

Committee: Planning Policy Working Group

Agenda Item

Date: 17 May 2017

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Title: Uttlesford Transport Study Briefing

Author: Alan Gilham, Planning Officer

Summary

1. This report briefs PPWG on the position at the time of writing as regards the Uttlesford Transport Study including:-
 - District Study
 - M11 Junction 8 Assessment
 - South Cambridgeshire Junctions Assessment

Recommendation

2. To note the briefing below with the final outcomes/published studies to be reported in full to PPWG on 22 June 2017.

Financial Implications

3. None

Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	N/A
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	Growth effects congestion/modal travel split
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

6. Introduction

The district study is being prepared by White Young Green on behalf of the Council to assess the transport impacts in the district of local plan growth. The study:-

- is a strategic level assessment in line with government policy and best practice
- examines the likely transport impacts of different spatial distribution options
- will present a comparison of the transport implications of growth

The study area covers the whole of the UDC and also parts of adjacent districts as advised by the relevant transport authorities Essex, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire County Councils.

The study provides evidence on:

- Existing baseline data;
 - sustainable travel/potential for improvement
 - network flows/traffic congestion
- Sustainable approach to travel in the district;
 - Policy improvements
 - Traffic impact of different scenarios/patterns of growth/accessibility
 - Impact on strategic infrastructure/measures needed

The objectives of the study are:

- Develop understanding of key highways issues including objections raised by Highways England on the withdrawn local plan
- Use recognised good practice/involve Essex County Council and Highways England
- Compile evidence on traffic impacts/sustainable travel/potential for improvements
- Consider implication for a sustainable pattern of development and impact on modal share
- Consider the reasonable options via applying the outcome of the above to a sieving process of the best performing options

Review of Inspectors transport comments on withdrawn plan

The inspectors report on the withdrawn local plan identified areas of transport concern. The study therefore began with a review of the inspectors transport considerations.

Transport Policy and Programmes

The study includes a full review of relevant transport policy including national policy and local policies and programmes that may affect the transport situation in the district.

Existing transport network/infrastructure

The study indicates the districts most significant transport infrastructure is along the M11 and A120 corridors including rail links to London and Cambridge. Transport connections in the district are focused on the M11, A120 and train stations on its western and southern edges. The M11 J8 interchange is a key junction in the district providing access to Stansted Airport and the M11 and A120 transport corridors. The B184 forms a north/south spine for the district connecting its two largest settlements. In the rest of the district connections/highway network are limited.

Baseline assessment/Sustainable transport modes/Sustainable approach

The study looks at commuting trends/modal travel shares. Initial work indicates long distance out commuting from a largely rural area to a wide range of attractors including London with implications for strategic and local transport infrastructure. Sustainable transport is a particular issue in the district with most travel by car and some sustainable travel modes negligible. A large portion of the study is therefore dedicated to:

- Understanding the causes of this travel behaviour
- Developing a sustainable approach
- How the local plan can improve the situation

For sustainable modes work indicates the following trends in the district:

- Average levels of rail use
- Low bus use/challenging to operate on commercial basis with most services centred on Stansted Airport, Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow
- Low cycle use/limited infrastructure
- Walking mode share reasonably high/well connected network in towns

Equally the use of active modes varies greatly across the District. On average for travel to work 11% is by active mode of which 91% is walking. However 22% of such travel is by active modes in Saffron Walden with 13% in Great Dunmow and just 5% or less in most villages. Walking is by far the most popular active travel mode in the district.

This background information will be used to inform a supporting Note on sustainable travel and the potential accessibility of future growth. This will include the following accessibility criteria to assess new settlement proposals;

- Internal service/amenity provision
- Access to existing rail services
- Access to existing bus services
- Quality of existing bus services
- Ease of implementing new bus services
- Pedestrian/cycle accessibility
- Potential pedestrian/cycle accessibility
- Existing access to strategic road network

Sustainable transport measures will then be developed from these outcomes.

Existing stress on the highway network in the study area

The study examines existing traffic flows on the network using up to date traffic data including commissioning 46 new traffic counts. No roads within the district are exceeding or approaching capacity although a number outside of the district are experiencing such stress. The study also examined road junctions within the study area and found the following settlements in the district contained junctions experiencing stress;

- Saffron Walden
- Newport
- Felsted
- Stansted Mountfitchet
- Takeley
- Great Dunmow

The details of the above road and junction data will be provided in the full report.

Testing of growth scenarios

The study has tested and analysed 27 growth scenarios to help consider transport impacts. These scenarios are based on different;

- Levels of housing and employment growth
- Growth distributions including;
 - two or three new settlements
 - different growth levels in towns and villages

Based on the Areas of Search in the Issues and Options Consultation, whether interest received in the 'Call for Sites Consultation' and the findings of the Green Belt study the following six new settlement locations have been tested;

- M11 Junction 9a East (Great Chesterford)
- Elsenham
- West of Great Dunmow (Easton Park)
- West of Braintree
- Little Dunmow (Chelmer Mead)
- North of Takeley

Birchanger/AOS 4 strongly meets the purpose of Green Belt so was not tested further at this stage.

The emerging findings of the study indicate that none of the scenarios resulted in unacceptable increased traffic flows.

Analysis of M11 Junction 8

The study models the impacts of growth on the above as advised by the County Council and Highways England. In particular the study uses the County Council's planned short to medium term improvement scheme that has successfully completed a first round bid for funding. The County Council will also be modelling the impacts of major long term improvements to J8 to inform a future bid for government funding.

Analysis of South Cambs junctions

As part of the district study more detailed assessment of junctions in South Cambridgeshire was undertaken following comments from Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. Initial work indicated most traffic impacting on these junctions was not as a result of the UDC local plan development scenarios. Therefore following discussions with Essex CC/Cambs CC/Highways England/South Cambs District Council a proportionate methodology was agreed to model/identify impacts and the possible range of mitigations at;

- M11 junction 10
- A505/A1301 roundabout
- A11/A1307 Four Wentways roundabout

The emerging findings of this work indicate that with mitigation works at these junctions the proposed growth in Uttlesford can be accommodated. Officers will take forward the final outcomes of the above work when considering the emerging local plan.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
If the Council does not have NPPF compliant evidence the Local Plan could be found unsound	1 - Low	Delays in adopting the Local Plan	Making sure that the evidence is up to date and in accordance with the relevant regulations and NPPF.

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.