

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**31 January 2019**

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

**MAJOR ROAD NETWORK AND LARGE LOCAL MAJOR TRANSPORT SCHEMES – PROGRESSION OF ASHBOURNE AND CHESTERFIELD SCHEME OPTIONS (HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To update Cabinet on recent Government guidance for confirming and funding major transport projects, and to make recommendations on the progression of options for the County Council.

(2) **Information and Analysis** At its meeting of 15 March 2018, Cabinet considered and agreed the Council's response to Government consultation to create a major road network (MRN) which recognised the important relationship between key, local authority roads and those operated by Highways England on the strategic road network (SRN) (Minute No. 81/18 refers). The concept of the MRN was contained in Government's Transport Investment Strategy published in July, 2017 which committed allocating a proportion of the National Roads Fund (derived from vehicle excise duty) to the confirmed MRN.

In defining this network, Government set out five central policy objectives:

1. Reduce congestion – alleviating local and regional congestion, reducing traffic jams and bottlenecks.
2. Support economic growth and rebalancing – supporting the delivery of the Industrial Strategy, contributing to a positive economic impact that is felt across the regions.
3. Support housing delivery – unlocking land for new housing developments.
4. Support all road users – recognising the needs of all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people.
5. Support the SRN – complementing and supporting the existing SRN by creating a more resilient road network in England.

Linked to these objectives, Government has proposed a number of 'guiding principles' for the creation and management of the MRN (ie those roads that sit beneath the Strategic Road Network but have a level of regional/national importance which raises them above any other 'local' roads). These principles are:

- Increased certainty of funding.
- A co-ordinated investment programme.
- A consistent network.
- Clear local, regional and national roles.
- A focus on enhancement and major renewals.
- Strengthening links with the SRN.

Following consideration of the consultation results and more detailed discussion with regional transport bodies such as Midlands Connect, (the representative sub-national transport body for East and West Midlands), Government published its response and Investment Planning Guidance for the proposed MRN and Large Local Major (LLM) programmes in December 2018. For the East Midlands, the resulting proposed network is:

- The A6135 and A619 from the Sheffield boundary, through Eckington and Barlborough to the Nottinghamshire boundary west of Worksop.
- The A61 from the Sheffield boundary to the A38 at Alfreton and from the A38 to the Derby City boundary at Little Eaton.
- The A617 from Chesterfield, via M1 Motorway Junction 29 to the Nottinghamshire boundary at Pleasley.
- The A38 east of M1 Motorway Junction 28.
- The A610 from the A38 at Ripley to the Nottinghamshire boundary.
- The A609 and A6096 through Ilkeston.
- The A511 through South Derbyshire.
- The A516 in the Etwall area.
- The A52 from Derby to the Staffordshire boundary.
- The A6 from Derby to the East Cheshire boundary at New Mills.
- The A53 from Leek to Buxton.

Whilst covering a relatively extensive network within the County, this is a disappointing outcome in some respects. The Council had made the case, which was accepted by Midlands Connect, for inclusion of the A515 between Buxton and its junction with the A50, due to the importance of the route for transporting minerals and the visitor economy. With an historic centre, large number of listed buildings and conservation areas, the town of Ashbourne is a major visitor attraction in its own right. But it also serves as one of the gateways to the Peak District National Park and the A515 connects the Park to the national strategic road network which is why the Council considered it important for inclusion in the MRN.

A case was also made by Midlands Connect for inclusion of the A444 through South Derbyshire. The exclusion of these roads from the Government's list of proposals means that any potential schemes along them are ineligible to be considered for MRN funding - unless future revisions of the MRN result in the inclusion of such routes.

In terms of the wider funding approach set up by Government, the Investment Planning Guidance sets out the types of scheme currently eligible for MRN funding:

- Bypasses or new alignments which alleviate congestion and make through journeys quicker, safer and more reliable.
- Missing Links – new roads that link existing stretches of the MRN or SRN.
- Widening of existing MRN roads where there is a known congestion point or safety risk.
- Major structural renewals on roads, bridges, tunnels and viaducts on MRN roads, where significant work needs to be done to renew the carriageway or prevent closure or weight restrictions.
- Major junction improvements, such as a grade separation that would improve the safety, performance or flow of an MRN road.
- Variable message signs, traffic management and the use of smart technology and data to raise the performance of the network.
- Packages of improvements which may include elements of safety, widening, junction improvements and new alignment.

Government funding is available for those MRN projects that fall within the £20 million to £50 million range and a contribution of at least 15% towards total costs will be expected from local sources.

For large local major (LLM) schemes, Government has issued the following advice:

- LLM funding is for schemes that cannot reasonably be funded through any other route. They should be single schemes that can only be delivered or justified as a whole, as opposed to being split into phases or smaller elements.
- The lower threshold for consideration for the LLM programme is £50 million, to dovetail with the upper threshold for MRN schemes.
- Only road schemes will be considered for the programme.
- As a general guideline, LLM schemes should aim for local or third-party contribution to be at least 15% of the total scheme costs.

The 2018 Autumn Budget set a financial envelope of £3.5 billion for the MRN and LLM over the second Roads Investment Strategy (RIS2) period, which runs from 2020 to 2025. It is proposed that sub national transport bodies (STBs) such as Midlands Connect will play a central role in the initial assessment and prioritisation of both MRN and LLM projects. Although all schemes will need to follow the standard business case appraisal process (supported by a suitable assessment model), each STB will determine which project should be taken forward into this process for its own area. There is no doubt this will be a highly competitive process and it is understood that Midlands Connect may look to propose approximately ten MRN and two or three LLM schemes for the RIS2 period.

### **Next Steps for Derbyshire Projects**

Cabinet will be aware that work on options for an A515 Ashbourne Bypass is underway through the development of a traffic model capable of supporting business case development, planning and land assembly processes. This was considered by Cabinet at its meeting of 26 April 2018 (Minute No. 124/18 refers). The project's Appraisal Specification Report is now complete, assessing modelling options and setting out requirements to ensure that scheme options are assessed through a robust method.

During the remainder of the financial year 2018-19, the next phase of work, totalling £344,000, comprises the collection of additional data (largely on the origin and destination of trips). Cabinet has already agreed funding from the Economy, Transport and Environment budget in its previous considerations. This work will help test how well the model can replicate existing traffic conditions and, subsequently, the testing of scheme options. This will enable a preferred option to be put forward for whatever funding options become available, which could still potentially involve the National Roads Fund under any future review process. Cabinet will note the exclusion of the A515 from the initial MRN but is asked to reaffirm that it wishes to proceed towards adoption of a preferred scheme option.

It is difficult for the Council to make firm proposals at this stage for projects to be delivered during the RIS2 period. The production of valid assessment models is, in itself, time-consuming. During the financial year 2019-20, appropriate transport models will become available for the Ashbourne area and also for north-eastern Derbyshire; the latter having been commissioned in support of the A61 Growth Corridor Strategy.

At present, the most eligible Derbyshire scheme that would fit the stated MRN criteria and existing Local Transport Plan status, would be the grade-separation of the A61 Chesterfield Inner Relief Road junctions. Cabinet will be aware from its meeting of 20 December, 2018 that an interim scheme for Whittington Moor is being developed but that grade-separation for the three roundabouts is planned to be explored with Midlands Connect.

There is a possibility that a grade-separation scheme could be brought forward in combination with the Chesterfield-Staveley Regeneration Route (CSRR). As reported to Cabinet on 8 November, 2018, this is the subject of a current grant bid for Housing Infrastructure Fund (Minute No. 266/18 refers). Should this be unsuccessful, or support only partial delivery, an LLM business case could be considered for the CSRR (which would not be eligible for MRN funding as the A619 does not sit on the eligible network).

Notwithstanding the above, the availability of the quantum of funding allocated to MRN and LLM projects will allow consideration of potential schemes which, in the recent past, would have been unaffordable. There are a number of settlements along the Derbyshire MRN for which it would be worthwhile

considering possible schemes, even if aimed at long-term delivery. It is recommended that officers undertake an initial assessment and report this to Cabinet in the form of an indicative programme for preparation and delivery.

(3) **Financial Considerations** There are no additional financial considerations directly associated with this report. Work on progressing traffic modelling and option assessment for Ashbourne Bypass can be met from existing Economy, Transport and Environment capital and revenue budgets, as reported to Cabinet on 26 April 2018. These costs are estimated to be £80,000 for data collection and £264,000 for model development and option tests.

### **Other Considerations**

Transport considerations are fully embedded in the above report, however, regard has also been given to following factors: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property and social value.

(4) **Key Decision** No.

(5) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(6) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Environment Department. Officer contact details - Jim Seymour, extension 38557.

(7) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That Cabinet:

- 7.1 Notes the contents of the report on Government support for major transport projects and on the assessment of an Ashbourne Bypass, A61 Chesterfield junctions and the Chesterfield-Staveley Regeneration Route.
- 7.2 Reaffirms its commitment to the development of an assessment model and the testing of scheme options for Ashbourne.
- 7.3 Agrees to receive a further report recommending an outline programme for the preparation and delivery of future Major Road Network and Large Local Major schemes.

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