positive relief to local communities.
- i. Other possible legacy matters include employment opportunities, including apprenticeships and linked to Regional Colleges, linked to the actual construction. Additionally outreach activities with schools and other groups would be welcomed. Further legacy will investigate improved cycling facilities, NMU access as well as issues arising from archaeological investigations and opportunities for localised environmental improvement schemes following traffic reductions i.e. within Huntingdon & Godmanchester. Importantly, large scale improvements in wildlife sites are likely, associated with biodiversity enhancement.

5. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- a. This Council has been an active participant in the development of the A14 project since the time of the CHUMMS study back in 2001 and our stated position has always been to support the upgrading of the existing route and to achieve the best possible overall solution for the District with an emphasis on dealing with the current unacceptable mixture of strategic and local traffic.
- b. We have previously identified that the creation of a new A14 would allow several new development opportunities to proceed to support economic and employment growth, such as at Alconbury Weald and the regeneration of Huntingdon Town Centre.
- c. We have supported the provision of a new off-line route on the basis that it would ease serious traffic congestion within Huntingdon & St. Ives and surrounding communities due to the nature of the current sub-standard A14 route.
- d. Air Quality, Noise and Environmental impact issues currently exist within urban areas of Huntingdon and a new offline route is the only opportunity to address those, and additionally, at Godmanchester, and at Fenstanton, whilst also accepting that other communities such as Brampton, Buckden, The Offords and Hilton require the best possible mitigation measures provided as part of the proposed scheme to properly mitigate any adverse impact.
- e. The new scheme now being proposed 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 a contribution of up to £5M, spread over a 25-year period 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