

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

NON-KEY DECISION – 19/02

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL: A414 CORRIDOR STRATEGY  
CONSULTATION

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- The purpose of this report is to agree the Council's response to Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) consultation on its draft A414 Corridor Strategy.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR DECISION: That Hertfordshire County Council be informed that, in respect of the A414 Corridor Strategy, Draft for Public Consultation (December 2018) East Herts Council:**

<b>(A)</b>	<b>Welcomes the introduction of the Strategy both to help address the impact of development on the corridor to 2031 and beyond and to engender a shift to sustainable travel modes;</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>Supports the introduction of Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) to help achieve modal shift to sustainable modes and reduce the impact of planned development and background growth along the corridor;</b>
<b>(C)</b>	<b>Urges HCC to include the extension of the MRT route from Hatfield beyond its currently proposed end destination of Harlow/Gilston Area to serve Stansted Airport from the outset of the scheme, and to work with the Stansted Airport Transport Forum in this regard;</b>
<b>(D)</b>	<b>In respect of the need for a strategic intervention at Hertford, considers that a further option of introducing the MRT without the delivery of a southern bypass</b>

	<p>should be modelled and considered before any decision is taken on the introduction of bypass scheme and that the Council therefore reserves its position on the potential provision of a bypass until the outcome and implications of such work are known;</p>
(E)	<p>In the event that a bypass for Hertford should be delivered, the sustainable travel schemes for the town would need to be delivered concurrently to ensure that green travel patterns are established at the outset.</p>
(F)	<p>Considers it important that potential environmental and heritage implications, along with possible physical constraints to the delivery of dedicated roadspace along the A414 corridor connected with delivery of the MRT scheme, should be both acknowledged and discussed in the published document as being in need of further consideration in the formulation of final proposals and prior to decisions being taken on their implementation.</p>
(G)	<p>Considers that, due to concerns around public transport journey reliability for East Herts residents/workers that some of the highway schemes contained in Segment 13: Broxbourne of the Strategy might cause, flexibility should be retained to take into account the outcome of matters raised by the Inspector to the Broxbourne Local Plan Examination in his Post Hearings Advice regarding the scale of retail development at Brookfield and any subsequent modifications to the Broxbourne Local Plan in due course. The outcome of such modifications should then inform consideration of whether any revision to currently proposed mitigations is required in the A414 Strategy.</p>
(H)	<p>Considers that proposals to introduce Real Time Passenger Information at bus stops, improved bus shelters, and integrated ticketing allowing travel across all services within a given zone currently proposed for Segment 13: Broxbourne would be extremely conducive to encouraging modal shift across the A414 Corridor and that similar proposals should feature within all segments across its entirety.</p>

<b>(I)</b>	<b>Considers that all other matters raised in Essential Reference Paper B should be addressed prior to final publication of the Strategy.</b>
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## 1.0 Background

1.1 HCC has launched a consultation on a draft A414 Corridor Strategy. This proposes measures along this strategic east-west corridor covering the area running between Harlow and Hemel Hempstead, with branches to Watford and Broxbourne. The measures are proposed to address current constraints which limit sustainable journey choices, along with supporting planned growth along the corridor.

1.2 The document is underpinned by the recently adopted Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP4), which covers the whole county and, when finalised, the Strategy will be classed as a supporting document.

1.3 While the overall draft A414 Corridor Strategy covers a wide area, this report mainly assesses the key matters pertaining to the East Herts district and makes recommendations for the Council's response to HCC. The consultation, which has been extended from its original end date, closes on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

## 2.0 Report

2.1 As discussed above, the draft A414 Corridor Strategy (the Strategy) document (with supporting evidence) is currently the subject of consultation by HCC, which runs until 25<sup>th</sup> February.

2.2 This report discusses the general principles outlined in the Strategy with a focus on potential impacts and implications for East Herts. A presentation on the Strategy was made to Members of this Council by HCC officers on 8<sup>th</sup> January and discussions at that event have also helped inform this report.

- 2.3 The key issues for the Council to identify within its response to HCC are included within the Recommendations to this report; however, there are also numerous other matters, such as factual inaccuracies, areas requiring further clarification, minor issues and typographical errors within the report. The proposed responses to these issues have been consolidated in a separate paper, which is set out at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.
- 2.4 The A414 is a strategic east-west route, that runs through the county of Hertfordshire and which provides access for both local and wider ranging journeys. For East Herts, the route runs across the district, from the east of Welwyn Garden City through to the borders with Harlow, in Essex. There are various sections of the route that present issues in terms of congestion, which disrupts the free-flow of traffic, most notably at peak times. The key area of significance in this regard runs through Hertford, along Gascoyne Way and beyond, where the impacts are such that an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is in place. Other junctions, such as the Rush Green roundabout, Amwell roundabout, and the approach to Harlow also experience heavy congestion and delays at peak time.
- 2.5 The full draft A414 Corridor Strategy, running to some 355 pages, contains an overview of the Corridor, setting out the area and how it has been developed; the detailing of the 11 corridor objectives; an overview of the proposals (including Mass Rapid Transit); and, then separate sections covering 14 segments, detailing proposals that could be brought forward within those sections. These proposals are described (for East Herts, Segments 10 through 14 apply), along with what they will aim to achieve and broad suggestions of their potential cost and funding streams.
- 2.6 The Strategy recognises that further to existing conditions, around 50,000 of the 100,000 new homes planned in the county will be delivered along the A414 corridor by 2031, with

further development expected beyond that time horizon. The trips generated by this new housing, coupled with increased employment development along the corridor, will certainly exacerbate the present situation. The Strategy, which looks to LTP4 as its framework, seeks to propose measures to help mitigate that growth, while engendering modal shift to sustainable transport and active travel as part of its approach.

- 2.7 In considering the overarching elements of the Strategy, prior to discussing more local implications, a key element of the sustainable transport approach is to engender modal shift, largely by the proposed introduction of a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system that would enable increased access to fast services across the county. The overarching aim of the MRT is to provide “A fast and reliable, express inter-urban passenger transport network linking major urban settlements within the A414 corridor to facilitate sustainable travel and address the pressure of delivering significant growth in housing and jobs”.
- 2.8 While the final manner of provision has yet to be determined, as various modes have been under consideration, potentially a bus-based option would be utilised, where greater speeds and reliability would be offered over traditional provision. The key issue is how to make that service speedy and attractive when compared against private motorised transport to ensure large take up.
- 2.9 It is important to note that the MRT system options being proposed would comprise more than one route along the corridor, but that these would overlap to allow for interchange, potentially at St Albans, Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City and Ware. End destinations of the routes are proposed to be at: Hemel Hempstead, Watford, Welwyn Garden City, Cheshunt and Harlow.
- 2.10 For East Herts, two routes would serve the district which would run between Hatfield and either Cheshunt or Harlow, depending on route.

2.11 In considering the destinations that the MRT should serve, the Strategy provides the potential for later links to serve other destinations beyond the Harlow end of route currently proposed, such as Bishop's Stortford and Stansted Airport and/or a potential extension into Essex. However, it is considered that the Strategy falls short in respect of links to Stansted from the outset.

2.12 Both this Council and HCC made representations in respect of the recent Stansted Airport application (recently approved by Uttlesford, subject to SoS approval) seeking provision of:

- A new east-west express, limited stop, coach service linking St Albans, Hatfield, Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City, Hertford, Ware and Stansted Airport. Such provision should be a regular service, which should accommodate the varied working shift patterns at the airport, especially in respect of early morning/late night operations.
- Comprehensive marketing of the service, coupled with targeted employee recruitment advertising within the towns it serves, should be included as part of its provision.

As it has since been confirmed through the application determination process that any S.106 funding would not be specifically allocated for an express coach scheme, but contributions towards any passenger transport scheme would need to be sought (with evidenced justification) through the Stansted Airport Transport Forum funding mechanism for any proposed passenger transport scheme, it would seem irrational not to incorporate these destinations within a single proposal, especially as most of this route overlaps that proposed by the MRT.

2.13 It is considered important that not only are the larger settlements to the west of the county included in the MRT scheme, but also that the airport, as a key driver of the local

economy, is also recognised. In meeting the aims of modal shift and to open up opportunities for travel, it is vital to ensure that transport is available to both employees and passengers (from Hertford and Ware, in particular for East Herts), especially as there may be latent worker demand where getting to the airport at required times is not currently possible and access to private transport is not an option e.g. for younger people without cars.

- 2.14 Furthermore, the amount of development along this route will certainly add to demand for this provision. As both this Council and HCC have already been lobbying for a service along this route, it is therefore recommended that the MRT route should be extended from the Harlow/Gilson Area to serve Stansted Airport from the outset of its introduction. This should be carried out in conjunction with working with the Stansted Airport Transport Forum for added value in delivering the service.
- 2.15 In order for the MRT service to prove attractive, interventions will be required to ensure priority over other motorised road users and in certain locations this may involve the reallocation of carriageway lanes or junction priority measures. This is especially the case where there are existing bottlenecks that cause significant delays and affect journey time and reliability. Hertford has particularly been identified as an issue in this regard and the need for a strategic intervention has already been established in order to accommodate growth along the corridor. Various measures have been examined by HCC over recent years that would seek to address this issue and these options, (some of which have already been dismissed, such as a tunnelled bypass), are detailed.
- 2.16 Likewise, the benefits of a bypass to the north of the town would have far less benefits in terms of rerouting away from the existing alignment, as journey destination modelling shows considerably fewer trips on that route.

- 2.17 The preferred approach of the Strategy to address the congestion and air quality issues is a combination of a surface level southern bypass for Hertford (running from west of the town to a connection with the A10/A414 to the east), coupled with the reassignment of one lane of carriageway in each direction for sustainable transport modes. Importantly, this would allow a clear passage for the MRT giving it a big advantage in terms of travel time in relation to the single lane allocated for other motorised users.
- 2.18 From the East Herts perspective in terms of delivering growth, this has clear links to the District Plan allocated sites along the A414 corridor and particularly in terms of Policy WARE2, Land to the North and East of Ware, where delivery of the final 500 dwellings is dependent on “suitable mitigation measures to identified constraints on both the local and wider strategic road networks”. It would also enable the growth in other parts of the county and beyond to be more successfully delivered in terms of the road network’s ability to cope with the additional trips made.
- 2.19 A bypass of Hertford would also enable measures to be introduced around it becoming a Sustainable Travel Town (as detailed in LTP4), and would allow for part of the town centre’s road layout to be changed in line with the Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Framework, to provide additional benefits for pedestrians and cyclists. This would enable a change in travel behaviour and modal shift to non-motorised forms of transport, along with a significantly improved public transport offer. The scheme would also be seen to benefit the environmental quality of the town through removal of a large amount of the traffic which currently runs through the middle of it, and also support the vitality of the town centre.
- 2.20 However, the provision of a bypass, while allowing for many improvements to the core and improving connectivity across the current route through Gascoyne Way, would come at a cost in both monetary and environmental terms.

- 2.21 While an exact alignment has yet to be determined, a new route to the south of the town would cut across rural countryside and would be likely to significantly affect areas of environmental quality, potentially along with other heritage assets. Some residents' properties would also likely be affected by the addition of a bypass.
- 2.22 Currently, with any alignment yet to be established, there is no exact costing for the scheme, with a large prospective range of between £250m and £500m being estimated for its delivery. Furthermore, the funding of the scheme is likewise unclear. Potential sources could involve LEP investment, CIL, and HIF bids (should further rounds be released). A full business case would need to be made in advance of any bid process. Recent experience of the government approach to allocating sources for funding is that it is increasingly apparent that such investment does not come without expectations that schemes are linked to future growth. While it could be argued that the scheme would indeed unlock growth along the whole corridor, there are concerns that the delivery of a bypass could predicate pressure for further development to secure its funding.
- 2.23 The Strategy discusses that the option of doing nothing has been dismissed as it "would hinder the delivery of Local Plan developments around Hertford and increased traffic congestion will lead to growing environmental issues and increasing potential for rat-running along less appropriate routes". However, while it is acknowledged that the delivery of District Plan strategic allocations local to Hertford are underpinned by the delivery of a strategic intervention (see Policy DPS4 Infrastructure Requirements in the District Plan), it is important to ensure that all options have been fully considered in advance of decision making.
- 2.24 As the key aim of the document is to engender modal shift, it is questioned whether the investment in the MRT should be

prioritised over the building of a new road for private motorised journeys and if the Strategy is being radical enough. This matter was raised at the member briefing session in January and questions were asked around whether the effects of introducing the MRT either in advance or instead of a bypass had been modelled and HCC officers confirmed that this had not and that assumptions around levels of modal shift would be difficult to assess.

- 2.25 However, in view of the huge costs of a bypass in both environmental and monetary terms, it would not seem unreasonable for further work to be carried out on this proposal prior to any decision being taken and that consideration of the modelled impacts of a carriageway reassignment for MRT should factor into the equation. It is therefore recommended that East Herts Council should not express a view on whether a southern bypass for Hertford should be delivered until evidence has been presented by HCC on the effects of this alternative scenario.
- 2.26 However, in the event that a bypass for Hertford should be delivered alongside the MRT, it is considered important that the sustainable travel schemes for the town be delivered concurrently to ensure that green travel patterns are established at the outset.
- 2.27 In terms of the actual delivery of the MRT itself, the Strategy details potential prioritisation measures that would be needed along the route. However, while it is acknowledged that further investigations in these are needed prior to specific schemes being introduced, there are elements that are of potential cause for concern around whether more attention is currently being paid to engineered approaches over the appreciation of environmental and historic matters.
- 2.28 As an example, the Strategy discusses 'roadspace' requirements being necessary to deliver the MRT. If this is indeed the case, then in Ware, for example, given the

significant space restrictions in the town, if the MRT is to run on bespoke and separate infrastructure as indicated in the main document (P55), it is difficult to conceive how this could be achieved without significant negative impact on the historic environment and physical fabric of the town.

- 2.29 Assuming that the route would run along Ware Road/Hertford Road, due to it being the quickest route along the least impeded carriageway near to the station interchange and siting of Hertford Regional College, it should be acknowledged that it was because of physical constraints, such as the river, that the past construction of the railway line through Ware was limited to single track only and the topography along Ware Road also constrains opportunities to provide additional carriageway space.
- 2.30 Not only is it important that such constraints are acknowledged so as not to raise expectations over what might be feasible to deliver, it is very important that environmental and heritage issues are seen to be taken into account at an early stage in the consideration of the scheme. It is therefore considered appropriate that constraints such as these (which may also be evident for other proposals elsewhere in the corridor) should be acknowledged and discussed in the published document as being in need of further consideration in the formulation of final proposals and prior to decisions being taken on their implementation.
- 2.31 Segment 13 of the Strategy covers the Broxbourne Towns. The measures included for this have their basis in the adopted Broxbourne Transport Strategy, which is linked to the proposed growth in the emerging Broxbourne Local Plan and are carried over wholesale to the A414 Strategy. For information, at the time of the consultation on that Transport Strategy, concerns were expressed to Broxbourne *inter alia* around the effects that the cessation of right turn movements on the A10 in terms of additional vehicular movements and additional measures proposed along the High Street parallel

route would have on East Herts residents/employees utilising public transport. For example additional congestion could impact the reliability of the 310 service.

2.32 In December 2018, however, with the Broxbourne Local Plan now at its Examination stage, the Inspector issued Post Hearings Advice detailing, inter alia, that “The proposal in policy DS1 to make provision for around 40,000 square metres of new retail development, primarily at Brookfield Riverside, is not justified or consistent with national policy”. Given that elements of the schemes listed in the A414 Strategy are inter-related to the levels of growth proposed in the Regulation 19 version of the Broxbourne Local Plan and that a reduction in retail development levels could result in changes to the Broxbourne Transport Strategy in due course, it would be sensible for this section of the document to reflect the outcome of the Local Plan Examination and allowance should be made for the potential revision of Segment 13 in due course.

2.33 Also within schemes discussed in Segment 13, and separate to any large scale highway infrastructure measures, are proposals to introduce Real Time Passenger Information at bus stops, improved bus shelters, and integrated ticketing allowing travel across all services within a given zone. It is considered that such proposals would be extremely conducive to encouraging modal shift across the A414 Corridor and similar proposals should feature within all segments across its entirety.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper ‘A’**.

#### Background Papers

- A414 Corridor Strategy Consultation, HCC, December 2018:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations/transport-and-highways/a414-corridor-summary-of-consultation.aspx>

- Add link to Hertford Town Centre Urban Design Framework: [https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/media/30414/Hertford-Town-Centre-Urban-Design-Strategy/PDF/5539\\_Hertford\\_Town\\_Centre\\_Urban\\_Design\\_Strategy\\_LOW\\_RES.pdf](https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/media/30414/Hertford-Town-Centre-Urban-Design-Strategy/PDF/5539_Hertford_Town_Centre_Urban_Design_Strategy_LOW_RES.pdf)
- Broxbourne Local Plan Examination Inspector's Post Hearing Advice : <https://www.broxbourne.gov.uk/sites/default/files/EXAM%209%20-%20Inspector%27s%20Post%20Hearings%20Advice%20Dec%202018.pdf>
- Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan to 2050 (LTP4), 2017: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/consultations/ltp4-local-transport-plan-draft.pdf>

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