

Appendix A. Promoters Response

Introduction

Essex County Council (ECC) welcomes the results of this very successful public consultation and would like to thank the many people who participated and shared a wide range of views which will inform decisions on the next phase of the scheme.

This document sets out ECC's response to the main issues raised in responses to the consultation and outlines the next steps for the scheme.

Background

The A120 is in urgent need of improvement between Braintree and the A12. The section between Braintree and Marks Tey is already greatly over capacity and with traffic volumes expected to increase, congestion problems and the regular bottlenecks are expected to get worse. In 2015, the government agreed that ECC would lead the work to determine the best way forward for the A120. ECC identified issues for the A120 and developed 68 potential options. Using the Department for Transport's (DfT) Early Assessment Sifting Tool and transport appraisal process, these options were refined to the five best performing options, which were presented for public consultation.

The proposals which were consulted on are a significant step forward in understanding how best to address this need and find effective solutions that reflect the needs of local communities and users of the route.

Highways England (HE) are developing the next phase of the Road Investment Strategy (RIS2), for schemes commencing construction after 2020. Whilst there is no guarantee of funding for the scheme, based on the consultation and ongoing studies ECC believe there is a very strong case for the A120 being included in RIS2. In the coming months ECC will present the case for the inclusion of this scheme within RIS2 to Highways England and the Department for Transport.

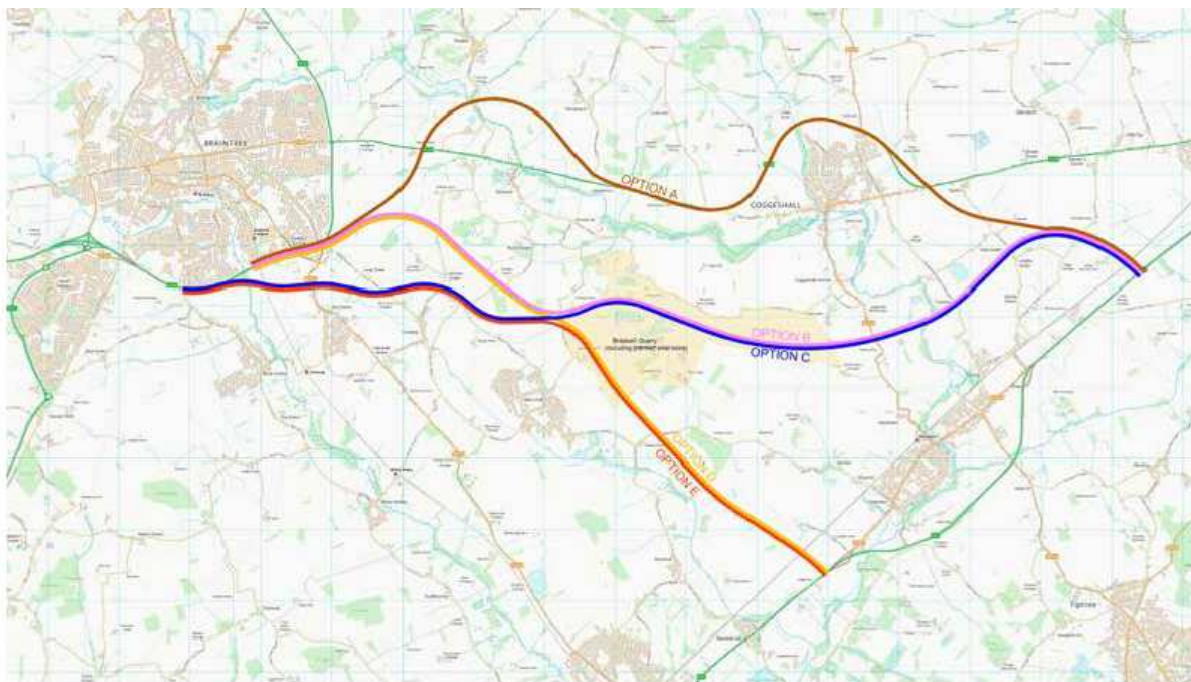
The Consultation

Public consultation on the five options identified was carried out between 17th January and 14th March 2017 and sought views from:

- members of the public
- communities
- local authorities
- emergency services
- strategic traffic generators

- freight and passenger transport bodies
- statutory environmental bodies
- equalities and vulnerable user groups
- organisations
- businesses

The figure below shows the five option alignments that were consulted on:



Respondent views were sought on the need for improvements to be made to the A120 and on the five options identified, including ranking the options and on potential junction locations.

ECC welcome the enthusiastic response to the consultation and are grateful that so many people took the time to participate. The Council are pleased with the engagement which took place and the interest shown in the scheme. Over 3000 people attended the public engagement events held during the consultation and 2795 responses to the consultation questionnaire were received. The majority of responses (88%) were received online, with 12% of responses received through post and email.

Questionnaire Responses

Support for Scheme:

82% of respondents to the public consultation felt that the A120 required a complete upgrade to meet current and future demand.

Favoured Outcomes:

Through agreement to a series of statements in the consultation questionnaire, respondents indicated they strongly agreed or agreed that they would like to see upgrades which would:

- reduce queuing at junctions (87%)
- reduce HGV's need to travel through villages (85%)
- improve journey times (82%)
- upgrade the A120 to a dual carriageway (80%)
- improve pedestrian, cycling and equestrian facilities (46%)

Route Option Preference

In the consultation questionnaire, respondents were asked to rank the five options presented in order of preference.

Of those who provided a ranking, options C and E were favoured. Option C received the highest number of '1' rankings (29%), followed by option E (27%). When '1' and '2' rankings are considered then there is little difference between the two options.

All routes have varying levels of support but are relatively close. If you add the first and second preference together, routes C and E are favoured, but there is no clear winner from the options.

Additional Evidence:

Alongside the public consultation, an independent study was commissioned by Transport Focus to assess the views of those who regularly use the route but do not live in the local areas. The study surveyed around 2000 A120 users and found that the A120 is seen as worse than other A-roads by 69% of users, with key issues including road type, traffic jams and the condition of the road surface.

The Transport Focus study confirms support for the scheme and reinforces the argument for improvements to the A120.

Response to issues and proposed actions

The key issues to arise from the consultation and ECC's response to those issues are detailed below. The issues below relate to all of the route alignments. Many of these issues will be mitigated once a single route has been finalised and the technical studies are progressed.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Response and Action</i>
Visual and environmental impacts on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackwater Valley, particularly of the viaduct Brain River Valley 	<p>The River Blackwater and Brain River Valleys are recognised as key areas for consideration with particular regard to views and nature conservation. The impacts on these have been considered as part of the environmental appraisal.</p> <p>Overall, all route options are considered to have a similar level of environmental effect, and we will mitigate where appropriate. However, there may be impacts to a local wildlife site and views from crossing the River Blackwater which potentially would be more difficult to mitigate. The effects may be limited through careful design of structures and earthworks and other mitigation measures such as planting.</p> <p>Action: further environmental appraisal will be undertaken on the options. This will inform considerations of potential approaches to mitigation and design.</p>
Concern that route options were influenced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particular developments Interest groups 	<p>The route options were not influenced. The process undertaken to date follows Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines that only allow developments that have some formal planning permission status to be considered. While the predicted general growth in housing and traffic is considered, access to specific development sites that do not have formal status planning is not. In addition, the consultation process has provided a route for interest groups to be involved and share their views, in the same way as the general public.</p> <p>Action: no further action required until the local plans in particular are confirmed.</p>
Addressing congestion at junctions around Braintree	<p>In all options a new road layout would be provided to address the high levels of existing congestion on the A120 around Braintree, including at Galley's Corner.</p>

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	<p>For options A, B and D, an entirely new grade separated junction located to the east would replace the existing Galleys Corner roundabout. This junction would provide new road links connecting to the existing A120/A131/Marks Farm Roundabout, Fowler's Farm Roundabout, Cressing Road and Long Green.</p> <p>For options C and E the new A120 would avoid the Galleys Corner by leaving the existing A120 alignment near the River Brain with a limited movement junction provided to give access to/from Galleys Corner and Freeport via the existing A120 alignment. The new A120 would then pass north of Tye Green, where a grade separated junction would be provided connecting to a new link that would provide access to the B1018, A131 and Marks Farm roundabout to the north, bypassing Galleys Corner to the east. In this option the existing Galleys Corner roundabout would be retained, but would have most of the traffic removed from it by the new links provided.</p> <p>New west-facing slip-roads are being proposed to connect the existing A120 to Millennium Way which will remove some traffic, in particular that for Freeport, from the Galley's Corner and Fowler's Farm roundabouts.</p> <p>Action: ongoing consideration will be given to the issue as the technical studies progress and when specific junction details are established.</p>
Additional traffic on the A12	<p>The potential impact of additional traffic on the A12 between the new A120 junction and the existing J25 at Marks Tey is acknowledged and is being considered in the design and appraisal of all options.</p> <p>Action: further consideration will be given to traffic impacts on the A12 issue in further development of the options. At this time, investigations are being undertaken to ensure that the improvements made to the A12 best serve the region.</p>

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Response and Action</i>
Location and performance of junctions with the A12	<p>None of the routes would use the existing A120 junction with the A12, (Junction 25 at Marks Tey), which already suffers from high levels of congestion.</p> <p>Routes A, B and C would join the A12 at a grade separated junction between Feering and Marks Tey. Routes D and E would join the A12 at a remodelled Kelvedon South (J23) junction.</p> <p>All new junctions would be designed in accordance with current design standards and analysed to ensure their operational effectiveness and safety.</p> <p>The exact location of the junctions will be decided in discussion with the team planning the upgrade of the A12, which is to be implemented prior to the A120 scheme.</p> <p>Action: consideration will be given to junction location and design in the further development of the options.</p>
Network Resilience	<p>All route options provide improved resilience for the road network across north Essex and beyond by providing an additional east-west corridor that serves east-west movements as well as providing faster and higher capacity access between the A12 and M11. Resilience is improved to a lesser extent by Option A, which would upgrade the existing bypass rather than creating a new one.</p> <p>Specific concerns regarding the impact on resilience of additional traffic generated by the A120 on the A12 Kelvedon bypass by options D and E have been identified. It should be noted that improvement of the A12 will provide a higher capacity and safer route on this section, reducing the probability and impact of an incident and increasing resilience in the area. Also, the additional A120 traffic on the A12 would avoid an incident on Kelvedon bypass via the existing A120 road.</p> <p>Action: consideration will be given to impacts in the further development of options, in particular for the Kelvedon bypass and any mitigation from improvements to the A12.</p>

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Response and Action</i>
Capacity for future development	<p>All the route options have been designed to accommodate the expected growth in traffic resulting from the DfT's projected housing and employment growth in the region (including the growth expected from sites that have formal planning permission)</p> <p>Action: no further action required until the local plans in particular are confirmed.</p>
<p>HGV's:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the A120 to access Bradwell Quarry • Possibility of a larger number of HGVs using unsuitable local roads leading to increased congestion 	<p><u>Access to Bradwell Quarry</u></p> <p>All options are expected to significantly reduce HGV traffic on the existing A120 and other local roads. Reflecting responses to questions regarding potential junctions and on the impact of HGV traffic in general, including a HGV access to Bradwell Quarry on Options B, C, D and E will be looked at as part of the design to be taken forward. This would provide a direct access for HGVs and remove the need for these vehicles to travel on local roads or through villages. This would further reduce the number of HGVs travelling through Bradwell by around 590 lorry movements each day. Option A already includes the provision of a grade separated junction for access to Bradwell Quarry from the new A120 that bypasses Bradwell.</p> <p>Action: consideration will be given to HGV access to Bradwell Quarry in further development of the options.</p> <p><u>Unsuitable Local Roads</u></p> <p>As shown in Section 8 of the consultation document, all of the potential route options are expected to significantly reduce traffic on local roads as HGV's will use a new route. This is particularly the case for HGVs for which a reduction in the order of 89% to 93% is estimated on the A120 at Bradwell, depending on the option and the inclusion of a new junction for Bradwell Quarry.</p> <p>Action: no additional action required.</p>
Impact of Construction works on:	<p><u>Noise, Air and Light Pollution</u></p> <p>A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would be developed to reduce</p>

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Response and Action</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise, air and light pollution Traffic flow Community ties, local businesses, schools and road users Pedestrians, local road users, cyclists and equestrians 	<p>noise, air and light pollution during construction.</p> <p>At this stage of assessments, all of the options were considered to have an overall adverse but not significant effect on air quality. The scheme would also lead to a beneficial effect on areas along the existing A120 and in the south east of Braintree by relieving congestion and reducing the amount of traffic using this road.</p> <p>The proposed A120 scheme is anticipated to lead to an overall significant beneficial effect on noise for all routes, due to the change in traffic along the existing A120. Whilst a number of properties have the potential to experience adverse noise effects in relation to the proposed new routes, mitigations such as road design and landscaping will be implemented where appropriate. These areas are located in the rural areas between Braintree and the A12.</p> <p>Roadside lighting would also be appropriately designed to mitigate potential impacts.</p> <p><u>Traffic Flow</u></p> <p>We acknowledge that the construction of each of the five routes would have some impact on traffic flow at new junctions and connections. The CEMP report will explain how these temporary impacts will be managed to reduce inconvenience to road users.</p> <p><u>Community Ties, Local Businesses, Schools and Road Users</u></p> <p>Although there may be a temporary disruption during construction, there are a number of expected benefits from this project, some of which are long term. During construction, these could include: the creation of construction jobs and use of local services and suppliers. In the longer term, benefits are anticipated to include improvements in access, relief of traffic congestion; and economic benefits from reduced journey times. Connectivity across the existing A120 for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders could also be improved.</p> <p><u>Pedestrians, Local Road Users, Cyclists and Horse Riders</u></p>

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Response and Action</i>
	<p>A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be designed to appropriately address and limit the impacts on pedestrians, local road users, cyclists and equestrians.</p> <p>Action: consideration will be given to approaches to mitigating relevant impacts as part of further development of the options and for inclusion in the CEMP.</p>
<p>Environment and Landscape:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of the highly regarded landscape, wildlife and conservation areas • The environmental impacts of routes A, B and C which were felt to be greater • Impacts on listed buildings • Proximity of route to Stisted and associated environmental effects 	<p><u>Landscape, Wildlife and Conservation Areas</u></p> <p>The environmental appraisal already undertaken considers the landscape, wildlife and conservation areas for each of the scheme options.</p> <p>The effects would be limited through careful design of structures and earthworks and other mitigation measures such as planting. Opportunities would be sought for ecological enhancements, such as buffer areas around new and retained habitats, compensation planting and replacement habitats. However, further environmental appraisal is required once the routes are further developed.</p> <p><u>Routes A, B and C</u></p> <p>It is considered that whilst all the routes have overall significant impacts, mitigation will be implemented where appropriate. However, options A, B and C could lead to impacts which may be more difficult to mitigate. This is due to a number of factors, including Route A's proximity to Stisted, crossing of the River Blackwater by Routes A, B and C, and crossing a local wildlife site for Routes B and C. More detailed assessment of relative environmental impacts will be happening at a later stage.</p> <p><u>Impacts on listed buildings</u></p> <p>Each of the routes could affect the views from and the setting of a number of listed buildings. There are a number of rural dwellings, farmsteads and settlements from which earthworks and structures could be visible. However, whilst all of the route options are considered to have potential adverse effects, mitigation through careful design of structures and earthworks will be developed where appropriate.</p>

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Response and Action</i>
	<p><u>Stisted</u></p> <p>The concerns are noted and consideration is being given to a minor variation of the alignment within the route corridor to reduce impacts on Stisted.</p> <p>Action: consideration to be given to approaches to mitigating relevant impacts as part of further development of the options.</p>
<p>Local Communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns that through traffic will not use the new route Separating local and through traffic Impact on property prices and blight Impact on existing public rights of way and pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian facilities 	<p><u>Through Traffic Using New Route</u></p> <p>The new A120 would be a high-standard dual carriageway with grade separated junctions (where the A120 traffic runs through uninterrupted). Combined with the new grade separated connection to the A12, the journey between Braintree and the A12 north of Marks Tey would be faster than the existing A120 even after traffic is transferred to the new route and without any reduction in speed limit or traffic management measures. Depending on the option, traffic volumes on the existing A120 are therefore expected to drop by between 55% and 65% through Bradwell to an average of around 10,000 to 13,000 vehicles per day by 2026. Around 40,800 to 44,600 journeys are expected per day on average on the new A120 by 2026.</p> <p>Action: no further action required.</p> <p><u>Local and Through Traffic</u></p> <p>A key benefit of all options is expected to be the separation of local and through traffic. The anticipated significant reduction in traffic on the existing A120 would free-up capacity for local journeys.</p> <p>During the design development phase, treatment of the existing “de-trunked” A120 would be considered and this may include traffic calming or other measures to create a road environment more appropriate for its revised local usage for local journeys, as well by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.</p>

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Response and Action</i>
	<p>Action: consideration to be given to the treatment of the existing “de-trunked” A120 during the further development of the options.</p> <p><u>Property Prices and Blight</u> This will be the responsibility of Highways England, who will set out details of how blight resulting from this scheme will be addressed.</p> <p>Action: In line with the statutory process, blight and the impact on property prices is not applicable until a single route is selected.</p> <p><u>Public Rights of Way, Pedestrian, Cyclist and Equestrian Facilities</u> Detailed improvement plans for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrian networks will only be made once a single route has been chosen. However, there are a number of provisions that are likely to happen, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local roads and Public Rights of Way would remain in place where possible and realigned where this is not possible. • improved facilities would be provided to tie into local strategies and plans. In some cases where crossings are close together, it might be more effective to combine facilities; in other places studies may show additional facilities or routes would be beneficial <p>Action: further consideration and more detailed plans for improvements will form part of further development of the options.</p>
Subsidence	<p>The concerns of respondents about the state of the carriageway of the existing A120, in particular around Coggeshall, are noted. Should the new A120 run on the alignment of the existing A120, the road and other associated features, such as drainage, would be reconstructed to modern standards to provide long term durability of the new road.</p>

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Response and Action</i>
	Action: consideration will be given to this issue in further development of the options.
Routes through Bradwell Quarry	<p>The alignments of routes B, C, D and E were designed to pass through the quarry to limit the impacts on the environment and local residents. A route to the south of the quarry would move the road closer to settlements like Silver End and a route to the north would move the road closer to the southern limits of Bradwell and Perry Green. It could also impact the Grade 1 listed Parish Church of the Holy Trinity in Bradwell.</p> <p>Action: no further action required</p>
Route Alignment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impact of routes on communities 	<p>During the options development stage, 68 route options were considered. Options were then sifted down to five during a lengthy process that included consideration of environmental constraints, the location of the housing and heritage buildings, transport performance, likely cost, feasibility and risk, safety and economic impacts. Routes to the south of Bradwell and many more were assessed during this stage with the five options taken to public consultation representing the five best performing options when all criteria were taken into account.</p> <p>Action: consideration will be given to potential modifications to the route alignment during further development of the route options.</p>

Ongoing Engagement and Next Steps

Since the public consultation ECC have held a further round of forum meetings, updating key stakeholders about the consultation outcomes. A Members forum (for local politicians and councillors) was held on Friday 8th July whilst the economic and environmental forums (which include representative bodies) took place on Thursday 27th July. Two community forums, which include Parish councillors as representatives of local communities, were held on Wednesday 19th July and Friday 21st July. Attendees were given an overview of the outcomes and responses to the consultation, and also briefed on the findings from the 'Transport Focus' independent study of regular A120 road users. ECC recently held two more forum meetings with Colchester Borough Council, on Monday 11th September, and Braintree District Council on Tuesday 12th September.

Conclusion

ECC are very pleased with the public engagement activity, the level of interest shown in the scheme and the volume and detail of input provided by stakeholders. The project team have been able to discuss and respond to issues continuously throughout and this has contributed to an open and transparent process.

From the consultation it is clear that many people believe that the A120 is in need of improvement between Braintree and the A12. ECC are confident that there is support for improvement, although some respondents have highlighted issues that are of concern to residents and regular users of the route.

ECC are confident that the proposed options will address the existing issues and result in significant improvements for all road users as well as boost the economy. ECC are also keen to ensure that potential impacts and issues are recognised as part of the ongoing design process and that appropriate mitigations are introduced.