

**13 December 2016**

**Planning and Licensing Committee**

**Response to Highways England M25 Junction 28  
Improvement Scheme Consultation**

**Report of:** *Phil Drane – Planning Policy Team Leader*

**Wards Affected:** *All*

**This report is:** *Public*

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Highways England is consulting on proposals for improvements to Junction 28 of the M25 (Brook Street roundabout, Brentwood). Proposals relate to anti-clockwise traffic connecting with the A12 eastbound towards Chelmsford/Colchester/Ipswich. Views are being sought on three potential options.
- 1.2 In response to the consultation, a proposed response is set out with this report (see Appendix A). As a major national infrastructure project with implications for the Borough, it is important that the Council respond and further consider issues through the Local Development Plan and Duty to Cooperate processes.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 To approve the response to the Highways England M25 Junction 28 improvement scheme consultation as set out in Appendix A.**

**3. Introduction and Background**

- 3.1 Highways England is consulting on proposals for improvements to Junction 28 of the M25 that connects with the A12. The improvements are needed to increase capacity and reduce congestion and delays.
- 3.2 Junction 28 plays a vital role connecting the M25 with the A12, as well as providing local access to Brentwood via the A1023 (Brook Street). It's a heavily used junction which features a roundabout mainly controlled by traffic lights. Up to 7,500 vehicles per hour currently travel through the roundabout at peak times. It is already operating at capacity; motorists regularly experience congestion and delays. Queuing from delays has an adverse impact on air quality.

- 3.3 A number of issues have been identified at this junction that impact the local and regional economies and their ability to achieve full potential.

These include:

- a) Congestion and delay disrupting journeys on the trunk road network and local roads;
  - b) Actual and significant perceived safety concerns connected to driver movements on the roundabout;
  - c) Resilience to incidents is poor, resulting in significant disruption and unreliable journey times; and
  - d) Poor air quality.
- 3.4 Research by Highways England shows that traffic in the area is expected to increase by up to 30% by 2037, with more than 9,000 vehicles per hour travelling through the roundabout at peak times.
- 3.5 Highways England state that without intervention, there will be further deterioration in traffic conditions with delays being at least five times greater and average speeds reduced by 25%.
- 3.6 Although this scheme is not directly focused on Brook Street, the proposed improvements to Junction 28 will deliver some benefits for those using the A1023.
- 3.7 If no improvements are made to Junction 28 by 2037 there will be:
- a) Increased congestion and lengthy queues, at least five times worse than at present;
  - b) A 25% reduction in average speeds through the junction (excluding mainline M25 and A12);
  - c) Widespread disruption following incidents;
  - d) Constraints on future development and growth opportunities; and
  - e) Local air quality issues to deteriorate further.
- 3.8 Construction on the project is due to begin by March 2020.

#### **4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 4.1 Junction 28 of the M25 was reviewed by Highways England in the London Orbital and M23 to Gatwick Route Strategy Evidence Report. The M25 Junction 28 scheme was included in the March 2015 Road Investment Strategy. In response to this a delivery plan was developed which outlines the next steps for taking the scheme forward. These include:
- a) Develop and assess a range of options to inform consultation with key stakeholders;
  - b) Engage more widely with local stakeholders;

- c) Further develop proposals and assess traffic and environmental impacts; and
  - d) Make recommendations on the preferred route.
- 4.2 A shortlist of three options has been drawn up by Highways England to solve identified junction issues that will worsen over time if not resolved. All options will divert traffic away from the roundabout, with a new dedicated loop road between the M25 (anti-clockwise) and A12 (eastbound towards Chelmsford/Colchester/Ipswich). However, each option requires a different approach to achieve this. All the proposed options involve construction work taking place to the west of the M25, which is within the London Borough of Havering.
- 4.3 The traffic modelling does not include the proposed widening of the A12, which is not yet an approved scheme, but the options for construction work enable such a scheme to be carried out without a need to revisit the Junction 28 construction works.
- 4.4 Maps of each shortlisted option proposed by Highways England (5B, 5C and 5F) are set out in Appendix B.
- 4.5 **Option 5B:** Single lane loop road, widening of existing M25 bridge over Junction 28 (Brook Street roundabout). This option involves the following components:
- a) Creating a new single lane loop road, with hard shoulder for traffic travelling from M25 anti-clockwise to A12 eastbound;
  - b) Providing an overbridge at A12 eastbound exit road to allow the proposed loop road to join the A12 eastbound carriageway;
  - c) Works on A12 eastbound to maintain existing access to Maylands Golf Course;
  - d) Rearranging the A12 road markings to allow the new loop road to join the A12 and accommodate two lanes through the junction; and
  - e) Widen the M25 overbridge to accommodate a new exit road.
- 4.6 **Option 5C:** Single lane loop road, widening of short section of M25. This option involves the following components:
- a) Providing a bridge over the M25 anti-clockwise entry road to facilitate the new loop road;
  - b) Creating a new single lane loop road with hard shoulder, for traffic travelling from M25 anti-clockwise to A12 eastbound;
  - c) Providing an overbridge at A12 eastbound exit road to allow the proposed loop road to join the A12 eastbound carriageway;
  - d) Works on A12 eastbound to maintain existing access to Maylands Golf Course;
  - e) Rearrange A12 road markings, including entry road, to allow the new loop road to join the A12 and accommodate two lanes through the junction; and

- f) Use existing hard shoulder on M25 anti-clockwise carriageway to provide proposed exit road.
- 4.7 **Option 5F:** Two lane loop road, widening of short section of M25, reconfiguration of A12. This option involves the following components:
- a) Creating a new 2 lane loop road with hard shoulder for traffic travelling from M25 anti-clockwise to A12 eastbound;
  - b) Works on A12 eastbound to maintain existing access to Maylands Golf Course;
  - c) Providing an overbridge at A12 eastbound exit road to allow the proposed loop road to join the A12 eastbound carriageway;
  - d) Reconfiguring A12 to accommodate two lanes joining the A12 eastbound from the proposed loop road;
  - e) Widening M25 anti-clockwise carriageway to provide proposed exit road; and
  - f) Providing a bridge over M25 anti-clockwise entry road to facilitate new loop road.
- 4.8 The construction duration for all three options is estimated at two years and three months.
- 4.9 The estimated project cost ranges from:
- a) £61.3m for Option 5B;
  - b) £72m for option 5C; and
  - c) £79.5m for Option 5F.
- 4.10 In terms of benefit to cost ratio Option 5C performs the best, followed by Option 5F then Option 5B. If Option 5B is chosen there would be a clear opportunity for a dense tree belt planting scheme which could mitigate adverse impacts on air quality.
- 4.11 The average expected improvement in journey time through Junction 28 is the same for all options, 1 minute 5 seconds at AM peak, 2 minutes 25 seconds at PM peak, and 10 seconds off-peak.
- 4.12 The impacts of all three options are considered to be broadly the same and are set out below:
- a) **Air Quality:** Could lead to a potential reduction in air pollution levels at properties near the existing slip roads but an increase at properties near the new loop road, this will need to be investigated further. Traffic using the roundabout should be able to move more freely reducing the number of stationary vehicles and lead to improved air quality. Queuing of stationary vehicles is inevitable with traffic lights. Tree planting enables some of the pollutants to be absorbed.
  - b) **Landscape:** People living and working in nearby areas are likely to see changes to views of the local landscape. The consultation paper states “Any potential impacts will be mitigated, for example through tree planting”, but no landscape proposals are shown and will be

reserved for later stages. As noted above, Option 5B entails the acquisition of Grove Farm, which would then provide the opportunity for planting a dense tree belt with environmental enhancement benefits.

- c) **Heritage and Historic Environment:** No effects anticipated on designated heritage assets, investigations will take place for potential effects on buried archaeology.
- d) **Nature Conservation:** Potential impact on habitats and protected species (great crested newts and dormouse) within the Ingrebourne Valley Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Aim to avoid areas of ecological importance but if this is not possible it will be replaced or enhanced.
- e) **Water Environment and Drainage:** Potential impact on Weald Brook, River Ingrebourne and the streams that feed into them. These will be mitigated throughout the design process.
- f) **People and Communities:** During construction, any effect on people's access between communities is expected to be minimal with all existing routes maintained. Some minor alterations to the access of Maylands Golf Course may be required. There may also be loss of some private land. Option 5B necessitates the acquisition of the whole of Grove Farm whereas the other two options have less land take.

## **5. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 5.1 Brentwood Borough Council's proposed response to the consultation is set out at Appendix A. The response broadly supports the need for improvements to M25 Junction 28.
- 5.2 The response supports the schemes intention to take M25 traffic travelling anti-clockwise onto the A12 eastbound carriageway, thereby relieving Brook Street roundabout somewhat and creating capacity. However, concerns are highlighted that queuing traffic originating from Brook Street A1023 backing up onto the roundabout and then the A12 and M25, does not appear to be addressed directly as part of these proposals.
- 5.3 The response emphasises the importance of the scheme addressing the potential impacts on Green Belt. This area serves as an important separation between the edge of the Brentwood urban area and Greater London, specifically Harold Park at the edge of the London Borough of Havering. The level of growth being planned in the emerging Brentwood Local Plan is also raised, which is likely to have an impact on Junction 28. Highways England has been encouraged to take into account the emerging highways modelling evidence being produced to support the Local Plan, as well as evidence from other plans being prepared by local authorities in the wider area.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 Highways England is undertaking public consultation between 14 November 2016 and 6 January 2017. Responses will be analysed and incorporated into a consultation report. A second public consultation is due to take place once detailed designs are complete, although a date has yet to be set.
- 6.2 Copies of consultation materials, maps and questionnaires are available to view at a number of deposit locations during the consultation period, including Brentwood Library. In addition, a series of Public Information Events have been arranged across the local area including one event at South Weald Parish Hall on 9 December 2016 and two at the Holiday Inn on Brook Street on the 4 & 5 January 2017.

## **7. References to Vision for Brentwood 2016-19**

- 7.1 The proposed improvements to the M25 Junction 28 represent a scheme with impacts on one of the major routes into Brentwood. Although there is no direct reference made in the Council's 'Vision for Brentwood' Corporate Plan 2016-2019, the project has implications for the Local Development Plan and other Council priorities, including supporting economic growth.

## **8. Implications**

### **Financial Implications**

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- 8.1 There are no direct costs relating to the Council apart from officer time and this will be contained within existing budgets. The potential economic benefits of the improvements to M25 Junction 28 will benefit Brentwood businesses and contribute to unlocking growth opportunities in the Brentwood area, as proposed in the Brentwood Draft Local Plan.

### **Legal Implications**

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- 8.2 This is a major national infrastructure project with implications for the Borough, it is important that the Council respond. There will be a further consultation on the details of the selected option. Further issues will also have to be considered through the Local Development Plan process. Engagement in this way is consistent with the Duty to Cooperate and the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

- 8.3 The Consultation papers do not include landscaping proposals, although asserting that tree planning will mitigate any potential impacts. On the consultation drawings, it seems that only Option 5B involving the acquisition of Grove Farm will allow significant new tree planting opportunities.

## **9. Background Papers**

- a) M25 Junction 28 improvement scheme consultation brochure (November 2016) (available to view at:  
<http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/m25-junction-28-improvements/>)

## **10. Appendices to this report**

Appendix A - Brentwood Borough Council response to the M25 Junction 28 Improvement Scheme Consultation

Appendix B - Maps of Highways England M25 Junction 28 Improvement Options 5B, 5C and 5F

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