

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 23 February 2017

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Transportation

SUBJECT: M56 New Junction 11a Public consultation

WARD(S) Norton South, Daresbury

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform Members of the M56 Junction 11a scheme consultation, running for 6 weeks from 16 January 2017 to 27 February 2017, and to recommend a Council response to be forwarded to Highways England, the scheme promoters.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Council respond to the Highways England consultation expressing support for Junction 11a, with a preference for Option B (signalised junction), giving reasons for these views.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In autumn 2014, the Government announced the first Road Investment Strategy (RIS 1) which included a new junction between junctions 11 and 12 on the M56. The purpose of this additional junction is to create an improved link to the new Mersey Gateway Bridge from the south. The new junction will provide both local and regional benefits and will increase the economic, transport and social benefits of the Mersey Gateway, as well as providing better local access to the M56.

3.2 Local benefits set out in the consultation documents (attached) include:

- Reduced journey times with improved access to the M56 from surrounding areas such as Murdishaw, Brookvale, Whitehouse Industrial Estate and Halton Hospital.
- Improved amenity for Preston Brook residents by reducing the volume of traffic passing through to access the M56 at Junction 11

- 3.3 Regional benefits include:
- Supporting economic growth by reducing wider journey times both to the south and east and Liverpool City region destinations such as John Lennon Airport.
 - Reduction in delays through increased resilience should congestion build at junctions 11 or 12.
- 3.4 The consultation sets out the scheme programme. A preferred route is due to be announced in Spring 2017. This will be followed by preliminary design, further consultation, a Development Consent Order (DCO) application, statutory procedures and powers, examination by the Planning Inspectorate, a decision by the Secretary of State, and construction preparation. It is expected that construction will take two years with work expected to commence in March 2020.
- 3.5 A public awareness exhibition was held at the Linnet's FC club house in September 2016 which over 300 people attended, and provided a range of comments which were considered when Highways England shortlisted the options. At that stage, both a 'West Option' and 'East Option' (with the junction situated to the west or the east of the West Coast Mainline and Murdishaw roundabout) were presented. However, following feedback from the exhibition, and due to the estimated cost, the 'West Option' has now been discounted.
- 3.6 The current consultation, therefore, presents two Eastern options:
- Option A – Upgrading Murdishaw roundabout into a through-about
 - Option B – Converting Murdishaw roundabout into a signalised crossroads.
- 3.7 Option A is the eastern option previously presented at the public awareness exhibition. In the through-about design, the major road runs through the middle of the roundabout with signal controls at the intersection of each roundabout arm. The major road provides access to and from the east bound M56 carriageway. In both options, access to and from the westbound carriageway is via a new roundabout on a revised Chester Road alignment to the south of Preston Brook, which incorporates a new A533 bridge over the motorway and widening to provide extra capacity.
- 3.8 Option B would convert the existing Murdishaw roundabout into a fully signalised 4 way crossroads catering for all traffic movements. The A533 Southern Expressway would be realigned slightly (away from Brookvale and hence away from residential properties) to connect to the junction and M56 slip roads. The southbound approach from Murdishaw Avenue would widen

to 3 lanes allowing a full lane for each turning movement. In both options, pedestrian cycle routes would be reinstated across the junction through the crossing points at each stop line connecting the existing routes.

- 3.9 Environmental benefits and effects are presented in the consultation document and are similar for both options. In summary these are: Air Quality – small changes to properties on A56 Chester Rd; Cultural Heritage; Landscape, Nature Conservation – further surveys required, Geology – more ground condition surveys required, Noise – predicted to decrease at properties near Junction 12 with small increases at properties along the Southern Expressway and near the A533 Northwich Road roundabout; Safety – improvements reduce congestion and increase resilience with signage to inform M56 users of reduced link lengths between junctions, Community and private assets – land take on both sides of the motorway including some land from the baseball pitch and some woodlands (ancient woodland has been avoided) and residential and commercial properties to the south may be affected depending on the final design; Drainage and water – measures to minimise impacts will be incorporated and neither option is in a flood zone; and Construction duration – approx. 2 years with most construction being away from the main line of the M56.
- 3.10 Both options will give a significant improvement to regional journey times, as access to the Mersey Gateway is improved via the Southern Expressway. Local journey times are also significantly reduced, particularly in the case of the signalised crossroad option (option B) due to operational advantages of this type of junction. This option also proposes to move the Southern Expressway road alignment away from Brookvale residential area and give a greater distance between the junction and Northwich Road which will provide additional queuing space on Murdishaw Avenue which, coupled with the greater distance from the junction, should make it easier to exit from Northwich Road. Both options involve improvements to the Murdishaw roundabout which will alleviate long standing traffic issues for this part of the borough. This benefit appears to be more significant in the case of option B. As part of the vision for East Runcorn, both options would provide significantly enhanced connectivity to the motorway. It is likely that disruption to traffic during construction will be greater with Option B, and disruption to residents and businesses will be moderate for both options. Existing cycle and pedestrian routes are proposed to be upgraded with appropriate crossing points, with the exception of the existing crossing point across the A56 on its approach to the A533. The Highway Authority recommends that the upgrading of this crossing point should be looked at further by the scheme promoters.

- 3.11 At present, junction 12 of the M56 suffers from capacity problems and the implementation of Junction 11a would offer significant benefits in alleviating existing congestion issues. In addition, the expected improvement to amenity of Preston Brook village along the busy A56 is welcomed.
- 3.12 The East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study of May 2011, produced by Mott MacDonald in conjunction with Halton Borough Council's Core Strategy, supports the concept of junction 11a. In line with the Mersey Gateway project, this strategic road network enhancement would allow improved access to development areas in south and east Liverpool as well as the Daresbury Enterprise Zone, a key national contributor to science innovation and enterprise within the borough, and to the adjoining housing development sites. The Enterprise Zone is expected to contain over one hundred high-tech companies with over a million square feet of office, technology and laboratory space. The proposal would reduce through traffic on the Daresbury Expressway and this would benefit the area with reduced congestion at peak travel times and enhance capacity to support future development. The proposals will reduce congestion at Junction 11 and thus reduce journey times from the wider region via the M56 through to the Enterprise Zone.
- 3.13 The addition of junction 11a is seen as a positive and integral step toward the implementation of an improved and successful transport network. It has been identified in Halton's Local Transport Plan as a means of enhancing the local transport infrastructure in a way which would boost economic and social regeneration. This would be achieved through the creation a cohesive and connected transport system which works for the region as a whole. Therefore, it is recommended that the Council give its support to either option proposal, expressing a preference for Option B, which is considered, on balance, to offer greater local and regional benefits.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The principle of M56 junction 11a is supported by the Council's Local Transport Plan and is in line with the transport priorities for growth and access to opportunities set out in the City Region Local Transport Plan for Growth, together with a number of the wider strategic priorities including freight, housing, health and wellbeing, communities and visitor economy.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is expected that the scheme will be funded by the Government as part of

its Road Investment Strategy. There may be some further design work and changes to the tie in with the Mersey Gateway scheme area required as a result of the proposed change to the network e.g. on signing/lining. It is recommended that the Council verify that this will be funded as part of the junction 11a scheme.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Local access to education and other local facilities will be improved.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

The scheme will provide improved local access to education facilities and improve access to the wider East Runcorn Area by removing congestion / releasing traffic capacity to assist with the delivery of the Daresbury Enterprise Zone and Business Park.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The scheme will incorporate pedestrian and cycle facilities, encouraging the use of active travel modes. There will be some impact on playing field and woodland areas.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The scheme is in the early stages of design, but shows appropriate pedestrian and cycle facilities with controlled crossing points, and will follow Highways England Design Standard procedures.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The scheme will improve access to the wider East Runcorn Area by removing congestion / releasing traffic capacity to assist with the delivery of the Daresbury Enterprise Zone and Business Park.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The scheme is being delivered and funded by Highways England / DfT. Whilst financial risks to the Council are therefore unlikely, detailed traffic modelling results for the junctions and surrounding network are still awaited which may have some implications for the existing layout and operation of the Southern expressway junctions, and the junction tie in to the Mersey Gateway route. It is recommended that this is considered further by Highways England, and addressed as necessary, otherwise the risk of addressing these issues could fall on the Council in the future.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues in relation to this report.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
M56 Junction 11a Public Consultation Document/Questionnaire Jan-Feb 2017	Municipal Buildings, WA8 7QF	Jonathan Farmer