

Brentwood Borough Council response to M25 Junction 28 Improvement Scheme consultation | November 2016 – January 2017

Principle

1. The Council supports the need for improvements to M25 Junction 28 (Brook Street roundabout). Evidence and extensive local experience shows that this junction is heavily congested. This not only delays journeys but also has a negative impact on Brentwood, and both the local and national economies.

Need for junction improvements

2. The Council notes evidence that Highways England have provided regarding the existing situation at M25 junction and the need for improvements to capacity. It is understood that the need for the scheme was identified as part of the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) and the capacity issues are attributed to:
 - a) High volumes of traffic on movements between the M25 and the A12 towards Essex passing through the roundabout section;
 - b) The relatively high volumes of traffic to and from Brentwood via the A1023 Brook Street, accessed via an uncontrolled intersection on the roundabout; and
 - c) Limited capacity on the roundabout section due to the high traffic levels and the capacity of the signalised intersections.
3. The options that are presented in the consultation brochure look to address the capacity issues through the creation of a loop road that provides a direct link for traffic travelling anti-clockwise on the M25 onto the eastbound carriageway of the A12.

Junction improvement options

4. The Council has the following comments which apply to all three options that have been presented as part of the consultation.
5. It appears that the scheme for a loop road will serve to increase capacity of the junction by removing traffic travelling from the M25 anti-clockwise onto the eastbound A12 carriageway. However, it does not appear that any works are proposed to address the issue of queuing traffic originating from the A1023, Brook Street. The consultation brochure acknowledges that when the signalised junctions at Mascalls Lane and Nags Head Lane operate over capacity during peak times this causes queues onto Junction 28 and then the A12 and M25. The Council has the view that if this is not addressed as part of the scheme the problem will continue to persist as the same levels of traffic will continue to want to access Brook Street via this junction. This queuing traffic will also continue to

add to the existing air pollution at the junction. It is acknowledged that the A1023 is not within the control of Highways England and further work with Essex County Council (local highway authority) will be required to decide on an appropriate solution. It is not clear from the consultation material whether signalling the Brook Street arm of the roundabout would be the most suitable option.

6. While it is acknowledged that a solution is required to address vehicle congestion the junction is also the location for a Byway which crosses the southern end of the A1023, runs south of The Poplars and then crosses the M25 slip-road onwards to Putwell Bridge Farm and Oak Farm, to the south of the M25. The Council is working with Essex County Council on improving the Borough's cycling networks and looking at solutions to overcome major road and infrastructure barriers to connect to wider cycling / walking networks across Essex. These types of considerations will also need to be taken into account when looking at improvements to the Brook Street junction, as part of a more comprehensive scheme.
7. The Council is pleased to note that on page 19 of the Technical Appraisal Report that the Brentwood Local Plan 2005 and emerging Local Plan were considered as part of developing the options. We would emphasise the importance of the Green Belt designation in this area which provides separation between the edge of the Brentwood urban area and Greater London, specifically Harold Park, which is part of the London Borough of Havering. Whilst there is already an existing road structure the addition of a large loop road presents a new incursion into the Green Belt which could particularly impact on the openness due to its scale and height. As the scheme advances the Council would be keen to ensure that this is properly addressed and justified.
8. The Brentwood Draft Local Plan February 2016 did not identify any housing or employment allocations on land nearby to Junction 28. However, it is important to note that there is a significant level of growth proposed in the Borough with a large amount focused in and around the Brentwood urban area. It is likely that this growth will impact on Junction 28 through increased car journeys made by new residents. Work on the highway modeling evidence to accompany the Local Plan is ongoing and we would be keen to ensure that the outputs of this work are taken into account where possible. As part of a more comprehensive approach to traffic modelling the Council is also keen to better understand the Highways England research information on traffic forecasts for this junction. It is hoped that technical information can be shared and discussed as part of ongoing dialogues with Highways England on the Brentwood Borough Traffic Model.
9. The Council is concerned that by splitting the various elements of work identified as required to alleviate congestion and safety problems at Junction 28, will cause multiple and long-term disruption in the area. This disruption will not only impact local residents and businesses, but also those who travel through the junction from across the country. We are concerned that this disruption will impact the wider economy, including London. A more pragmatic solution would be to agree the multiple projects required at the junction and undertake these as closely together as possible, so that works are consolidated into one time period

rather than over a longer period of multiple disruption. Whilst the Council understands the process behind commissioning and funding large infrastructure projects, and that this scheme is focusing on one element of the required works at Junction 28, it is deemed unacceptable that long-term solutions for the entire junction are not being met through this scheme. It becomes particularly important to consider this issue in the knowledge of future levels of housing and employment growth being planned along the A12 corridor throughout Essex and Suffolk – a significant proportion of which is likely to flow through M25 Junction 28 if accessing Greater London or the wider transport network connected to the M25.

Future Engagement

10. We thank Highways England for involving the Council in this key public consultation and note the effort that has gone into preparing consultation material and holding public information events. The Council looks forward to continued dialogue on the subject.
