

Environment, Development and Transport Committee

Report title:	A47 Blofield to Burlingham Dualling Scheme
Date of meeting:	19 October 2018
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe - Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services
Strategic impact The A47 Blofield to Burlingham Dualling Scheme will be determined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Planning Act 2008. Norfolk County Council is a statutory consultee on such projects and therefore has the opportunity to comment and influence the final decision. Responding to the consultation will ensure the county council's views are formally taken into account prior to Highways England submitting a Development Consent Order application to the Planning Inspectorate.	

Executive summary

Highways England is consulting on proposals to dual the A47 between Blofield and Burlingham under Section 42 of the Planning Act 2008. This is public consultation in advance of them submitting a Development Consent Order application to the Planning Inspectorate, likely to be in spring 2019. Their headline proposals are:

- Dualling the existing single-carriageway section. The new section of dual carriageway is proposed to be offline south of the existing carriageway
- Junction improvements including a grade-separated junction at the B1140.

While the county council has long supported the principle of full dualling of the A47 – and this proposal is consistent with that objective – there are a number of detailed issues in respect of, amongst other things, local highway and access matters, flood risk and environmental management, and potential impact on delivery of council services that will need to be considered as part of this consultation.

At the time of writing it has not been possible to consider all the detailed implications of the proposals, although the majority have been covered. To date the most significant item of concern relates to the adequacy of the proposal in dealing with the A47 being a substantial barrier to walkers or other non-motorised users. Any other significant issues will be brought to the committee's attention.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- (a) Support the principle of dualling the A47 between Blofield and Burlingham, subject to the detailed issues and comments set out below being resolved with Highways England**
- (b) Agree any issues that the committee would want to be included in the response to the consultation, in addition to the items raised in the report**
- (c) Agree that the Executive Director Community and Environmental Services agrees the final response in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of EDT under delegated authority.**

1. Proposal

1.1. The county council is being consulted by Highways England on proposals to dual the A47 between Blofield and Burlingham.

The proposals in this consultation are set out on the [scheme web page](#) and in summary comprise:

- 2.6km of new dual carriageway on the A47
- De-trunking the existing A47 section between Blofield and North Burlingham
- New compact grade separated junction at B1140 Junction, including the B1140 Overbridge
- Improvements at Yarmouth Road junction, including closure of the central reserve, closure of direct access from High Noon Lane, creation of merge lane, realignment of Hemblington Road and local access improvements at the Sparrow Hall properties
- New overbridge at Blofield traversing the proposed A47 dual carriageway, connecting Yarmouth Road with the existing A47
- Provision of new drainage systems including an attenuation pond and retention of existing drainage systems where possible
- Retaining wall at Yarmouth Road junction
- Introduction of lighting at the Yarmouth Road junction and a new lighting layout at the B1140 junction
- Closure of an existing layby and provision of a new layby
- Footway connecting Blofield and North Burlingham via the new Blofield Overbridge
- New access to North Burlingham
- Agricultural access track to south of new dual carriageway
- New boundary fencing, safety barriers and signage.

A plan showing the proposals is shown as Appendix A.

1.2. The county council is a statutory consultee under Section 42 of the Planning Act 2008. This is a pre-application consultation in advance of Highways England submitting a formal Development Consent Order (DCO) consultation under Section 56 of the Planning Act 2008, which they anticipate doing in spring 2019. Norfolk County Council therefore has the opportunity to comment on the proposals in advance of submission of the DCO application.

1.3. Section 2 of this report outlines the issues that the county council would want to raise in response to the consultation, although due to the timing of the consultation and the committee it is not possible to set out all of the issues in this report, and the proposed county council response (although the majority have been covered). Any further issues coming to light prior to the committee will be reported verbally at the meeting. The final response, which members are asked to agree be sent under delegated authority by the Executive Director Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of EDT, will take this further consideration into account.

1.4. Members are asked to:

- (a) Support the principle of dualling the A47 between Blofield and Burlingham, subject to the detailed issues and comments set out below being resolved with Highways England
- (b) Agree any issues that the committee would want to be included in the response to the consultation, in addition to the items raised in the report
- (c) Agree that the Executive Director Community and Environmental Services agrees the final response in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of EDT under delegated authority.

2. Evidence

- 2.1. The principal role of the county council in responding to the consultation is in respect of the authority's statutory role as:
- Highways Authority
 - Minerals and Waste Planning Authority
 - Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)
 - Public Health responsibilities.
- 2.2. In addition the county council has an advisory environmental role and economic development function, which also need to feed into any response made to the proposal. In particular, Members will be aware that the county council has long supported full dualling of the A47 with appropriate grade-separation. Our response will need to balance the council's support for full-dualling with consideration of the proposal's impacts on our statutory and advisory role in the functions set out above, and any impacts from the proposals in delivery of the council's services.
- 2.3. The remainder of this section of the report assesses the proposals in respect of the county council's key functions and sets out the authority's proposed response or comments. As set out earlier, the timing of the consultation and the committee means that it is not possible at the time of writing to have given full consideration to all of the proposals (the majority have been able to be covered). The final response, which members are asked to agree be sent under delegated authority by the Executive Director Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of EDT, will take this further consideration into account. The sections below indicate the issues arising from an assessment of the proposals, which Norfolk County Council would want to raise as a response to this consultation.

Assessment of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)

2.4. Overview of the proposals

The proposal is shown in the Appendix. In summary, it is to dual the single carriageway section of the A47 from Blofield to Burlingham. Together with the proposals, which will come forward at a later date, to dual Easton to Tuddenham, this will result in the A47 being to dual carriageway standard all the way from Dereham to Acle. The current proposals include a grade-separated junction at the B1140 (to South Walsham and Cantley) junction.

At Blofield an overbridge is proposed that would provide limited movements onto and off the A47. There will be no direct access to the A47 for traffic travelling to Great Yarmouth from Blofield; motorists would need to use the new overbridge and the existing A47 through Burlingham, joining the A47 at the new B1140 junction. (Travellers to Norwich however will be able to join the A47 at this junction east of Blofield.)

- 2.5. Highways England has prepared a Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) to describe the environmental setting and currently anticipated impacts of the proposed scheme on the environment. The PEIR has been developed for the purposes of consultation and presents currently available information.
- Highways England state that the information contained within the PEIR is preliminary and the findings will be developed further in the Environmental Statement (ES) to reflect the evolution of the design informed by the feedback from consultation, and the ongoing Environmental Impact Assessment process. The Environmental Statement, presenting the full results of the Environmental Impact Assessment, will be submitted with the application for the Development Consent Order.

2.6. Comment and basis of proposed suggested response to the consultation

The principle of dualling the A47 is supported. This has been a longstanding objective of the county council. The county council leads the A47 Alliance, which has been campaigning for dualling of the A47 from Lowestoft to the A1 at Peterborough, with appropriate grade-separation. Whilst the proposals include a grade-separated junction at the B1140, which is welcomed due to the casualty record at this junction and its role in serving HGV movements to Cantley, the proposals include only a limited-movement junction at Blofield. There are no proposals to upgrade the existing at-grade roundabout junction at Brundall (Cucumber Lane, west of Blofield).

The county council is also aware of local concern regarding the junction of the A47 with The Windle. This is an existing minor road junction with the existing dual carriageway; a gap in the central reservation allowing right turns in and out. There are no current proposals to improve this junction.

The consultation material does not include any traffic flow information showing predicted changes to traffic levels on local County Council controlled roads within the vicinity of the proposed improvement. It is clear that with some roads being severed by the proposals other roads will experience increases as traffic finds alternative routings. These other roads may then need some localised improvements and to determine what improvements may be required and where we need to see the predicted changes to traffic levels. It is recommended that our consultation response refers to this and requests this information so we can assess any required minor improvements required to county roads as a consequence of the scheme.

2.7. Socio-Economic Issues

Although the PEIR does not include analysis of all of the wider socio-economic issues, there are potentially significant economic benefits arising from the dualling proposal in terms of:

- Local employment creation
- Business sectors affected by construction
- Productivity benefits to businesses, and other wider economic benefits, arising from the dualling.

2.8. Comment and basis of proposed suggested response to the consultation

The PEIR mentions the potential for jobs to be created during the construction phase. Whilst this is to be supported, it does not mention opportunities for social inclusion type activity such as work experience, internships and ways in which the local community could benefit economically from the investment. The county council should continue to work proactively with Highways England to encourage apprenticeships, work experience and internships being included at an appropriate stage in the project; and these issues should be raised in our response to the consultation.

2.9. Productivity and other wider economic benefits will arise from the completed schemes. These include journey time savings and reliability improvements, benefitting businesses. These are to be welcomed.

2.10. For the final scheme, the county council would expect the proposals to include full details of construction and compliance with nationally recognised standards, which would ensure that the road improvement is fit for purpose.

The county council would also expect there to be minimum disruption on the local highway network during the construction period and would want to work with Highways England, or its contractors, on managing traffic during the works.

2.11. Environmental Issues

The PEIR considers the local environment and identifies any sensitive receptors such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, people living in the vicinity of the

proposed scheme and local issues such as Air Quality Management Areas or Noise Important Areas. This section summarises the main issues.

2.12. **(a) Cultural Heritage**

Cultural heritage includes archaeology, historic buildings / structures and historic landscapes including parks and gardens. The PEIR states that the proposals are in an “area with a low number of recorded archaeological remains. This is understood to be due to limited archaeological investigation, rather than a true reflection of the actual archaeological buried resource.” It also states that “There are a number of designated assets that are likely to be adversely impacted by the Proposed Scheme as there is potential for them to experience permanent visual and / or noise intrusion which would adversely impact their settings.”

2.13. **Comment and basis of proposed suggested response to the consultation**

The county council will want to comment on impacts under the main headings of the historic environment and landscape. To date, it has not been possible to consider the proposals’ impact on the historic environment. Any major issues arising from the assessment will be reported verbally to committee.

The sections below cover only landscape impacts.

2.14. The PEIR sets out that potential landscape impacts include the removal of existing vegetation, earthworks and presence of construction plant, materials, machinery, compounds and lighting during construction. As part of the mitigation, Highways England will produce a detailed planting design to integrate the design into the surrounding landscape. This will include considerations for amenity like visual screening and biodiversity.

Impacts on local landscape character are likely during both the construction and operational phases as a result of the enlarged junctions and overbridges within a relatively flat and open landscape.

2.15. **Comment and basis of proposed suggested response to the consultation**

Paragraph 7.2.1 of the PEIR notes the various sources referred to as best practice guidelines, which have informed the methodology of Highways England’s assessment. These are considered appropriate for this type of landscape and visual assessment. The county council also agrees that the 1km study area should be appropriate, although it is possible that further into the process this area could be deemed as too restrictive and some further views may need taking into consideration. This is due to the open nature of the surrounding landscape and potential for long distance views. Existing vegetation data was not available at the point of this assessment, however this will be important in considering the extent of vegetation loss and potential impact on views.

The Baseline Data, section 7.5, identifies the broad National Character Area as well as the Local Landscape Character areas. Whilst these are useful in considering the wider context and surrounding landscape, the summary of Landscape Features provided in 7.5.5 appears quite brief and lacks detail in comparison. This could benefit from further detail reflecting the Local Landscape Character areas, which outlines how the landscape changes along the route.

Paragraph 7.7.1 and 7.8.1 provide details regarding design intervention and potential mitigation measures respectively. The county council can broadly agree with the ongoing consideration of the design and support the inclusion of this within the Environmental Statement. The potential mitigation to be considered appears appropriate, although the effectiveness of this cannot be commented on at this stage.

The summary of potential receptors appears sound, and it is pleasing to see that the long term impacts on some receptors are being considered. Whilst a road scheme such as this will always have visual and landscape impacts,

identification at this stage should allow the appropriate design interventions and mitigation to minimise these impacts.

2.16. **(b) Biodiversity**

The PEIR states that whilst the proposal would result in small, localised losses of habitats and potentially some severance of connecting habitats no areas are expected to have an overall net loss and long-term impacts on most species are not expected.

2.17. **Comment and basis of proposed suggested response to the consultation**

The PEIR describes the ecological situation as it is currently understood. Whilst acknowledging that this is a preliminary report, there are a number of matters which remain unclear. Several of the biodiversity surveys had not been completed when the PEIR was produced. The PEIR states that some of these surveys were intended to be undertaken during spring and summer 2018, but the results are not presented at this stage. Similarly, there are references to at least one bat transect not being completed and the need for a “full years’ worth of data.”

The ecology chapter also states that some surveys were not undertaken as landowners had not granted permission to access their land (8.34.2), although it is not explained what geographical areas were affected, or the ecological significance of this. Much of the ecology information in the PEIR is in summarised form (eg the great crested newt Habitat Suitability Index assessments); the county council would wish to see the original reports before being able to say if it supports the assessments.

References to the guidance and best practice used in the biodiversity assessment (section 8.2.1.) are noted. This is as expected although some important sources are not mentioned, notably BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development, and the industry best practice guidance relating to Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2018). Compliance with these documents would provide greater confidence in the reporting and conclusions drawn.

The county council would anticipate clarification of these matters in due course when the Environmental Statement is produced. At this stage, the scope of the ecology work is broadly supported but it is not appropriate to comment on the appropriateness of the survey data, or the assessments of impacts.

2.18. **(c) Climate Change**

2.19. Highways England state that the proposal is anticipated to generate an increase in carbon emissions during both construction and operation.

2.20. **Comment and basis of proposed suggested response to the consultation**

To date, it has not been possible to consider in detail the proposals’ impact on the historic environment. Any major issues arising from the assessment will be reported verbally to committee.

2.21. **Non-motorised users and severance**

Highways England set out that there will be an overall beneficial effect for non-motorised users. They state that pedestrians and cyclists travelling between Blofield and North Burlingham would find crossing the A47 to be easier and safer through the introduction of the Blofield Overbridge, and a beneficial impact for cyclists on the B1140 wishing to cross the A47. They note an adverse impact for users of Burlingham footpath between Lingwood and North Burlingham due to an increase in the travel time for users.

2.22. **Comment and basis of proposed suggested response to the consultation**

The A47 has historically been a barrier in public access separating the two

settlements of Burlingham and Lingwood. Burlingham Woods north of the A47, associated permissive paths and the Public Rights of Way network are all popular with pedestrians and dog walkers. The surveys conducted by Highways England support this, with 90 users having walked along Burlingham FP1 one Sunday. Other days in the Highways England survey showed consistently high use. However it was noted that very few users, and on most days no-one, would choose to cross the A47. Usage (according to Highways England PEIR Report) of the Public Rights of Way network south of the A47 was recorded as low.

Two close settlements having such a huge contrast in usage indicates that the A47 is likely to be acting as a substantial barrier to walkers.

- 2.23. The A47 Dualling Scheme has the opportunity to change this and with the right improvements can significantly enhance the Rights of Way network in this area. Whilst a footway has been proposed along with access across both road junctions, which in theory provide north south connections, the proposal (comprising a footway running parallel to the road) is not considered to be perceived as safe and attractive for families and dog walkers. This scheme could offer significant benefit for users if, wherever possible, a multi-user path was provided set back from the road rather than alongside the road. Some screening could also be used to further enhance the route, this would be more attractive for families with pushchairs, cyclists and dog walkers who are all looking to access the woods to the north.

The most important improvement Highways England have the opportunity to make is installing a footbridge across the A47 connecting Burlingham FP1 and FP3 (these footpaths run north-south at the eastern end of the settlement of Burlingham; on either side of the A47) and ultimately providing a safe off-road link connecting the parish of Burlingham but furthermore offering links to South Walsham in the north and Strumpshaw in the south.

The alternative (to a new crossing of the A47 at Burlingham) is walking considerably further to gain access at the proposed road bridges (west and east of Burlingham, both some 1500m from FP1 and FP3). This route will not be considered safe or appealing to families, cyclists or dog walkers.

In summary, a new bridge would provide a much needed missing link in the network, will offer a safe route for all users, and ultimately connects rural paths bringing two communities together.

- 2.24. Related to the above, previous funding bids were submitted to Highways England to create a Burlingham-Lingwood walking and cycling link. This aims to create a walking and cycling bridge across the A47 south of Burlingham Woods to provide connection between Lingwood, Lingwood Station and the Burlingham estate trails network to the south and Burlingham Woodlands and businesses to the north of the A47.

Burlingham Woods forms part of Norfolk County Council's Trails network <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/out-and-about-in-norfolk/norfolk-trails/short-and-circular-walks/burlingham-woodland-walks> and provides important connections between local settlements and a number of amenity spaces in this part of Norfolk. The scale of planned housing growth in east Broadland has led to a new focus on enhancing and expanding the core of Burlingham Woods at the heart of the Burlingham estate, to provide new green open space, connections and facilities for the wider population.

This connection could encourage greater use of Burlingham Woods, the woods and estate green space is considered key in relieving pressure on the most sensitive designated Broads' sits in the vicinity. It would also encourage residents south of the A47 in Lingwood and surrounding areas to use the Burlingham Woods trail to the north. The proposal is complementary to a wider ongoing project by Norfolk County Council, Broadland District Council and the

University of East Anglia to expand the area and offering at Burlingham Woods.

2.25. Road Drainage and the Water Environment

Highways England note a number of possible impacts on the water environment and suggest mitigation measures. These would be finalised within the road drainage and water environment stream in further work.

2.26. Comment and basis of proposed suggested response to the consultation

The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) advise, in addition to previous advice, that any surface water runoff from the existing road that is diverted to the new scheme drainage should be shown to either: be improved to be attenuated to current standards (up to the 1% annual probability rainfall event plus a climate change allowance); or show that the runoff rates and volumes will be maintained to be no worse than existing. As the current drainage is shown to be runoff un-attenuated the LLFA would strongly recommend that betterment as close to previous greenfield runoff rates / volumes be investigated. The LLFA would welcome that the existing drainage schemes are upgraded to the same standard as the proposed scheme where possible.

2.27. LLFA also request that a robust water quality assessment of road runoff is provided, and that the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) Manual (2015) is consulted and followed for the worst case pollution hazard anticipated. LLFA highlight that proprietary systems such as oil interceptors are not considered to be a SuDS treatment step and would request that any sole reliance on these prior to discharge without any SuDS water quality treatment components be supported by appropriate bespoke water quality assessments and permits which might be required from the Environment Agency.

2.28. LLFA state that it is unclear if section 2.4.17 of the PEIR is suggesting that greenfield runoff as well as informal drainage and overland flow routes (from the Environment Agency Risk of Surface Water flood map) will be considered, diverted or remain on a natural pathway. Clarification on what will be diverted and what will remain on a natural pathway would be welcome.

2.29. An allowance for 40% climate change to the surface water runoff should also be tested (not just an additional 20%) and potential mitigation provided in line with national standards. LLFA note that several soakaways and an attenuation basin are proposed but no calculations are provided at this stage. This is expected during the subsequent consultations.

2.30. LLFA welcome that section 14.7.9 indicates that ground investigations will confirm the inflows and outflows to the pond which is proposed to be filled in. They also welcome that a temporary surface water drainage strategy will cover the construction period.

Flooding on the existing A47 at the location of where the Environment Agency Risk of Surface Water Flood Map crosses the road should be reviewed and improvements made where possible.

2.31. Public Health

It is anticipated that matters relating to, for example, air quality and site and dust management, would be managed by other statutory agencies such as the Environment Agency and Broadland District Council. It is suggested that the county council make the following general comments:

- Welcome reductions in driver stress for both general well-being and accident reduction potential
- Easier and safer access across the A47 for pedestrian, cycling and equine modes of transport would be welcomed. The council would want to ensure where possible that severed access for these non-motorised users where existing routes are cut off is still easy to reach and does not make physical

- activity and access to existing paths and networks more difficult
- Severing of existing routes should as far as possible not result in increased traffic through villages and residential areas
- Residents currently or likely to be affected by noise, vibration and potential increased pollution are screened for impact and potential mitigating action
- Highways England should give consideration to the possible impacts on agricultural and allotment lands through increased NOx and associated ozone generation.

2.32. **Minerals and Waste**

The Mineral Planning Authority welcomes the recognition in paragraph 10.5.2 of the PEIR that safeguarded mineral resources occur on parts of the proposed scheme, and that potential impacts will be addressed in a future Environmental Statement. The Mineral Planning Authority agrees with the approach to the reuse of site-won materials as outlined in paragraphs 10.8.2, 10.8.3 and 10.8.4.

- 2.33. The Waste Planning Authority notes the contents of Table 10.1 (Licenced Waste Management Facilities). However, the Waste Planning Authority would caution that a number of these sites are not currently operational for the acceptance of waste; even though they still have a valid Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency. Highways England should ascertain that waste management sites that they may wish to utilise for the management of waste are operational and are accepting waste before their inclusion in Table 10.1.

2.34. **Local Member Views**

At the time of writing the following member comments have been received:

- Julie Brociek-Coulton: I would welcome this I travel on this road a lot and this would make travel so much better

Any other comments received will be reported verbally to committee.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. Staff have engaged with the applicant at the technical scoping stage; attending steering group and topic based meetings and provided technical advice and information in respect of the county council's statutory responsibilities. The county council has charged for some of this advice and technical data provided.

4. Issues, risks and innovation

- 4.1. These issues are covered in Section 2 above. In responding to the consultation, the county council has the opportunity to comment and influence the final decision to ensure that the proposals meet the objectives of the authority and do not impact on the service delivery or statutory responsibilities of the council.

5. Background

- 5.1. A number of improvement schemes for the A47 were included in the Roads Investment Strategy 2015 to 2020. In Norfolk these are: Blofield to Burlingham dualling, Easton to Tuddenham dualling; A11/A47 Thickthorn Junction improvement; Great Yarmouth Junction Improvements, now focussed on Gapton and Vauxhall Junctions.
- 5.2. The county council has strongly advocated improvements to the A47 and has engaged at officer-level with Highways England in bringing these current proposals forward. The county council is also working, through the A47 Alliance, for further improvement schemes to be included in the subsequent Roads Investment Strategy from 2020 to 2025, its priorities being Acle Straight and Tilney to East Winch dualling.
- 5.3. As the Blofield to Burlingham dualling proposal is a Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP) it will be the Secretary of State rather than the

respective local planning authorities who will determine the application. This decision will be taken following an examination of the proposals, which will be independently led by the Planning Inspectorate. The Secretary of State will need to have regard to local plan policies and allocations when determining the application. The individual local planning authorities, including the county council, are also statutory consultees in the NSIP process and will respond having regard to their local plan policies and other statutory responsibilities including environmental health (a responsibility of district councils).

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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Appendix A: Proposals Overview Plan

