



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

**to
COUNCIL
21 NOVEMBER 2019**

A12 CHELMSFORD TO A120 WIDENING SCHEME – OCTOBER 2019 UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Highways England have made the Preferred Route Announcement (PRA) for the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme, for the section between Boreham and Kelvedon (Junctions 19-23). In addition, Highways England are consulting on four additional route options for the Kelvedon to Marks Tey section of the widening scheme (Junctions 23-25), in addition to the options consulted upon in 2017.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to notify Members of the PRA and to seek their views on the Council's draft response to the J23-25 route options public consultation. The consultation on the additional route options closes on 1 December 2019. This report is being presented to the Council, as the next scheduled Strategy and Resources Committee is after the closing date for the consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Members agree the proposed response to the public consultation for A12 Junctions 23-25, as set out in section 3.4.1 of this report.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 Background

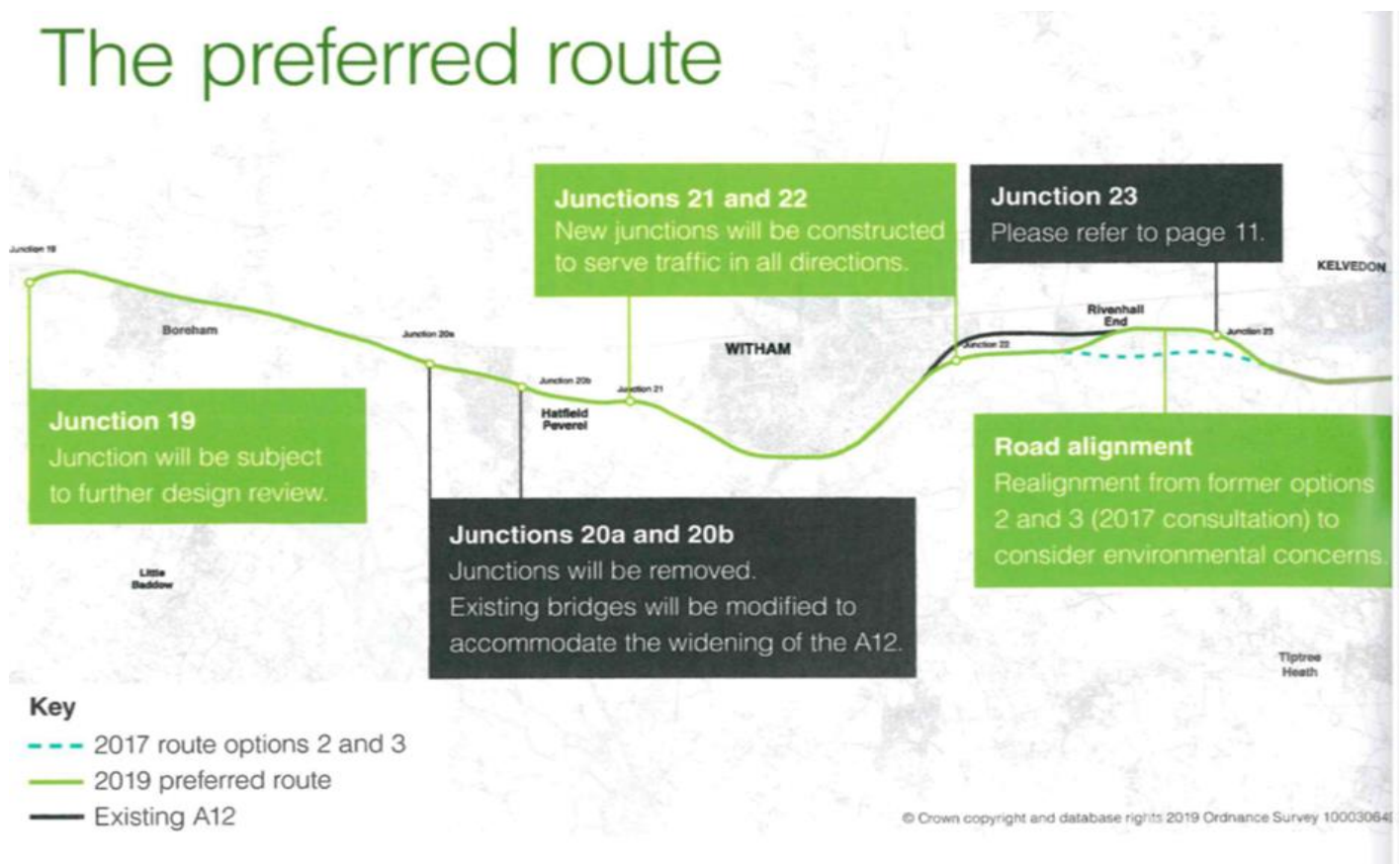
- 3.1.1 In 2017 Highways England consulted on four route options for the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme:
1. Online widening
 2. Online widening with two bypasses (Rivenhall and Marks Tey)
 3. Online widening with one bypass at Rivenhall
 4. Online widening with one bypass at Marks Tey
- 3.1.2 This Council, via the Planning and Licensing Committee, responded to that consultation (2 March 2017, Minute No.1058 refers). The consultation asked which of the four route options was preferred and whether any improvements were needed at each of the junctions. The Council supported:

- Option 2, providing bypasses at Rivenhall, and between Feering and Marks Tey.
- Closing both junctions at Hatfield Peverel (J20a and J20b) and replacing them with an all directions junction to the east of the village.
- Improvement to J24 (Feering, Colchester bound access only), to provide an all directions junction
- For the other junctions, the Council welcomed any junction improvements that would improve the efficiency of the junctions and minimise disruption to the A12 and approach roads.

3.2 Preferred Route Announcement J19-J23

3.2.1 The Preferred Route widens the existing A12 corridor between junctions 19 and 23 to three lanes in each direction where required and creates a three-lane bypass in each direction at Rivenhall End. This decision takes into account the feedback we received on junctions, and the overwhelming support for creating a bypass at Rivenhall End, received in the 2017 consultation, as well as concerns expressed about a Rivenhall End bypass being close to a scheduled monument.

The preferred route



Note: The PRA map has been scanned from the HE brochure.

3.2.2 It also includes the following changes and improvements to junctions:

- Junction 19 (Boreham) will be subject to further design review;
- Bridges across the existing A12 at Hatfield Peverel will be modified to accommodate the widening of the A12;

- Junctions 20a and 20b will be removed;
- a New junction 21 will be constructed and become an ‘all movements’ junction serving traffic from all directions;
- a New junction 22 will be constructed and become an ‘all movements’ junction serving traffic from all directions;
- the removal of junction 23 is being considered, instead new access roads would be provided from Kelvedon to junction 22;
- passive provision could be made for a potential future link to the A120 improvement proposed by Essex County Council, should it be funded through a future Road Investment Strategy.

3.2.3 The preferred route boundary must now be disclosed on Land Charges searches for properties within 200m of the boundary, and any development proposal that could prejudice the scheme is to be referred to Highways England. A GIS map layer has been provided to enable the Land Charges and Development Management staff to fulfil these legal requirements.

3.3 **Public Consultation on additional route options for Kelvedon to Marks Tey (J23 to J25)**

3.3.1 In 2017, Highways England held a consultation to widen the A12 from Chelmsford to the junction with the A120, presenting four options for the stretch of road running from junctions 19 to 25 (see paragraph 3.1.1 above). Since then, the local authorities of Colchester, Braintree and Tendring have been pursuing a joint Local Plan which has proposed several garden communities. The joint Local Plan is currently subject to a public examination. The Planning Inspector has asked for more evidence from the councils to back up their joint Local Plan. For Highways England a key piece of evidence is to show how the A12 between junctions 24 and 25 could be moved to consider the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community if it were to go ahead.

3.3.2 If the garden community does go ahead, it is likely to impact on the routes that were presented in the 2017 consultation, specifically on the section between junction 24 (Kelvedon North) and junction 25 (Marks Tey interchange). Highways England has therefore been reconsidering the possible road routes between these junctions. Also, a fourth lane in each direction between junctions 23 (Kelvedon South) and 24 (Kelvedon North) may be required.

3.3.3 Highways England are now considering alternative route options for the A12 between junctions 23 and 25, which take into account the possible planned garden community. This current public consultation is on these options only. Whether the route between junctions 23 and 25 follows one of these new options, or one of those from the 2017 consultation, will depend on whether the garden community goes ahead.

3.3.4 Once there is a clear decision on whether the garden community goes ahead, Highways England will make a further preferred route announcement on the route of the A12 between junctions 23 and 25. The preferred route will take into account the Local Plan Inspector’s decision and feedback from the 2017 and 2019 public consultations. After that, Highways England will progress the whole of the A12

Chelmsford to A120 widening between junctions 19 and 25 through the remaining stages of development, planning consent and construction as a single project.

- 3.3.5 Each of the options would result in improved reliability and safety on that section of the A12, however, there is not one clear option that is better than any of the others in terms of improved travel times, or road safety or impact on the environment and local communities.

The four route options:



Note: diagram scanned from the consultation brochure

3.4 Proposed Consultation response

- 3.4.1 In the previous consultation the Council supported the route that would provide two bypasses at Rivenhall and between Feering and Marks Tey. These additional options still bypass the J24 - J25 section of the A12 but take a route further south than the 2017 route option. None of the options will directly impact communities in the District. As such it would be inappropriate for the Council to comment on the merits of individual options. Instead, it is proposed that the Council's response continues to support the concept of bypassing the old A12 between Feering and Marks Tey, but that it provides a neutral response in terms of route preference.

3.5 What happens next

- 3.5.1 Highways England will continue to develop designs for the J19 - J23 section of the road in more detail and will carry out more surveys and investigations. The PRA for J23 - J25 is expected to be made in summer 2020. Following that, the statutory consultation on the detailed designs for the overall project will be held.
- 3.5.2 The A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. This means that permission to construct the road is decided through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process. The DCO application will be made to the Planning Inspectorate, who will examine the application, and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will decide whether the project will go ahead. Highways England intends to submit the application in 2021 and if approved, construction could start in 2023.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme has moved forward. The preferred route announcement has been made for the section between Boreham and Kelvedon. In addition, there is a consultation on additional route options for Kelvedon to Marks Tey. Although the proposals are only indicative at this stage, the improvements proposed for the A12 in this consultation aim to improve its long-term capacity, traffic flow and safety. There will be a further public consultation on the detailed design of the whole route in 2020 before Highways England applies for the Development Consent Order in 2021.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 The A12 widening scheme will have a positive impact on the strategic themes of Place and Prosperity through providing new infrastructure which will benefit both residents and businesses in the District.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The aim of the A12 widening scheme is to increase the road's capacity to improve its long-term safety and reliability. This will improve journey times and journey safety for both district residents and businesses using the A12.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – There should be no negative impacts on equalities from this scheme.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – The completed scheme should reduce business risks through reducing congestion on the A12. The improvements should improve the safety of the road and junctions for all users.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None.

- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – As with any road widening project there will be environmental impacts.
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – N/A.

Background Papers:

Highways England A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme brochures, available at <https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a12-chelmsford-to-a120-widening-scheme-23-to-25/>

Enquiries to: Leonie Alpin, Specialist - Local Plan, (Tel: 01621 876278).