



A47 Dualling: North Tuddenham – Easton –

Development Consent Order Application

Breckland Council Local Impact Report

September 2021

Introduction

- 1.1 A Local Impact Report (LIR) is defined under Section 60(3) of the Planning Act 2008 as “a report in writing giving details of the likely impact of the proposed development on a local authority area (or any part of that area)”. The content of the LIR is a matter for the local authority concerned as long as it falls within this statutory definition. This provides a means for Local Planning Authorities to present knowledge and evidence of local issues in a full and robust report to the Examining Authority. This report is based on the existing local knowledge of Council Officers.
- 1.2 This is a Local Impact Report relating to the submitted Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton Dualling project.
- 1.3 It has been produced in line with Version 2 of the Local Impact Report Guidance (the Advice Note) produced by the Planning Inspectorate dated April 2012. It specifically considers the likely impacts of the proposed development on the district of Breckland. Breckland Council is a statutory consultee for this Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) as it is one of the Local Authorities within whose administrative area part of the development lies.
- 1.4 The national guidance note for LIRs states that, when the Examining Authority decides to accept an application, it will invite relevant local authorities to submit a LIR. It is the responsibility of local authorities to prioritise preparation of the LIR irrespective of whether the local authority considers the development would have a positive or negative impact on their area. A number of topics are suggested which may be of assistance in the report. The relevant ones are included in this report, reinforced by local knowledge and evidence for the benefit of the Examining Authority.
- 1.5 The LIR may also comment on DCO obligations and their impact on the local authority's area. The advice note is however clear that in producing an LIR the local authority is not required to carry out its own consultation with the community. It is understood that parish councils, organisations and members of the public are able to make representations directly to the Planning

Inspectorate as “interested parties” so that their comments about the scheme will be considered by the Examining Authority. As such the views of local interest groups have not been sought specifically for the purposes of this report.

1.6 This report supplements the comments set out in the Councils’ Relevant Representation.

2 Breckland District

2.1 Spanning over 500 square miles Breckland is a geographically large rural District located in the heart of Norfolk. The District is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern of market towns, villages and hamlets. There are five market towns, a network of local service centres, and numerous small villages and hamlets. Approximately half the current population live in one of the five market towns of Attleborough, Dereham, Swaffham, Thetford and Watton with the remaining population dispersed across the District. The area is represented through 112 town and parish councils and the District Council.

2.2 Two trunk road routes run across the District, the A47 and A11. The A47 links Dereham and Swaffham with Norwich in the east and King’s Lynn in the west and further afield to Peterborough and the A1(M), while the A11 links Attleborough and Thetford with Norwich and the Norwich Research Park to the north-east and Newmarket, Cambridge and the M11 in the south-west. The remaining parts of Breckland are served by a network of non-trunk “A” category, secondary and minor roads.

2.3 The Breckland Local Plan was adopted by the Council on 28th November 2019 and the policies within it are considered to be relevant and carry full weight.

3 Proposal

3.1 The scheme description is set out in detail in the applicants application form and in summary consists of:

- 9km of new dual carriageway running to the south of the existing A47 at Hockering and north of the existing A47 at Honingham
- Two new junctions at Berrys Lane/Wood Lane and Blind Lane/Taverham Road
- Various other works as set out in the application form.

4 Planning Policy

Principle of the Development – National and Local Planning Policy Context

- 4.1 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021 includes at Section 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport – national policy advice on transport issues.
- 4.2 It includes requirements to have regard to opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport as well as ensuring that the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure is identified, assessed and taken into account, with appropriate mitigation and net environmental gains. (paragraph 104).
- 4.3 Also relevant is the section in the NPPF about conserving and enhancing the natural environment (Section 15). In line with this part of the framework, the Local Planning Authority seeks to protect and enhance the valued landscapes of the District and recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The countryside includes not just designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.
- 4.4 Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – is also considered to be of relevant as there are a number of designated heritage assets which may be affected. These have been identified by the applicant in the Environmental Statement, Chapter 6 (APP -045).
- 4.5 The NPPF, as well as Section 36(8) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.6 Breckland Council adopted its Local Plan in November 2019.
- 4.7 Policy INF03 of the Plan states:

The Council will undertake an immediate partial review of the Plan, with regard to the following matters:

- *Policy HOU 01 Development Requirements (minimum): To consider housing need and the subsequent strategy for meeting the identified need.*

- *Policy HOU 08 Gypsy and Travellers: To consider the needs of non travelling gypsy and travellers and identify suitable provision to meet such a need.*
- *Policy HOU 10 Technical Design Standards for New Homes: To consider the accessibility of homes standards.*
- *Policy EC 01 Economic Development: To consider the effect of the dualling of the A47 on the Plan's economic strategy.*

The partial review of the Plan will be submitted for examination 3 years after the date of adoption of this Plan or by November 2022, whichever is soonest. In the event that the review is not submitted for examination by this time, then the Council's policies that relate to the supply of housing, economic development and gypsy and travellers will be deemed to be out-of-date.

- 4.8 It will be noted that the requirement around the review of economic development policies is in order that the impact of the dualling of the A47 on Dereham and the north of the district can be taken into account.
- 4.9 The Inspectors report into the Local Plan (October 2019) at paragraph 215 acknowledged the impact that the dualling of the A47 could have in the apportionment of employment land to settlements on the A47 corridor.
- 4.10 Any review of the local plan will also have to consider the most appropriate locations for development within the district. Historically large-scale development has been located along the A11 corridor taking advantage of its dual carriageway along the whole of its length. Two Urban Extensions, to Thetford and Attleborough, are underway with a combined total of 9000 dwellings. The Council's main allocation for employment, Snetterton, is also based along the A11.
- 4.11 The dualling of the A47 will enable the Council to consider settlements in the north of the district if it has to provide additional housing/employment land to meet its assessed need.
- 4.12 The following policies of the Breckland Local Plan 2019 are also considered to be of relevance:
- GEN01 – Sustainable Development in Breckland
 - GEN02 – Promoting High Quality Design

- TR01 – Sustainable Transport Requirement
- ENV01 – Green Infrastructure
- ENV02 – Biodiversity protection and enhancement
- ENV05 – Protection and Enhancement of the Landscape
- ENV06 – Trees, Hedgerows and Development
- ENV07 – Designated Heritage Assets
- ENV08 – Non-designated Heritage Assets
- ENV09 – Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage
- COM01 – Design
- COM02 – Healthy Lifestyles
- COM03 – Protection of Amenity

4.13 In terms of the key impacts of the development there is a two-tiered level of governance for Breckland at the County and District levels.

4.14 Norfolk County Council has a statutory role to assess matters relating to the highway network, minerals and waste, flood risk and public health. Breckland is content to rely on their advice in relation to these matters as it is on statutory consultees in relation to matters such as ecology.

4.15 As the principle of the development is considered to be supported by national and local policy, the main responsibility of the District Council is therefore to judge the merits of the proposal with particular reference to the visual effect of the proposal on the landscape character of the area and the historic environment together with the opportunities it affords to increase options for sustainable transport.

5 Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impacts

5.1 Cumulative landscape impacts and cumulative visual impacts are best considered separately. The cumulative landscape impacts are the effects of a proposed development on the fabric, character and quality of the landscape; it is concerned with the degree to which a development proposal will become a significant or defining characteristic of the landscape.

- 5.2 Cumulative visual impacts concern the degree to which development will become a feature in particular views (or sequences of views) and the impact this has upon people experiencing these views.
- 5.3 The applicant has proposed a landscape masterplan (APP 138), the principles of which are considered to be acceptable. The District Council would be content for the details to be agreed post-consent.
- 5.4 The applicant has also submitted a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (APP 046) which concludes that there would be a moderate adverse (significant) effect on landscape character. By Year 15 with the establishment of the Proposed Scheme landscaping the impact on landscape features would be neutral and on landscape character slight adverse, neither of which are significant.
- 5.5 Breckland Council considers that with appropriate mitigation, following the principles set out in the environmental masterplan the landscape impacts can be adequately mitigated.

6 Historic Environment:

- 6.1 The applicant has submitted a Heritage Statement as part of the ES (APP 045). This identifies and assesses the designated heritage assets within Breckland and identifies their value and significance. Its findings and conclusions are accepted.

7 Sustainable Travel:

- 7.1 It is understood that Norfolk County Council are providing a Sustainable Transport Strategy as part of the development of the Norwich Western Link Road (NWLR), which will link with the A47 at Wood Lane.
- 7.2 It is considered that the provision of improvements to the Public Right of Way Network (PRoW) needs to be clear and is compatible and complimentary to those proposed as part of the NWLR.
- 7.3 There is a strong existing PRoW network in the area and the Council sees this as an opportunity to improve those opportunities around walking and cycling, including accessibility to villages and the nearby market towns.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 Breckland Council remains supportive of the construction of the A47 dualling route and supports the business case for the development of the route. The road will open up development opportunities for the north of the district and helps the district to meet its housing and employment growth requirements.
- 8.2 Breckland Council is an ambitious authority that is keen to support infrastructure projects that will improve development opportunities, benefit the economy of the district and consequently the well being of its residents.
- 8.3 The landscape of the area is considered to be of great importance, and it is important that this is protected by the mitigation associated with scheme.
- 8.4 It is also considered that there are opportunities including local employment roles, construction jobs and operation and maintenance requirements over the lifetime of the project and the Council would support the possibilities of apprenticeships and internships for residents as well as the use of local contractors and suppliers.