

CABINET – 30TH MAY 2006

PROPOSALS FOR WIDENING THE M1 MOTORWAY

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORTATION AND
WASTE MANAGEMENT**

PART A

Purpose of report

1. To propose a response to Highways Agency consultation on the planned widening of the M1 motorway.

Recommendation

2. It is RECOMMENDED that:
 - i. The Highways Agency's proposals for widening the M1 motorway between junctions 21 and 30 should be noted, and their proposal to construct the Kegworth bypass welcomed.
 - ii. The Agency should be notified of the initial comments set out in Part B of this report.
 - iii. The Agency should be further informed that these comments include substantial areas of concern which the County Council wishes to see resolved as the scheme develops.

Reason for Recommendations

3. The Highways Agency has presented proposals for motorway widening but there is not yet sufficient detail to allow a full judgement of the impact on Leicestershire to be made. A number of significant concerns are immediately apparent and should be relayed to the Agency, but there will be further opportunities for comment or objection when the preferred route alignment is announced and when the draft orders are published.

Timetable for decisions including Scrutiny

4. The Highways Agency's closing date for comments is 28th June.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

5. None relevant.

Resource implications

6. None.

Circulation under Sensitive Issues Procedure

Ms J A Dickinson CC – 19th May 2006
Mr D R Parsons CC – 19th May 2006
Mr R Fraser CC – 19th May 2006
Mr D A Sprason CC – 19th May 2006
Mr G H Perkins JP CC – 19th May 2006
Mrs L A S Pendleton CC – 19th May 2006
Mr M J Hunt CC – 19th May 2006
Mr P G Lewis CC – 19th May 2006
Mr C A Stanley CC – 19th May 2006
Mr B Garner CC – 19th May 2006
Mr D Jennings CC – 19th May 2006
Ms M L Sherwin CC – 19th May 2006
Mr J S Moore CC – 19th May 2006
Mr R J Shepherd CC – 19th May 2006
Mr J G Coxon CC – 19th May 2006

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PART B

Highways Agency Proposals

7. The Highways Agency propose to widen the 50 miles of the M1 between junctions 21 and 30, with the objective of easing congestion, improving journey times, improving reliability and improving safety. The motorway was designed for up to 67,000 vehicles a day and now carries between 100,000 and 150,000, and the Agency believes widening will produce regeneration and other economic benefits as well as improving the environment.
8. The first phase of the proposed works is between junctions 25 and 28 and does not affect Leicestershire. The second stage does affect the county and includes:
 - i. Widening to create four lanes in each direction throughout from junction 21 northwards
 - ii. Construction of the Kegworth bypass in association with the remodelling of junctions 23a, 24 and 24a
 - iii. Construction of a 'flyover' junction to the M69 at junction 21
 - iv. Improvements to junctions 22 and 23.
9. The indicative programme for the second phase includes an announcement of the preferred route this December, publication of draft orders and an environmental statement during 2007/08, a public inquiry in 2008/09, start of works during 2009/10, and completion during 2014/15.
10. The Agency held public exhibitions in Kegworth and Kirby Muxloe in April, and in Leicester Forest East on 22nd May, and plans were available on those occasions. The plans show, from south to north:
 - i. A flyover link road from the M69 to the M1 north. This will avoid the motorway service area
 - ii. Widening to 6 lanes in each direction between the point where the M69 flyover joins the M1 and junction 21a. This will require additional land through Leicester Forest East at the A47 overbridge
 - iii. Widening throughout, mainly within the existing boundaries of the motorway
 - iv. Widening of some bridges but with hard shoulder discontinuities to allow some others to be retained unaltered.
 - v. Improvements to junctions 22 and 23
 - vi. A substantially revised layout between junctions 23a and 24, with the A42/A453 made into, in effect, a single through road with junctions to the motorway. The Kegworth bypass will go due west from the A6 to join the motorway at junction 23a.

Comment

11. A meeting was held at County Hall on 4th May, chaired by the Leader and with invitations to all parishes, districts, members of parliament and local County Council members affected by the scheme. A number of concerns were raised and are covered in the comments below. In addition, officers have been attending meetings

of a consultation forum about environmental aspects of the scheme, and concerns from there are also noted.

The case for widening

12. The case made by the Agency is based on reducing congestion, economic benefits and the environment. There are counter-arguments, based on the unsustainability of such an approach to managing transport and the attractiveness of other approaches such as national road-user charging. However, the scheme resulted from the M1 multi-modal study and has entered the government's 'targeted programme of improvements,' so it must be assumed that the time for commenting on its basic justification has passed.

Noise and air pollution

13. This is possibly the single greatest concern. A number of Leicestershire communities already suffer substantial noise and pollution nuisance from the motorway and the additional traffic volumes following widening can only make this worse. The Highways Agency promise the use of low noise surfacing as well as additional noise fencing alongside the motorway. They appear, however, to be taking a narrow view on the matter, conditioned by restrictive rules as to where mitigation is justified. To take full account of Leicestershire concerns the following are required:
 - i. An imaginative approach to noise and pollution barriers, looking at noise bunds, trees and other measures and not just fences, even if the additional cost is significant
 - ii. 'No quibble' in provision of noise and pollution barriers, wherever these will help reduce present or predicted problems which the community judges to be significant
 - iii. Proper consideration of the way design can reduce noise, for example by considering asymmetric widening to take traffic further from the Vicarage Close area in Kirby Muxloe
 - iv. Provision of noise and air pollution barriers in the Enderby area where, although not directly affected by widening, there are substantial existing problems which will become worse during the construction period because of traffic disruption caused by the roadworks.

Impact on County roads

14. The Highways Agency has not yet supplied traffic predictions so the impact on County roads cannot yet be assessed. More traffic on the motorway could generate significantly more traffic on County roads and detailed comments will need to be made once the traffic predictions are available. Any necessary improvements to County roads to deal with this traffic should be funded by the Highways Agency as part of the scheme.
15. The Agency state that a full three lanes in each direction on the motorway will be kept open during the whole construction period and that there should therefore be no additional burden on County roads during that time. Further evidence should be produced, however, to provide full reassurance that this can be guaranteed.

Relationship with Local Development Frameworks

16. The new round of local development frameworks will define substantial additional growth in Leicestershire. There is as yet no evidence that the motorway widening plans are taking proper account of the likely traffic consequences of this, particularly in respect of junction arrangements, for example at junction 23 outside Loughborough.

Blight

17. A number of houses and other properties will be adversely affected by the plans, to the extent that planning blight will be caused. The Agency should act as speedily as possible to resolve its plans and so minimise blight uncertainties.

Other environmental issues

18. Widening will affect other aspects of the environment, including water quality, visual and landscape impact (including from sign gantries and lighting), loss of established existing roadside vegetation, ecology and biodiversity, archaeology, cultural heritage and the impacts on pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Officers have already made a number of comments in the environment forum but it is too early yet to draw any definitive conclusions. As with many of the other issues, the County Council's position will need to be reserved until there is more detail available.
19. In respect of the archaeological impact of the M1-M69 link road, although no rationale for the specific route of this extended link road has been offered, it seems probable that a significant factor in the design of the route has been to avoid direct impact to the scheduled area of the deserted medieval village of Lubbesthorpe, and the nationally important archaeological remains it protects. However, in taking the currently proposed route the link road encloses this significant archaeological site within the extended junction, divorcing the site from the surviving evidence of its setting, the landscape to the west and north of the present site, and significantly compromises any future usage and interpretation. In addition, the project line runs through a current unassessed archaeological landscape, with a strong probability of impacting upon currently unrecognised archaeological sites, not the least of which are potential unscheduled elements of the medieval village.

Equal opportunities implications

20. None direct

Background papers

None