



REPORT of INTERIM HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

**to
PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE
2 MARCH 2017**

A12 CHELMSFORD TO A120 WIDENING: HIGHWAYS ENGLAND CONSULTATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the Council's response to the A12 Chelmsford to the consultation into the A120 Widening. A draft response is set out in **APPENDIX 1** to this report.
- 1.2 The consultation period runs until 3 March 2017.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the response to the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening consultation, as set out in **APPENDIX 1** be approved.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Highways England is consulting on proposals to improve the A12 between Chelmsford and the A120 at Marks Tey. The improvements are programmed to start in 2020 and are in response to general traffic congestion, environmental and safety factors.
- 3.2 At peak travel times much of the A12 between J19 and J25 is nearing capacity. Highways England state that *'forecasts show that by 2038, the road will operate above the capacity it was ever designed to handle if no improvements are made'*. As the road reaches capacity, congestion increase, which will not benefits communities along the A12 corridor, and access to Maldon District, which relies on the A12 as a major strategic route for residents, visitors and businesses. A congested A12 will not benefit the aim to attract new businesses to and create 2,000 new jobs in Maldon District. The aim of the A12 widening scheme is to increase the road's capacity to improve its long term safety and reliability.
- 3.3 Highways England have identified six key benefits of the proposals:
 - A more free flowing network;
 - A safe and serviceable network;
 - Supporting economic growth;

- An improved environment;
- A more accessible and integrated network;
- Customer satisfaction.

3.4 Four options are being consulted upon:

3.4.1 Option 1:

3.4.1.1 Widening the existing A12 to three lanes in both directions from Junctions 19 to 25 (Boreham to Marks Tey). This will potentially will be the most disruptive option for residents and businesses located close to the A12. It will bring the road closer to existing premises, private accesses to the road will be closed and diverted, Highways England acknowledge that this option *'requires the acquisition of most properties'*. It is not clear whether this option would include the same opportunity as the off line options for junction improvements that improve access to and from Maldon District

3.4.2 Option 2:

3.4.2.1 Widening of the A12 to three lanes in both directions from Junctions 19 to 25, with 2 new bypasses between junctions 22 and 23 (Witham and Kelvedon) and between Junctions 24 to 25 (Feering to Marks Tey). The two lengths of the A12 that are constrained by at-grade private accesses, with existing safety and capacity issues, are proposed to be bypassed in this option. This will reduce impacts on residents and businesses along the A12 corridor along the two stretches most affected by direct private access.

3.4.2.2 Due to the constraint of the railway line running parallel to the north of the A12, the bypasses are shown as running to the south of the existing road. The bypasses will generally take traffic away from residential properties.

3.4.2.3 A bypass between J22-23 (also proposed in Option 3) will circumvent Rivenhall End and should enable safer access to and from Braxted Road, as the new bypass will enable a new junction to be designed.

3.4.2.4 The proposed bypass between Feering and Marks Tey (J24-25) (also proposed in Option 4) will enable a north and southbound junction to be created at Feering, which currently only has northbound access. This should improve access to the A12 from the north of the District. A north and south bound junction at this point is particularly important, as the draft Braintree Local Plan is proposing a 1,000 home development at Feering. Without the two way junction, all south bound traffic from the development will pass through Kelvedon High Street which is already highly congested. This would negatively impact Maldon District residents' and businesses' access to the A12 via Great Braxted, Tiptree and Inworth.

3.4.3 Option 3:

3.4.3.1 Widening of the existing A12 corridor to three lanes from Junctions 19 to 25 with one bypass between Junctions 22-23 (Witham to Kelvedon). One of the two lengths of the A12 that are constrained by at-grade private accesses, with existing safety and capacity issues, are proposed to be bypassed in this option. This will reduce impacts

on residents and businesses along the A12 corridor at Rivenhall and provide the opportunity to improve the access point to the A12 from Braxted Road.

3.4.4 Option 4:

- 3.4.4.1 Widening of the existing A12 corridor to three lanes from Junctions 19 to 25, with one bypass between Junctions 24 to 25 (Feering to Marks Tey). One of the two lengths of the A12 that are constrained by at-grade private accesses, with existing safety and capacity issues, are proposed to be bypassed in this option. It will provide the opportunity to provide a new north-southbound junction at Feering.
- 3.5 The lines of each option are shown indicatively on the consultation maps (reproduced in **APPENDIX 2** to this report).
- 3.6 The proposed improvements are a one-off opportunity for the Highways England to ensure that Maldon District is not bypassed and to the fix inherent accessibility limitations caused by the inadequacy of existing junctions. If the opportunity is not taken now, and the route plus junctions are confirmed in the preferred option in the summer 2017, it would have a lasting impact on the ability of the District to attract investment, visitors and new residents. Therefore, the Council must be clear in its intent to secure the best access for Maldon.
- 3.7 Option 2 provides the best opportunities to improve access to the A12 from this District at both Rivenhall End and Feering. Building the bypasses off-line along two stretches, will reduce the impact of the roadworks on users of the A12, as less of the existing road will need to be changed. Crucially, it will also create the best opportunities for new grade separated junctions, built to modern standards and safety, that provide easier access to the north and southbound carriageways. For these reasons, Option 2 is this Council's preferred option.
- 3.8 The consultation asks for responses on whether junction improvements are required. Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, both Members and Officers have emphasised the importance of improving access to the A12 at Hatfield Peverel.
- 3.9 The consultation offers three options for the Hatfield Peverel junctions 20a and 20b:
- A) Retain and improve existing junctions 20a and 20b;*
 - B) Remove junction 20a and 20b and create a new junction 20;*
 - C) Neither.*
- 3.9.1 Either option A or B should result in improved access to the A12 from Maldon District. The consultation information shows that although the volume of traffic using J20a and J20b is similar to that using Junction 22 (north Witham), there have been twice as many collisions at J20a / 20b than at J22 over the last five years. Junction 20a currently offers only southbound access to the A12. The northbound exit at Junction 20a enters Hatfield Peverel at the T-junction of Bury Lane and The Street (B1137). Accessing The Street from Bury Lane is difficult at peak times, due to the volume of traffic passing through the village.
- 3.9.2 At Junction 20b, there is a very good slip road coming off the A12 south bound. The entrance slip to the A12 northbound is below standard, reducing the ability to join the

A12 safely at this point. Junction 20b offers northbound access only. Access to J20b is further constrained by access onto The Street from Maldon Road.

- 3.9.3 Option A for Junction 20a and 20b will result in improved access to and from the A12, however it may not deal with the current access issues at J20a of the Bury Lane / The Street T-junction or the Maldon Road/The Street mini-roundabout near J20b.

Option B for Junction 20a and 20b will result in the creation of a new single Junction 20. This will create safer, access both to and from the A12, north and southbound. However, it may not result in reduced volumes of traffic passing through the village itself, as there will only be one junction in the future, not two. As this option provides the opportunity to overcome the access and safety issues with the current two junctions, it is this Council's preferred option. There is already a significant bottleneck at Hatfield Peverel where traffic backs up along Maldon Road when seeking to access the A12. Solutions will need to consider appropriate B Road access to the new junction to address this.

3.10 **A12 widening scheme timetable**

- 3.10.1 This consultation closes on 3 March 2017.

- 3.10.2 The key milestones for this project are given below. Highways England has, wherever possible, compressed the different stages for this project, enabling the proposed construction start date to be brought forward to March 2020. The Development Consent Order (effectively the planning application) process is a statutory 18 month process, over which Highways England has no control.

January - March 2017.....	Public consultation on the Options.
Summer 2017	Preferred option announced; further engagement with communities, landowners and stakeholders.
Autumn 2017	Statutory public consultation on the preferred route.
Summer 2018	Submit an application for a Development Consent Order.
Winter 2019	Planning Inspectorate makes a recommendation to the relevant Secretary of State, who issues the final decision.
March 2020	Construction starts (estimate).

4. **CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 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. The proposals offer the opportunity for improved access to the A12 from Maldon District and are therefore welcomed. Option 2 would provide the greatest benefit to Maldon District.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 5.1 The improvements proposed for the A12 will have positive impacts on the corporate goals of protecting and shaping the District, and creating opportunities for economic growth and prosperity.

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 from this scheme. The online widening will bring the road closer to residential areas, and will result in private accesses to the A12 being closed and diverted. The proposed bypasses, will improve the environmental quality at existing residences by moving the A12 away from them. The bypasses will result in the loss of farming and other land along their route. The environmental impacts, both positive and negative, of the scheme are detailed on pages 28 - 31 of the consultation brochure.

Background Papers:

‘A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening consultation’ brochure; ‘A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening Have Your say’ booklet – both provided to all Members w/c 23-1-17. Copies are available at Maldon District Council reception.

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