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Meeting:	General Scrutiny Committee
Meeting date:	18 July 2018
	HEREFORD TRANSPORT PACKAGE (HTP) – SUPPLEMENTARY BRIEFING RE ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Introduction

Herefordshire Council's Cabinet is due to consider reports and recommendations regarding the Hereford Transport Package which will include considering the preferred route for the bypass at a meeting on Friday 27 July 2018 at 10am.

In advance of this, the council's General Scrutiny Committee has called in the decision for pre-decision scrutiny; and will consider the issue on Wednesday 18 July 2018 at 10am.

The report for General Scrutiny Committee, associated technical reports and appendices were available to view on the council's website from 19:00 on 10 July 2018 and members of the public and elected members were, in accordance with the council's constitution, able to submit written questions to the to the committee by 5pm 12 July 2018.

A total of 14 valid questions have been submitted and a further three valid questions submitted for the committee meeting held on 2 July have been re-directed by the Monitoring Officer to this meeting. No questions were received from elected members.

Responses to the 17 questions have been published. Where questions relate to the proposed decision under scrutiny, the issues raised by the questioner will be explored by the committee. To inform their consideration of these issues this supplement provides clarifications, information, and where appropriate highlights the relevant parts of the technical papers published as part of the proposed cabinet report, by reference to the question number.

Issues:

1. Equality Impact Assessment Approach

A comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment Screening Report has been produced as part of the delivery of this project and the recent consultation and is contained in Appendix 7 of the cabinet report. This report considers the potential impact of the bypass project on vulnerable people and this report will ensure that any decision made about the project reflects the Councils equality duty under the Equality Act 2010.

This report does not indicate that the Red Route, or any of the route options, will have a disproportionate adverse impact on the less advantaged. It identifies that there are certain protected characteristic groups (gender, age, disability and pregnancy and maternity) which have the potential to be disproportionately impacted and which need to be considered at every stage of the project.

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The council's equality impact assessment process will provide a means of developing mitigation where required and will also identify how the benefits to these groups can be realised in the detailed design of both the bypass and the Active Travel Measures; a full equality impact assessment will be developed to inform the next decision. The preparation of an Equality Impact Screening Report is the appropriate level of assessment at this stage of scheme development. It will ensure that as the project goes forward, the potential impacts of the scheme on protected characteristics groups are properly assessed, and through this process of assessment and review the council demonstrates its compliance with its public sector equality duty.

3. Current Scheme Cost Estimates and the Assessment of Value for Money:

Detailed information on the estimated scheme costs are contained with Appendix 2 to the cabinet report and summarised within the Resources Implications paragraphs of the cabinet report.

The latest estimated costs for each bypass route corridor have been developed on a consistent basis across all route corridors and are presented as current year 2018 prices. This is to ensure a fair comparison for route selection purposes based on an assumed standard for the road at this stage of development. Whilst the estimates for the different route corridors range from £149m to £166m, the assessment undertaken to identify a recommended preferred route has not identified the cost of the scheme as a key differentiating factor.

The costs for schemes of this kind are regularly updated as a project progresses to ensure estimates are presented in current prices taking into account inflation and refinements to the detail of projects, in accordance with Government guidance. The spring 2018 consultation cost estimates were based on 2016 prices, the current cost estimates are based on 2018 prices as the design and risk assessment of the seven shortlisted routes has progressed since the consultation.

Once a route is chosen work will be done to confirm the design and standard for the scheme prior to confirming the cost estimate for the scheme to be delivered. At this point a further review of cost estimates will be undertaken prior to a decision to proceed.

The Benefits Cost Ratio for a scheme is part of the basis on which Government assesses the overall benefits to society of investment in infrastructure. It does not form part of the methodology for determining a preferred route corridor for a bypass. Once a preferred route corridor is selected, further technical and modelling work will be undertaken to develop the required business case for submission to the Department for Transport. This will be based on the detailed design of the preferred route for the bypass and package of active travel measures and will include a Benefits Cost Ratio to enable a comparison of the overall costs of taking forward the scheme against the benefits which would accrue for this investment.

4. 9. & 12. Consultation with the public and stakeholders

The Phase 2 Public Consultation Report is included in Appendix 1 of the cabinet report. This sets out a detailed analysis of the results of that consultation and includes the full details of responses received from organisations in Appendix F of that report. The council invited a wide range of organisations to respond to the consultation and over 30 responded representing a wide range of environmental, social and business interests.

Not all statutory organisations chose to respond directly to the public consultation; responses were not received from either Natural England or Highways England. However, the project team is working closely with all appropriate statutory bodies and will continue to do so throughout the development of the scheme. Natural England have been to the site to see the shortlist of route options and the issues associated the route selection process. Given that the A49 is a trunk road, the project team has been

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meeting regularly with Highways England to ensure they fully understand the development of the scheme. Highways England has been supportive of the council's approach to developing this scheme and have provided funding towards development costs.

The absence of a consultation response at this stage does not invalidate the option appraisal process. Future consultation in phase 3 and any planning approval process will provide further opportunities for the two statutory bodies, and any other interested parties, to provide their views.

Detailed analysis of the responses to questions about the bypass and seven possible bypass routes are set out in the consultation report contained within Appendix 1 of the cabinet report. 59% of respondents indicated their support for a bypass. Many of these respondents support the delivery of the scheme and did not express their preference for a route – they simply wish the scheme to be delivered.

Only 40% of the total number of respondents chose to answer the question asking them to select a route or state a preference for a particular route. Of these only 20% of all respondents chose to rank all seven possible routes. Given this it is difficult to be conclusive over the public's preferences over the different route options, although the overall support for a by-pass as part of the package is clear. The recommendation that the red route be the preferred route results from it being the best performing route from the technical assessment as detailed in appendices 4 and 5 of the report to cabinet and the consultation report does not support any other recommendation.

5. 11. & 17. Active Travel Measures:

The inclusion of Active Travel Measures as part of a Hereford Transport Package has been identified throughout the scheme development as crucial to achieving the overall objectives of the package. The Local Transport Plan makes clear the importance of encouraging greater use of walking, cycling and public transport. Appendix 6 of the cabinet report contains a detailed update on the development of the walking, cycling, public transport and public realm projects that could form part of the Hereford Transport Package. The Phase 2 Consultation Report highlights that the Active Travel Measures (ATM) are widely supported and should be taken forward.

In order to achieve the objectives of the Hereford Transport Package, both a bypass and active travel measures are required. Many of the measures indicated in the ATM report would not be deliverable without the bypass, most obviously those proposed on the existing A49 through the city. Without the bypass, giving greater priority to pedestrians and cyclists in these locations would lead to increased congestion for road vehicles. The bypass is required to remove traffic from the centre of the city to provide the opportunity for these measures to be introduced. Further development of these measures will continue following the selection of a route for the bypass and this work will include an assessment of locations where it may be possible to deliver improvements in advance and as the bypass is delivered. This would be the subject of further reports.

6. Journey Times and Regional Connectivity

The assessments undertaken indicate that the traffic benefits of the Hereford Transport Package are broadly similar regardless of the choice of route corridor for the bypass. Once a preferred route is selected, detailed traffic modelling will be undertaken as part of the next stage of scheme development.

The bypass has been identified as a priority within the Midlands Connect Regional Transport Strategy. It will enable north-south through traffic on the A49 to avoid the centre of the city, providing more reliable journeys for long distance movements and improving regional connectivity between England and Wales and also within the West Midlands Region.

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In addition, improved resilience of the road network associated with the provision of a new river crossing will improve conditions for long distance regional journeys supporting business and the economy of the region.

Monitoring of journey times within Hereford shows that current average speeds on the network are amongst the lowest of any city in the country and at peak times can be lower than central London. The impact of this on the local economy is considered unacceptable.

7. Benefits to University Development

The bypass is an integral part of the Hereford Transport Package, taking through traffic away from the centre of the city and allowing many other journeys starting and/or finishing in Hereford to do likewise. The bypass will provide the additional network capacity which will enable the planned growth set out in the Core Strategy to be delivered. Without it the planned growth in housing and employment and economic benefits cannot be achieved. The need for the bypass to support the delivery of a successful University in Hereford is clearly set out in the response from the NMITE team to the consultation in the report contained in Appendix 1 of the cabinet report. The response sets out how the bypass will reduce congestion and enable the city to flourish and fulfil its potential as a tranquil place to study, work and visit, enable students to enjoy the public realm and enable Hereford to develop into an attractive university city.

10. Southern Link Road and the Hereford Transport Package

The Southern Link Road forms part of the South Wye Transport Package which is a separate project and seeks to address transport problems within the south of the city. The Southern Link Road (SLR) is a confirmed scheme, having received planning approval in 2016.

Funding for the project has been secured from Growth Fund, with the final business case to be submitted to the Department for Transport when tender prices are known in the autumn. This is the normal process for funding of infrastructure schemes.

The Public Inquiry in relation to the Compulsory Purchase and Side Road orders for the scheme is scheduled to commence in late October. Subject to the outcome of this process the land required to commence construction in spring 2019 would be secured. This Inquiry is not a planning inquiry and will determine the council's case for acquiring any land which cannot be secured by negotiation.

There is a robust case for the SLR based on the benefits it will deliver for the south wye area and the Hereford Enterprise Zone.

There is no reason not to progress the development of the Hereford Transport Package, including the selection of a preferred route for a bypass. All route options for the bypass have a common starting point at on the A465 where there would be a roundabout to connect with the SLR and the A465.

14. Noise & Air Quality

The impacts of possible routes on air quality and noise have been assessed in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively within the Stage 2 Environmental Assessment Report which is contained in Appendix 3 of the cabinet report.

Air quality and noise modelling concluded that overall, the proposed scheme is predicted to redistribute traffic that currently goes through Hereford onto the bypass, leading to improvements in air quality in the centre of Hereford. This will mean improved air quality and reduced noise associated with traffic on homes, schools and communities adjacent to the existing A49. The implementation of

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Active Travel Measures within the city centre would also contribute to improving the environment for those living and working within the area.

The delivery of bypass will have minimal impact on air quality in the area surrounding the new road as the route will be mostly free flowing and not stop start as is the case currently at peak times on the existing A49 and subsequently emissions will disperse quickly in the surrounding area. Noise assessment information contained with the Stage 2 Environmental Assessment report contained in Appendix 3 of the cabinet report sets out that with mitigation the increase in noise at any affected properties can be reduced.

15. Bypass design and capacity.

The design standard of the bypass is yet to be determined. For the purposes of route comparison a design standard has been assumed to enable a route selected for further development and detailed design. This detailed work will include traffic modelling which will inform the final standard of the bypass on the red route. This work will ensure that the road standard can accommodate traffic growth in future years.

16. Traffic Growth / Congestion Relief

The delivery of the bypass will enable significant growth in housing and employment as set out in the council's adopted Core Strategy. Growth in housing will have associated growth in traffic, however with a bypass in place it is predicted that there will be relief to the existing A49 and other routes in the wider Hereford area with decreases in delay per vehicle and improved journey times by taking the longer distance strategic journeys out of the city and on to the bypass.

Modelling work is ongoing and is currently progressing to inform the Department for Transport business case. The Hereford Transport Package will reduce the number of shorter distance car journeys that are currently a prevalent factor in the levels of congestion in the city. By moving strategic trips out of the city and onto the bypass we can create a safer environment for walking, cycling and public transport trips.

The business case will also include an Options Assessment Report outlining the work assessing and sifting a variety of transport interventions that best meet the objectives of the Hereford Transport Package. As set out in the Phase 2 consultation and Active Travel Measures reports cycleways and other ATM projects are a key component of the Hereford Transport Package.