

Environment, Development and Transport Committee

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| Report title: | Norwich Western Link |
| Date of meeting: | 8 March 2019 |
| Responsible Chief Officer: | Tom McCabe – Executive Director, Community and Environmental services |
| Strategic impact The County Council, at its meeting in December 2016, agreed a motion setting out that the 'Council recognises the vital importance of improving our transport infrastructure and that this will help to deliver the new jobs and economic growth that is needed in the years ahead.' In addition to the motion set out that the 'Council also recognises the importance of giving a clear message of its infrastructure priorities to the government and its agencies, and so ensure that there is universal recognition of their importance to the people of Norfolk.' The Norwich Western Link (NWL) has been recognised as one of three priority infrastructure schemes and is included in the Norfolk Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2017-2027. | |

Executive summary

The Norwich Western Link (NWL) Initial Consultation completed in July 2018 found there was very strong support for a new link between the end of Broadland Northway and the A47 to the west of Norwich.

Subsequent to the initial consultation, work was carried out to produce a shortlist of options that meet the objectives of the NWL project and provide a compelling business case.

Following approval at November 2018 EDT Committee a non-statutory public consultation on the shortlist of four options was undertaken between 26 November 2018 and 18 January 2019.

Findings of the options consultation along with other work will be used to recommend a Preferred Route Announcement (PRA) for the NWL. Alongside the PRA work it is proposed to continue with the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for submission to the Department for Transport (DfT) in Summer 2019. The SOBC is required to be submitted to the DfT with a Regional Evidence Base compiled by the Sub-national Transport Body in line with new funding guidance received from DfT in December 2018.

Further work is also to be undertaken subsequent to the above comprising the Outline Business Case (OBC) for submission to DfT which is the next phase of the business case process and commencement with initial procurement activities to facilitate the appointment of a contractor.

Recommendations: Members are requested to:

- 1. Note and comment on the progress of the project.**
- 2. Note the new funding requirements from DfT for this type of road project; namely a Large Local Major.**
- 3. Agree to continue with the project, with funding provided for the next stages of the project for a further year to the end of financial year 2019/20.**

1. Proposal

- 1.1. The initial consultation undertaken in summer 2018 and the subsequent shortlist options consultation conducted between 26 November 2018 and 18 January 2019 found there was very strong support for a new link between the end of Broadland Northway and the A47 to the west of Norwich. Following this it is proposed to continue with the scheme development in the 2019/20 financial year.
- 1.2. The principal items of work planned for financial year 2019/20 are as follows:
 - Completion of the Strategic Outline Business Case for submission to DfT
 - Production of an Options Selection Report to inform the PRA
 - Agree and publish the PRA
 - Preparation of an Outline Business Case to DfT
 - Industry engagement / contractor pre-qualificationThe items are supported by ongoing work comprising stakeholder liaison, ecology and environmental studies, traffic modelling and engineering design work.
- 1.3. The timeline for the PRA decision is after the proposed change of constitution to the Cabinet system. The decision making process under this new system of governance is due to be agreed by Full Council during April 2019. A further report will be provided in accordance with the new system of governance to determine the preferred route.

2. Evidence

- 2.1. There is no direct, high standard transport link between the western end of the Broadland Northway and the A47 to the west of Norwich. In order to understand this further and gain knowledge on transport issues in the area, an initial consultation was undertaken in the Summer of 2018. The consultation found that there was very strong support for creating a new link, with the majority of those responding suggesting a new road was their preferred solution.
- 2.2. Following the initial consultation and detailed further work and studies a shortlist options consultation was undertaken between 26th November 2018 and 18th January 2019. This comprised a series of 16 staffed events and an online questionnaire requesting views on four shortlisted road options and what other measures could be done to meet the project objectives. Organisations were encouraged to respond by separate correspondence to facilitate the gathering of further information in relation to the proposals and understand what options they may support.
- 2.3. The shortlist of options was determined via stakeholder liaison and an options appraisal process. This work was summarised in an Options Assessment Report that was provided via a link in the November 2018 EDT Committee Report that proposed the shortlist consultation. Following feedback and further work undertaken prior to the consultation, the Options Assessment Report has been updated and the latest version is provided at this [link](#).

A range of factors were used in developing the four shortlisted options, including:

 - Physical constraints e.g. existing development and infrastructure
 - Impact on the environment and ecology
 - The proposed Highways England A47 North Tuddenham to Easton dualling scheme

- Projected growth and development in the area to the west of Norwich
- The requirements of the DfT Business Case process
- How traffic uses the existing road network including Broadland Northway

2.4. Four options were shortlisted for the options consultation and were referenced Options A, B, C and D from west to east (as shown at Appendix A). Option A is a single carriageway upgrade that broadly follows an existing B-road route. Options B, C and D are new dual carriageway routes. Consideration of additional transport measures to enhance the benefits of the above options was included in the consultation and will be considered further as the scheme develops.

The process used to determine the shortlist of options is detailed in the November 2018 EDT Committee Report. The shortlist options brochure is available at this [link](#).

2.5. More than 1,900 people responded to the options consultation, with 1,825 responding via the consultation survey available on the consultation website and 104 sending their responses by letter or email. The consultation website was viewed by 3,475 people and a total of 1,245 people came to 17 consultation events staffed by members of the Norwich Western Link project team.

Initial analysis of the responses to the consultation survey suggests there is strong agreement among respondents that there is a need for a Norwich Western Link Road, with Option D ranking as the most popular solution, Option C the second most popular and Option A the least popular. Analysis of the letter and email responses and 'free text' elements of the survey is ongoing, so there is not as yet a complete picture of the consultation responses.

2.6. Project objectives

A range of objectives have been developed to align with the current strategic objectives presented in national, regional, and local policy and associated guidance. It is considered that the objectives reflect the issues and opportunities identified within the previous project reports, in addition to the wider objectives of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, supporting the principal aim to deliver a modern and efficient transport system. The objectives are in two tiers, namely high-level objectives and specific objectives. These objectives have been discussed at meetings with local communities and are subject to ongoing refinement as the scheme advances.

High-level objectives:

H1 Support sustainable growth

H2 Improve the quality of life for local communities

H3 Support economic growth

H4 Promote an improved environment

H5 Improve strategic connectivity with the national road network

Specific objectives:

S1 Reduce congestion and delay, and improve journey time reliability, on routes through the study area

S2 Improve network resilience and efficiency of the strategic and local transport network

S3 Reduce the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles using minor roads

S4 Make the transport network safer for all users (including Non-Motorised Users)

S5 Encourage modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport

S6 Provide traffic relief (and reduce noise & emissions) within residential areas

S7 Enable improved accessibility to existing and new housing and employment

sites

S8 Improve emergency response times

S9 Improve access to green space

S10 Not affect the ecological integrity of the Wensum Valley SAC

S11 Contribute to the improved health and well-being of local residents

S12 Improve connectivity and accessibility to Norwich International Airport, Norwich Research Park and Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital

S13 Minimise any detrimental impact on valued landscapes, the built environment and heritage assets, including through high quality design – new objective added as discussed at Jan 2019 Project Board meeting.

- 2.7. Additional / complementary measures that could strengthen the overall NWL scheme are being developed as the scheme progresses.
- 2.8. In order to obtain funding from the DfT the department has set out a Transport Business Case process that applicants are required to follow (see Appendix B). This involves a staged process to investment decisions in line with the Treasury's recommended five case model. The purpose of this is to enable ministers to make informed and balanced decisions based on evidence prepared by the DfT and its partners.
- 2.9. The five case model (see Appendix B) to be included in each business case phase is described below:
Strategic Case – demonstrate the schemes is supported by a robust case for change that fits with wider public policy objectives
Economic Case – demonstrate the schemes value for money
Commercial Case – demonstrate the schemes commercial viability
Financial Case – demonstrate the scheme is financially affordable
Management Case – demonstrate the scheme is achievable
- 2.10. There are three phases in the decision making process and each phase ends with an investment decision point as follows:
Phase 1 – Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC)
Phase 2 – Outline Business Case (OBC)
Phase 3 – Full Business Case (FBC)
- 2.11. The work to be undertaken in financial year 2019/20 comprises completion of the SOBC that is already in progress and preparation of the OBC.
- 2.12. Following the work undertaken to Autumn 2018 culminating in the Options Appraisal Report as included in section 2.3 a need for intervention has been established and a range of options developed. Phase 1 was then entered with compilation of the SOBC. This provides suggested or preferred ways forward and presents the evidence for the decision as to whether to proceed to Phase 2.
- 2.13. Phase 2, the OBC reconfirms the conclusions of the SOBC but concentrates on the detailed assessment of the options to find the best solution. Full economic and financial appraisals take place during this phase (building up the economic and financial cases), a preferred option is selected and preparations are made for the potential contract through the development of the commercial case. The arrangements required to ensure successful delivery are set out in the management case.
- 2.14. In order to support the PRA and the OBC to select the preferred option an Options Selection Report is currently under preparation and will be completed in financial year 2019/20. This will undertake an assessment of each of the shortlisted options with consideration to environmental, engineering, economic and traffic conditions. It will also incorporate the information obtained from

options consultation. The Option Selection Report will be prepared in accordance with Stage 2 of TD 37/93 Scheme Assessment Reporting which is in the suite of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges documents.

2.15. A range of multidisciplinary professional work is required in financial year 2019/20 and is summarised below.

2.16. Environmental studies and appraisals

The environmental work for the scheme is wide ranging and has been planned in accordance with current best practice. It includes the following subject areas: ecology, water environment, landscape, cultural heritage, air quality / greenhouse gases, and noise assessment. Each shortlist option will be assessed against the subject areas to understand the potential affect and issues to be taken into consideration. Where mitigation is thought necessary this will be factored into the assessment and understood for each option.

As mentioned in previous committee reports the project team are actively engaging with the statutory environmental bodies namely the Environment Agency and Natural England as the project develops. It is intended to agree the scope of work required in each of the coming stages of the project and work collaboratively with these bodies.

There are a number of important environmental designated sites that could be affected by the shortlist options including Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient Woodland and County Wildlife Sites. The environmental work will take cognisance of these and consider the requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive.

2.17. Engineering assessment of route options

This comprises technical work from civil, water, geotechnical and structural disciplines to develop the feasibility of the shortlisted options and outline design to understand the relative merits and implications of each option. This will involve design of highways and earthworks, development of drainage strategies and design and consideration of flood risk, and scheduling and consideration of bridge structures and viaducts.

2.18. SOBC and OBC work including economic appraisal and traffic modelling

As described in section 2.9 and 2.10 the DfT Transport Business Case requirements will be followed. Transport modelling will continue to use the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) model. Further information on the use of the model is given in the 9th November EDT Committee paper and link to which is included in section 5.1.

Cost estimation and risk analysis will be undertaken in order to provide the necessary information for the scheme economics. This will be undertaken in accordance with DfT guidelines. The costs will be based on the environmental and engineering work described previously.

The five cases as described in section 2.9 will be compiled firstly for the SOBC submission and then developed further at Phase 2 for the OBC submission.

2.19. Industry engagement and contractor procurement planning

Due to the scale of work and timescales necessary to appoint a contractor to deliver the construction of the scheme it is planned to begin this process in financial year 2019/20.

The initial work will consider the appropriate procurement process and the type and details of the contract to be employed. It is planned to hold an "Industry Day" in the autumn to begin active engagement with the industry and potential contractors.

Following appropriate feedback from the Industry Day work would continue to

develop materials in line for the publication of a contract notice in spring 2020.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. The budget for developing the project in financial year 2019/20 is £1.948m. This comprises an approved Business Rate Pool allocation and 50% match funding from the capital programme.

The expenditure falls within the parameters of the Annual Budget agreed by the Council and the Chief Finance Officer has confirmed the financial implications.

- 3.2. As a preferred route for the NWL is yet to be determined the total project budget is unknown at this stage. However the anticipated future years' spend profile is estimated in terms of percentages of the total project cost below:

FY2020/21 – 4%

FY2021/22 – 4%

FY2022/23 – 15%

FY2023/24 – 36%

FY2024/25 – 41%

This will be subject to further review and refinement as the project progresses.

- 3.3. On 18 December 2018 the DfT published a new guidance document for investment planning for the Major Roads Network and Large Local Major programme. The funding for these programmes is from the National Road Fund to be spent in the period 2020 to 2025. As the NWL DfT funding "ask" is above £50m it is within the Large Local Majors category. The transitional arrangements confirm that the NWL will fall into these new requirements with immediate effect. The guidance requires Sub-national Transport Bodies to compile a Regional Evidence Base giving long term strategic approach to investment needs of a region. Where there are more than 2 or 3 potential Large Local Major schemes that meet the eligibility criteria and are deliverable the DfT expects the Sub-national Transport Body to indicate its priorities. Under this guidance the NWL will need to be established as a potential Large Local Major scheme forming part of the Sub-national Transport Body's Regional Evidence Base to be considered for funding.
- 3.4. The DfT guidance requires a minimum of 15% local funding contribution. Consideration and engagement with potential funding sources has commenced to identify opportunities to meet this requirement.

4. Issues, risks and innovation

- 4.1. Robust risk management arrangements are in place for this project. Foreseeable significant risks have been recorded and assessed for their potential impacts and how they can be mitigated. This is an ongoing process as the scheme develops whereby any new risks are considered and evolution and mitigation of existing risks is managed and reported to the Project Board and the Member Working Group.

4.2. Key Project Risks

The Norwich Western Link project is currently following behind the stated timeline for the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton dualling scheme. It will therefore remain important for the project team to continue to work closely with Highways England to ensure the implications of this scheme are considered and new information is shared and factored in as both projects develop.

