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Report title: A120 Braintree to A12: Favoured route option	
Report to: Councillor Kevin Bentley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	
Report author: Andrew Cook – Director, Highways and Transportation	
Date: 8 June 2018	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To approve a favoured route option for an upgraded A120 between Braintree and the A12 (the Scheme). This decision, which is based on detailed study work and the results of a January 2017 public consultation, will then be passed to Government and Highways England (HE) for consideration and inclusion within the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) 2.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve route option D, as set out in Appendix A, as Essex County Council's (ECC) favoured route option for the A120 between Braintree and the A12 (the Favoured Option).
- 2.2 To agree that ECC will recommend the Favoured Option to HE for determination as to whether the Scheme will be included in RIS 2.
- 2.3 To authorise the release of all information connected with the Scheme as necessary to HE and the Department for Transport (DfT) in support of ECC's consideration for the inclusion of the Scheme in the RIS 2.
- 2.4 Note that HE and the DfT will have the final decision as to whether to fund the Scheme and make a Preferred Route Announcement (PRA), which might differ to ECC's Favoured Option.

3. Summary of issue

Background

- 3.1 The A120 between Braintree and the A12 at Marks Tey is the last stretch of single carriageway road between the M11 and Colchester. Over the years, and particularly since the stretch of the A120 from Stansted to Braintree was upgraded, the single carriageway of the A120 between Braintree and the A12

A120 Braintree to A12: Favoured route option

has become increasingly congested and unreliable. This has led to poor levels of service and safety for road users, which impacts on economic growth and development in the region, as well as affecting the well-being of local residents via impacts on the local environment and access to essential services. With traffic volumes expected to increase, congestion on the A120 will get worse, further exacerbating the impacts on travel, local residents and economic growth.

- 3.2 It has long been the ambition of ECC and its partners to see an upgrade of this section of highway to dual carriageway standard, however the work to upgrade this stretch of road is not currently committed in a Government improvement programme. As a result, ECC needs to submit the Scheme to the DfT and HE for their consideration and determination as to whether it will be included within the RIS2.
- 3.3 The first Road Investment Strategy (RIS) 1 covered investment in England's motorways and major roads between 2015 and 2020. This is the first step in a long-term program from the DfT and HE to improve England's motorways and major roads. Accordingly, it is the intention that this will be repeated to enable a second period of investment post 2020.
- 3.4 In order to be included within the DfT's RIS 2, the DfT requires that:
 - The project's development follows HE's processes to determine a route;
 - The scheme ultimately selected represents value for money; and
 - As wide a consensus as is possible is achieved through consultation and engagement processes.
- 3.5 In agreement with the DfT and HE, ECC has taken the lead on reviewing all possible route options for the Scheme and identified its Favoured Option. The Scheme is following the HE Project Control Framework (PCF) process and is currently in Stage 2, option selection. It is the practice of HE to choose and then announce a Preferred Route on completion of Stage 2. ECC has indicated its desire to recommend its Favoured Option as it believes that this would improve the probability of the Scheme being included within the RIS 2, by having a route option that has clear public and political support.
- 3.6 An assessment of responses to the January 2017 public consultation and an analysis of the relative performance of the options based on the available data was carried out and the findings were reported to Cabinet in November 2017. On the basis of the data, Cabinet agreed that further analysis would be undertaken on all five options to fulfil the current PCF stage and determine the best overall performing route, but that only routes in the central and southern corridors were still being considered for recommendation to HE and the DfT. The central corridor contained option B and C, and the southern corridor contained options D and E.
- 3.7 Accordingly since that time ECC has further developed its Decision Framework and has scored the results of the technical analysis and public consultation in

order to reach a Favoured Option which could be recommended to the DfT and HE.

Decision Framework

- 3.8 A key requirement for entry to the RIS2 programme is the assessment of each route option against five key business cases (Strategic Fit, Economic, Managerial, Financial and Commercial) in accordance with the DfT's five cases Business Case model as contained in the Government's Green Book (Central Government Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation). The public consultation results are one of many criteria that must be considered by HE when they make their decision on a PRA.

Strategic Fit

- 3.9 The Strategic case looks at the case for change and the rationale for intervention and seeks to identify the fit of the Scheme to wider policies and objectives.
- 3.10 The extent to which each route option addresses existing and predicted future problems on the A120 has been assessed, along with their ability to meet the HE-approved scheme objectives:
- Provide infrastructure that facilitates economic growth;
 - Reduce congestion and delay;
 - Improve safety for all users;
 - Improve environmental impact of transport on existing communities along the A120 and reduce impact on the environment generally through design processes;
 - Improve strategic connectivity; and
 - Improve local connectivity by non-motorised modes of travel.

Economic

- 3.11 A wide range of criteria are assessed in the Economic case, encompassing everything from economic growth and value for money to carbon emissions and the environment. The value for money of each route is worked out by looking at the economic benefit and comparing it to the cost of the scheme, while economic growth is measured by assessing the overall contribution to the economy and the ability of the route to unlock housing and jobs. Environmental considerations include air quality, carbon emissions, cultural heritage, landscape, nature conservation, geology and soils, materials, road drainage, the water environment, noise and vibration, and people and communities. The well-being of residents and road users is taken into account in ensuring the route remains safe, accessible and, wherever practicable, does not sever nearby communities.

Managerial

3.12 Under this heading, the options are reviewed and consideration is given to how the proposal will be delivered and received by the public. The results of the public consultation, conducted between January and March 2017, are one of the key considerations within this case along with how each route deals with practical feasibility and issues raised within Transport Focus's survey of A120 road users.

Financial

3.13 The Financial case looks at the overall projected costs of the Scheme including both capital and revenue. The affordability, cost profile and overall cost risk are also considered in this case.

Commercial

3.14 This requires consideration to any income generated by the Scheme and where funding is coming from to deliver the Scheme. As funding is currently being sought from the DfT and HE through the inclusion in the RIS2 programme, this has been scored neutral across all route options on the Decision Framework.

Conclusion

3.15 The criteria assessed in the Decision Framework have been updated since the November Cabinet based on the results of additional assessment work carried out over the last six months. This work has included further environmental assessment, more detailed construction planning and design, updated economic forecasts based on more detailed traffic modelling, updated safety and accessibility assessments, more detailed air quality and noise modelling and revised capital cost estimates provided by HE.

3.16 Each of the four remaining routes has been scored from 1 to 5 on how it best meets the 14 criteria (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest). This score is then divided by 14 to create the 'Overall Score' referred to in Table 1 and 2 below.

3.17 The Favoured Option scored the highest in the Decision Framework results in November 2017, closely followed by option E as both options deliver good value for money with the highest Benefit to Cost ratios. Following the additional work undertaken since that time, the Favoured Option is still scoring the highest within the Decision Framework.

3.18 The Decision Framework scores as they stand in June 2018 are set out in Table 1 below with a breakdown of the scoring shown in Table 2:

Table 1: Decision Framework results (June 2018) – please see paragraph 3.16 for an explanation of the figures in the table below.

Option	Overall Score	Overall Rank
D	3.86	1st
E	3.77	2nd
C	3.57	3rd
B	3.56	4th

Table 2: In depth Decision Framework results (June 2018) – please see paragraph 3.16 for an explanation of the figures in the table below.

Option	Overall Ranking	Strategic Fit	Economic Case	Managerial Case	Financial Case	Overall Score
D	1st	3.66	3.63	3.57	4.60	3.86
E	2nd	3.89	3.58	3.47	4.24	3.77
C	3rd	4.11	3.48	3.24	3.42	3.57
B	4th	4.01	3.42	3.08	3.71	3.56

- 3.19 Although the Favoured Option is not the highest scoring option in the Strategic case, it addresses all the identified problems well and more than meets the Scheme objectives.
- 3.20 The Favoured Option scores highest for the Economic case as it delivers the best Benefit to Cost ratio (3.75), has the least impact on the environment and delivers the largest reduction of traffic through local villages.
- 3.21 The Favoured Option scores highest for the Managerial case as it is the least difficult option to construct and was also chosen by 20% of respondents as a first or second choice route during the 2017 public consultation.
- 3.22 The Favoured Option scores highest for the Financial case as it has the lowest cost with the lowest financial risk. Updated costs from HE are available in Table 3 below. The Favoured Option costs, excluding inflation, had originally been estimated at £475 million within the 2017 public consultation document. Following further study work, HE has updated this to £396 million.

Table 3: Capital Cost Estimates (Highways England)

Option	Out-turn Costs (£ million)		Economic Costs (NPV £ million) ³
	Excluding Inflation ¹	Including Inflation ²	
Option D	396.4	555.0	314.3
Option E	471.4	672.2	370.7
Option C	680.6	974.2	537.5
Option B	632.3	894.7	502.9

1. Out-turn costs in 2016 prices excluding inflation and portfolio risk

2. Out-turn costs in 2016 prices including inflation and excluding portfolio risk

3. Economic costs in 2010 market prices discounted to 2010 (excluding portfolio risk)

3.23 In light of the Decision Framework, the Favoured Option has a number of benefits which have helped it to score highest within the Decision Framework including:

- **Highest Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)** at 3.75, which provides a ‘**High**’ value for money rating. This means that for every £1 million spent on upgrading the A120; residents, road users and businesses will see £3,750,000 in benefits;
- **Lowest cost;**
- **Lowest impact on the local environment** of all the options;
- **Largest reduction in traffic through local villages:** 59% less traffic through Silver End and 44% traffic less through Tye Green (as well as 43% less through Bradwell) in the morning peak in opening year.
- **Highest score for *well-being*, least severance and highest operational safety;**
- **Best option with respect to practical feasibility:** least bridges and other complex structures, as well as the shortest construction programme.

3.24 As a result, the updated Decision Framework scores provide an exceptionally robust and comprehensive assessment of the relative performance of the four route options; clearly identifying the best performing option.

4. Options

4.1 ECC cannot make a Preferred Route Announcement (PRA), it can only decide on its favoured route option to recommend to HE, who will make a final decision on any preferred route for an upgraded A120 between Braintree and the A12. ECC would expect HE to make its PRA in 2019.

4.2 As a result, this paper sets out a number of potential options below. The options below should not be confused with the route options A, B, C, D and E referred to earlier in this document.

4.3 **OPTION 1 – Recommended option** – Announce route option D as a favoured route option to be recommended to HE due to it scoring highest on the Decision Framework.

A120 Braintree to A12: Favoured route option

- This would be the most open and transparent way of deciding the merits of each route having been scored by the Decision Framework which is designed to fit Highways England's own processes.
- The advantage of this approach is it gives a clear route option for people to support as ECC and partner organisations look to gain funding to improve the A120 through RIS 2.
- This option allows more in-depth study work to continue on route option D ahead of a PRA by Highways England in 2019.
- The risk is that the chosen route could conflict with HE's PRA. However HE is aware that ECC is seeking approval of its favoured option and is supportive of this approach.

4.4 **OPTION 2** – Announce route option D as a favoured route option to recommend to HE due to it scoring highest on the Decision Framework, but formally note that option E remains a viable alternative.

- This would be an open and transparent way of deciding the merits of each route having been scored by the Decision Framework which is designed to fit Highways England's own processes.
- The advantage of this approach is it allows HE a choice of route options for consideration ahead of its PRA.
- The risk is that it may prevent further in depth study of the single route option, or potentially doubles the cost of this work due to two options remaining viable.

4.5 **OPTION 3** – Rank route options B to E in preference order from 1st to 4th noting that all four have favoured route status due to close scoring within the Decision Framework.

- This option eliminates the risk of picking a favoured route option that could conflict with Highways England's PRA.
- The risk is that it restricts detailed study work that could begin immediately on one single route.
- It also risks angering the public as there may be an impression that ECC is no closer to a chosen route despite seven months of study work since last November's Cabinet decision.

4.6 **OPTION 4** – Delay a decision or refuse to make a favoured route option announcement and request further technical analysis.

- This option eliminates the risk of picking a favoured route option that could conflict with Highways England's PRA.
- It risks further delaying an upgrade to the A120 which more than four out of five people who responded to the consultation have asked for.

5. Next steps

5.1 ECC will continue to work with HE and lobby Government to highlight the strong case for the A120 Braintree to A12 scheme's inclusion within RIS 2.

6. Issues for consideration

Financial implications

- 6.1 The total cost of the study work is incorporated within the Essex County Council Capital Programme and totals £9m. £6.5m has been spent in prior years and £2.4m remains for the 2018/19 financial year. This has allowed completion of PCF Stage 2 and will facilitate some additional work related to Stage 3, which should enable the Government to make a PRA.
- 6.2 Of the £9m in the capital programme, £5m has been funded by ECC and Highways England has contributed £4m. There are no additional impacts to the Medium Term Resource Strategy as a result of this decision.
- 6.3 There is a risk that Highways England/DfT decide not to include the A120 in RIS2 and do not proceed with a preferred route announcement. This would potentially result in abortive costs to ECC that would need to be met from revenue if an alternative source of funding could not be identified as the costs cannot be capitalised. As ECC has been working closely with teams within Highways England and the DfT throughout the design and HE has made a significant contribution towards the project, this risk is considered to be low.

Legal implications

- 6.4 The feasibility study has been undertaken on behalf of HE. HE is the body with the legal duty to plan and operate the country's motorway and trunk road network. All work undertaken by ECC is to develop proposals which will encourage HE and the DfT to support its work and take over delivery. A PRA can only be made by HE in association with the DfT. At the stage of a PRA, the route will be safeguarded and protected from development.
- 6.5 To fulfil the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment process, an Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) is prepared in PCF Stages 1 and 2. Once the PRA is made, an Environmental Statement is prepared in PCF Stage 3 which is submitted as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

7. Equality and Diversity implications

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and

A120 Braintree to A12: Favoured route option

- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. The highway improvements are likely to improve safety, particularly for vulnerable groups. Engagement with relevant stakeholder groups during the detailed design period will seek to optimise these benefits.

7.4 The *Equality Impact Assessment* can be found in *Appendix B*.

8. List of appendices

- A: Map of four route options
B: Equality Impact Assessment

9. List of Background papers

- A120 Braintree to A12: report on option selection and consultation (Cabinet report)
- Public Consultation Document
- Consultation report
- Transport Focus report
- Late response consultation report
- Options Assessment Report

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Councillor Kevin Bentley, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure	7 th June 2018

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Executive Director, Economy, Localities and Public Health and Interim Executive Director, Infrastructure and Environment	7 th June 2018
Mark Carroll	

A120 Braintree to A12: Favoured route option

Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services (S151 Officer) Tiffany Brassett on behalf of Margaret Lee	29 th May 2018
Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer) Kim Cole on behalf of Paul Turner	29 th May 2018