

A14 HUNTINGDON

To: Economy & Environment Committee

Meeting Date: 16 January 2020

From: Steve Cox – Executive Director; Place and Economy

Electoral division(s): Huntingdonshire

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable **Key decision:** No

Purpose: To update and inform Members of the proposals for works in Huntingdon as a result of the A14 improvement scheme and to outline issues for the County Council.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Committee;

1. Notes the further development of the proposed works following the development consent order process.
2. Agree that the proposed works in Huntingdon are acceptable based on Highways England having demonstrated satisfactory performance of the proposed junctions.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon scheme is at an advanced stage of construction and is planned to be completed by December 2020. The Huntingdon Southern Bypass opened to traffic on 9 December. Sections 1 to 5 comprise the A14 and A1 between Alconbury and Milton. Following completion of the new and widened A1 and A14, a further section of work will take place to de-trunk the A14 through Huntingdon and take down the Huntingdon Railway Viaduct. Following the opening of the southern bypass, the section between Godmanchester and Spitalles is closed to allow these works to commence.
- 1.2 The A14 Huntingdon Railway Viaduct is a substantial concrete structure carrying the existing A14 over the B1514 Brampton Road and the East Coast Mainline Railway. This viaduct is in poor condition despite having had a considerable amount of structural work performed. Currently, the B1514 Brampton Road is re-aligned to provide headroom to steel “fingers” that support the concrete half joints and prevent the possibility that the suspended centre span could fail.
- 1.3 The Huntingdon Railway Viaduct is currently owned and managed by Highways England. Once the existing A14 has been de-trunked, it would have no reason to manage and maintain the viaduct. The condition of the viaduct is such that it cannot economically be repaired, and such works that have been carried out to date are only to prevent issues in the short term. It would not be desirable for the cost of maintaining or replacing this structure to fall on the County Council.
- 1.4 Severing the existing A14 at this location was first proposed in the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS). CHUMMS Strategy 2 was adopted as the preferred plan. Strategies 1 and 6, which maintained the existing A14 through Huntingdon, were both considered to fail to provide relief over existing traffic conditions. Strategy 6 which proposed a northern new strategic route bypassing both Huntingdon and Cambridge, and Strategy 1 (public transport improvements only) both failed to address demand between the A1/A14 to the west and A14/M11 to the east. In consequence, traffic on the existing A14 remained high, although with some reductions in A14 traffic with Strategy 6.
- 1.5 The Highways Agency (now Highways England) held a public consultation into route options in 2005, offering for comment the “CHUMMS” route (D3 southern bypass and viaduct demolished) and the “Alternative” (D2 southern bypass and viaduct replaced/repared). In 2006 further consultation was held relating to routes of the southern bypass.
- 1.6 The County Council part funded a study in 2005/2006 that concluded that a proposal to demolish the viaduct and replace it with a junction was beneficial to Huntingdon. This study assessed a wide range of options and alternative layouts, and concluded that a junction between the de-trunked A14 and Brampton Road would have a beneficial impact on traffic in the town, albeit with some negative impacts on the section of Brampton Road immediately next to the de-trunked A14.
- 1.7 The study concluded that the Pathfinder Link at Mill Common was an essential part of the proposals as it reduces traffic demand on Brampton Road to reach Huntingdon town centre. A further key element of the proposals was the West of Town Centre Link Road, which opened to traffic in 2014, now known as Edison Bell Way.

- 1.8 The removal of the viaduct would allow for the creation of new access roads into the town centre, improving accessibility for all modes and allowing the existing A14 alignment to serve as a high quality local road. This in turn would ease pressure on the Spittals interchange, the A141 bypass and main thoroughfares in Godmanchester.
- 1.9 Huntingdon from the east can only be reached by traffic leaving the A1307 at Godmanchester, passing through the historic village of Godmanchester, and crossing the river by a narrow bridge constructed in the 14th Century. The alternative is to bypass Huntingdon, leave the A14 at the A1 Spittals interchange and access Huntingdon from the west. Providing a new means of access to the south of Huntingdon reduces traffic in Godmanchester, and on the Huntingdon Ring Road. To avoid congestion at the Spittals interchange traffic passes through Huntingdon (via the Ring Road) that would (but for congestion) have a quicker and more convenient route via Spittals Interchange and the A141. With the southern bypass, much traffic is removed and this traffic no longer needs to be in Huntingdon.
- 1.10 Retaining the Huntingdon railway viaduct provides a shorter route from the A1 to the A14/M11 and Cambridge. It is therefore impossible to deliver any environmental improvements in Huntingdon as long as this route remains intact. Only by removing the viaduct is demand to use the existing A14 route constrained.
- 1.11 The A14 forms a barrier between the town centre of Huntingdon, Hinchingsbrooke, and the river by Port Holme. The river creates a constraint that limits the opportunity for expansion of the town centre. To the west it is constrained by the mainline railway and to the south by the A14.
- 1.12 Areas of Huntingdon are classed as an 'Air Quality Management Area'. The reduction in traffic through the removal of the A14 should see pollution reduce to the extent that Huntingdon is no longer designated as an Air Quality Management Area.
- 1.13 The view of the County Council is that on balance the removal of the viaduct and creation of a junction are beneficial to Huntingdon. It is for this reason that the proposed removal of the viaduct has been supported by the County Council in the adopted Huntingdon and Godmanchester Market Town Transport Strategy. Removal of the viaduct is also considered to be a key part of a positive legacy of the A14.
- 1.14 Plans of the proposals are in Appendix 1

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 At Development Consent Order (DCO) Examination Stage the County Council raised concerns over the traffic modelling work done by Highways England. These related to the validation of predicted traffic on the local road network, and in the case of Huntingdon the reliance to be placed on operational assessment by Highways England.
- 2.2 In the made DCO a Requirement (planning condition) was secured that provided for traffic monitoring before and after construction and an obligation by Highways England to address variations in actual traffic from that predicted. Baseline surveys were carried out in 2016 before construction started. After completion further surveys will be undertaken and compared to the baseline and forecasts.

- 2.3 In the DCO Examination the County Council made clear that acceptance of the proposed works in Huntingdon was subject to Highways England at Detailed Design stage demonstrating acceptable performance of the proposed junctions. Officers have worked with Highways England in developing detailed designs and examination of traffic modelling and operational assessment.
- 2.4 Based on information provided by Highways England, Officers are satisfied that the predicted traffic impacts of the works in Huntingdon are net beneficial to Huntingdon and Godmanchester and the predicted performance in 2035 is no worse than existing.
- 2.5 During the design development process Highways England have made various changes to the proposals in the Development Consent Order. The principal changes are:
- a) The Pathfinder Link from the de-trunked A14 to Huntingdon Ring Road has been moved westwards to avoid high pressure gas mains and to reduce the extent of earthworks required. This has improved the junction with the Ring Road and avoided loss of parking spaces in the former MAGPAS car park.
 - b) A transport interchange (bus stops, taxis, and set down) is now proposed at the Station in the area currently occupied by the viaduct and parking. The access to the Station forecourt as a result becomes pedestrian and cycles only. This has been welcomed by Officers, but is as yet subject to agreement of Network Rail.
 - c) The proposed vehicle access to the car park remains, but is not now to be wholly adoptable by the County Council. Previously, this provided a route for highway drainage, including an attenuation tank under the car park. The tank has been relocated to Mill Common, and hence there is no need for the access to be maintainable at public expense.
 - d) A proposed field access at Views Common off the roundabout has been removed.
 - e) The footway previously proposed on the east side of the Views Common Link has been moved to the west, improving pedestrian routes to Views Common and onwards to the Town Centre.
 - f) A new dedicated access has been provided to Station Cottages. Currently these are accessed through the Station car park.
 - g) Improvement of an existing uncontrolled pedestrian crossing near Scholars Avenue to a Toucan crossing.
- 2.6 Local Members have raised concerns over the existing “dead end” status of Hinchingsbrooke Park Road with a single exit onto Brampton Road. The new Views Common link provides a second means of exit and entry to Hinchingsbrooke Park Road. With the new junction layout at the Station, journeys from the Hinchingsbrooke area and connections to Cambridge are shortened.

- 2.7 Members have suggested relocation of the Views Common link to a position west of the hospital. This has the following issues:
- Parkway is a residential area
 - A link here would bring traffic into Hinchingsbrooke in the vicinity of a primary school
 - A reason for the link being close to the Police HQ is the slip roads at Spittalls Interchange.
- 2.8 To achieve the above would require a change to the A14 Development Consent Order (DCO). However, the DCO cannot simply be changed, and a new planning application would be required. As Highways England has a DCO for its works, it has no interest in making a change that is not necessary for delivery of the A14 scheme. The County Council would have to put forward such a proposal, and it is highly likely that planning consent would not be obtained as planning consent (through DCO) has already been granted for the Views Common link to which the County Council had no objection.
- 2.9 A suggestion was made to open the existing emergency services link at Parkway into the Hinchingsbrooke Business Park. The roads in the Business Park are not adopted public highway. Opening the link to traffic other than “blue light” vehicles would bring traffic, including heavy vehicles along a residential road.
- 2.10 A Requirement (planning condition) in the Development Consent Order provides for post opening traffic monitoring 1 year after completion and for Highways England to agree mitigation with the County Council if the monitoring shows traffic due to the A14 works in excess of that predicted.
- 2.11 Highways England has carried out extensive local engagement over the past few years on the proposals following the formal consultation already carried out as part of the DCO process.
- 2.12 A series of engagement events took place throughout June 2018. These events were well attended, with over 1,200 people in attendance and significant media coverage.

There were also a number of events in February 2019 specifically in the Hinchingsbrooke Park / Brampton area, including at the school.

The final round of engagement events, showing final designs as well as construction methods (inc. proposed traffic management) ran from late August into September.

A letter drop to all Hinchingsbrooke Park residents was also carried out on 18 August 2019 with details of the consultation events.

Details of these events and the common themes from those attending are shown below.

Date	Time	Location	Note	Common questions
27/08/2019	14:00 - 20:00	Huntingdonshire District County Offices - Civic Suite	35 Attendees	
28/08/2019	12:00 - 20:00	Brampton Memorial Hall	61 Attendees	How do the traffic lights on Edison Bell Way junction, Brampton road and Hinchingsbrooke Park Road monitor and optimise traffic flows?
31/08/2019	10:00 - 16:00	Queen Elizabeth School Hall	40 Attendees	Access in Huntingdon & Godmanchester post completion Traffic forecasts in Godmanchester once scheme complete
02/09/2019	14:00 - 18:00	MVC - Hinchingsbrooke School	59 Attendees	Hinchingsbrooke Park Road design - Traffic post completion - Access during construction
04/09/2019	16:00 - 20:00	MVC - Huntingdon Railway	64 Attendees	Pedestrian access from Mill Common to Huntingdon Station
07/09/2019	10:00 - 16:00	Huntingdon Town Hall	46 Attendees	Air / Noise impact of scheme

- 2.13 In addition to formal engagement, the A14 project team attend informal events in the local area. In Huntingdon, the team has attended 7 events in the Mobile Visitors Centre with an estimated 1,200 members of public attending these. The team has also attended as speakers for public interest groups throughout the year, presenting to an estimated 250 people over 7 events.
- 2.14 In summary the feedback from Highways England following their considerable engagement activity did not highlight any significant concerns in relation to the design of the proposed scheme.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

The proposals reduce traffic in Huntingdon and Godmanchester and improve access to Huntingdon and Godmanchester, helping people live healthy and independent lives

The removal of heavy traffic from the existing A14 through Huntingdon and Godmanchester reduces traffic noise and improves air quality

Traffic is removed from the vicinity of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, which supports and protects vulnerable people.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

See 3.2 above.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

The works will increase the length of road for which the County Council is responsible and even without the viaduct a number of substantial structures will become local responsibility.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.7 Public Health Implications

The removal of heavy traffic from the existing A14 through Huntingdon and Godmanchester reduces traffic noise and improves air quality.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Sarah Heywood
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	Yes Gus de Silva
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law?	Yes Fiona MacMillan
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Elsa Evans
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	Yes Sarah Silk
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Andrew Preston
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Iain Green

Source Documents	Location
Changes in Huntingdon – Highways England	https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.highwaysengland.co.uk/roads/road-projects/a14-cambridge-to-huntingdon-improvement/A14+Huntingdon+improvements+-+What%E2%80%99s+happening+in+Huntingdon+brochure+Aug+2019(2).pdf

