

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

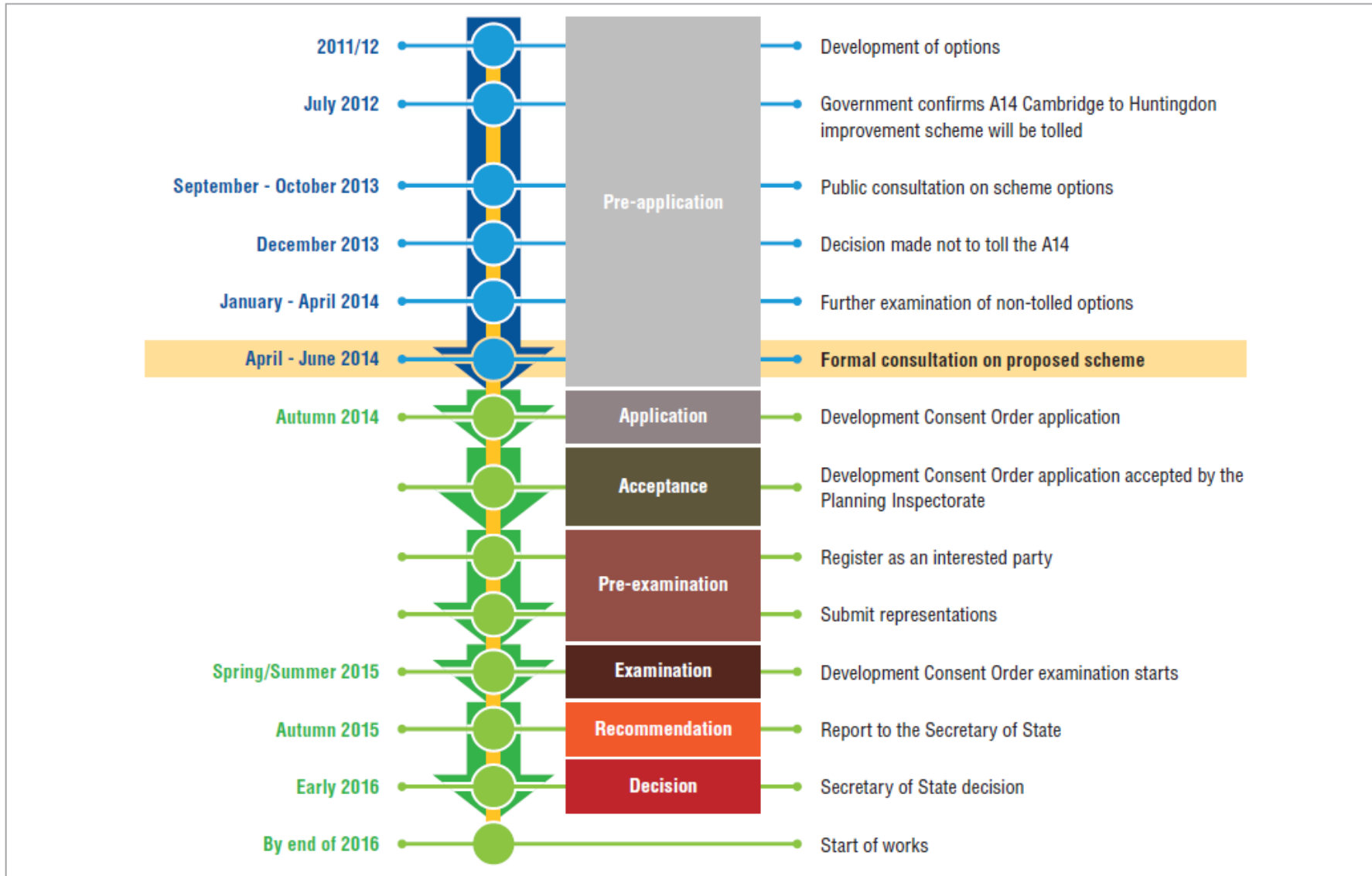
A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Technical Review of Options – September 2013

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

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ANNEX A – A14 PROJECTED TIMELINE TO COMMENCEMENT



Proposed timeline to construction

ANNEX B

DRAFT HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE HIGHWAYS AGENCY APRIL 2014 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Reason for Response

The Highways Agency is undertaking a Statutory Consultation relating to its proposals for the A14 and this requires a formal response from the District Council. It is suggested that the matters covered below should form the basis of that response.

Overall Consideration

1. Huntingdonshire District Council continues to support the proposed scheme and its early delivery as the project remains vital to relieve current congestion, reduce journey times and address the safety issues of the current route as well as the delivery of the sustainable growth agenda across Huntingdonshire and the wider Greater Cambridge area, and also creating a positive legacy as part of eventual delivery.
2. Support for the scheme and the agreed financial contribution remains dependant on the removal of the existing A14 Viaduct within Huntingdon and its replacement with a new local road network for the town
3. That the Highways Agency continues to maintain the overall aim of commencing construction work on site by the end of 2016

Principal Elements of the Scheme

4. The Council welcomes and supports the planned improvement and widening of the A1 between Alconbury and Brampton, reflecting the previous request of this Council for that to be included within the proposed scheme based on predicted traffic growth on that route.
5. The Council welcomes and supports the planned alternative layout of the A14 and A1 to the west of Brampton whereby the A1, as the projected busier traffic route, is moved further west. This support is conditional on the overall design of this element of the scheme providing adequate noise and landscaping mitigation between the planned Trunk Roads and Brampton village, including as part of any bridge or elevated structure provided.
6. In relation to non-motorised user (NMU) access within the Brampton area, while detailed stakeholder discussions continue and are welcomed by the Council, it is requested that as part of the overall design in (4) above, that appropriate linkage is made across the proposed A14 and A1 alignments in order to create and maintain east/west non-motorised access to both Brampton Wood and Brampton Hut services. In the longer term as part of future legacy, it is also requested that the future of planned Borrow Pits in this area are also linked to these requirements.

7. In addition to (2) above, the Council supports the Viaduct removal and the planned creation of a new local road network within Huntingdon. Concern remains however in relation to the physical impact of these proposals at both Mill Common and Views Common and the need to provide and maintain access to the key transport node at Huntingdon Rail Station. The Council welcomes continued Stakeholder dialogue relating to the overall design in these areas and indeed, to emerging alternative design proposals that minimise that impact further, particularly at Mill Common. Such alternative proposals are also welcomed in order to minimise the impact on significant heritage issues at Mill Common and in the vicinity of Hinchingsbrooke House.
8. In relation to (7) above, the Council requests that continuing design and stakeholder dialogue also considers the merit of providing an additional road-based link from Parkway to a de-trunked A14 across Views Common to further minimise traffic impact at the Hinchingsbrooke Park Road junction and the potential for a separate cycle/foot bridge to the north side of the Brampton Road railway bridge following the removal of the A14 Viaduct.
9. The alignment of the new Huntingdon Southern bypass is supported, including the proposed partial junction with the A1198. In terms of detail, this support is conditional on the overall design of this section of the scheme providing adequate noise, landscaping, air quality, land contamination, and drainage mitigation, as well as NMU accessibility, between the planned route and villages on that corridor including The Offords, Hilton and Fenstanton (south of the current A14 alignment). Such design needs to pay particular attention to the impacts of new bridge crossings of both the River Great Ouse and the East Coast Main Line (ECML).
10. The Council welcomes continued dialogue with the HA and partners relating to overall design and would stipulate that the need for final traffic forecasts for the project to be completed in order to inform final assessment and design.
11. The Council notes the proposed use of Borrow Pits as a source of construction material for the proposed scheme and welcomes continued dialogue on the future use of these, post-scheme construction. This formed part of the Council's 'Scoping Opinion' response to the Planning Inspectorate on the Draft Environmental Impact Assessment where the Council stated that particular weight and regard on the future use of these features post-project completion was necessary as part of the overall legacy of the scheme, including their visual impact, future roles, scope for innovative treatments and biodiversity improvements and maintenance of these across the local community. It is of vital that the long-term future of these is identified and tied into the wider delivery of Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity needs within this part of the County and that the required level of funding is secured at the earliest opportunity to ensure that the future viability of such a significant legacy is secured.

12. In addition to (7) above and as part of our Scoping Opinion response, we welcome the extensive work that has been undertaken to identify Heritage and Conservation issues and the ranking of these in terms of importance relating to their designated status. We also welcome the same form of ranking within the Landscape character assessment and the identification of all trees with TPO status and on all these issues, we support continued dialogue and joint working with the Highways Agency/J2A in seeking an overall scheme that protects or enhances these areas of issue or to reach agreement on a range of interventions to mitigate any impact as far as possible.

13. Additionally in relation to Heritage & Conservation issues, and also as outlined in our Scoping Opinion, while we welcome the identification of assets within Huntingdon following the de-trunking of the A14 and Viaduct removal, it cannot be over-emphasised highly enough, that due weight must be given to the impacts of the scheme in this location. This is a highly significant area relating to the wider arena of Huntingdon's historic environment and any final scheme must maximise opportunities to minimise impact and indeed to enhance these following de-trunking in order to create an appropriate legacy. This is of particular relevance at Post Street in Godmanchester and across the Medieval Town Bridge at the River Great Ouse that connects Godmanchester to Huntingdon. We welcome the continued opportunity to explore future environmental opportunities in all these areas following de-trunking and reduced traffic flows on these routes and consider that the highest possible regard is given to these elements in moving forward.

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