

Report title: A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Scheme Update

To: Highways and Transport Committee

Meeting Date: 9 March 2021

From: Steve Cox, Executive Director - Place and Economy

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: *Key decision:* No

Outcome: To update Members on the A14 Huntingdon to Cambridge scheme being delivered by Highways England.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Note the progress with the scheme to date.
- b) Approve the formal submission of the issues outlined in section 2.3 to Highways England to request further review and investigation as part of its Post Project Review.

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1. Background

- 1.1 The A14 Huntingdon to Cambridge scheme was fully opened to traffic in May 2020 and, whilst it is yet to experience normal traffic volumes due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has provided a significant improvement to the strategic road network between Cambridge and the A1.
- 1.2 The project was delivered by Highways England through a Development Consent Order (DCO) approved in 2016. This is the required route for nationally significant infrastructure projects and provided Highways England with the powers to construct the project.
- 1.3 Whilst the scheme has seen improvements to the strategic network, it also delivered additional highway assets for the County Council to adopt as highway authority. These included side roads junctions, a 10 km local access road between Huntingdon Road and Swavesey and numerous non-motorised user routes. Whilst the bridge structures themselves over the A14 are not adopted by the County Council, the approach embankments and carriageway surfacing over the structures is adopted and will be the County Council's responsibility to maintain.
- 1.4 More significant changes are also still being implemented in Huntingdon, following the removal of the old A14 viaduct over the east coast mainline railway. These changes will also be adopted by the County Council.
- 1.5 In total just over 30km of new carriageway will be adopted by the County Council as a result of the works.
- 1.6 The creation of a new bypass to the south of Huntingdon for the A14 route has led to the old route between Swavesey and the A1 being reclassified as the A1307. This will also be detrunked and become the responsibility of the County Council to operate and maintain.
- 1.7 The contract to deliver the A14 project was awarded by Highways England to four contractors that became an integrated delivery team (A14 IDT) with Highways England as the integrated client.
- 1.8 The County Council has a legal agreement with Highways England that provides the terms and framework under which the agreed assets are being delivered by Highways England and its designers and contractors.
- 1.9 This report is the first of a regular update to Committee on the outstanding A14 issues.

2. Main Issues

2.1 Construction Progress

- 2.1.1. Construction work is ongoing in Huntingdon, with the first of the three sections now open. The Pathfinder link has now connected the A1307 (old A14) to the Huntingdon inner ring road. The link to the new station access is also complete and operational under traffic management.

- 2.1.2. The remaining section of the new link to the Edison Bell Way junction with Brampton Road and the link between Spittals roundabout and Hinchingsbrooke Park road are estimated to be complete by spring 2022.
- 2.1.3. The rest of the A14 project with the exception of a small number of short non-motorised user links is now complete and any defects associated with the new County Council assets are being completed prior to adoption to ensure future maintenance liabilities are kept as low as possible.
- 2.1.4. A further 12 month defects correction period will then apply, but the County Council will be responsible for operating and maintaining these new assets immediately on adoption.
- 2.1.5. Appendix A shows the list and location of assets that the County Council will adopt, as well as progress with the handover of assets.

2.2. **Detrunking Progress**

- 2.2.1. The A14 is part of the strategic road network (SRN) and therefore falls under the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport. Highways England is a government owned company responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the SRN on behalf of the Secretary of State.
- 2.2.2. Detrunking is the process of transferring a road from the control of the Secretary of State to a local authority.
- 2.2.3. This process is currently underway for the old section of the A14 between Swavesey and the A1 at Alconbury and the section between Brampton Hut and Spittals roundabout. The route, incorporating the new local access road between Cambridge and the A1 via Huntingdon has been reclassified as the A1307. The short stretch between Brampton Hut and Spittals is now an extension of the existing A141 to the north of Huntingdon.
- 2.2.4. This required adoption was incorporated into the DCO along with a clear process that was agreed with HE as part of the legal agreement.
- 2.2.5. There is still some time before these sections will be officially detrunked and adopted by the County Council to operate and maintain. The process is still in its early stages of identifying the condition of the asset and the maintenance work required to the route for its condition to be to an acceptable standard for the County Council to agree adoption.
- 2.2.6. Subject to progress with agreeing a handover plan and the amount of associated maintenance work required, adoption could potentially take place by the end of this year. Until then the roads will remain the responsibility of Highways England to operate and maintain.
- 2.2.7. Once a handover plan has been finalised a further report will be presented to this Committee in the summer for agreement to progress to formal adoption of the route with the Secretary of State.

2.3. **Current local issues**

- 2.3.1. A scheme of the scale of the A14 was expected to have a significant positive impact on the local road network along the corridor, mainly through a reduction in diverting traffic that should remain on the strategic network, but there is always the risk that some impacts are not predicted or expected prior to completion.
- 2.3.2. Highways England (HE) complete a post project review, usually 12 months after completion, but the Covid-19 pandemic has delayed that based on the reduced traffic volumes. There is therefore the opportunity for issues to be raised with HE and investigated through this process.
- 2.3.3. Local Members have been contacted along the route and there are three main areas of concern with regard to traffic volumes or types of traffic.
- 2.3.4. The B1043 between the Alconbury junction on the A1 and Alconbury Weald has seen a considerable increase in Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) traffic. This is thought to be due to the A14 moving to the south of Huntingdon leading to traffic wanting to head east on the A14 now has to use the A1 from Alconbury Weald.
- 2.3.5. Meetings have already taken place with divisional county councillor Ian Gardener, HE and Urban and Civic, the Alconbury Weald developer. Improvements to HGV signage to utilise the A1307 and A141 will be delivered by HE and a HGV Covenant is also planned between the local parish councils and businesses on the Alconbury Weald site to seek agreement to use this alternative route using the 'A' road network.
- 2.3.6. There have also been issues reported to Councillors Bates and Fuller with regard to higher volumes of traffic using the A1123 between Huntingdon and St Ives, as well as the B1040 through Hilton, particularly HGV's in the case of the A1123. This has been reported to HE for further investigation and again should be considered as part of its post project review.
- 2.3.7. A more recent issue has also arisen around Fenstanton in terms of concerns over a suggested increase in surface water flooding following the recent heavy periods of rainfall. This has also been escalated to Highways England for further investigation to ensure that the sustainable drainage systems are functioning as they were designed and the scheme has not had any negative impacts on this local area.
- 2.3.8. There are concerns over the lack of provision of a safe crossing point of the A1307 (old A14) between the New Barnes Lane and Cambridge road Fen Drayton junctions. There is an existing gap in the central reservation and, whilst the volume of traffic has reduced significantly there remains a local concern over this crossing. A new non-motorised user route is also being provided on the Fen Drayton side that provides a link through to Cambridge, so this crossing may become more attractive in the future. An A14 designated funds application for a bridge has been unsuccessful at this location due to the relative small numbers that would use it not creating a feasible business case. Alternative options to improve the safety of the crossing are currently being explored with a view to incorporating the issue as part of the detrunking process.

- 2.3.9. Whilst there has been one million trees planted as part of the scheme, a large proportion have died off and are currently being replaced by HE's contractor. Young saplings are used rather than more mature specimens as the rate of success is known to be much greater. These are also subject to an ongoing 5 year maintenance agreement that HE is responsible for and this will be monitored closely. It is important to ensure that these planted areas are successful as they provide significant environmental benefits for the scheme and local area.
- 2.3.10. There is also a concern locally that these saplings will take some time to provide noise mitigation. Whilst trees are not known for providing this mitigation, there is a feeling locally that this is the case and the local community are keen to find funding to plant more mature specimens. This may prove challenging with the health and safety requirements associated with the operation of the A14 and work required, but County Council officers will work to facilitate this request with HE.
- 2.3.11. The impact of the scheme on the village of Dry Drayton has also been raised and the expectation that an impact assessment will be carried out each year for a period of 5 years. This was also linked to the decision of whether to close The Avenue link from the new A1307 into Madingley village, an ambition of residents in the village. The consideration of the outcome of this assessment will to inform any future closure of The Avenue.
- 2.3.12. The monitoring of traffic levels after construction is a general requirement of the legal agreement between the County Council and HE for the scheme as a whole, with defined monitoring points along the corridor that were baselined prior to construction of the scheme. Should any impacts be found that are greater than expected then HE will be required to look at ways to mitigate them.
- 2.4. Damage to the local road network**
- 2.4.1. During the construction of the new sections of the A14, there was a significant amount of disruption, which is to be expected for a project of this size on the highway network. This included many closures with associated diversion routes.
- 2.4.2. Whilst these diversion routes utilised the strategic route network wherever possible, there were a few circumstances when this was not possible, and the local highway network had to be used.
- 2.4.3. However, the greater concern has been the volume and type of traffic that attempted to avoid the strategic diversion routes by using local roads along the A14 corridor. Many of these roads are unclassified and were unsuitable, particularly for use by HGV's that regularly avoided the night-time closure diversions. There were also some challenges with the signing for diversions that saw improvements over time.
- 2.4.4. This caused significant disruption for some communities living along the corridor and has also left a lasting negative legacy, as the condition of many of these roads has deteriorated significantly due to this unsuitable volume and type of traffic.
- 2.4.5. Local Members and Parish Council's have highlighted the areas of concern and a list of roads is included in appendix B to this report.

- 2.4.6. The County Council has been working closely with HE over this issue and, despite initial positive signs that some work could be funded by HE, it has been confirmed that this is now not possible.
- 2.4.7. Both the County Council and HE have raised the issue with the Department for Transport and received an initial positive response that funding may be able to be made available to contribute to the repair of the damage to the local network.
- 2.4.8. The estimated cost of repairs to these roads is currently being quantified and Members of this committee and local Members along the route will be kept updated.

2.5. Legacy Fund

- 2.5.1. The legacy fund for the A14 totalled £3 million and was split into numerous categories, such as non-motorised user schemes, skills, and community funding.
- 2.5.2. Towards the end of the scheme, a number of Parish Council's that were deemed to be most adversely affected by the scheme were invited to present three bids that would support their wider village plans. The A14 Project would then look to support at least one of the bids.
- 2.5.3. This programme has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and concerns have been expressed over the speed with which it has moved forward, but progress is now being made with many of the proposed schemes. Detailed work to establish the full cost of these schemes is yet to be completed and until then delivery cannot be guaranteed. Delivery support for the highway based schemes is also now being provided by the County Council, but the programme continues to be led by the A14 IDT.
- 2.5.4. Appendix C to this report provides more information on the Legacy Fund projects that have been funded.

3. Alignment with Corporate Priorities

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The escalation of local issues to Highways England for resolution will support the best quality of life for all living along the A14 corridor.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

The scheme provides important connectivity and thus should boost the local and wider economy.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

There are no significant implications for this priority

3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

The close monitoring of tree planting along the route over the 5 year maintenance period will ensure maximum success rate through to maturity.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

This report outlines the issues but a further report will come to Committee in the Summer which will set out the estimated cost of correcting the damage to the network and the ongoing maintenance costs.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications arising directly from this report.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications arising directly from this report.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications arising directly from this report.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications arising directly from this report.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications arising directly from this report.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications arising directly from this report.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Gus de Silva

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Elsa Evans

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications? Yes

Name of Officer: Sarah Silk

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Andrew Preston

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health Not able to due to Covid redeployment
Name of Officer: Kate Parker

5. Source Documents

5.1 Source documents
None