

Chichester District Council

**THE CABINET (SPECIAL)
THE COUNCIL (SPECIAL)**

**8 June 2018
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A27 Chichester Bypass Improvements: Submission to the Government's Roads Investment Strategy

1. Contacts

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2. Executive Summary

On 28 February 2017, the Secretary of State wrote to Highways England cancelling the A27 Chichester improvement scheme because of the lack of local consensus regarding the published options. On 27 September 2017, the Council resolved to investigate the options for a potential scheme to be put forward for inclusion in the government's second Roads Investment Strategy (RIS2 - 2020-25).

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) also convened a series of community meetings to try to build consensus and develop a way forward through the 'Build A Better A27' (BABA27) initiative. The BABA27 community group established themes and key requirements to inform a set of 'success criteria' for the A27 Chichester scheme. Transport and engineering consultants, Systra, were appointed to provide independent technical advice and support to the community group to promote a scheme for inclusion in RIS2. Systra has worked with the BABA27 community group to understand key issues and constraints. A long list of possible options was identified which was sifted down to a short list of five conceptual options: three are assessed to be undeliverable or undesirable but there are two 'desirable' conceptual options that meet, or meet most of, the success criteria identified by the group; a 'mitigated northern route' and a 'full southern route'.

There are three potential approaches to promoting a scheme to the government for inclusion in RIS2, each of which has different advantages and risks. It is suggested that Approach A is taken forward, that is, promoting both the 'mitigated northern route' and the 'full southern route' as being desirable without indicating a preference for either option.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That the Cabinet notes the outputs of the work by Systra and the BABA27 community group and recommends to the Council to support Approach A ie promoting both the ‘mitigated northern route’ and the ‘full southern route’ as being desirable without indicating a preference for either option, in promoting a scheme to the government for inclusion in RIS2, noting the ‘fall-back’ position if no approach is selected.**

4. Background

- 4.1 The government’s first Roads Investment Strategy (RIS1) published in December 2014 included a commitment to improving four junctions on the A27 Chichester Bypass in the period 2015-2020.
- 4.2 In July 2016, Highways England published five options for public consultation for improving the A27 at Chichester. The five options included a range of improvements to four junctions around the bypass. One option also included a proposed Stockbridge link road and another option included carriageway widening between the Fishbourne and Bognor junctions.
- 4.3 In September 2016, the Cabinet and the Council considered a report concerning the options proposed by Highways England to improve the A27 at Chichester. The report outlined the five options published for consultation, reviewed the consultation documents and considered the potential benefits and adverse effects of the different options, including how they might affect local communities, businesses and visitors to Chichester District.
- 4.4 Based upon the information made available by Highways England, the Council resolved to provide qualified support to option 2. However, the Council made it clear that it was only minded to support this option provided that Highways England gave serious consideration to a number of improvements and mitigation measures.
- 4.5 On 28 February 2017, the Secretary of State wrote to Highways England cancelling the RIS1 scheme noting that the scheme was controversial and there was a lack of community support, and the withdrawal of support by the local councils for the shortlisted options.
- 4.6 On 6 September 2017, Highways England wrote to Gillian Keegan (MP for Chichester) outlining that there were two possible approaches to taking forward a scheme to improve the A27 at Chichester:
- A. RIS 1 (2015 - 2020) which would have required a route announcement by the end of September 2017 that one of the options from the 2016 consultation was the preferred route, including further discussions with the district and county councils about potential mitigations and broader community and environmental benefits.
 - B. RIS 2 (post 2020) which would allow time for active community engagement around potential alternatives, although the risk of a Chichester scheme having to compete with other schemes nationally was highlighted, with work unlikely to commence before 2023.

- 4.7 At its special meeting held on 27 September 2017, the Council resolved to investigate the options for a potential scheme to be put forward for inclusion in RIS2.
- 4.8 The Build A Better A27 (BABA27) initiative was launched by WSCC and supported by the Council to try and find a way forward. The BABA27 community group included representatives from local parish councils, residents groups and user/interest groups. The meetings were also attended by the WSCC members for the Chichester South County Local Committee area together with Chichester District Council members and in some instances, Gillian Keegan MP. The BABA27 community group identified a set of 'themes' and 'key requirements' for the A27 Chichester scheme that provide a set of local identified 'success criteria', against which different possible options for improving the A27 can be considered.
- 4.9 In January 2018, transport and engineering consultants, Systra, were appointed by WSCC to provide independent technical advice and support to the community group. The brief and specification for the project also received input from the Council, Highways England and members of the BABA27 community group.
- 4.10 Systra have carried out a fresh review of previous studies and reports to gain an understanding of the key issues and constraints. This included information published by Highways England as part of their 2016 options consultation and information (eg traffic and environmental data) about options not previously published for consultation. Systra generated a long list of scheme suggestions for discussion with the BABA27 community group drawing on previous studies, information provided by members of the community group and their own professional knowledge and experience. The long list of suggestions included 'on-line' (ie on the existing A27 Chichester bypass), 'off-line' (ie away from the current alignment of the A27) and 'modal' (ie relying on road users switching to other modes of transport) options.
- 4.11 Systra sifted through the long list of suggestions by considering performance against the BABA27 identified success criteria, Highways England objectives and wider delivery considerations to identify a smaller number of suggestions that may be potentially feasible and likely to meet the future needs of the area. This resulted in a shortlist of five conceptual options for further consideration and option assessment. The conceptual options are described briefly in Table 1 below and in the attached Systra report in more detail (Appendix A).

Table 1: Short list of five conceptual options for further consideration and option assessment

Conceptual Option	Description
Marginal gains	Improvements to six junctions on the A27 Chichester Bypass identified to mitigate the impacts of planned development in Chichester and Arun districts.
Combined investment	Combined investment in both the 'mitigated northern route' and the 'full southern route'. This option would combine the components of the two options described above.
Tunnel	A tunnel between a point west of the Fishbourne junction and a point east of the Portfield junction.

Mitigated northern route	A new dual carriageway 'off-line' route to the north of Chichester between a point west of the Fishbourne junction and a point east of the Portfield junction. The scheme would include lowered carriageways and green bridges in sensitive sections to reduce severance. There is an option to provide a junction with the A285. Environmental mitigation measures would also be needed to mitigate visual, noise and other impacts.
Full southern route	An 'on-line' improvement to six junctions on the A27 Chichester Bypass. The scheme would include underpasses at Fishbourne and Stockbridge junctions, maintaining all existing turning movements. The scheme includes flyovers at the Whyke and Bognor junctions maintaining all existing turning movements. The scheme would also include a flyover and junction remodelling at Portfield. The scheme would include carriageway realignment to provide slip roads and maintain traffic flow during construction. Environmental mitigation measures would also be needed to mitigate visual, noise, air quality and other impacts.

4.12 Systra have assessed each of the five shortlisted options and have concluded that two are worthy of further consideration ('*Mitigated northern route*' and '*Full southern route*') as set out in section 6 whilst three ('*Marginal gains*', '*Combined investment*' and '*Tunnel*' options) should be discounted at this stage for the reasons outlined in section 7.

4.13 The government's second Roads Investment Strategy (RIS2) covers the period 2020-25. Highways England (HE) has advised that the indicative RIS2 timetable is as follows:

- Department for Transport (DfT) publish a draft RIS2 in late 2018 – this is not expected to contain potential schemes.
- HE publish draft Business Plan in April 2019 – which would contain potential RIS2 schemes and be subject to public consultation.
- DfT publish a RIS2 in late 2019
- HE publish a final Business Plan in December 2019 with RIS2 schemes
- If A27 Chichester scheme is in RIS2 programme, HE sponsored public consultation on scheme options could take place in summer 2020.
- Next steps would be a preferred route announcement and the Development Consent Order planning process. Depending on progress, a scheme could be on site in 2023/24.

4.14 In parallel with the BABA27 community group workshops, WSCC together with the Council and Gillian Keegan MP have continued to engage with HE to ensure they have been provided with opportunities to influence the consultants brief and the long list of options. During the project, HE has provided advice about the RIS2 timetable (as outlined in para 4.13 above) and evaluation process. They have confirmed that the level of technical work carried out by Systra is suitable for the current stage of the project and that HE will undertake a technical assessment of the work, treating both the '*Mitigated northern route*' and the '*Full southern route*' equally. They have agreed to share their findings with the Council, WSCC and Gillian Keegan MP and have advised that this should be available in the autumn. HE agreed to write to the two councils to confirm the RIS2 timetable and their commitment to assess the Systra work. This letter will be made available to members as soon as it is received.

- 4.15 HE has also confirmed that the A27 at Chichester is on their long list of schemes although the level of government funding for RIS2 (as a whole) is not yet known. Whilst the budget range for the RIS1 scheme was up to £250m, no budget is currently allocated to the A27 Chichester scheme in RIS2. In order for it to be included, it would need to be considered against other potential priorities nationally. It will be for the government, not HE, to decide whether or not to include the A27 Chichester scheme in RIS2 and, if included, to set the budget for the scheme.
- 4.16 HE has identified that as the RIS1 scheme was cancelled due to a lack of community consensus, this is an important issue to be addressed in order for any further scheme to have the best chance of being included in RIS2. Such consensus is expected to be demonstrated by broad agreement between the two councils and Gillian Keegan MP on a preferred concept/approach to be put forward to HE. In addition to this, HE has made it clear that any new scheme will need to be different from the options identified as part of the RIS1 scheme. Also, importantly, they have indicated that off-line routes can be considered and that the councils could decide to put forward either one or two of the Systra options.

5. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 5.1 To secure a scheme of improvements to the A27 at Chichester within RIS2 in order to address issues of capacity, congestion, journey reliability and environmental issues such as air quality.

6. Proposal

- 6.1 Systra have identified two concepts for improvements to the existing A27 which they consider have strong merits and a range of challenges in key delivery areas. They also recognise that by being more ambitious than the earlier RIS1 scheme options, both have increased costs but will deliver increased benefits.
- 6.2 They consider that the '*mitigated northern route*' option offers the best long-term transport solution to the problems of the A27 at Chichester in best fitting with the BABA27 success criteria and wider considerations. They consider the '*full southern route*' option offers a medium to long-term solution addressing all key concerns raised with earlier 'south' RIS1 options and also capable of addressing many of the BABA27 success criteria and wider considerations. The two concepts are assessed in detail in sections 8 -10 of the Systra report (Appendix A).
- 6.3 There are three potential approaches to promoting a scheme to the government for inclusion in RIS2. Each potential approach has different advantages and risks. The approaches are either:
- A. Promoting both the '*mitigated northern route*' and the '*full southern route*' as being desirable without indicating a preference for either option. HE has confirmed that this approach is, in principle, acceptable and that they are prepared to carry out a technical assessment of both options and inform the two councils of their findings; or
 - B. Promoting only one of these options (either the '*mitigated northern route*' or the '*full southern route*') and not promoting the other one. However, this would effectively rule out the other reasonable alternative option that would meet at least some of the success criteria identified by the BABA27 community group,

HE's objectives and wider delivery considerations and that is also likely to have some support within the community. Also, if the preferred option ultimately proves to be undeliverable for some reason, there would be no alternative scheme, other than the Local Plan mitigation scheme (see para 6.4 below); or

- C. Promoting one of these options (either the 'mitigated northern route' or the 'full southern route') as a preference but also promoting the other one as a 'reasonable alternative' that could be delivered if, following further feasibility work, the preferred option was found to be undeliverable. This approach may provide greater prospect of a scheme for Chichester being included within RIS2 and would demonstrate that there is community consensus if the same preference is indicated by WSCC and Gillian Keegan MP.

- 6.4 Members should also note that if none of the above approaches are endorsed by Council and, as a consequence, HE do not take forward a scheme for inclusion in RIS2, the 'fallback' is that improvements to the junctions on the A27 Chichester Bypass will still need to be delivered to mitigate the impacts of development in the adopted Local Plan. These comprise small-scale, at-grade¹ improvements that involve restricting movement to ensure the junctions will continue to operate effectively. As these improvements are intended to be partly developer-funded, they are likely to be delivered incrementally as development comes forward over the Local Plan period to 2029. Importantly, they are only expected to mitigate the impacts of development rather than to improve conditions overall.
- 6.5 Systra recognise that with both concepts significant further work will be required to take any proposal forward for formal inclusion as a RIS2 scheme. They state that ongoing close working with HE will be required together with engagement with key stakeholders. They state that their analysis and judgement indicate that both these concepts are deliverable but with different cost, benefit and risk profiles and reliance on strong mitigation measures. Systra have not therefore recommended one of these concepts over the other. Given this analysis and HE's commitment to carrying out a detailed technical assessment of both concepts, it is suggested, on balance, that both the 'mitigated northern route' and 'full southern route' are promoted to HE as being desirable without indicating a preference for either option.

7. Alternatives Considered

- 7.1 These are set out in summary in Table 1 above. Systra have advised that the '*marginal gains*' option is unlikely to address the problems faced in the Chichester area, other than in the short term. This is essentially the Chichester Local Plan mitigation scheme and is designed to mitigate the impacts of future growth (ie to ensure that conditions do not get worse due to development related traffic growth), rather than to address pre-existing issues. In terms of addressing the critical success factors identified by the BABA27 group and HE aims, this option is considered to be undesirable although as outlined in para 6.4 above, it amounts to the fall-back position in the absence of any alternative option being included as part of RIS2.
- 7.2 In relation to the '*combined investment*' and '*tunnel*' options, Systra have concluded that whilst both options could add capacity to the transport network, they are also fundamentally unaffordable (i.e. more than double the RIS1 budget). Neither would they generate sufficient additional benefits to offer good value for money and so

¹ ie without flyovers or underpasses

make the investment attractive to the government. Systra advise that both these options are therefore 'undeliverable'.

8. Resource and Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Council has agreed in principle to contribute to the cost of the consultancy work carried out by Systra. Beyond this, there are no resource implications at this stage other than officer time spent in respect of this review.
- 8.2 Any major A27 improvement scheme taken forward will be primarily resourced by HE and the DfT. However, the Council is continuing to secure contributions towards the A27 Local Plan mitigation scheme from large scale new housing development via section 106 agreements in accordance with the adopted Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.
- 8.3 In addition, in the event that a scheme is included in RIS2, officers will need to provide input and respond to public consultation of the options put forward by HE.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 There has been extensive community consultation via the BABA27 initiative and members of the group have provided feedback on key issues, constraints and potential solutions. The key themes of the feedback received are:
 - A package of junction improvements could have some merit in conjunction with a 'smart A road' concept of using technology and signage to improve traffic flows and reliability;
 - Any on-line improvements should avoid flyovers and turning restrictions, but should still offer separation of local / through traffic;
 - Concern over the impacts of disruption during construction for 'on-line' improvements;
 - Southern 'off-line' routes are seen as challenging because of land availability and environmental impacts, particularly on Chichester Harbour AONB;
 - Split views on the merits of northern 'off-line' routes;
 - A local 'off-line' northern route is seen as being particularly challenging due to conflicts with proposed housing developments, the impact on the Portfield junction and local villages;
 - Strategic 'off-line' northern routes are acknowledged to provide capacity and separation of through and local traffic, but would require significant mitigation of environmental and business impacts; and
 - Modal measures generally supported as a vital part of the wider strategic solution, but will not address the issues of A27 on their own.
- 9.2 During the BABA27 initiative a community survey was carried out by WSCC to check the acceptability of the long list of suggestions between 15 - 29 March 2018 via the Chichester Observer, the WSCC website and through email and written responses to WSCC. 3,798 responses were received. The key themes of the feedback received are broadly consistent with the themes fed back during the community workshops and listed in paragraph 9.1 above.
- 9.3 The wide range of views shared during the community workshops and through the community survey demonstrates that there continues to be a wide range of views

within the local community. No significant majority appears to have developed during the course of the project in favour of any single conceptual option.

9.4 The two conceptual options shortlisted by Systra were presented to the most recent BABA27 workshop held on 18 May 2018. A majority, by a small margin, were in favour of promoting a single concept only to HE whereas promoting both concepts equally without a preference for either one was the second choice. A note of the meeting will be available at Cabinet and Council so that the views of the BABA27 community group can be taken into account.

9.5 The WSCC Chichester South County Local Committee, including a representative from the Council have formed a Member Working Group (MWG) to oversee the BABA27 project. The MWG previewed information before it was presented to the BABA27 community group and notes of all meetings have been published to provide transparency of the process.

10. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

10.1 The shortlisted conceptual options put forward by Systra will have potentially significant and wide ranging impacts for the local community. These impacts and possible mitigation measures will need to be the subject of more detailed design and feasibility work and subsequent public consultation in the event that a scheme is included in RIS2.

10.2 As outlined in para 6.4 above, the absence of community consensus on an option to be put forward to HE and/or no scheme for Chichester being included by HE in RIS2 would be likely to lead to implementation of the Local Plan mitigation scheme with its associated limitations.

11. Other Implications

Are there any implications for the following?		
	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		X
Climate Change and Biodiversity		X
Human Rights and Equality Impact		X
Safeguarding and Early Help		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		X

12. Appendices

12.1 Appendix A - Systra Report – ‘Build A Better A27 Situation Summary, Assessment and Recommendations Final Report’

13. Background Papers

13.1 Letter to Gillian Keegan MP from Highways England dated 6 September 2017 [**Note** This is available to view on the web-site as the appendix to the agenda report for the special meeting of the Council on Wednesday 27 September 2017]

13.2 Note of BABA27 meeting held on 18 May 2018 [**Note** This note will published for online viewing only subsequent to the publication of this agenda report]