

Luton & South Bedfordshire Joint Committee

23 October 2009

Agenda Item No. 11

AUTHOR	Joint Officer Team (Keith Dove LBC and Paul Cook CBC)
SUBJECT	Major Transport Schemes Update
PURPOSES	To brief the Joint Committee on the latest position on the major transport schemes.
RECOMMENDATIONS	The Joint Committee is recommended to i) note the report ii) endorse the response to the Highways Agency's public consultation on the proposed junction designs for M1 Junctions 11 and 12.
REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS	The Joint Committee receives regular reports on the progress of the major transport schemes, which are crucial to the housing and economic growth of the area. Reports enable the Committee to identify any actions required to ensure schemes are progressed as rapidly as possible.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report summarises the latest position on the major transport schemes, including those funded by Central Government either through the Highways Agency (HA), the Regional Funding Allocation, the second round of the Communities Infrastructure Fund (CIF2), or the third round of the Growth Area Fund (GAF3). The GAF3 includes funding to progress certain aspects of schemes at various stages of the Government's approvals process for major transport infrastructure (summarised below), as well as preparing the detailed engineering and environmental design for the grade separation of M1 Junction 10a and developing the design of Luton Northern Bypass and the Woodside Connection.

- 1.2 The Government also formally announced in July 2008 the process for undertaking a second round of Regional Funding Advice (RFA) of Government contributions to schemes/initiatives to support new homes, economic development and transport. The RFA, endorsed by the East of England Regional Assembly on 30 January 2009, included continued support for the A5-M1 Link and Luton Dunstable Busway, and allocated a further £8.1M for the Luton Town Centre Transport scheme.
- 1.3 The Governments response to RFA2 was published on 22 July 2009. The Region has subsequently confirmed the £78.39M funding for the Luton Dunstable Busway and increased the funding for the Luton Town Centre Transport Scheme to a total of £22.1M.

2. M1 WIDENING AND A5-M1 LINK INCLUDING M1 JUNCTION 11A

- 2.1 The HA Business Plan for 2008/09 published at the end of March 2008 indicated that the Secretary of State for Transport had asked the Agency to review a number of Motorway widening schemes (including the M1 widening Jcts10-13) and consider the opportunities for Dynamic Hard Shoulder Running. On 19 January 2009 the Government announced that this option would now be progressed for the improvement of the M1 to four lanes in each direction between junctions 10 and 13. Members should note that the four lanes will be continued through junctions 11, 11a and 12, and that this will require some land-take in the vicinity of these junctions.
- 2.2 The HA published their proposals for junctions 11 and 12 on 25 June, and public exhibitions were held between 9 and 11 July 2009. The closing date for responses to the consultation is 24 September. At the July meeting of this Committee, Members provided officers with their initial advice on the response to this consultation, in particular with regard to the preferred option for Junction 12. A copy of the response to the Highways Agency is included as Appendix A to this report.
- 2.3 The HA is continuing to work with the two local authorities and key Developers on design of a connection of Junction 11a (J11a) with the local highway network. Part of this work includes modelling of the traffic impacts on the local network of such a connection. The Government Office for the East of England is now co-ordinating this work. Members should note that the local roads in the vicinity of the new junction are now to be re-aligned as part of the design of the A5-M1 Link. The HA is planning to publish the Orders for the A5-M1 Link (including J11a) in November 2009. It is still the intention that J11a is constructed as part of the M1 scheme, and subject to a satisfactory conclusion of the statutory process following Draft Order publication for the whole A5-M1 Link scheme, advanced works at J11A could commence in late 2011.
- 2.4 The RFA submitted to Government envisages construction of the A5-M1 Link will start towards the end of 2012/13. However, if the works to complete J11a need to be brought forward to fit in with HA works, borrowing may be required to fund the J11a works until RFA funds can be drawn down. A provisional GAF3 allocation of £6.2M has been made to fund the interest payments on any loan required as a result of bringing forward construction of J11a and possibly all of the A5 to M1 Link to enable earlier opening of the scheme. Members should note that the GAF3 funding term is to 31 March 2011 although this may be extended if work is committed.

If the works are not brought forward and no borrowing is required, then time permitting the £6.2m GAF3 can be released and reallocated to other growth area projects. Changes to interest rates would also impact on the total amount that needs to be repaid. An internal review on funding is currently underway between the HA/DfT to determine scheme funding profiles based on existing allocations and taking account of the GAF3 provision. While this review will clarify the need and timescales the HA/DfT will not be drawn as to when results will be available. It is therefore imperative that we continue to press the HA for early decisions on the form of the scheme to be implemented and continue to ensure funding is secured that would allow the A5-M1 Link to be open at the earliest opportunity.

3. LUTON DUNSTABLE BUSWAY

- 3.1 One of the key objectives of the Project Management is to achieve cost certainty. Following discussions with various parties during autumn 2008 about how we could amend the procurement process to maximise the opportunity for cost certainty, discussions have been held with the DfT to consider the recommended approach to procurement and funding of the detailed design and construction of the Busway. The outcome of those discussions was reported to the Project Board in February 2009. The preferred approach is to adopt a single stage procurement process, but to switch to the new funding rules to ensure adequate funding for the detailed design.
- 3.2 The Tender documents were despatched to the short-listed contractors on 21 May 2009. Tenders were returned on 23 September, and assessment of the quality and financial bids is currently being undertaken by two separate teams of LBC and CBC officers. The preferred contractor will be identified in early December. The submission for Final Approval will be made to the DfT in late November,, based on Tender prices (including the priced risk schedule) of the preferred contractor. Following the DfT confirmation of Full Approval, reports will be submitted to the Councils Executives in early 2010 to confirm letting of the Contract, after which the Tender will be formally awarded. Advanced works for site clearance will commence in late January/early February 2010 to ensure the site is clear for the contractor before the bird breeding season starts.
- 3.3 Following an OJEU procurement process this Spring, in August Atkins were appointed to provide site supervision and project management support to the Councils. The majority of the work in this commission will be undertaken once the Contractor is appointed, although the scope of the commission also extended to providing support to the Councils during the Tender Assessment stage.
- 3.4 When the DfT wrote to the Borough Council on 3 September confirming Conditional Approval for the scheme, one of the conditions for Full Approval was that the Councils needed to demonstrate progress in seeking the commitment of bus operators to run services along all or part of the Busway. In mid May the Councils published an advert in the local and trade press seeking Expressions of Interest to operate these services, and also wrote all operators who operate services in the local area. As a result four local operators have formally indicated that they wish to operate services along all or part of the Busway. These operators have been invited to attend the Bus operations sub group meetings, and meetings have also been held with each of them to:

- determine their initial aspirations for Busway services;
- seek their initial views on the content of any subsequent Quality Partnership; and
- review the proposed vehicle specification.

4. EAST WEST RAIL

- 4.1 At the end of January 2009, the East West Rail Consortium published a report into alternative routes for the section of East West Rail route between the Midland Main Line and the East Coast Main Line. The technical report, prepared by consultants Steer Davies Gleave (SDG), focussed on the missing Central section, considering all routes between the Western Section (Oxford-Bedford) and the destinations of Norwich and Ipswich.
- 4.2 The responses to the consultation have been assessed by the East West Rail Consortium Central Section Sub Group and concluded that the construction of a new route 1C between the south of Luton and Stevenage has the greatest operational benefits. It is important to be aware that Bedfordshire County, Mid Bedfordshire District and Bedford Borough Council supported a variant to route 2B from Bedford, Sandy, Hitchin and on to Cambridge excluding the link to Stansted Airport. This option was not favoured by the majority of the consultees as services would not provide any interchange with Inter-City services on the East Coast Main Line (which would be at Stevenage), thus reducing the business case. The responses will be formally considered by the meeting of the East West Rail Consortium Steering Group in September 2009.

5. OTHER MAJOR TRANSPORT SCHEMES

East Luton Corridor (ELC) M1 Junction 10a to Airport

- 5.1 The new road up to the airport was fully opened in April 2009, and the formal opening ceremony took place on 18 June.
- 5.2 Members may be aware that works are still being carried out on Airport Way. These consist of upgrading to existing road safety barriers to bring them up to latest standards and unblocking existing drains. These works are being carried out by LBC's term contractor, Volker Highways, as they were not part of the original scope of works of the ELC contract.

Luton Town Centre Transport Scheme

- 5.3 Following the Borough Councils Preferred Route Announcement in April 2008, progress is being made in developing the engineering and environmental design of the scheme. Planning applications for the four elements of the scheme have now been granted planning permission. Approval was sought from the Borough Councils Executive on 9 March for the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs). The CPOs were published at the end of July 2009 and the objection period closed on 21 August.
- 5.4 The total out-turn cost of this option is about £26.8M, of which £4M is funded through GAF3 and £22.1M through the RFA. Some cost savings to bring the scheme within budget are anticipated through reductions in land costs.

5.5 The present programme for the scheme, assuming a conventional procurement process and availability of funding, is set out below:

- January 2010 -Public Inquiry
- Late 2010 -Start Of works
- Early 2012 -Completion of works

M1 J10a

5.6 Consultants Scott Wilson were appointed in January 2009 to undertake the development of the engineering and environmental design of the scheme. A review of the scheme options was undertaken in the Spring, which included workshops attended by officers from both Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Councils. Following this review, two options are being presented to public consultation, The closing date for receipt of consultation responses was 1 September.

5.7 In both options the existing roundabout at Junction 10a is removed and slip roads provided to connect the M1Spur/Airport way to London Road. The main differences are:

- Option 1 uses the existing under-bridge at Newlands Road, together with a link to London Road to connect to the new slip roads
- Option 2 has a new under-bridge about halfway between Newlands Road and the existing Junction 10a roundabout.

Some visitors to the public exhibitions in mid July suggested an alternative to these options, where London Road would pass under the existing roundabout. Scott Wilson are developing the engineering design for such an option to determine its feasibility. At the July meeting of this Committee, Members deferred making a decision on the preferred option until this further option had been evaluated; it is hoped to report the outcome of this further work to this meeting of the Committee.

5.8 The expected programme to progress the scheme design can be summarised as follows:

- July/Aug 2009 -Undertake consultation on scheme option(s)
- January 2010 -Publish Planning Application and Orders
- April 2010 -Completion of detailed design

Luton Northern Bypass and the Woodside Connection

5.9 The outcome of the public consultation into these two schemes was reported to the March 2009 meeting of this Committee. Bedfordshire Highways have been commissioned to carry out further design work on both schemes, and in particular of the outer route of the Luton Northern Bypass, which Members of this Committee resolved to support as the Preferred Route at their meeting on 20 March. Development of both projects, up to the Planning Application stage is being funded from the GAF3 allocation.

5.10 Woodside Connection

Discussions with the developers for the Woodside Connection have indicated that the design needs to adopt a flexible approach particularly with respect to alignment close to Junction 11A of the M1 so as to serve the developing layouts for the core strategy. Design work is now being progress by Bedfordshire Highways.

5.11 Luton Northern Bypass

Following the consultation into the emerging Core Strategy during the Spring, a number of the responses expressed concern about the Outer Route, in particular the section between the A6 and A505 which extends into Hertfordshire. As a result Bedfordshire Highways are reviewing the alignment of the northern bypass, including consideration of mitigation measures, that could reduce the impact of the preferred outer route on the Chilterns AONB and adjacent villages in Hertfordshire..

In addition, work is being undertaken to assess the likely scale of investment in a realistic package of sustainable transport measures that would be necessary to reduce congestion in a non-bypass scenario.

Northern entrance to Luton Airport Parkway Station

- 5.12 Agreement has been reached between the developer of Napier Park/Stirling Place, the Council and Network Rail for Network Rail to carry out a GRIP1-3 fast-track process to produce a preferred design layout and cost estimate for the project. A provisional start date in August was provided by Network Rail to allow the initial design and cost estimate to be completed in September. Unfortunately due to Network Rail internal administration, this process has yet to start.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The need to undertake Equalities impact assessments (EIA) will be considered as each scheme is developed. Many highway schemes tend to have impacts on all residents/ businesses in close proximity to the scheme and as such will be considered as part of the consultation process. A high level EIA has been produced for the Luton Dunstable Busway and the Luton Town Centre Transport scheme, and more in-depth assessments will be undertaken as sub-projects of these schemes progress e.g. account of facilities at stops to assist groups such as people with disabilities and the elderly to access busway services and passenger information. Agreed by the Borough Council's Environment & Regeneration Equalities Coordinator on 12 October 2009.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Each of the schemes being promoted by the Luton Borough or Central Bedfordshire Unitary Authorities will need to progress through the various stages of the Governments funding approvals process. It will also need to be ensured that the business case for these schemes is robust enough to ensure ongoing funding approval through the Regional Funding Allocation process, which has been reviewed and was endorsed by EERA in January 2009. The Government's response to the advice submitted by the Region is expected in Summer 2009. The business cases will need to ensure the individual schemes are affordable in terms of capital expenditure as well as on-going revenue costs. Where major schemes may impact on each other,

it is essential that the requirements, and timing of works, for each scheme are considered to ensure that value for money is achieved and that duplication of work is minimised.

- 7.2 The current economic climate means that local authorities are experiencing difficulties attracting firm s106 contributions which may affect some of the above projects. Land values and the construction industry generally have also been affected which could create capacity issues in terms of delivering all of the above schemes, particularly given that a lot of the work will be undertaken in the run up to the Olympics in London 2012 which in itself could pose capacity issues as well as cost issues.
- 7.3 Consideration also needs to be given to recent government indications that additional funding will be provided for housing, which could impact on the level of funding available for transport projects.
- 7.4 The government have also recently announced a national reduction in the GAF3 programme to enable an extra £1.5bn to be pumped into housing. The estimated impact on the Luton and Central Bedfordshire GAF3 allocation is a reduction of £2.2m in 2010/11. No decision has been taken yet as to which project(s) this will be applied to. These implications were agreed by the Borough Council's Environment and Regeneration Finance Manager on 12 October 2009.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no legal implications to be considered by this Committee. Agreed by John Secker, Luton Borough Council Legal Services, on 12 October 2009.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Response to Highways Agency Public Consultation regarding improvements to M1Junctions 11 and 12.

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T/T/M1

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24 September 2009

Dear Lynne

M1 JUNCTIONS 10-13 CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS

I refer to the Highways Agency (HA) public consultation into the proposed improvements of M1 Junctions 11 and 12 to be carried out as part of the aforementioned proposals. In preparing this response to the public consultation, account has been taken of the information available in the public consultation leaflet/exhibition material. The Joint Committee supports the principle of capacity improvements to the M1 between Junctions 10 and 13.

At its meeting on 24 July 2009, the Joint Committee considered the alternative options for Junction 12, and suggested that the Orange option was preferable based on the grounds that it would:

- have new slip roads built to the north of the existing junction which would provide increased capacity;
- include a new bridge built over the M1, which will enable the existing junction to remain open during construction;
- have new traffic signals installed;
- need less extra land and less fill material than for the red and blue options;
- enable provision of safe and easy to use facilities for cyclists and pedestrians on the new bridge;
- allow for the existing bridges under the motorway to be extended and new ones built to maintain access to fields and the rights of way network; and
- have an estimated cost in the range of £32.4m to £47.9m, less than the red and blue options.

In relation to the last bullet point, at the Joint Committee meeting on 24 July Members also put forward to the HA that if there were any budget savings by going with the orange option for Junction 12 rather than the other two options, then these savings be used to help pay for other strategic highway improvements within the Luton and south Bedfordshire growth area, such as the improvement of M1 Junction 10a. The representative from the HA (the meeting was attended by Alan Kirkdale) explained that funding for the M1 works came from the National network budget, whereas improvements for junction 10a would be from the regional budget, but that this would be given further consideration.

Given the aforementioned cost range of the orange option for Junction 12 (£32.4m to £47.9m) is significantly lower than the cost range of the red option (£43.8m to £70.6m) it is not clear why such potential savings cannot form a contribution from the HA to the proposed improvement of M1 Junction 10a. The Councils would therefore request that the HA continues to give consideration to using any cost savings from the M1 capacity improvements to fund other improvements to the strategic highway network.

Given that there is only one option for M1 Junction 11, the Joint Committee supported the principles of the proposed improvements at that Junction. However, given the limited amount of design information currently available, it is difficult to comment on those proposals in detail. However it is anticipated that the Borough Council may wish to raise further issues regarding the proposals for M1 Junction 11 given the concerns that they raised about the operation of that junction in relation to the previous M1 Widening scheme. An understanding of the existing and future traffic movements at the junctions is key to this process.

I trust that the information contained within this letter is helpful, but please contact me should you wish to further discuss any of these matters.

Yours sincerely

Keith Dove
Transportation Strategy Manager