

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE HORIZONS**

**Agenda Item No: 5b**

**A14 – Implications for Major Development Sites**

*To:* **Joint Strategic Growth Implementation Committee**

*Date:* **10<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

*From:* **Chief Executive, Cambridgeshire Horizons**

*Purpose:* **To update JSGIC on the decision not to proceed with the planned upgrades to the A14 and to discuss the implications for major development sites**

*Recommendation:* **That JSGIC members discuss the implications of the decision on the A14 for major development sites and consider practical next steps**

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## **Implications of the cancellation of the A14 scheme for major development sites**

### Background

The A14 is a dual carriageway road, running from the M1/M6 motorway junction to Felixstowe Docks, a distance of approximately 130 miles (210 km). It is an all-purpose road with national, regional and local functions, designated as the main east-west strategic route between the east coast ports and the Midlands and identified as a priority Trans European Network (TEN) route. The section of the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon also caters for north-south traffic between the A1(M) at Alconbury and the northern end of the M11 at Junction 14.

As part of the roads programme in the 1990's, the Department for Transport commissioned a number of multi-modal studies, one of which covered the A14 corridor (Cambridge to Huntingdon multi-modal studies, CHUMMS). The road was dogged by accidents and delays and it was apparent that some action was necessary on a route that was becoming ever more important, especially for freight, as recognised by its role in the TEN.

Approval in principle for the guided busway was founded on the evidence in CHUMMS, but the study also recognised the national, regional, and local importance of the A14 and recommended a major upgrade scheme. The key recommendations of CHUMMS were:

- a guided bus system should be provided in the disused Cambridge to St. Ives railway corridor with extensions to Trumpington and Addenbrooke's Hospital, and to Godmanchester and Huntingdon;
- the A14 should be widened to a dual 3-lane carriageway, where necessary, on its existing line between the junction for Horingsea/Fen Ditton and a point to the east of Fenstanton. Also, a new dual 3-lane carriageway should be constructed to the south of Godmanchester, Huntingdon and Brampton to rejoin the A14 to the west of the A1;
- longer-term consideration should be given to an Eastern Bypass of Huntingdon to provide extra access to the north of the town from the east; and
- to stabilise levels of traffic entering Cambridge and encourage use of public transport, the current demand management measures in Cambridge should continue and further, more rigorous measures should be implemented in the future.

The proposed A14 scheme consisted of the following elements:-

- A new two lane dual carriageway to the west of Huntingdon between Ellington and the A1.
- A new three lane dual carriageway between A1 and Fen Drayton around the south of Huntingdon and Godmanchester.
- Widening of the existing A14 to three lanes in each direction between Fen Drayton and Fen Ditton, a distance of approximately

11 miles (17km) (the part between Bar Hill and Girton is already three lanes).

- Local access roads alongside the widened A14 between Fen Drayton and M11 Junction 14 at Girton.
- Major interchanges with the A1 at Brampton, the existing A14 at Fen Drayton and the M11/A428 at Girton.
- Detrunking of the existing A14 between the A1 and Fen Drayton and removal of the Huntingdon Railway Viaduct. The 'old road' would then have been available as a local road, with the new road acting as an express route.
- Remodelling of the road network in Huntingdon, of which the west of town centre link road is a part.

It was confirmed by the Department for Transport (DfT), on 20 October 2010, that the A14 scheme will not progress in its present form. The DfT recognises that this corridor faces severe congestion, and that mobility along the route is critical for economic success and growth. However, the current scheme is considered unaffordable as it is predicted to cost over £1bn. The DfT is therefore withdrawing the current scheme. The Department has said it will undertake a study to identify cost-effective and practical alternative proposals which bring benefits and relieve congestion - looking across modes to ensure they develop sustainable proposals. This approach will also provide an opportunity for the private sector to play its part in developing options to tackle existing problems in the corridor.

### **Impact on Housing Development**

The Highways Agency retains powers of direction in planning applications. The Agency's current approach to developments is generally that they may be permitted provided that there is 'nil detriment' to the capacity and performance of the strategic highway network (the term 'nil detriment' is not defined in policy or elsewhere). The agency normally seeks to resist schemes that could infringe this.

### Northstowe

The development of Northstowe has a clear relationship with the need for improvements on the A14, in particular relating to the middle section of the proposed A14 scheme, Fen Drayton – Histon. The now-cancelled scheme would have provided for improvement of the existing interchanges at the Bar Hill and Dry Drayton junctions to access the new link roads to Northstowe.

The Joint Promoters of Northstowe, the Highways Agency and the local authorities are undertaking work to understand the relationship between the A14, the Northstowe housing trajectory and other transport measures. This work has not been completed yet. There is some uncertainty as things stand over how many houses could be built without some increase in the capacity of the A14, relating to both individual phases and the whole development.

### NIAB site

The NIAB development permission has a condition placed on it which only allows 350 dwellings to be completed without some intervention which improves the capacity of the A14 to the satisfaction of the Highways Agency.

### North West University site

The University is in discussions with the HA to understand the implications of the withdrawal of the A14 improvements on its transport assessment for the proposed North West University development. The transport modeling is yet to be completed. The University has indicated that until the full implications of the decision to withdraw the A14 scheme are known, it will not submit a planning application. In general, the impact of the University development on the A14 is likely to be marginal, but this would need to be established.

### Orchard Park

The original 900 dwellings at Orchard Park already have consent but a further three sites are proposed for development. Of these, the HA has stated it will not condition two sites; however the A14 announcement may have an impact on the third site. The HA, Promoters and the local authority are in discussions to understand the implications for the third site.

The Cambridge southern fringe sites are not considered materially to affect traffic levels on the A14.

## **Conclusions**

The Cambridgeshire growth plans are affected by the withdrawal of the A14 from the roads programme. Whilst it may be possible to reduce car traffic from new developments in the Cambridge fringes and Northstowe, it will not be possible to eliminate it altogether. This has consequential impacts on the A14 that may trigger Highways Agency intervention.

There is consensus amongst all partners that some action needs to be taken to address the concerns about the A14. The key questions are what measures are appropriate and feasible both in general and to address additional traffic from major development sites.

## **Recommendation**

That JSGIC members discuss the implications of the decision on the A14 for major development sites and consider the next steps.