

23 January 2019

Policy, Projects and Resources Committee

Response to Highways England M25 Junction 28 Improvement Scheme Statutory Consultation, December 2018

Report of: *Phil Drane, Director of Strategic Planning*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Highways England is consulting on an improvement scheme to Junction 28 of the M25 (Brook Street roundabout, Brentwood). Proposals relate to anti-clockwise traffic connecting with the A12 eastbound towards Chelmsford. This follows consultation that concluded in January 2017 when three route options were presented. Now that the preferred route has been selected, this consultation presents further detail for comment.
- 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(s)

- 2.1 To approve the response to the M25 Junction 28 improvement Scheme Statutory 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.

- 3.3 This follows previous Highways England consultation in January 2017, and the Preferred Route Announcement in August 2017. Since then the scheme has been developed and Highways England are now publishing proposals for feedback.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 In January 2017 Highways England consulted on three route options as part of the Junction 28 improvement scheme. In August 2017 a preferred route was announced, confirming “Option 5F”, which received the most support from those responding to the consultation and presented the best value for money. This comprised a two-lane loop road for M25 anti-clockwise traffic exiting on to the A12 eastbound towards Chelmsford, requiring the need to widen of short section of M25 and reconfigure the A12. A summary of the scheme is set out in the Consultation Brochure (Appendix B).
- 4.2 Since the previous consultation and preferred route announcement certain aspects of the proposal have developed or changed, such as:
- a) Slight layout reconfiguration of the merge for the new loop road with the A12 eastbound, which avoids the need to realign the A12 carriageway resulting in less disruption during construction;
 - b) Consideration of the latest traffic forecasts for the M25 which includes new developments such as the Lower Thames Crossing to ensure future traffic levels can be accommodated; and
 - c) Early consideration of potential environmental mitigations for example, flooding, ecology and landscape to obtain initial views during the consultation.
- 4.3 Next steps, once the consultation has closed, include a review of all the comments received. Highways England will then refine the proposed design and develop planned mitigation measures. A summary of the responses will be published, and Highways England will describe how proposals have been informed by and influenced by these. This will form part of the Development Consent Order (DCO), which is expected for submission by autumn 2019. Provided that the DCO is granted, works will start in June 2021.

4.4 Once Highways England submit the DCO, the Planning Inspectorate (acting on behalf of the Secretary of State) may examine it. There is likely to be public hearings during examination. Following this, the examining authority will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will decide on whether the scheme will go ahead. This process is explained in more detail in the Consultation Brochure (Appendix B).

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 It is recommended that the issues set out in Appendix A be issued in response to the consultation from the Council. The current consultation provides more detail to the preferred route.

5.2 The changes detailed in this consultation are technical in nature, and so it is proposed that no specific comment be made on this detail. The proposed development is to the west of the M25, wholly within the London Borough of Havering. Whilst the Council should respond to broader strategic issues, it is not considered necessary to offer a view about the specific proposals.

5.3 It is proposed that the strategic points raised in the Council's response to the previous consultation be repeated, where relevant. This includes:

- a) Support for a scheme given congestion issues at the junction and the implications of these;
- b) Concern that the scheme does not address wider congestion issues across the junction and on surrounding roads, such as the A1023 Brook Street (junction issues at Nags Head Lane and Mascalls Lane that can cause queuing back onto the junction in peak periods).
- c) Concern that the scheme does not address wider congestion issues all at once, meaning it is likely that future improvement projects cause longer term and multiple disruptions in the area.
- d) Support for the proposals presented that require less realignment on the A12, reducing construction activity and disruption.
- e) Comments about the need to consider existing byways and cycle routes as part of comprehensive consideration of the junction;
- f) Importance of the Green Belt in this location, and that development should be sensitive to this; and
- g) Comment about joint working on transport evidence.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Highways England is undertaking public consultation between 03 December 2018 and 28 January 2019. Responses will be analysed and incorporated into a consultation report. This follows consultation that took place November 2016 to January 2017. The proposed response (Appendix A) continues to raise the same issues that the Council responded with in January 2017.
- 6.2 Copies of the consultation brochure (Appendix B) have been made available to view at several deposit locations during the consultation period, including Brentwood Library. In addition, a series of consultation exhibitions have been held across the local area, including one event at South Weald Parish Hall (12 January 2019) and two at the Holiday Inn on Brook Street (5 & 6 December 2018).

7. References to Corporate Plan

- 7.1 The M25 Junction 28 Improvement Scheme is relevant to the Council's Local Development Plan, which is a key priority in the Council's 'Vision for Brentwood' Corporate Plan 2016-2019. The Plan is an important delivery vehicle for several cross-cutting priorities, informed by individual Council strategies.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Interim Chief Finance Officer

01277 312829 jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk

- 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 Local Development Plan.

Legal Implications

Surinder Atkar, Planning Solicitor

01277 312687 surinder.atkar@brentwood.gov.uk

- 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.

Other Implications

- 8.3 As the M25 Junction 28 project progresses, in future a Development Consent Order (DCO) will be submitted by Highways England to the Council as local planning authority. A DCO is the means of obtaining permission for development categorised as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). This includes energy, transport, water and waste projects. This is a statutory process and has implications for the resources of the Council's Planning Development Management Team.
- 8.4 When Highways England submit the DCO application, this will include an Environmental Statement outlining how it is proposed to minimise the impacts of the project. This may identify implications on the local environment and wellbeing of local residents and businesses.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 Consultation material, including background documents and maps, can be found on the Highways England website at:
<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/m25-junction-28-statutory-consultation/>
- 9.2 Item number 237, Brentwood Borough Council Planning & Licensing Committee, 13 December 2016, "Response to Highways England M25 Junction 28 Improvement Scheme Consultation".

10. Appendices to this report

- a) Appendix A: Brentwood Borough Council response to the Highways England M25 Junction 28 Improvement Scheme Statutory Consultation (January 2019)
- b) Appendix B: Highways England M25 Junction 28 Improvement Scheme Statutory Consultation Brochure (December 2018)

Report Author Contact Details:

Name: Phil Drane, Director of Strategic Planning
Telephone: 01277 312610
E-mail: philip.drane@brentwood.gov.uk