



**CABINET – 9 MARCH 2018**

**A5 STRATEGY**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

**PART A**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the A5 Partnership's draft revised Strategy '*The A5: A Strategy for Growth 2018-2031*' ('the A5 Strategy'), to seek Cabinet's approval of the Council's response to the draft proposals, and to seek Cabinet's views on the current and future operation of the Partnership.

**Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that:
  - (a) The Council continues to express its support in principle for the upgrade of the A5, but in the context of the Council's wider transport infrastructure priorities as set out in the Leicester and Leicestershire Rail Strategy and its Prospectus for Growth;
  - (b) The Council's response to the draft revised A5 Strategy be approved based on the key issues set out at paragraphs 20-21 of this report;
  - (c) The Director of Environment and Transport, following consultation with the Lead Member and the County Council's representative on the A5 Partnership, be directed to enter into immediate discussions with the local highway authorities and other A5 Partnership members, with the aim of establishing a constitution for the Partnership;
  - (d) A further report be submitted to the Cabinet to present a final version of the revised A5 strategy and a new Partnership constitution for approval when available;
  - (e) Until such time as the Cabinet has approved a final version of the A5 Strategy and a new Partnership constitution, the Council advises the other A5 Partnership members that it is unable to endorse the draft revised Strategy or support the continued functioning of the Partnership in its current form.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

3. In 2012 the Cabinet approved the A5 Strategy. Since then there have been significant changes to the way in which both national and local policies, priorities and funding are developed and managed. This has resulted in the Council having a wider set of priorities, as set out in the Prospectus for Growth. The Council therefore proposes that the draft A5 Strategy is amended, to reflect financial constraints, growth aspirations and wider priorities.
4. In October 2014, the Government published 'Local Government Transparency Code 2014'. To ensure that the Partnership acts in accordance with this code the Council proposes that a formal and transparent constitution is adopted by the Partnership.

### **Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)**

5. Each constituent Council in the A5 Partnership, including Leicestershire County Council, will need to ratify the finalised draft A5 Strategy, prior to its adoption. The Partnership secretariat, on behalf of the Chair of the Partnership Officer Group, has proposed this is sought at a special A5 Partnership Member meeting on 23 March 2018. This report recommends further time is required.

### **Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

6. A Strategy for the A5 was produced in 2011. The Cabinet considered the report '*A Strategy for the A5 2011-2026 A449 Gailey (Staffordshire) to A45 Weedon (Northamptonshire)*' on 16 October 2012 and agreed that the Strategy should be adopted as an evidence base.

### **Resource Implications**

7. There are no resources implications arising from this report. All officer time to resource the A5 Partnership is covered by existing revenue budgets.
8. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the content of this report.

### **Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure**

A copy of this report has been sent to County Councillors representing divisions on the route of the A5: Mr. I. D. Ould CC, Mr. D. C. Bill MBE, CC, Mrs A, Wright CC, Mrs R. Page CC, Mr. B. L. Pain CC, and Mr. T. Richardson (for Stoney Stanton & Croft) .

### **Officers to Contact**

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## **PART B**

### **Background**

#### The A5 route

9. The A5 (T) is a Trunk Road for which Highways England is the highway authority. It provides a long distance strategic route between London and Holyhead, which travels through large parts of southern and central England, including Leicestershire. The corridor is a key artery to movement that supports and provides access to economic activity and growth.
10. In the Midlands region, the A5 is generally of a variable standard (design and layout). Existing traffic levels along certain parts of the route are heavy throughout the day particularly around Cannock, Lichfield, Tamworth, Nuneaton/Hinckley and Magna Park, and there are road safety problems and other operational issues, including regular railway bridge strikes at Hinckley. Without suitable investment, planned housing and employment growth along this section of the A5 will exacerbate these conditions, as well as creating new pressure points.
11. Problems on the A5 (congestion, accident, bridge strikes) more often than not result in detrimental impacts on local roads through Hinckley and villages in south Leicestershire.

#### A5 Partnership and Strategy

12. The A5 Partnership is a voluntary body with no statutory role or powers. It was formed a number of years ago. It covers a 62 mile section of the A5 between Gailey in Staffordshire to Weedon in Northamptonshire and consists of an officer A5 Transport Partnership Group and an A5 Member Partnership. Both bodies include representatives drawn from 15 local authority areas (county and district), including officers and members of Leicestershire County Council and Highways England. The length of A5 covered by the Partnership and a full list of its constituent members is shown at Appendix A.
13. The key purpose of the A5 Partnership is to work to achieve wholesale improvements. Its first strategy 'A Strategy for the A5 2011-2026 A449 Gailey (Staffordshire) to A45 Weedon (Northamptonshire)' was approved by the Cabinet in October 2012 and was based on the following objectives:
  - a) To ensure the A5 is fit for purpose in terms of its capacity and safety, both now and in the future;
  - b) To allow the A5 to play its full and proper role in supporting and facilitating economic activity and growth at a national and local level;
  - c) To promote and facilitate access to leisure and tourism within the area covered by the Strategy;

- d) To assist in identifying the priority improvements along the A5 corridor that are needed to facilitate and enable growth, reduce congestion, improve air quality and deliver a sustainable transport system; and
- e) To reduce, where possible, the impact of traffic on communities along the A5.

#### Changes in context since 2012

14. In 2012 achieving the upgrade of the A5 was primarily the sole strategic transport objective of Leicestershire County Council. However, since then, through a combination of its own study work and working with other bodies, including Midlands Connect, Leicester City Council, and the Leicester and Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, a much wider range of strategic transport interventions have been identified to support long term housing and economic growth in the sub-region. These are set out in publications including the Leicester and Leicestershire Rail Strategy (published February 2017) and the Prospectus for Growth (published September 2017).
15. Thus, whilst the upgrading of the A5 has to date been a priority for the Council, it is now one of a number of road and rail investment priorities.
16. A number of these priorities are reflected in the 'Midlands Connect Strategy: Powering the Midlands Engine', which was published in March 2017. Midlands Connect is undertaking a number of studies to support the Midlands Engine<sup>1</sup>, with the most relevant to Leicester and Leicestershire including:
- Leicester to Coventry direct rail (LeNuCKLe)
  - Enhancement to Leicester to Birmingham rail connections
  - A46 Expressway
  - A5 Expressway
  - Midlands Major Road Network (MRN)
  - HS2 Gateway.
17. The A5 Partnership has been asked by Midlands Connect to provide its views on a draft A5 study brief, prior to it being issued for tender.

#### **Draft Revised A5 Strategy**

18. As the current A5 Strategy is over 5 years old, a revised version has been drafted, with the work led by Warwickshire County Council officers. The current working draft is attached at Appendix B.
19. In principle, the objectives of the draft revised A5 Strategy remain unchanged from the current strategy. It is considered that the Council should continue to support in principle the upgrade of the A5; it should remain a strategic investment priority both to address current operational issues (limiting impacts on

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<sup>1</sup> On 8 March 2017, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Midlands Engine, which would aim to make the East and West Midlands an engine for growth for the UK economy, backed by business, local authorities and 11 LEPs. Midlands Connect represents the strategic transport 'arm' of the Midlands Engine.

local roads) and to support long term housing and economic growth, including as set out in the recently published draft Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan to 2050 (Draft 'Growth Strategy').

20. However, there are a number of concerns with the present draft of the revised A5 Strategy. In particular the Strategy needs:
- a) To be clearer that whilst local authorities can work closely with and lobby Highways England (HE) and the Department for Transport (DfT), it is HE that is ultimately responsible for the management and operation of the A5 and the delivery of improvements to it.
  - b) To set out a clear narrative on what it is seeking to achieve and what is required to meet growth aspirations, setting out in broad terms those interventions that are required to address current issues and to support/enable growth over the short, to medium, to longer term. This is of particular importance to Leicester and Leicestershire in the context of its Draft Growth Strategy.
  - c) To make reference to other relevant wider strategic priorities and clarify how it sits and interacts with these projects, including HS2, the A46 Expressway and proposed new M1 Junction 20a (and any similar such projects elsewhere along the Partnership length of the A5). These are key Midlands Connect strategic priorities and it is important that the Strategy clearly aligns with and complements these.
  - d) To recognise fully local highway authority (LHA) funding constraints and avoid anything that would appear to be, or could be construed as, an open-ended LHA commitment to deliver local supporting transport improvements. Whilst the Council will continue to work with district councils and seek to deliver improvements as necessary via appropriate mechanisms (such as developer funding or Governmental bidding opportunities), the ability for it to introduce supporting local transport measures through its own funding is extremely limited.
21. It is recommended that the Council should respond to the draft revised A5 Strategy based on the key issues set out above, including more detailed comments as necessary. Such comments would be submitted by the Director following consultation with the Lead Member and the Council's representative on the Partnership. It is further recommended that until a revised version is prepared to the satisfaction of the Council it should advise the other members of the A5 Partnership that it is unable to endorse the current draft of the A5 Strategy.

### **Functioning of the A5 Partnership (Constitution)**

22. Whilst the Partnership is a non-statutory body with no powers it nevertheless has an important role in seeking improvements for the A5 and it is thus important that its role and functions are clearly set out in an approved and transparent constitution. This will help to ensure that the Partnership functions in an efficient

manner and will help give weight to the Partnership objectives, particularly with other agencies. This is important for two key reasons:

- a) the varying roles and responsibilities of its constituent members, for example those of the local highways authorities in comparison with those of the local planning authorities need to be recognised and taken into account (especially in the decision making process); and
  - b) to ensure its role is understood by other bodies such as Midlands Connect.
23. At present the Partnership has objectives. However, it does not have a formally approved constitution that has been adopted by its constituent members. It is now an appropriate time to adopt a formal constitution for the Partnership that is open and transparent. This will ensure that constituent member statutory roles, obligations and priorities are recognised and the public and other bodies (such as the DfT, HE and Midlands Connect) can have confidence in the way in which decisions are made.
24. The Government recognises that openness and transparency can save money, strengthen people's trust in public bodies and encourage greater public participation in decision-making. The Government requires increased transparency and in recognition of this, the Government published 'Local Government Transparency Code 2014' in October 2014. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-transparency-code-2015>).
25. Supporting the Government's drive for greater transparency and efficiency, it is proposed that the A5 Partnership should adopt a constitution. This should cover such issues as:
- a) chairship, its rotation, role and remit
  - b) roles, responsibilities and remit of constituent members and the Partnership as a whole
  - c) meeting frequency and ability to call special meetings
  - d) decision making, voting and approvals processes
  - e) communication e.g. with constituent members and external bodies, such as DfT, HE and Midlands Connect
  - f) conflict resolution
  - g) secretariat support and responsibilities.
26. It is suggested that discussions should be held with the other Partnership members with the aim of drawing up and agreeing a formal and transparent constitution for the A5 Partnership.
27. It is also recommended that until a formal constitution has been prepared to the satisfaction of the Council it should advise the other members of the A5 Partnership that it is unable to support the way in which the Partnership functions now or will function in the future.

## **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

28. There are no equality or human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

## **Background Papers**

Report to the Cabinet – 16 October 2012: ‘*A Strategy for the A5 2011-2026 A449 Gailey (Staffordshire) to A45 Weedon (Northamptonshire)*’ on 16 October 2012  
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MID=3395#A132599>

Leicester and Leicestershire Rail Strategy  
<http://bit.ly/2Fa1lkw>

Prospectus for Growth (2017)  
<http://bit.ly/2CKwF3V> (high resolution PDF: 15.9 mb)  
<http://bit.ly/2F63DBg> (low resolution PDF: 4.85 mb)

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Plan of the length of A5 covered by Partnership and members  
Appendix B: Current working draft of revised A5 Strategy

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