

**Report To:** Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly

10<sup>th</sup> September 2020

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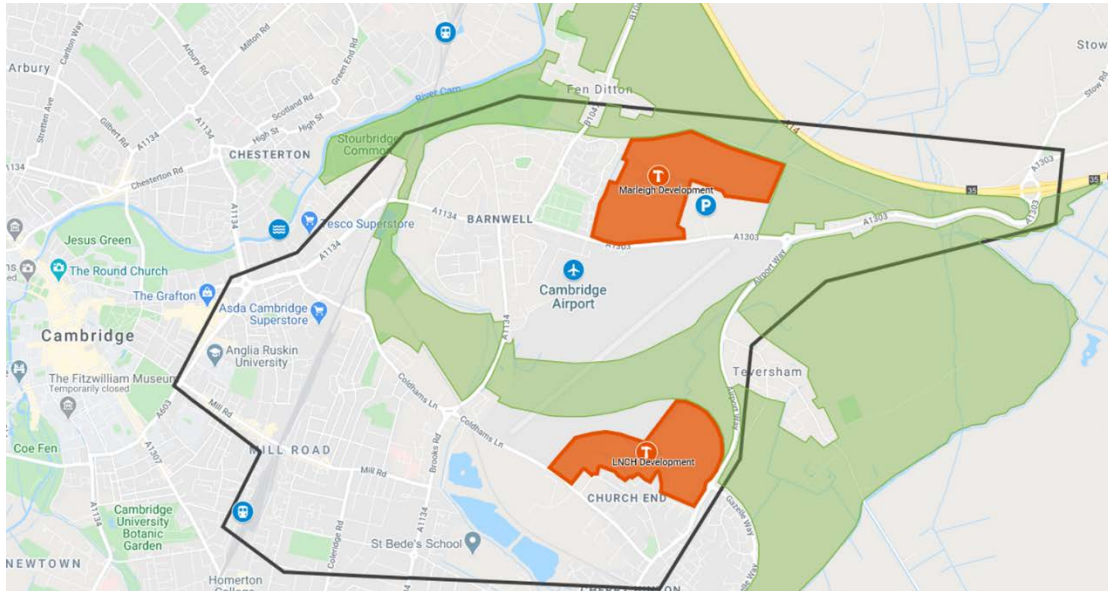
**BETTER PUBLIC TRANSPORT - CAMBRIDGE EASTERN ACCESS PROJECT**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide an update on progress with the Cambridge Eastern Access (CEA) project, including feedback from pre-engagement with stakeholders, and outline proposals for a series of integrated packages which will be the subject of consultation and further analysis.
- 1.2 The Joint Assembly is invited to consider the proposals to be presented to the Executive Board and in particular:
  - (a) Note on the outcome of stakeholder engagement process.
  - (b) Endorse the Options Appraisal Report (OAR) as the basis to formally consult on the proposed route options for a segregated public transport route.
  - (c) Endorse the list of shorter term interventions that have been identified for further assessment.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Cambridge Eastern Access (CEA) project was considered by the Executive Board at its meeting in February 2020. The Board recognised that the corridor is one of the key radial routes into Cambridge. It suffers considerably from congestion during peak times, particularly at the Cambridge end. There are also sites of planned or potential large development that will potentially place considerable additional pressure on the corridor.
- 2.2 The corridor has been identified by the Greater Cambridge Partnership's (GCP's) Executive Board, as a priority project for developing public transport, walking and cycling improvements, linked to the development of proposals for a regional rapid mass transit solution. The scheme forms part of GCP's high quality public transport network and Phase One of the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM) network as outlined in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Transport Plan.
- 2.3 The CEA project is looking at access to and from the city from the east to enable people to get around more easily by public transport, cycle or on foot.
- 2.4 The study area, for the purposes of pre-engagement, was defined as shown in the map below. It is bounded in the north by Newmarket Road, and to the east by Airport Way, although extending along Newmarket Road to the Quay Interchange. To the west the study area extends as far as the Railway Station, whilst to the south it extends past Mill Road.



2.5 Scheme progress has been impeded by Covid-19 but the intention is to seek approval from the Executive Board to:

- Note the outcome of pre-engagement activities (July/August 2020) and emerging stakeholder feedback.
- Agree the selection of packages of options to be taken forward for consultation (November/December 2020) and subsequent inclusion in a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC).
- Agree that these packages of options should be presented in two Phases:
  - Phase 1: improvements to the Newmarket Road corridor to address existing problems and issues relating to committed development.
  - Phase 2: longer term strategy to address the requirements of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan and delivery of the CAM.

2.6 A two Phase approach is needed because a comprehensive on-line solution including major widening of Newmarket Road would be highly intrusive from the Leper Chapel to Barnwell Road, whilst still failing to ensure future-proofing for the development of the CAM, including segregation. As a result, any on-line solution, whilst addressing immediate problems, will not achieve the level of service achieved by a segregated solution. The current assumption is that Phase 2 would be off-line and would include the best performing Phase 1 option as the two would be complementary. This mirrors the agreed approach for the Cambridge South East Transport scheme.

### 3. Key Issues and Considerations

3.1 The land designated as Marleigh and Land North of Cherry Hinton, which are under development and approved for development respectively and will place further pressure on this corridor.

3.2 The implications of the CAM are particularly significant for Eastern Access. As CAM is not as yet a committed proposition in terms either of consents or finance, the core SOBC will need to include solutions which might be based on the following, in addition to consideration of the CAM tunnel option:

- Access to City Centre via the Tins Path and Mill Road.
  - Access to City Centre via Coldhams Lane/Brooks Road and Mill Road.
  - New Cambridge East Rail station on the Newmarket Line, with possible future transit access to Airport site.
- 3.3 Given the recognised constraints in East Cambridge, neither of the first two options is entirely attractive, whilst the third will depend on agreement with Network Rail.
- 3.4 There has been a suggestion from some stakeholders of a realignment of the Newmarket Line through the Airport site and back onto its original alignment at Fulbourn. This would be a major undertaking requiring Network Rail buy-in, but would bypass four Level Crossings, eliminate a corridor of severance in Cherry Hinton and significantly improve access to the Airport site. The need for this is wholly dependent on a choice, still to be made, whether or not the Airport site will be approved for development in the next Joint Local Plan and the planning authorities are not yet at the stage of making that choice. Such an investment would only be practical once the Airport is non-operational. It would have a significant impact on Coldhams Common but removal of the existing line may create new leisure opportunity to enhance the Common as a whole and create a high grade non-motorised route connecting Fulbourn and Cherry Hinton to the Chisholm Trail. There are also operational issues to consider at Cambridge Station.
- 3.5 In order to comply with DfT guidance we will test options with different levels of development, and will test off-line options against the best performing on-line option and a high-cost option with CAM tunnels. For the purposes of an SOBC this should help to establish the potential case for investment. As clarity emerges with regards to CAM and decisions still to be made in the emerging Joint Local Plan there may be scope to refine the off-line options if this scheme progresses to Outline Business Case (OBC).
- 3.6 The pre-engagement process has been delayed by Covid-19. As such the proposed timescale for reporting to the Executive Board in October and delivering an SOBC for the June 2021 Executive Board meeting was still achievable but there is no remaining flexibility in the programme.
- 3.7 Place-based consultation has been put in place and is feeding option development and appraisal. A pre-engagement exercise has been undertaken and a first consultation phase will be undertaken prior to SOBC.
- 3.8 Proposals for the regeneration of East Barnwell promoted by the City Council are likely to go to consultation on a timescale similar to Eastern Access in October/November if agreed by its members at committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. In general the projects should be complementary with a desire to improve the urban realm and provide for active travel modes on Newmarket Road, working predominantly within the existing highway boundaries to enable early delivery.
- 3.9 Pre-engagement on the study took place from July 6<sup>th</sup> to August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020. In all 112 questionnaires were completed and 299 pins placed on the study area map with comments. In addition, Zoom workshops took place with elected members and other stakeholders, and 1-1 discussions were held with key consultees such as Network Rail and Highways England. A number of issues raised from initial pre-engagement activities are also worth consideration:

- There is clear concern about potential impacts on Ditton Meadows. Whilst a corridor skirting the north of East Barnwell has been considered as part of long-listing, the initial conclusion is that there should be a commitment to avoid incursion onto Ditton Meadows.
- A suggestion with regards to Newmarket Road would be the reduction in the quantity of low density retail activity. Relocation of some or all of the non-food retail, and perhaps some food retail, to a site in the vicinity of Airport Way would reduce car-based activity in the city. There is some merit in the suggestion but land-use changes may be better considered as part of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan process.
- Rail: a couple of people have suggested new stations to the east of Cambridge (i.e. Fulbourn). Moving the railway line and using the existing line for bus lanes/light rail gets a mention as does increasing the number of services to Newmarket/Bury St Edmunds.
- Mill Road/Mill Road bridge: there is support for maintaining the bridge closure as well as closing the whole road to make it more pleasant for active travel. Conversely, there is also opposition to the closures and support for reopening the bridge to all traffic.
- There are concerns about the quality of the urban realm and the land-use mix along the Newmarket Road, and specifically a desire to improve the urban environment at Elisabeth Way.
- Segregated cycleways/safety: there is support for having wide segregated cycleways away from motor traffic and pedestrians to help keep users safe.
- Public transport: several respondents would like more frequent and more reliable public transport from villages in the east into Cambridge as well as along Coldhams Lane and along Mill Road; and buses that go destinations such as Addenbrooke's without going to the city centre.
- Some respondents have said to be mindful that some people still want and need to use a car to get around and to get shopping etc.

3.10 A full report on the pre-engagement activity is attached at Appendix 1.

#### **4. Options and Emerging Recommendations**

4.1. A wide range of on-line and off-line options have been considered in the OAR (Appendix 2). Those for which there is a clear showstopper have been sifted in accordance with DfT major scheme appraisal criteria, whilst the remainder have been assembled into a series of integrated packages which will be presented for consultation and further analysis. A map illustrating possible options for improvement in East Cambridge is attached at Appendix 3.

4.2. The proposed packages are:

- Package 1.1. On-line improvements to Newmarket Road to improve bus operations and facilities for active travel through traffic management and intelligent transport systems. Complementary measures to improve the urban environment, and manage car access to Newmarket Road. Agreement will be needed as the Package develops on the balance of roadspace between traffic, public transport and active travel modes.
- Package 1.2. As Package 1.1 but relocating and enlarging the Newmarket Road Park and Ride site. Consideration was given to the idea of a Bus Gate to further enforce the option but it was felt that this could not be developed in isolation from the wider City Access strategy: this will not be assessed as part of Package 1.2 but may be revisited if aligned with City Access.
- Package 2.1/2.2. As Package 1.2 but with a new High Quality Public Transport route from the new Newmarket Road Park and Ride site through the land safeguarded for development on the Marshalls site to Coldhams Lane via a potential portal entrance to the CAM network. In the interim prior to opening of the CAM, the route would proceed into Cambridge either via existing roads or potentially a new route/access arrangements.

- Package 2.3. As Package 1.2, but with a new Cambridge East rail station providing increased frequency of services on the Cambridge to Newmarket Line, details including location dependent on Joint Local Plan choices.

4.3. Over the coming months, subject to Executive Board agreement, the intention is to subject these packages to public consultation, and to undertake further analysis which would lead to the production of a SOBC which will be brought back to the Executive Board for further consideration.

## 5. Citizen's Assembly

5.1 Citizens' Assembly members developed and prioritised their vision for transport in Greater Cambridge. The range of solutions being considered for CEA directly contributes to delivery of 5 of the highest 7 scoring priorities, namely:

- Provide affordable public transport (32).
- Provide fast and reliable public transport (32).
- Be environmental and zero carbon (28).
- Be people centred – prioritising pedestrians and cyclist (26).
- Enable interconnection (e.g. north/south/east/west/urban/rural) (25).

5.2 In addition, CEA has the potential to complement delivery of the other highest scoring priorities:

- Restrict the city centre to only clean and electric vehicles (27).
- Be managed as one coordinated system (e.g. Transport for Cambridge) (25).

5.3 The Citizens' Assembly voted on a series of measures to reduce congestion, improve air quality and public transport. Of the measures considered, Assembly members voted most strongly in favour of road closures, followed by a series of road charging options (clean air zone, pollution charge and flexible charge). These will be considered further as packages develop.

## 6. Financial Implications

6.1 The current budget allocation is summarised below. This is more than ample for completion of a draft SOBC by the end of 2020 to be taken to Executive Board for approval in March or June 2021, depending on the outcome of public consultation.

Project Description	Total Budget £'000	2020-21 Budget £'000	2020-21 Expenditure to Jul 20 £'000	2020-21 Forecast Spend - Outturn £'000	2020-21 Forecast Variance - Outturn £'000
Eastern Access	50,500	532	39	532	0

6.2 The intention is that a provider under the new Professional Services Framework should be in place by late 2021 to start preparation for development of OBCs for Phases 1 and 2. This may include items such as Ecological Surveys and other data collection. Once this contract has been agreed the budget will be revisited but the anticipation is that any variance would be a modest underspend.

## **7. Next Steps and Milestones**

7.1 The next steps for this stage of the work are as follows:

- Consultation November/December 2020.
- SOBC finalised for consideration at the June 2021 Executive Board.

7.2 Thereafter it is likely that work could continue on twin tracks as set out below:

- An OBC for Phase 1 improvements might be prepared in a further year. There would be a need for Environmental Impact Assessment and other supporting documents, but these measures would be delivered under local powers through the Highways Act/Town and Country Planning Act. The majority of Phase 1 could be delivered on highway land, the main exception being the potential enlargement of the Newmarket Road Park and Ride site which would probably require planning consent and land acquisition.
- An OBC would also be required for Phase 2, but it is envisaged that the economic case for a more substantial intervention would need to be informed by the emerging Local Plan and the development of the CAM. The publication of a Preferred Option in 2021 will provide the guidance needed to refine the assessment. The OBC would be finalised early 2022.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1	Pre-Engagement Report
Appendix 2	Option Assessment Report
Appendix 3	Illustration of possible options for improvement in East Cambridge