

CAMBRIDGESHIRE HORIZONS BOARD MEETING – 17 September 2007

A14 Huntingdon-Cambridge

An update provided by the Highways Agency

1.0 Ongoing Operational activities

1.1 Installation of Average Speed Cameras (sometimes referred to as SPECS):

Works have been substantially completed on the cameras and are now operational. The police announced that they had commenced enforcement on 7th July 2007. Highways Agency has received positive comments about the effect of these cameras in terms of controlling of vehicles speeds, increasing headways between vehicles and generally having a positive effect on driver behaviour. The first “after” speed survey is programmed for October 2007. Accident data will be monitored but at present we have no data available. The Police will publish data on the number of prosecutions at the end of the financial year.

The publicity campaign to support the introduction of the Cameras, led by Cambridgeshire County Council’s Road Safety Team, has been well received.

1.2 Parking in Lay-bys

A study in 2006/7 showed that about 15% of all injury accidents on the A14 in Cambridgeshire have some relationship with lay-bys – either the presence of the lay-by itself or vehicles moving in or out of the lay-by. The Agency has consulted on a parking ban in sub-standard lay-bys, except in an emergency. This resulted in some improvements to the proposals. One lay-by is also planned to be physically closed. Public Notices requesting formal comments on the proposed restrictions is due to be published later this month.

So far the closure of the Alconbury Truckstop has not resulted in any noticeable problems on the trunk road. We are continuing to liaise with the County Council and other local bodies about any other impacts, but none have been brought to the Agency’s attention.

The Agency will be further discussing lorry parking with the Cambridgeshire Freight Quality Partnership on 27th September.

2.0 The Major Scheme (Widening between Ellington-Fen Ditton)

- 2.1 The announcement of the preferred route for the western section of the scheme has been delayed slightly. This is due to the time taken to collate all the information from the consultation and produce the necessary documentation.
- 2.2 The procurement process is continuing in parallel to that for the preferred route announcement.
- 2.3 In the meantime essential survey work which is required to take the scheme forward is being carried out by HA where possible in order to avoid any delay to scheme progress.

3.0 Northstowe

Introduction

- 3.1 In the autumn of 2006, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all participating organisations. This MoU commits all parties to joint working to investigate and develop potential mitigation measures to ensure that the Northstowe development's planning application meets Government advice (now Department for Transport Circular 02/2007 requirements) regarding 'nil detriment' impact to the operation of the A14 (The MoU is attached at Appendix 1).
- 3.2. It was agreed that the Northstowe development should seek to achieve a high level of transport sustainability in order to minimise the number of vehicle trips that would be generated. The developers of Northstowe are committed to this objective and a considerable amount of work has been undertaken over recent months in order to ensure that the balance of land uses that will be promoted at Northstowe is such that it maximises the number of trips that would be contained within the new town, thereby reducing the number of external vehicle movements that would be generated. A comprehensive package of Travel Planning measures is being established to accompany the development at Northstowe in order to ensure that journeys by non-car modes, particularly the Guided Bus, are maximised.

Proposed mitigation measures

- 3.3. Existing conditions on A14 (safety and/or congestion) are well understood and the resultant level of service is often poor. Taken at face value, there is no spare capacity with which to allow Northstowe to commence prior to the Widening scheme being in place. To countermand this, the developer and public sector partners have been working to identify interim mitigation measures which, if delivered, could allow a start of the development

The modelling indicates that one of the key elements of a package of measures is the implementation of a link road that would run parallel to the

A14 between the Bar Hill and Dry Drayton interchanges. This new highway for local traffic would split local/long distance movements and hence create additional capacity along the A14 corridor in the vicinity of Northstowe.

- 3.4. The MoU identified above gives a flavour of the package of measures which are likely to be required to allow an early start for Northstowe the Planning Application can be considered. As part of this package Highways Agency is keen to see not only physical highway measures and travel plan measures but also 'Access Control' to the A14 and its junctions. This type of control will be able to be investigated once the modelling identifies the residual traffic generated by the development.

Traffic Modelling/Planning Scenarios (to test the effects of Northstowe development)

- 3.5. The potential impact of development at Northstowe prior to completion of the Highways Agency's A14 Widening scheme was originally considered as part of Gallagher's planning application for the development of 8,000 dwellings at Northstowe. This appraised the situation in 2010 that, at the time, represented a critical design year during the build out of Northstowe as the Highways Agency's TPI scheme was then scheduled for completion in 2011.
- 3.6. A significant amount of technical analysis was undertaken by the developer following the original planning application submission (July 2005) in discussions with the Highways Agency in order to ensure the model properly represented the likely impacts of Northstowe as well as identifying the degree of confidence that could be afforded when interpreting the model outputs.
- 3.7. Further modelling work was undertaken in the autumn of 2006 in order to re-assess the situation as the modelling of the current (July 2005) planning application indicates that Northstowe-related traffic generation requires extensive mitigation measures to ensure nil detriment to the operation of the A14. The forthcoming (ie revised) planning application is likely to contain an increased quantum of development (in the order of 9,500 dwellings), and a different balance of land uses and phasing.
- 3.8. In recognition that the Highways Agency's Widening scheme will be delivered during the period 2011 to 2015, a modelling year of 2013 has been agreed. Consequently the current modelling work now allows for that higher number of housing completions.
- 3.9. The developer has now begun fresh modelling work although not all of the base assumptions are yet agreed on which the modelling is based. Highways Agency is continuing to work with the developer to resolve the remaining issues.

Master Plan

- 3.10. The developer has now produced a Master Plan for consultation which was presented to Cambs Horizons and others at a meeting at South Cambs District Council's offices on Monday 11th June 07. Public consultation regarding these proposals took place on 22nd June 07 and lasted for three weeks.
- 3.11. The Area Action Plan of the LDF indicates that there should be a target of 10,000 houses in the Northstowe area. However, we have now been advised that (as seems likely) should the Northstowe Transport Assessment only assess 9,500 houses, then Highways Agency cannot insist that more housing (including that on the Reserve Land should be assessed). If 9,500 houses form the TA, then the Highways Agency would be minded to 'Direct' a Planning Condition to limit the Application to 9,500 houses.

Summary

- 3.12. Work to complete the traffic modelling and assessment, and on defining a potential package of interim measures is ongoing (travel plan, engineering, levels of service and access control). The developers have stated that they now expect a new planning application for Northstowe to be submitted in December 2007. In order for the Highways Agency to comment on this new planning application, the work on interim measures will need to be substantially completed. Therefore, conclusions on the effectiveness of those interim measures need to be resolved by this date – as does modelling (as part of the required Transport Assessment).

Gwyn Drake
Highways Agency
September 2007

APPENDIX 1

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Joint Position Statement regarding highway implications of development at Northstowe

Parties

This note reflects the views of the following organisations:

Cambridgeshire County Council

Cambridgeshire Horizons

English Partnerships

Gallagher Longstanton Ltd

Highways Agency

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Development

Development details.

Up to 10,000 homes at Northstowe and other uses, infrastructure and facilities to provide a sustainable new town.

A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton TPI scheme.

The HA has committed to complete works by 2015.

The scheme is expected to start by 2010.

The HA is also pressing ahead with the Preferred Route announcement for A14 Fen Drayton to Fen Ditton section, which is not part of the further public consultation for the Ellington to Fen Drayton proposals.

The HA are investigating ways that may allow them to start work on some sections of the scheme sooner.

Congestion and highway capacity

All parties share a commitment to minimizing congestion and facilitating movement on the A14, whilst ensuring safety potential is not diminished.

The development of Northstowe will have an impact on travel patterns in the area. Without adequate mitigation measures the existing strategic road network would not be able to cope with the predicted growth in traffic and the additional traffic this new development would generate. This would mean that no development could begin before improved operating capacity is provided for the A14 corridor in accordance with [item 3] below. Therefore, the developers, authorities and agencies involved are working together to ensure that in the early years of Northstowe construction, prior to completion of the A14 upgrading, there will be no detrimental effect on the operation of the A14 Trunk Road and its junctions will have adequate capacity.

In response to this, the parties to this agreement are working together to establish agreed forecasts of future traffic flows, and to agree a housing delivery strategy that is sustainable. All of the technical work and consideration of options/opportunities has been shared with the other parties. If, after traffic generation from the development has been minimised, there remains a gap between the capacity of the highway network and the likely level of future traffic, then highway engineering measures will be necessary to mitigate for the residual traffic. A package of further developer funded mitigation initiatives will also be considered to maintain appropriate 'Levels of Service' on the A14 Trunk Road.

Understanding

Recognizing the above points, the parties are working together in the following way, such that:-

- 1 they should use their best intent and collective resources to mitigate the impact of future development at Northstowe on the road network;
- 2 they understand that no one policy measure or investment project, by itself, will be sufficient to eliminate the predicted adverse effects; hence it will be necessary to put together the right package of measures, based on effectiveness, timeliness and value for money;
- 3 the components of such a package being considered include (but are not constrained by):
 - Travel planning and promotional measures for alternatives to car travel, including guided bus services and conventional bus services, to be implemented at the commencement of Northstowe.
 - The CGB Park and Ride sites are promoted and expanded as necessary both along and to the north of the A14 corridor.
 - Initiatives to maintain 'Level of Service' on the A14.
 - Physical investment in the highway network; both on and off the A14. To ensure that there will be no detrimental effect on the operation of the A14 Trunk Road and its junctions will have adequate capacity.
 - Further investment in public transport.
 - Environmental measures.
 - Monitoring of traffic levels and commitment to review measures depending on the results;
- 4 all parties are working together to deliver the agreed development and transport package, with the aim of ensuring that the development impacts of Northstowe are managed effectively, including an appropriate phasing strategy for the development;
- 5 after the initial package has been agreed and delivered; it will be the subject of regular review, as part of the process of reviewing the LDFs to ensure that the development programme and the capacity of the transport network remain aligned;

- 6 the contents of this statement does not prejudice the detailed negotiations that will be required as part of the consideration of the Northstowe planning application. Each party to the statement will still have the right to exercise its powers, in the delivery of its duties, as part of those negotiations. It should also be noted that this Statement does not endorse the WSP technical paper on the operation and management of the A14 dated 20 October 2006. Work has not progressed to a stage where all parties are able to agree it but the intention is that all technical papers will be shared and updated as further assessment is carried out to a point where agreement can be reached by all signatory parties.