



4th July 2019

Agenda Item: 8

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, PLACE

A617 MANSFIELD ASHFIELD REGENERATION ROUTE – ROAD WIDENING FEASIBILITY STUDY UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - provide an update on recent progress on the scheme feasibility study and to set out next steps in scheme development;
 - seek approval to notify affected parties with a view to formally safeguarding an improvement corridor.
 - 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 A617 MARR is a key access corridor from Mansfield and Ashfield to the M1 motorway and A1 trunk roads. Delays on this corridor are limiting employment growth and the uptake of serviced employment land and residential development sites already unlocked by the construction of MARR in 2004. Several business parks are located on (such as Lindhurst and Summit Park) or close to the A617 route (such as Oakham and Ransom Wood). The traffic delays therefore have significant detrimental impacts on all existing businesses using this route, as well as potential employment and housing development sites adjacent to and nearby.
3. The County Council has recently reviewed all safeguarded transport projects in the County and has prepared and published a Departmental Place Plan (published January 2018). This review and Plan sought to reinforce and reaffirm the need to improve traffic and travel conditions on the A617 corridor in Mansfield as a matter of priority.
4. At a recent Full Council meeting Members approved a Motion to consider and investigate 'dualling' the MARR to the south and east of Mansfield, i.e. the section of MARR between the A38 at Kings Mill and the A617 Rainworth Bypass (the latter which is already constructed as a dual carriageway), see Plan A attached.
5. The County Council commissioned Via East Midlands to examine the feasibility of upgrading the A617. A preliminary design for the improvement of the A617 to either a single four lane carriageway with at-grade junctions or a full dual carriageway with two level (grade separated) junctions has been completed.

Study details and findings

6. This initial piece of work was a 'high level' study, to establish if it would be feasible to widen the existing MARR and if so the likely extent of private land needed for the suggested widening and

the likely associated cost. This initial piece of work has not been informed by up to date traffic modelling and future traffic forecasting.

7. For cost effectiveness Via EM recommend that any carriageway widening is more suited on the south side of the existing MARR due to the presence of a cycle/footway and additional drainage systems which exists on the north side. Also, as the development of the Lindhurst site, which straddles part of MARR, is already under construction on the north side there may be an opportunity to widen on the south side as built development is still in the planning stage and could possibly be varied to accommodate a widened A617. It should be noted that the Lindhurst development site is one of the key development sites to the south of Mansfield which is earmarked for 1700 new houses and 21.3 hectares of new employment land to be used for class B1/B2 and B8 uses. The County Council is a landowner and member of the development consortium.
8. Via EM have considered two possible road widening scenarios;
 - As a minimum a 4 lane undivided carriageway with a 40 mph speed limit and;
 - As a maximum a full dual carriageway with split level motorway style junctions and a 70mph speed limit.
9. It should be noted that there is no specific standard layout for the proposal which is to provide 4 single lanes, however, there is an example of a recent scheme undertaken by Highways England where 4 single lanes with a speed limit of 40 mph has been implemented on the A453 Barton Lane, Clifton.
10. A preliminary design of both widening options has been completed. Further detailed design of the scheme would of course be required if the authority wished to pursue a scheme through to business case submission and delivery, and all necessary planning and statutory processes would need to be attended to.
11. The Via EM studies have shown that in engineering terms either of the two scenarios are feasible and the existing MARR route could be modified accordingly. Third party land take would be extensive if the highest standard improvement option was chosen and this would likely compromise the Lindhurst development. In so doing such a scheme is unlikely to be politically acceptable.
12. For the 4-lane undivided carriageway option the initial extent of carriageway widening needed for the proposal is 6.0m. This would allow the existing 10m wide single carriageway cross section to be modified to a proposed cross-section consisting of four 3.65m lanes. As the existing land topography varies along the proposed widening area an additional 3.0 - 4.0 metres is suggested to accommodate any undulations in the topography which may affect size of the embankments. At the NMU crossings and junctions additional private land is needed to accommodate further widening needed at these features and this would need to be established after undertaking detailed traffic modelling.
13. The comparative costs of the two schemes are:
 - 4 lane undivided carriageway £40m- £50m plus land acquisition costs
 - full dual carriageway £120m plus land acquisition costs.

Funding

14. The current cost estimates for the scheme packages range from £40m to over £120 million. Funding for schemes up to £50 million would need to be funded from central Government sources. The Government's Major Road Network (MRN) fund is one such possible funding

source. Bids for funding would have to be made at the appropriate time. For funding of scheme over £50m up to £100m (and possibly slightly over) these are currently funded from the Government's Large Local Majors (LLM) fund.

15. Funding bids for both MRN and LLM projects are made on behalf of local highway authorities by Midlands Connect, as the relevant sub national transport body. Should the County Council wish to pursue an application for funding then it will be necessary to work up a scheme to an advanced stage of readiness (ie 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 A617 MARR widening scheme will attract funding support. In which case the cost of preparing the necessary detailed assessments falls entirely to the County Council.
16. If the County Council were subsequently successful in attracting funding support then Members should note that under the terms of the Outline Business Case (OBC), the 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. A report will be taken to a future NCC Policy Committee meeting providing a financial update and seeking approval to submit the OBC, once a preferred scheme has been approved by Committee.

Consultation

17. It is proposed to consult further with the local planning authorities, both Ashfield and Mansfield District Councils, and local landowners to establish whether it would be possible to accommodate the widening of MARR and formally safeguard a corridor for improvement in emerging Local Plan documents of the two authorities.

Other Options Considered

18. There have been two options considered for the widening of MARR this sets two possible extremes of widening to accommodate four lanes of traffic. This should enable Members to decide whether they support further investigation of one or other of these options or would like consideration of something in between.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

19. The improvement of the A617 MARR will unlock major developments sites in this part of Nottinghamshire and will deliver significant journey time savings.
20. It is considered there is a compelling case in the public interest for progressing with highway improvement measures of MARR as this is seen as a priority corridor for improvement in the Departmental Place Strategy, and that the benefits of the scheme justify interference with private property rights.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. 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

22. The latest cost estimate for the package of measures is currently up to £ 50 million for a single 4 lane undivided carriageway.
23. The feasibility work undertaken to date was funded through a Policy Committee report – 12th September 2018. Should Committee approve further feasibility work on this scheme, the funding to deliver this work will be sought from suitable funding sources or a further report to Policy Committee. It is currently intended that this will be funded from an agreed pooled budget arising from Business Rate contributions.
24. A report will be taken to a future NCC Policy Committee meeting providing a financial update and seeking approval to submit the OBC.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Committee:

- 1) Consider whether there are any actions it requires in relation to the recent progress on the A617 Mansfield Ashfield Regeneration Route widening engineering feasibility study and the next steps in project development as set out in this report.
- 2) Give approval to consult with the Local Planning Authorities, landowners and other key stakeholders with a view to formally safeguarding a corridor of improvement.
- 3) Approve the carrying out of further scheme assessment and preparation of a strategic outline business case for the widening of Mansfield Ashfield Regeneration Route to a minimum 4 lane carriageway standard.

Adrian Smith
Corporate Director – Place

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

Constitutional Comments (SJE – 30/05/2019)

22. 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. If Committee resolves that any actions are required, it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Financial Comments (GB 21/06/19)

23. The feasibility costs for this work totalled £20k and was fully funded from the £150k Major Infrastructure Improvement capital budget which is already approved within the Communities and Place capital programme. It is proposed that any further feasibility work is funded from the Business Rates Pool reserve.

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

- Andy Sissons – Mansfield South
- Stephen Garner – Mansfield South
- Martin Wright – Mansfield East
- Vaughan Hopewell – Mansfield East
- Samantha Deakin – Sutton Central and East