

Member Briefing

Number: 1184

Title: Chester – Broughton Growth Corridor access road study

Summary: The purpose of this briefing is to update members on the work currently being undertaken to bring forward the Chester – Broughton Growth Corridor, formally known as the Chester Western Relief Road scheme.

In particular, it focuses on joint work with partners in Wales to explore the benefits of potentially re-aligning the proposed route in to Flintshire to address and mitigate current and future traffic congestion issues while supporting longer-term development opportunities.

Background

The Chester Western Relief Road (CWRR) is the long standing name given to a proposed new road to the west of Chester. It was identified in the 1990s and has subsequently been retained within Local Plan (Part One) and Chester Transport Strategy (2014) as a potential solution to address and mitigate congestion issues in and around Chester city centre.

Further development and appraisal work, carried out in September 2015, showed that the previously protected route could help contribute to reducing traffic congestion and improve air quality within the city centre and along part of the A483 Wrexham Road. However, additional traffic modelling suggests that the former CWRR route would also potentially have a negative impact elsewhere on the local network, not least in the vicinity of the A55-A483 junction and along the A548-A5480 in the vicinity of the Sealand Basin.

This alignment would also have limited ability to enable the release of any significant development sites. Estimated scheme costs are high and, as such, it is clear that the current scheme would demonstrate poor value for money. Therefore, failing to meet the necessary criteria required to access the necessary funding from either Central Government and/or Local Enterprise Partnership in order to be delivered.

Examining options for a revised route

The current Local Plan (Part Two) publication draft (published in November 2017) contains policy T1, which states identifying an alternative route for a CWRR is a priority local network scheme for the Council.

Compared to when the Chester Transport Strategy was published in 2014, there is now considerable interest in broadening the analysis of a potential future scheme, to consider the options and implications and longer-term benefits of a revised alignment, supporting the ambitions of both the North Wales Growth Deal and the Northern Powerhouse. Meetings have taken place with Welsh Government, Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council.

This could provide greater opportunities to improve connectivity on both sides of the border and enable improved access to new and emerging development sites. These include: Deeside and Ellesmere Port Enterprise Zones, Wrexham Industrial Estate, Wrexham Western Gateway, Hawarden, Broughton and the Retail Park, Warren Hall as well as potential sites that may be considered beyond the current Local Plan horizons. The potential alignment could also help reduce congestion on the Chester inner ring-road, supporting the

Northgate and Chester Business Quarter Developments and at the A55-A483 Posthouse junction.

Agreement has been reached that a new joint, cross-border study is established to review and identify new corridor options to address current capacity and congestion issues and help secure current and future growth ambitions and opportunities. This scheme, previously called Cheshire-Flintshire Access Road Study, has been titled the **Chester-Broughton Growth Corridor**.

Overall, the purpose of this planned study is to:

- identify the potential alignment(s) for any new proposed route(s)
- set out high level scheme costs - outline scheme costs should be used to undertake an economic assessment of the potential new corridor options, taking into account any potential scheme phasing
- test opportunities for improving integrated transport in the area and for using more sustainable modes
- make recommendations relating to further modelling work necessary to support potential scheme development
- provide a budget cost estimate and timetable for preparing a strategic outline business case
- prepare an outline programme of work showing the steps necessary to progress the scheme to a strategic outline business case or outline business case that must be compliant with the requirements of both UK and Welsh Governments. Consideration should also be given to the status of potential options and future funding opportunities in relation to the major road network and Road Investment Strategy.

Next steps

Work is at an early stage of development and it is anticipated that this initial study will formally start in May 2018, with the initial outcomes confirmed by early autumn.

A cross-border officer working group has been established to progress this project. This includes representation from both Welsh Government, the Department for Transport and Highways England.

Both Flintshire County Council and Wrexham Borough Council have made the decision to seek formal cabinet approval to participate in this exercise. The outcome of these meetings will be known shortly.

Cheshire West and Chester Council took a paper to Cabinet in June 2016, which endorsed continuing work to bring forward Chester Western Relief Road as one of a number of major scheme priorities for the Council.

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