

4th July 2019**Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE****A611 MAJOR ROUTE NETWORK – SCHEME UPDATE AND FEASIBILITY
STUDY****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - provide an update on the feasibility study undertaken to identify potential improvements to the A611 route between the M1 J27 and A60 Mansfield
 - seek approval to undertake a public consultation exercise with a view to selecting a preferred scheme for future development and safeguarding
 - seek approval for further work in preparation of completing an 'outline business case' submission at a future date.

Information

2. Members will be aware that the A608/A611 between the M1 motorway Junction 27 and the A611/A60 junction in Mansfield suffers from considerable journey time delay at both peak and inter-peak periods. The corridor provides a key link between Ashfield and Mansfield town centres and forms part of the designated 'Major Road Network' in Nottinghamshire.
3. Several business parks are located on the A608/A611 route (such as Sherwood Business Park) or close to it (such as Oakham and Ransom Wood) and this route is a vital connection to the M1 motorway from both of these districts for both businesses and residents. The route links the businesses along the Mansfield Southern Growth Corridor (MARR) to the M1 (and elsewhere). The traffic delays therefore have significant detrimental impacts on local residents, all existing businesses using this route, as well as potential employment and housing development sites adjacent to and nearby the corridor (including Lindhurst in Mansfield).
4. Following discussions at the Ashfield Regeneration Board, the three local authorities (Ashfield District, Mansfield District and Nottinghamshire County councils) determined that it would be beneficial to undertake a study of the current economic impacts of the delay along the A608/A611 study route and establish the level of any benefits that could be derived from highway improvements along the route. In so doing it would be possible to determine if there is a strong business case for such transport improvements. Transport consultants AECOM were commissioned to undertake a transport study.
5. The A608/A611 corridor study area identifying the 11 junctions that were studied in detail is shown on plan A. It should be noted that the M1 (Junction 27) itself is not part of the study as Highways England (HE) is examining the capacity of this junction and separately promoting an improvement scheme.

Study details and findings

6. The purpose of this section is to provide Members with details of the study which aimed to:
 - value the current economic impacts (social costs) of the journey time delay along the study route
 - identify potential options along the study route to improve journey times
 - test the potential options to determine if they would offer sufficient economic value to warrant further development
 - develop a strategic business case for the potential options or packages of options.
7. The baseline conditions along the route corridor were examined using traffic count and journey time data specifically collected for the study. The value of the travel time delays at each junction has been calculated using detailed junction models and an assessment of their operational performance. The travel time delay has been monetised using Department for Transport (DfT) values of time by different vehicle classes. The baseline study results calculated that the cost of delays along the A608/A611 corridor amount to £14m per year to society.
8. Having established the capacity limitations of each junction a range of options to improve the carrying capacity of each junction was considered by AECOM. This involved consideration of a range of options involving different scales of intervention. Four alternative packages of junction improvement options were identified:
 - scheme options that are wholly contained within the confines of the existing highway boundary (termed package 1)
 - scheme options which needed land acquisition outside of the highway boundary but involving only minor strip widening (package 2)
 - scheme options where more significant land acquisition outside the highway boundary (including potential demolition of buildings) is required (package 3)
 - provision of an Annesley Bypass and associated A611 corridor improvement works (package 4).
9. It was determined that, given the limited scope of improvement that it would provide, package 1 would not be progressed any further as such a package of options would not deliver the stated project objectives.
10. The estimated likely costs, the monetised benefits, and consequently the benefit to cost ratio of each of the remaining packages (2-4) were calculated and are shown in the table below. It should, however, be noted that the improvements used to estimate these cost and benefits are based on very preliminary alignments and designs. The scheme design, and therefore the 'Benefit to Cost ratio' calculations, are still subject to the necessary consultation, statutory undertakings and other issues arising from feasibility studies, detailed scheme investigation, and design. These calculations are therefore likely to change as they are informed by the proposed public consultation and further detailed design.

Benefit to Cost ratio calculations – based on core growth figures

| Option | Costs (at present values) | Benefits (at present values) | Benefit Cost Ratio |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Package 2 | £44m | £513m | 11.7 |
| Package 3 | £51m | £503m | 9.9 |
| Package 4 | £80m | £557m | 7.0 |

11. Given the figures reported in paragraph 10 it is clear that the rate of return on investment is significant for all packages, and even though some of the costs need to be confirmed (as schemes are developed further) the benefit to cost ratios exceed the DfT figure of 2 which is

seen as the minimum to attract external funding support. As such there appears to be a justification to undertake additional assessments on a preferred scheme package, should such an option be considered deliverable and a priority by the County Council.

12. At first glance it would appear that the cheapest package (package 2) generates the best rate of return and should automatically be selected as the preferred option package but that is not the only consideration. There are greater total scheme benefits arising from the package that includes a relief road for Annesley (package 4) and this would reduce the severance and direct impact on properties and businesses with frontages on the A611. Therefore, it would be premature to dismiss the bypass option despite its far higher construction cost; and it is proposed to consult further on all the package options listed above before reporting back to Committee with a preferred scheme recommendation.

Funding

13. The current cost estimates for the scheme packages range from £44m to over £80m. Funding for schemes up to £50m would need to be funded from central Government sources and the Government's Major Road Network (MRN) fund is one other such possible funding source. Funding of schemes over £50m and up to £100m are currently funded from the Government's Large Local Majors (LLM) fund. Bids for funding would have to be made at the appropriate time.
14. Funding bids for both MRN and LLM projects are made on behalf of local highway authorities by Midlands Connect as the relevant national transport body. Should the County Council wish to pursue an application for funding then it will be necessary to develop a scheme to an advanced stage of readiness (i.e. at least preparing an outline business case) and establish support from Midlands Connect. There are likely to be many more schemes competing for priority selection by Midlands Connect than there are funds to support. In summary there can, having worked up schemes for delivery, be no guarantee that the County Council's A608/A611 schemes will attract funding support. In which case the cost of preparing the necessary detailed assessments falls entirely to the County Council.
15. If the County Council were successful in attracting funding support then Members should note that under the terms of the outline business case, the Government (DfT) will require the County Council (Section 151 Officer) to confirm that NCC accept responsibility for meeting a minimum of 15% of the scheme cost and any costs arising from overspends. Subject to approval of this report, a report will be presented to a future Policy Committee meeting providing a financial update and seeking approval to submit the outline business case once a preferred scheme package has been selected.

Consultation

16. Subject to approval of this report, a number of consultation events will be planned for Autumn 2019. These public exhibitions will be the main element of the consultation strategy in showcasing the potential corridor wide packages of measures. Members of the public will have the opportunity to make comments and discuss any issues with members of the project team. Leaflets will be distributed to properties near the A608/A611 corridor informing people of the consultation dates and a webpage will also be set up allowing easy access to view the latest scheme plans.

Other Options Considered

17. There have been numerous options considered for each junction and extensive traffic modelling has been undertaken to assist in the decision-making process. An Options Assessment Report has been prepared by traffic consultants and this is listed as a background paper.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

18. The improvements to the A608/A611 will unlock major developments sites in this part of Nottinghamshire and will deliver significant journey time savings. It is considered there is a compelling case in the public interest for progressing a package of highway improvement measures in the A608/A611 corridor as this is seen as a priority corridor for improvement in the Departmental Place Strategy, and that the benefits of the A608/A611 scheme justify interference with private property rights.

Statutory and Policy Implications

19. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Finance Implications

20. The latest cost estimate for the package of measures is currently in the range of £44m to £80m but it should be noted that these costs will need to be reviewed and confirmed as the scheme options are developed further.
21. The feasibility work undertaken to date was funded through a successful bid for funding from the Nottinghamshire Productivity Development Fund; and contributions by Nottinghamshire County, Ashfield District and Mansfield District councils. Should Committee approve further feasibility work on this scheme, the funding to deliver this work will be sought from similar sources. It is currently intended that this will be funded from an agreed pooled budget arising from Business Rate contributions.
22. Subject to approval of this report, a report will be presented to a future Policy Committee meeting providing a financial update and seeking approval to submit the outline business case once a preferred scheme package has been selected.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Committee:

- 1) Approve the update on the A608/A611 corridor feasibility study and the next steps in project development as set out in this report
- 2) Approve public consultation (and the carrying out of any appropriate associated publicity) on the scheme options and, following the consultation, present a report on a preferred scheme for consideration at a future Committee meeting

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Corporate Director – Place

For any enquiries about this report please contact: David Pick 0115 977 4273

Constitutional Comments (SJE – 30/05/2019)

23. This decision falls within the Terms of Reference of the Communities & Place Committee to whom responsibility for the exercise of the Authority's functions relating to the planning and management of highways (including traffic management and wider transport initiatives and the development of integrated transport systems) has been delegated.

Financial Comments (GB 21/06/2019)

24. As stated in paragraphs 20-22 in the report and pending approval to proceed: Cost estimates of £44m to £80m will be reviewed and confirmed with development of scheme options and any match funding requirements will need to progress through the usual capital approval processes; Feasibility costs totalling £69,000 have been funded from the approved 2019/20 Integrated Transport Measures line in the capital programme which totals £7.1m. This budget is made up of NCC borrowing and contributions from external partners. It is proposed that any further feasibility work is funded from the Business Rates Pool reserve; and an outline business case will provide a financial update on the preferred scheme package once selected.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- Rachel Madden – Kirkby South
- John Knight – Kirkby North
- Samantha Deakin – Sutton Central and East
- Stephen Garner – Mansfield South