



## Examination of application by Highways England for an Order granting Development Consent for the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme

### Examination Statement by Huntingdonshire District Council relating to;

- i. Position Statement with regard to Agenda Item No. 5 of the Issue Specific Hearing on Detailed Design held on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2015
- ii. The District Council position relating to the Huntingdon Viaduct proposals as part of the DCO and the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan
- iii. Position Statement with regard HE REP5-028 and the Council's view relating to 'Double-Dose' consultation and how the Council may consider carrying out further Third Party consultation

**i) Position Statement of Huntingdonshire District Council with regard to Agenda Item No. 5 of the Issue Specific Hearing on Detailed Design held on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2015.**

At the above Hearing, the Ex. A asked Huntingdonshire District Council to provide a verbal outline of its role with regard to the following Agenda item No. 5;

*How has the scheme design process sought to balance operational, safety and security requirements with visual appearance, functionality, fitness for purpose, sustainability and cost? Paying particular regard to:*

- a) Crossings and elevations*
- b) Lighting*
- c) Cuttings and embankments*
- d) Noise mitigation*
- e) Above grounds structures such as gantries and other signage*

The Council was also asked to provide its position in writing by Deadline 10 and to also include our position in relation to Huntingdon Viaduct and its relationship to the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan.

The Council is a Tier 1 Stakeholder in relation to the current application in its role as the Local Planning Authority for Huntingdonshire and in relation to other statutory functions, particularly with regard to Noise and Air Quality matters. We therefore consider our role as one of negotiation with the applicant in order to secure the best position for Huntingdonshire, particularly in relation to current approved planning policy. However, the Council also takes an active role within the local community across our administrative area in terms of other matters such as local environment, in order to protect the position of local communities and to seek to minimise the impact of any form of development as far as practicably possible and to seek the best possible position and outcomes for those who live and work in Huntingdonshire.

Turning to the Agenda items, we would comment as follows;

a) Crossings and elevations – through our discussions with the applicant, we have been able to provide a local perspective to the impact relating to the significance of these on local communities. This is particularly relevant to the proposed crossing of the River Great Ouse and the design thereof and to minimise the impact of the proposal in this environmentally sensitive location.

While the Council can confirm that this location is not a designated ‘Quiet Area’ or a ‘Tranquil Area’ and that it is not an ‘Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty’, we are concerned at the likely impact within this location and we welcome the agreement that we have reached with the applicant in the emerging Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) and the commitment of the applicant that the Council will continue to be involved in the design aspects of the scheme, including at this location.

Appendix A on Page 4 of this Paper provides a statement relating to Ouse Valley designations.

b) Lighting – the design of lighting for the scheme is a design matter for the applicant and within either the local road network or the sections of the current A14 to be downgraded to local road network status, this is a matter to be agreed with Cambridgeshire County Council in their role as local highway authority.

However the Council would confirm that it has been engaged with the applicant and the County Council in design discussions relating to proposed lighting in our role in seeking to minimise the impact of the scheme on the local community. We have welcomed this fruitful engagement and continue to do so within the emerging CoCP and the commitment of the applicant to engage with the Council on such design matters.

c) Cuttings and embankments – the role of the Council under this heading has mainly been in relation to landscape mitigation where a regime is proposed to include landscape measures as part of providing cuttings and embankments. The Council considers that it has a key role in seeking an agreed solution with the applicant and it acknowledges the engagement to date on this. A particular element of the Council’s position is to mitigate the impacts of the scheme on the local communities most directly affected but to also ensure that what is proposed is robustly supported by an on-going management regime to ensure that the overall landscape design is sustainably supported going forward and remains in perpetuity to deliver the on-going mitigation for the benefit of the local community.

We welcome continued engagement on these under the terms of the CoCP and particularly welcome the appointment of a Landscape Manager (Sec. 10.1.2), which is something that the Council has suggested during our Tier 1 stakeholder discussions..

d) Noise mitigation – the Ex. A. will have noted that the Council has a number of statutory functions relating to Noise matters and this is extensively covered in our Written Representation at Sec. 8 (b), together with Vibration and Air Quality matters.

The Council has been in negotiation with the applicant relating to the need for agreed noise monitoring post-scheme completion and an agreed position is being reached.

In terms of noise mitigation, the Council considers its role is to ensure that what is proposed fully aligns with the noise modelling outputs and that while we are not involved in the detailed design of noise barriers, we do offer feedback on locations of proposed mitigation and particularly where it aligns with landscaping proposals (see also above) and the visual impact relating to local communities.

As with the above measures, the Council again welcomes the input on such matters within the emerging CoCP and the Council will continue engage with the applicant on these on these, particularly through Section 61 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

e) Above ground structures such as gantries and other signage – in relation to community and visual impact, the Council has welcomed proactive dialogue with us from the applicant on such matters and our role is considered by us to be about securing the best possible solution in community and visual terms, particularly in reducing the need for such measures unless in accordance with relevant design standards. We welcome continued discussion on these from the applicant via the CoCP.

## **Appendix A - Ouse Valley designations, including Noise**

### **Quiet Areas:**

The Environmental Noise Directive (END) allows Local Authorities to nominate a small number of their approved Local Green Spaces delineated in Local or Neighbourhood Plans to be classed as a Quiet Area. These nominations are assessed by DEFRA using set criteria.

Part of this assessment is that the candidate area falls wholly within an END agglomeration. An END agglomeration is an area having a population in excess of 100,000 persons and a population density equal to or greater than 500 people per km<sup>2</sup> and which is considered to be urbanised.

No area in Huntingdonshire falls into this category.

Areas can be classed as Local Green Spaces if designated in Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans. Huntingdonshire District Council has not designated any area in our Local Plan as it is our currently position that we have no areas that meet the criteria.

Neighbourhood Plans are written by parish councils and at the time writing no Neighbourhood Plans have been agreed. Currently there are two in production (St Neots and Wyton & Houghton) and while they have areas which they wish to be classified as local green spaces the closest of these is about 2.3km away from the A14.

Therefore, as the Ouse Valley is not a Local Green Space and cannot be classed as an agglomeration then HDC cannot apply to DEFRA for it to be classified as a Quiet Area under the Environmental Noise Directive.

### **Tranquil areas:**

Under planning legislation there is no classification of a tranquil area so the Ouse Valley cannot be designated one.

### **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty:**

Natural England (NE) is the authorising body for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is our understanding that NE is currently considering the Ouse Valley to be classed as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty but due to a backlog of work and resources will not be assessed for another 2-3 years.

## **ii) Huntingdon Viaduct and the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan (HWAAP).**

The Council's position in relation to Huntingdon Viaduct is extensively outlined in our Written Representation at Section 4 of that document, including our support for its removal and its replacement with a local road network as proposed by the applicant as part of the submitted DCO application. It is necessary to reiterate however that the Council's support for the overall A14 project is absolutely reliant on the removal of the Viaduct and the following information helps to outline why this is the view of the Council relating to the wider opportunities and improvements that the de-trunking of the route through Huntingdon, and the creation of the new local road network, will engender.

Sec. 4 (vii to x) of our previously submitted Written Representation provides an overview of the linkage between the applicant's submitted proposal and how it aligns with the HWAAP.

The purpose of this note is to provide the Ex. A. with a link to the approved HWAAP via the District Council website as follows;

<http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/HDCCMS/Documents/Planning%20Documents/PDF%20Documents/Local%20Development%20Framework/HWAAP%20Adopted%20Complete.pdf>

The Ex. A. attention is drawn to the following elements of the plan that have the greatest relevance to the proposed DCO, Huntingdon Viaduct and the aim and objectives of the HWAAP.

- Sec 3. Area Context – at Sec. 3.8, the Constraints and Opportunities highlight the constraint of the current road network in relation to the objective of allowing the town to grow and how the plan has been created to align with the emerging A14 proposals
- Sec. 3.12 outlines opportunities to improve Views Common , particularly if the A14 is removed, with Sec. 3.13 highlighting that the designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) within the HWAAP area can be addressed through the opportunities arising from the A14 proposals
- Map 1 on page 5 outlines the designated HWAAP area
- Accessibility improvements as a result of the Viaduct removal are outlined at Sec. 5 as Objectives, together with Sec. 6 and the range of Sustainable Travel measures that the new local road network as a result of the Viaduct removal can create. Of particular reference is Sec. 6.10 that makes reference to the possibility of a new walking/cycling route across the railway to the north of the current Brampton Road bridge
- Sec. 7 deals with 'Vibrant Growth' and at Sec. 7.13, reference is made to potential development at the Police HQ and that future development will need to have regard to proposals associated with the planned A14 improvement. Map 7d outlines the land use proposals west of the East Coast Main Line, including Site B which is currently bi-sected by the A14 Viaduct

- Sec. 8 covers 'Healthy and Green' and makes reference at Sec. 8.5 to Views Common being sufficiently changed if the A14 is removed and Policy HW7 reflecting that this area will remain a significant open space and that the removal of the Viaduct would add that area into reinstated form of Common
- Sec. 10 relates to Infrastructure, Phasing and Implementation and the Ex. A will be aware that the West of Town Centre Link Road (now known as Edison Bell Way) is completed and open to traffic

**iii) Position Statement with regard HE REP5-028 and the Council's view relating to the Discharge of Requirements relating to Schedule 2 of Rev 3 (August DCO), of the consultation in respect of requirements and how the Council may consider carrying out any further Third Party consultation and notification.**

The Council confirms that it remains of the view that it would not generally be appropriate for it to discharge requirements given issues around resources and expertise and our concern that consulting Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) should be consistently provided across all relevant requirements, particularly given that the overall scheme crosses multiple LPA areas. On this basis, the Council confirms that it is satisfied that the drafting of Requirements as set out in Rev 3 (August DCO) meets our expectations in relation to these issues.

The Council particularly welcomes the view of the Ex. A. that the applicant must conscientiously take into account comments made by relevant LPAs and that it must also be recognised that in formulating the applicant's detailed proposals for approval by the SoS, that the relevant LPAs have a special position compared to the 'average' consultee party and it would be expected that their contributions be incorporated in recognition of those duties. The Council supports the view of the Ex. A. that any application for discharge should allow for incorporation of relevant LPA input in order to avoid that input being conscientiously considered and rejected. The Council particularly welcomes the agreement of the applicant in this regard.

The Council has been asked by the Ex. A. to consider its position with regard to further public engagement with regard to important matters within their administrative boundaries in relation to the scheme. The Council recognises the important role it has to play as the LPA in this regard for Huntingdonshire and the responsibilities placed upon it and that transparency is vital relating to the discharge of requirements relating to the submitted scheme.

While any method of further consultation has yet to be agreed and determined, the importance of community notification on matters such as the submitted scheme, are at the heart of what the Council undertakes relating to its statutory duties and while details of the exact form of consultation or notification are yet to be developed, it is the Council's intention to explore on-line capability to publicise the discharge of requirements via the Council's website. Given the increasing take-up of this form of engagement within the planning process, discussions to date have highlighted that this is a likely form of appropriate engagement, particularly relating to the ability to publicise the discharge of requirements related to the scheme that emerge directly from the relevant Secretary of State and to act as a 'conduit' for the dissemination of this information to the local community.