

Committee: Local Plan Working Group

Agenda Item

Date: 7 February 2014

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Title: Public exhibitions by Essex Highways on options for a new access from the M11 for Harlow (Junction 7A)

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Key decision: No

Summary

1. This report is about a series of exhibitions by Essex Highways into a proposal to construct a new M11 junction for Harlow. The report explains the background to the proposals (including the sub-regional context), what they are and how they could be beneficial to Uttlesford residents and workers. The report sets out the proposed timeline and recommends that the Council supports the new junction.

Recommendations

2. That the Council supports the construction of M11 Junction 7A and writes to the County Council expressing its support. Whilst the closing date for on-line comments via the exhibition was the end of January, there has not been a meeting of the Working Group during the life of the consultation.

Financial Implications

3. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background Papers

4. None

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	Essex Highways is currently running a series of public exhibitions on these proposals. It welcomed comments and feedback until the end of January 2014 by completing an online high-level questionnaire. After then, it will be modifying the scheme options for full public consultation in summer 2014. The Council will have the opportunity to take part in the summer consultation.
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Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	Junction 7A should result in less congested access to / from Harlow for Uttlesford residents and workers.
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	Officer and Member time in preparing and considering this response.

The New Junction Proposals

6. The County Council is looking at options for meeting future traffic demands in the Harlow area. Harlow suffers from significant road congestion at peak times, and there is a need to plan for future growth as well as accommodate committed development in the northeast of the town. Harlow has only one connection to the strategic road network which is to the south of the town (M11 Junction 7) which is now at capacity during peak hours, meaning that even minor incidents can have a significant impact on the local road network, especially the A414. The A414 runs along the northern and eastern sides of Harlow, connecting with Chelmsford to the east and Hertford, Hatfield and Hemel Hempstead to the west.
7. The exhibition is about a proposal to build a new grade separated junction (Junction 7A) roughly midway between M11 Junctions 7 and 8. The new junction would have a dumb-bell arrangement with north and southbound on and off-slips, with a four lane connecting bridge across the M11. Three options are proposed (Options 1, 1A and 2) which differ in the way that Junction 7A is linked to the local road network at Gilden Way on the east side of Harlow. Gilden Way is the western section of the B183 which runs from the A414 at Harlow north, then becoming Sheering Road to Hatfield Heath, Hatfield Broad Oak and Takeley. The roundabout junction of Gilden Way and the A414 is identified as a current congestion point.
8. The options would cost between £47-55m. It is anticipated that construction could start in 2017/2018 and be completed in 2020/2021.
9. The exhibition discounts the construction of a relief flyover at Junction 7 connecting the A414 West and East sections because it would be very expensive (£90m+). Also, a flyover would not necessarily solve local congestion problems in the event of a traffic incident on or close to Junction 7.

10. The exhibition also comments on the possibility of constructing a northern bypass from Junction 7A to the A414 at Eastwick (north of Harlow) as a fourth option. This has been discounted for a number of reasons:
- Significant bridging of existing roads, the railway, the River Stort and its floodplain would be required
 - It would cost over £200m
 - It would remove some traffic from Harlow, but would not address congestion within the town
 - It would not provide for access to Junction 7A from Gilden Way for committed development which is necessary for growth and regeneration
11. To support Junction 7A, the exhibition gives details of a number of local road improvements that would be progressed as funding becomes available. These are principally along the A414 in Harlow and along Gilden Way.
12. Construction of Junction 7A features in the South East Economic Plan, as submitted to Government by the South East Local Economic Partnership (SELEP). Junction 7A is a key factor in maximising the potential of the 51ha Harlow Enterprise Zone to generate over 5,000 jobs via a proposed investment package known as the M11 Pinch Point Package (Junctions 7, 7A, 8 and improved access to Harlow). Job numbers in the Enterprise Zone have been capped due to concerns by the Highways Agency about constraints at Junction 7. SELEP's ambitions to improve strategic road links are closely aligned with the County Council's 2012 Essex Economic Growth Strategy and with the West Essex Alliance (Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford DCs). Junction 7A will also support the construction of nearly 3,500 new homes in the Harlow area.
13. For Uttlesford residents and workers travelling by car to / from Harlow during peak hours, Junction 7A would be beneficial. It would reduce the distance travelled for those who currently use the motorway between Junctions 7 and 8, saving some time as well. For instance in the am peak it is necessary to drive past Harlow on the M11 in order to return via Junction 7 along the A414, which is invariably congested. Junction 7A would provide a distance and time saving option for motorway users from the north, particularly for those whose destination is in the northern or central parts of the town.
14. The exhibition provides some information on current and predicted traffic flows on the Harlow road network using 2008 as the base year and 2021 as the prediction year. The 2021 flows are based on three scenarios:
- 1) *"do nothing"*, - committed schemes and developments, but not J7A
 - 2) *"do minimum"*, - 25% proposed developments and associated schemes, but not J7A, and
 - 3) *"do something"* – *"do minimum" plus J7A*

15. Along the B183 Sheering Road in 2008 the daily average 2-way traffic flow was 9,250, rising to 10,500 in the “do nothing” and “do minimum” scenarios in 2021. With the construction of Junction 7A, flows along Sheering Road reduce to 4,250. Based on these flows, there would be a distinct benefit of reduced traffic to / from Harlow along the B183 within Uttlesford.
16. Along the A1184 from Sawbridgeworth and Bishop’s Stortford, the 2-way traffic flow was 21,500 in 2008, rising to 27,500 in the “do nothing” scenario and 28,250 in the “do minimum” scenario. In the “do something” scenario the flow reduces to 27,750 – a slight beneficial effect for motorists using that road compared to the other two scenarios.
17. Along the A414 from Junction 7 the 2008 2-way flow is 41,500, increasing to 44,500 and 45,250 under the “do nothing” and “do minimum” scenarios respectively. In the “do something” scenario the flow reduces to 38,250 which is indicative of reduced congestion at Junction 7 following the construction of Junction 7A.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the Council’s views are not taken into account.	1 The Council has regular discussions with the County Council over strategic highway matters in the preparation of the new Local Plan and at wider “Duty to Co-Operate” meetings with other local authorities including the County Council and Harlow DC.	2	Support the construction of Junction 7A and take part in the summer 2014 consultation.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.