



Northumberland County Council

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

DATE: 3 MARCH 2020

A1 DUALLING NORTH OF MORPETH - LOCAL IMPACT REPORTS

Report of the Director of Planning

Cabinet Member: Councillor JR Riddle

Purpose of Report

This report is to set out the broad areas that should be covered in the preparation of Local Impact Reports that the Council is required to submit to the Planning Inspectorate as part of its consideration of the Development Consent Order applications for the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects by Highways England which are necessary to bring forward the dualling of two sections of the A1 Trunk Road north of Morpeth.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the committee:

- i) Endorses the general approach to matters to be included in the Local Impact Reports; and
- ii) Delegates authority to the Director of Planning for the submission of the reports to the Planning Inspectorate to coincide with the relevant deadlines in the process.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following key themes in the Corporate Plan for 2018-2021:-

- How - We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone;
- Living - We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for;
- Enjoying - We want you to love where you live;
- Connecting - We want you to have access to the things you need;
- Thriving - We want to attract more and better jobs

Key Issues

1. Background

- 1.1 Highways England are preparing two Development Consent Order (DCO) applications for the dualling of the A1 Truck Road north of Morpeth to be determined under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) process (set out in the Planning Act 2008). The determining authority for the applications will be the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Northumberland County Council is the Host Authority for the development. In order to determine the application the Planning Inspectorate will carry out an examination into the proposal.
- 1.2 A Planning Inspector will be appointed to conduct the examinations into the two sections of dualling which are being submitted as two separate Development Consent Orders (DCOs); the first will be the Morpeth to Felton section and the second, Alnwick to Ellingham.
- 1.3 The DCO for the Morpeth to Felton section is due to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) imminently and the Alnwick to Ellingham section is due to be submitted early April 2020. The Inspector has a statutory duty to conclude the examination part of the DCO process within six months. The timetable is set by PINS and will be fixed once set.
- 1.4 The Local Authority is required to submit a Local Impact Report (LIR) to the Planning Inspectorate as part of the examination process into the proposal. The LIR is intended to be used as the means by which the Local Authority submits their local knowledge and evidence to the examination.
- 1.5 The majority of the examination process will be via written representations from consultees and interested parties; however, there may be hearings on specific topics if the Inspector considers it necessary.
- 1.6 The Planning Inspectorate has prepared an advice note to guide applicants and Local Authorities through the DCO process and suggests that the following topics be included in LIRs:
 - Site description and surroundings/location;
 - Details of the proposal;
 - Relevant planning history;
 - Character of the local area;
 - Local transport patterns;
 - Site and area constraints including designated sites;
 - Socio-economic and community matters;

- Consideration of the impact of the proposal and requirements within the DCO in respect of all of the above
 - DCO obligations and their impact on the local area.
- 1.7 The applicant is Highways England who has carried out their own consultation on the proposals and there is no requirement for the Local Authority to carry out consultation on the preparation of the LIR.
- 1.8 The objectives of the Scheme are to:
- Improve journey times on this route of strategic national importance;
 - Improve network resilience and journey time reliability;
 - Improve safety;
 - Maintain access for local traffic whilst improving the conditions for strategic traffic;
 - Facilitate future economic growth;
 - Avoid, mitigate and compensate for potential impacts upon the built and natural environment;
 - To seek to support the aim of no net loss of biodiversity;
 - To ensure the effective measures are in place to protect watercourses from pollutant spillage on the highway; and
 - To investigate and encourage the use of environmentally friendly operations and products throughout the Scheme life cycle.

2. Description of the Site

- 2.1 The proposed sections of dualling would mean that the A1 would be continuously dualled to Ellingham approximately 8km north of Alnwick. The two schemes involve sections of on-line and offline dualling.
- 2.2 The scheme is designed to address the issues identified and improve the safety and speed of journeys along the route.

3. Description of the Proposed Development

Morpeth to Felton

- 3.1 The scheme includes approximately 6.5km online widening and approximately 6.1km of new off line highway to provide more lanes and increase capacity. The existing A1 to be replaced by the new offline section would become a local access road (de-trunked). The national speed limit would apply along the length of the scheme (70mph) and the de-trunked A1 (60mph).
- 3.2 Dualling of the existing single carriageway section of the A1 would begin where the A1 meets the A697 near Northgate Hospital and Warreners House. Between the A679 junction and Priests Bridge, which is a length of approximately 2.9 km, the

existing A1 would be used as the southbound carriageway and a new northbound carriageway would be constructed to the west (i.e. widening would be online). Both carriageways would comprise two 3.65 m wide lanes with 1 m hard strips either side. Direct vehicular access from the A1 for residential properties at Warreners House would be stopped up, with alternative access provided from the south. A replacement private access road would be built to the southeast of Warreners House, which would join up with the residential cul-de-sac, West View. To facilitate the additional vehicle movements, West View would be widened.

- 3.3 At Highlaws Junction, the existing at-grade staggered junction would be replaced by a new compact grade-separated junction with a new bridge over the A1, which would allow easier and safer crossing. New access tracks from the local side roads at Highlaws Junction would provide access for Strafford House, Low Espley residents and the surrounding fields, with all direct access from the A1 stopped up.
- 3.4 At Priests Bridge, approximately 6.1 km of 7.3 m wide new dual carriageway (i.e. the offline section) would move away from the existing line of the A1 towards the west, bypassing to the west of Earsdon Moor, passing east of Fenrother and Causey Park and tying-back into the line of the existing A1 adjacent to Burgham Park on the west and Felmoor Park on the east.
- 3.5 A new compact grade-separated junction comprising a bridge over the A1 would be constructed where the Scheme crosses Fenrother Lane. This would allow easier and safer crossing for travellers in this area. In order to maintain road connectivity from Causey Park across the Scheme, a new overbridge would be constructed to carry Causey Park Lane over the offline section. An underbridge at Burgham would be constructed to enable Burgham Park Road from Longhorsley to pass under the Scheme to connect to the existing A1.
- 3.6 Continuing north from Burgham Park to the northern end of the Scheme, which is approximately 3.6 km in length, the widening to dual carriageway would be online. A new compact grade-separated junction with a bridge over the new A1 would be constructed at West Moor, to replace the existing at-grade junction, which would allow easier and safer crossing.
- 3.7 A new bridge over the River Coquet would be constructed alongside the existing bridge on the eastern side. The existing bridge will carry northbound traffic and the new bridge will carry southbound traffic. The new bridge would be of concrete and steel construction and comprise a continuous bridge deck with two upright supports (or 'piers').
- 3.9 In order to construct the Scheme, a National Grid gas pipeline needs to be diverted near Causey Park. In order to do this, a Northern Gas Networks pipeline and a Northern Powergrid overhead electricity line are also likely to need diverting. Ground moving activities are likely to be required as part of the works include the

excavation of a gas pipe trench and the establishment of temporary compound areas, access roads and other work areas.

- 3.10 The Scheme would require some demolition works. This includes the demolition of the residential property North Gate House (opposite Northgate Farm, on the western side of the A1 approximately 100m north of the A697 junction), small sections of some existing culverts in order to extend the structures and the existing wing walls (a small wall) at Parkwood subway underbridge (between the River Coquet and the B6345) on the side of the extension. Other Scheme elements would include site remediation and preparation, and construction works. These activities are likely to produce waste, including broken out concrete, cut steel, road surface planings, hazardous or contaminated material found on or beneath the Scheme, vegetation, surplus topsoil or subsoil materials, timber formwork, bricks and aggregate.

Alnwick to Ellingham

- 3.11 The existing A1 would form the new northbound carriageway and a new southbound carriageway would be built to the east of the existing A1. The mainline width of each carriageway is 9.3 m. The road design standard would be a two-lane dual carriageway to rural standards. The national speed limit would apply along the Scheme.
- 3.12 The existing at-grade junction at Charlton Mires and Rock Lodge would be replaced with a compact grade separated junction located at Charlton Mires, called Charlton Mires Junction. This would be in the form of a bridge above the A1 which would separate the local traffic from long-distance traffic. The junction would remove the need for direct access from B6341 and B6347 on to the A1, improving safety for end-users. Charlton Mires junction would also separate the local traffic using the B6347 and B6341 from the strategic traffic using the A1.
- 3.13 A roundabout would be provided where there is a sharp existing north-west bend in the B6347, to the north of Rock Lodge. The roundabout would provide safe access to the B6437 west and B6341, northbound carriageway of the A1 and southbound carriageway of the A1 and B6347 east via the new grade-separated junction.
- 3.14 Charlton Mires Junction would include a footway to facilitate safe, pedestrian access. The footway would link the diverted Footpath 129/004, to the east of the Scheme, extend across the A1 and along the improved B6341, to the west of the Scheme, to approximately Rock Lodge.
- 3.15 There are a number of crossing points along this stretch of the A1 that are currently used for people using Public Right of Ways and / or agricultural vehicles. These would need to be closed as part of the Scheme, for safety reasons. Charlton Mires Junction would replace a number of the crossing points at the north end of the

Scheme and a single bridge at the southern end of the Scheme would replace the remainder.

- 3.16 Private Means of Access (PMA) would be provided for properties where existing access to the A1 would be stopped up. The existing direct access between Rock South Farm and the A1 would be stopped up and Footpath 129/005 upgraded to an access road to service these properties. The direct access between Heckley Fence and the A1 would also be stopped up; meaning residents would have to travel north and access the A1 from the Charlton Mires Junction.
- 3.17 Two access tracks would be located to the north of Charlton Mires Junction and run parallel to the upgraded A1 on either side of the route. West Linkhall Access Track would service West Linkhall and Paterson Cottage. East Linkhall Access Track would service East Linkhall and West Lodge.
- 3.18 It is anticipated that two residential dwellings would need to be demolished to accommodate the proposed Charlton Mires Junction. These properties include East Cottage and Charlton Mires Farm, which are located to the east of the existing junction between the A1 and B6347 at Charlton Mires.

4. Development Plan Policies

- 4.1 The route of the proposed road goes through two former districts of the County, Castle Morpeth and Alnwick. Saved policies of the district's local plans are relevant to the determination of the Development Consent Order. The emerging policies of the Northumberland Plan are also relevant. The relevant policies are listed below:

4.2 Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (2003)

- C3 Areas of High Landscape Value
- C9 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance
- C10 Sites of Local Conservation Interest
- C11 Protected Species
- C12 Wildlife Corridors
- C15 Trees in the Countryside and Urban Areas
- C16 The Green Belt
- T1 Major Road Improvements
- R8 Public Footpaths and Bridleways

4.3 Alnwick LDF Core Strategy (2007)

- S8 Economic Regeneration
- S12 Protecting and Enhancing Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- S13 Landscape Character
- S15 Protecting the Built and Historic Environment
- S16 General Design Principles

- 4.4 Alnwick District Wide Local Plan (1997)(Saved Policies)
RE6 Protection of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance
RE13 Protecting Wildlife Habitats
BE2 Regional and Local Archaeological Significance
TT2 Protection of Route of A1 Dualling from Development
- 4.5 Emerging Northumberland Local Plan (Publication Draft Plan 2019)
STP1 Spatial Strategy
STP3 Principles of Sustainable Development
STP4 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption
STP7 Strategic Approach to the Green Belt
STP8 Development in the Green Belt
ECN1 Planning Strategy for the Economy
TRA1 Promoting Sustainable Connections
TRA3 Improving Northumberland's Core Road Network
ENV1 Approaches to Assessing the Impact of Development on the Natural, Historic and Built Environment
ENV2 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
ENV3 Landscape
ENV7 Historic Environment and Heritage Assets
WAT3 Flooding
WAT4 Sustainable Drainage Systems
POL2 Pollution and Air, Soil and Water Quality
POL3 Agricultural Land Quality
- 4.6 The National Planning Policy Framework will be taken into account where applicable although it should be borne in mind that paragraph 5 of the framework states that:

The Framework does not contain specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure projects. These are determined in accordance with the decision-making framework in the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and relevant national policy statements for major infrastructure, as well as any other matters that are relevant (which may include the National Planning Policy Framework).

5. Local Impacts

- 5.1 A number of issues have been identified that will need to be included in the Local Impact Reports submitted to PINS, these reflect the contents of the Preliminary Environmental Information Reports (PEIR) which have been published by Highways England ahead of the submission of the Environmental Statement (ES) with the DCO applications.

General Principles

- 5.2 There has been a long ambition and campaign to dual the A1 north of Morpeth. A 2014 Feasibility Study considered the problems experienced by users of the A1 in Northumberland. The following problems were identified:
- Drivers face a lack of alternative routes for their journeys;
 - Varying carriageway standards on the route. This can lead to confusion for long distance drivers;
 - Poor junction standards and layout – there are many different types of junctions along the route which can be confusing for those who are not familiar with the road;
 - Many junctions and direct private accesses on to the A1, resulting in delays and potential accidents when vehicles exit or enter the main carriageway;
 - Average traffic speeds on the single carriageway sections of the route are significantly lower than the sections that have been upgraded to dual carriageway;
 - A high proportion of heavy goods and agricultural vehicles north of Alnwick resulting in reduced speeds for following vehicles;
 - Lack of overtaking opportunities on single carriageway sections of the route which slows down traffic; and
 - Peak-hour traffic speeds are significantly lower than when traffic is free flowing.
- 5.3 The council is hopeful that by dualling the A1 in this location, as well as improving highway safety, it would also act as a catalyst for economic growth by improving the connectivity of North Northumberland with the wider region. This is reflected in Policy TRA 3 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan which supports the full dualling of the A1 through Northumberland with improved local links and junctions.
- 5.4 The objective of the scheme would be generally compliant with the aims of the NPPF and both existing and emerging development plans by, amongst other things, supporting healthy and safe communities and supporting a strong, competitive economy.

Impact on Existing Land Uses

- 5.5 There are likely to be effects on agriculture and farms affected by the proposal and Highways England have been working with individual land owners to ensure that their land remains accessible following the construction of the road. In the Alnwick to Ellingham section for instance an access bridge is proposed for this reason. The de-trunked highway section between Morpeth and Felton provides the opportunity for local agricultural traffic to be segregated from through traffic using the dualled section.

- 5.6 Upon completion the proposed route would result in the loss of agricultural land. The Agricultural Land Classification for the scheme is predominantly Grade 3 (Good to Moderate). It is recognised that in order to provide dual carriageway passage over the River Coquet at Felton a second bridge is required which will result in the loss of Ancient Woodland. This is an unavoidable consequence of the scheme and extensive work has been carried out with Natural England to provide adequate mitigation for its loss.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.7 In general the choice of preferred route between Morpeth and Felton means that the project has greater effects on landscape receptors than an online solution would have done, whilst potentially having some very minor positive effects for visual receptors close to the de-trunked route. The online route selection between Alnwick and Ellingham means that this section is likely to have more limited effects on the landscape.
- 5.8 The PEIR identifies the potential for significant effects for receptors and highlights the key issues to consider in terms of mitigation and the Council will seek to ensure that the negative visual impacts of the scheme are appropriately mitigated.
- 5.9 The LIR will therefore include a section on the landscape and visual impact of the proposal. The Council has engaged specialist Landscape Consultants to advise on the impacts of the scheme.

Cultural Heritage

- 5.10 There is potential for the whole or partial loss of designated and non-designated heritage assets both above and below ground both permanently and during the construction phase. For example, Grade II listed mileposts at Low Espley between Morpeth and Felton and at Heckley House between Alnwick and Ellingham may need to be removed as a result of the scheme. Potential impacts upon the setting of historic assets and the historic landscape should be avoided by design and where not practical visual or acoustic screening. Highways England anticipate that all significant impacts on heritage assets would be reduced through mitigation but may not be eliminated entirely.
- 5.11 The LIR will include a section on the potential impacts of the development on archaeological and cultural heritage interests and an assessment of the proposed mitigation undertaken to ensure that the best possible solution is reached. The content of the section will be informed by the Council's Conservation Officer and the County Archaeologist.

Biodiversity

- 5.12 Habitats in the local area such as arable land, grassland, hedgerows, trees (including ancient woodland) and scrub would be permanently lost as a result of the development. Species such as bats, birds and mammals may also be affected by increased disturbance. The scheme design considerations and mitigation and enhancement should ensure that the scheme results in no net loss of biodiversity. The PEIR indicates that compensatory habitat will be created to ensure that this is the case. The Council will seek to ensure that appropriate levels of mitigation are provided.
- 5.13 The LIR will include a section on the ecological impacts of the proposal which will be informed by the County Ecologist.

Air Quality

- 5.14 During construction there is potential for temporary adverse impacts on air quality due to dust and general construction activity. In addition traffic management measures may result in both positive and adverse changes to emissions from vehicle exhausts and roadside pollution concentrations. Once operational, the scheme is expected to result in both positive and adverse changes to air quality due to exhaust emissions from road traffic. A decrease in pollutants is expected as traffic moves away from the de-trunked sections and increase is expected along the new sections of the scheme. Potential long term increases in pollutants could be generated at nearby sensitive designated ecological sites, such as the River Coquet and the Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI as a result of increased traffic flows.
- 5.15 The LIR will include a section on the potential impact on air quality and will be informed by the Council's Public Protection team. The Council will seek to ensure that any significant impacts on air quality identified in the ES are appropriately mitigated.

Noise and Vibration

- 5.16 Construction activities such as piling, breaking and demolition could result in temporary high levels of noise and vibration causing disturbance to nearby receptors. Such works are anticipated for the construction of the grade-separated junctions, National Grid works and associated diversions and the construction of the new bridge over the River Coquet. Night-time working may result in further impacts. During operation the scheme could result in both permanent adverse and beneficial impacts.

- 5.17 The Council will seek to ensure that any significant impacts relating to noise and vibration from both the road and the construction impacts are identified in the ES are mitigated against.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 5.18 The construction of the scheme may result in temporary impacts upon surface water features, groundwater features and flood risk. Temporary drainage systems and diversions may be required to manage and attenuate flow prior to discharge during the construction phase. It is unlikely that all the potential impacts during this phase can be fully mitigated, however are likely to be temporary and not result in permanent adverse effects. A drainage strategy for the operational phase of the scheme has been designed into the scheme to ensure that discharges from the road and does not increase flood risk elsewhere, allowing for climate change effects, through incorporation of attenuation ponds, filter drains, swales and other Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). It is not anticipated that the scheme will result in significant permanent effects in this respect.
- 5.19 The Local Impact Report will include a section on the potential impacts on flood risk and will be informed by the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA).

People and Communities

- 5.20 The scheme will pass through the following divisions (wards):
- Pegswood
 - Longhorsley
 - Shilbottle
 - Alwick
 - Longhoughton
- 5.21 There are a number of communities either side of the scheme currently accessed by the local road network and Public Rights of Way.
- 5.22 During the construction of the scheme temporary impacts on people and communities may occur including disruption relating to noise, dust, access to sites and locations and traffic management measures. Public Rights of Way may be temporarily closed or diverted during the works and bus stops may be altered. On a permanent basis new accesses to properties may be provided and there may be diversions to public rights of way. Overall, traffic would be attracted to the new route rather than other local roads, leading to an overall beneficial effect. The improvements in safety are considered to be an overall beneficial impact of the proposal. Individual landowners on the route have been consulted by Highways England to discuss the impact on access to the proposed route and implications for farming practices etc.

- 5.23 The Local Impact Report will include a section on the potential impact on people and communities and will seek to ensure that any identified negative impacts are minimised where possible.

Material Resources

- 5.24 The construction of the scheme will have implications for the consumption of materials as well as the recovery and disposal of waste. The council will seek to ensure that the materials required are sourced locally where possible in order to benefit the local economy and waste is recycled where possible and if not is disposed of responsibly.

Climate

- 5.25 During the construction of the scheme, large sources of emissions and embedded carbon are to be found in materials required such as asphalt, aggregate, steel and concrete. Emissions will also be generated through transport and plant machinery. During operation, the main emission source will be from road vehicles. The Council recognises that improvements and additions to the road network are necessary at the current time albeit in the light of future anticipated demand within a low carbon context. In the immediate future, the priority is for improving safety and addressing congestion on the strategic network.
- 5.26 The A1 in Northumberland is part of the national strategic highway network and is one example where the flow of traffic is such that the air quality levels at peak times can reach unacceptable levels. The Council therefore supports Highways England in its bid to improve this section of the strategic network.
- 5.27 Through the LIR, the Council will seek to ensure that sustainable methods of construction and use of materials are employed by the project wherever practically possible in order to minimise the impact of the scheme on the environment.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This report sets out in general terms the main matters that will be covered by the Local Authority's Local Impact Report on the two proposed sections of A1 dualling north of Morpeth.
- 6.2 Members are recommended to endorse this general approach and delegate the submission of the reports to the Planning Inspectorate to the Director of Planning in accordance with the deadlines which will be set out upon acceptance of the applications.

Implications

Policy	Adopted and emerging local planning policies as well as national planning policy will be taken into account in the formulation of the Local Impact Report.
Finance and value for money	There are no financial implications arising from this report.
Legal	There are no legal implications arising from this report.
Procurement	There are no procurement issues arising from this report.
Human Resources	There are no human resource issues arising from this report.
Property	There are no property issues arising from this report.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Risk Assessment	The item raised poses a minimal risk to the organisation.
Crime & Disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications.
Health and Wellbeing	There are no health and wellbeing issues arising from this report.
Customer Consideration	There are no customer considerations arising from this report. Customer consultation on the scheme is the responsibility of Highways England.
Carbon reduction	<p>The declaration of a climate emergency demonstrates the council's commitment to responding to climate change.</p> <p>However this also recognises that improvements and additions to the road network will also still be considered albeit in the light of future anticipated demand within a low carbon context. In the immediate future, priority will be given to improving safety and addressing congestion where there is a detrimental impact on air quality.</p> <p>The A1 in Northumberland is part of the national strategic highway network and is one example where the flow of traffic is such that the air quality levels at peak times can reach unacceptable levels. The</p>

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Wards	Pegswood Longhorsley Shilbottle Alwick Longhoughton

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