

County Council - 17 December 2019

Item 12(f) - Notice of Motion from Mr Montyn

A27 - Briefing Note

West Sussex Transport Plan

The approved West Sussex Transport Plan 2011-26 (WSTP) is the County Council's main policy on transport in West Sussex. The WSTP identifies improvements to the A27 trunk road and complementary public transport improvements to address the current bottlenecks at Chichester, Arundel and Worthing as the highest priority.

The WSTP states that improvements are needed to increase capacity, improve reliability and safety and to increase the competitiveness of local businesses and attract investment. One of the aims for Chichester in the WSTP is; "improvements to the junctions on the A27 at Chichester which reduce congestion, improve journey times for public and private transport and improve air quality".

Although this is the County Council's policy, decisions about the identification of priorities for the Strategic Road Network, including A27 at Chichester are made by the Government and published in the Roads Investment Strategy.

Highways England's 2016 Consultation on Options

In June 2013, the Government made a commitment in the Spending Review announcement to improve the A27 Chichester Bypass. Following this, the Government published the Roads Investment Strategy 2015-20 (RIS1) which committed to improving four junctions on the A27 Chichester Bypass in Roads Period 1 (2015-20).

In early 2016, Highways England began to notify local stakeholders that it intended to publish a set of options for A27 at Chichester including two 'off-line' routes to the north of the City. However, in March 2016 the County Council was notified of Highways England's decision to withdraw off-line routes because they could not be delivered with the available budget, nor did they meet the criteria set out in RIS1.

In July 2016, Highways England published five options for improving the existing A27 at Chichester for public consultation. However, none of options secured support from a majority of the consultation respondents and on 28 February 2017, the Secretary of State wrote to Highways England cancelling the scheme because of the lack of local consensus about how the A27 at Chichester should be improved.

Build A Better A27 Initiative

In response to the Secretary of State's announcement, the County Council convened a community meeting to try to build consensus and develop a way forward through the Build A Better A27 (BABA27) initiative. The BABA27 community group established themes and key requirements to inform a set of 'success criteria' for the A27 Chichester scheme. Discussions between the County Council, Chichester District Council, the MP for Chichester and local community representatives continued to take place.

In June 2018 following the conclusion of this work, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure wrote to Highways England requesting the inclusion of the A27 Chichester scheme in the Roads Investment Strategy 2020-25 (RIS2). The letter stated that the 'mitigated northern route' is the County Council's preferred option but that the 'full southern route' should also be developed as a reasonable alternative.

Both conceptual options sought to address local stakeholders' concerns about the options previously identified by Highways England. The approach sought to address concerns about a lack of community consensus, deliverability and policy fit of these options. However, in January 2019, Highways England concluded its review of the two conceptual options by stating that the two options are not buildable or likely to provide value for money.

Member Briefings

In August 2019, officers briefed members of the Chichester County Local Committee on Highways England's assessment of the two conceptual options. On 22 August 2019, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure wrote to Highways England requesting that the A27 Chichester scheme be included in RIS2 with sufficient scope and flexibility with regard to funding to; (a) explore and consult the public on a range of alternative, effective and buildable options; (b) provide a high standard of environmental mitigation; and (c) ensure that the option-sifting and appraisal process takes account of wider value for money factors.

In October 2019, Highways England wrote to the County Council highlighting the need to await the publication of RIS2. This correspondence has been shared with members of the Chichester County Local Committee and further updates will be provided following the publication of RIS2.

Roads Investment Strategy 2020-25

Highways England and the Government have been preparing the Roads Investment Strategy 2020-25 (RIS2) which was expected to be published in late 2019, following the Government's Spending Review. It is understood that publication of RIS2 has been delayed by the calling of a General Election.

Local Plan Mitigation

If Highways England does not deliver a major scheme for A27 at Chichester as part of RIS2, the 'fallback' position is that improvements to the junctions on the A27 Chichester Bypass will be delivered to mitigate the impacts of development in the Chichester and Arun Local Plans. As the improvements are developer-funded, they are being delivered incrementally as development comes forward. However, they are only expected to mitigate the impacts of development rather than to improve conditions overall.

Matt Davey

Director of Highways, Transport and Planning