

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

14th SEPTEMBER 2021

Portfolio Holder For Environment, Transport, Highways And Waste:
Councillor Phil Larratt

Report Title A422 Farthinghoe Bypass

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Route Options

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update Cabinet on the progress made with developing proposals for an A422 Farthinghoe Bypass to include results from a consultation exercise held in 2020, possible interim solutions and timescales for future funding opportunities.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Consultation on four northern route options for the A422 Farthinghoe Bypass was undertaken between 6 November 2020 and 3 January 2021. 87% of those who responded felt a bypass was necessary and 65% supported a northern route. There was a clear preference for Northern Route V1/Orange over the other three options presented. The detailed comments raised issues, particularly around landscape and fog which need considering in more detail before it is appropriate to recommend a preferred route to Cabinet. Assuming a decision on a preferred route before the end of 2021, the earliest opening date for the scheme is estimated to be mid-2028.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet receive the results of the recent consultation on the A422 Farthinghoe Bypass and agree the timescales for further work

4. Reason for Recommendations

- To progress the delivery of the A422 Farthinghoe Bypass, which is a priority scheme for the Council.
- The recommendation reflects the results of the consultation and scheme assessment work and the need to examine the points raised in the detailed consultation comments in more detail.
- The timescales for further work are based on the processes to be followed to gain statutory and funding approval for a major highway scheme.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The village of Farthinghoe (population 413, 2011 census) is located on the A422 between Banbury and Brackley.
- 5.2 In the 1980s, in anticipation of the forthcoming opening of the M40, the former County Council developed a policy of upgrading the A422 to provide a high-quality route for traffic from the M40 towards Milton Keynes. Middleton Cheney was bypassed in 1991 and a southern bypass for Brackley was opened in 1992. Improvements, jointly with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire County Councils, improved the A421 to continue the upgrade towards Milton Keynes.
- 5.3 Plans were developed to provide a bypass for Farthinghoe, but difficulties in determining an appropriate route which enjoyed public support, at a time when Government funding for new road construction was being significantly reduced, led to the scheme being discontinued.
- 5.4 This has left Farthinghoe as the only village on the A422/A421 between the M40 and Milton Keynes without a bypass. In the subsequent period the local community has continued to campaign for a bypass. Although current traffic flows of some 11,000 vehicles per day (7.5% HGV) are lower than those experienced by some other villages in West Northamptonshire, there is a pinch-point in the village which prevents two large vehicles passing, and this frequently leads to vehicles mounting the footways, which has resulted in recorded accidents between vehicles and collisions with residential boundaries.

- 5.5 Local concerns have been heightened by the potential for significant growth at Banbury in the period 2014 to 2031, as proposed in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan. This includes proposals for 7,106 new houses and a strategic employment located allocation located east of Banbury adjacent to the M40 and the west Northamptonshire border. Inevitably, this level of development will increase current traffic flows on the A422 through Farthinghoe.
- 5.6 There is also concern that the substantial volume of HS2 construction traffic forecast to use the B4525, which broadly parallels the A422 between the M40 and A43, will lead to much of the traffic from that route switching to the A422 for an extended period.
- 5.7 In November 2016, following consultation on northern and southern route options, the County Council Cabinet agreed that the A422 Farthinghoe Bypass should be added to the County Council's priority list of major road schemes and that a northern route should form the basis of further work to develop the scheme.

6. 2020 northern route options

- 6.1 Following the identification of funding to progress the scheme by the former County Council and South Northamptonshire Council, further work to develop four northern route options was undertaken in 2020.
- 6.2 A plan showing the four northern route options, with the 2016 southern route included for comparison, can be found at Appendix A.
- 6.3 A Scheme Assessment Report provided a technical overview of the routes. The desktop environmental impact assessment showed that the impacts of the four northern routes were very close:
- Northern Routes V0 and V1 scored best on Landscape impacts
 - Northern Route V1 scored worse than the other routes on Materials Waste impacts
 - Northern Route V3 scored best on Road Drainage – Groundwater Impact
 - Northern Route V0 scored worst on Road Drainage Flood Risk/Surface Water impacts
- Overall Northern Routes V0 and V3 scored slightly better than routes V1 and V2.
- 6.4 The Scheme Assessment Report can be found on the website at <https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/northamptonshire-highways/major-highway-projects/Pages/a422-farthinghoe-bypass-consultation.aspx>

7. Consultation results

- 7.1 Consultation on four northern route options was undertaken between 6 November 2020 and 3 January 2021. The intention was to designate a preferred route which would then be the basis of further work to develop the scheme. Owing to coronavirus restrictions, the consultation was hosted on-line with two webinars being held. A total of 400 leaflets were distributed to the village and surrounding area, and 430 responses were received.
- 7.2 The first consultation question asked whether Farthinghoe needed a bypass:
- 87% supported a bypass
 - 11% did not support a bypass

- 2% did not know

7.3 The second question asked about preference for a northern or southern route:

- 65% supported a northern bypass
- 13% supported a southern bypass
- 10% did not support a bypass
- 12% did not know

7.4 The next question asked about support for the specific northern route options which has been presented:

	Strongly Support	Support	Neither support nor object	Object	Strongly Object	Don't Know
Northern Route V0/Blue	10%	20%	22%	19%	24%	5%
Northern Route V1/Orange	48%	16%	12%	6%	12%	5%
Northern Route V2/Purple	18%	27%	25%	9%	16%	5%
Northern Route V3/Magenta	18%	24%	24%	9%	20%	6%

7.5 These results show clear support for a bypass and for a northern route over a southern route. Of the four options presented for consultation, there was a clear preference for Northern Route V1/Orange over the other three.

7.6 The full Consultation Report will be published on the Council website once an accessible version has been created, but in the meantime is available on request.

8. Next steps

8.1 While the consultation demonstrated clear support for Northern Route V1, the detailed comments raised issues, particularly around landscape and fog which need considering in more detail before it is appropriate to recommend a preferred route to Cabinet. The designation of a preferred route represents a significant stage in the development of a major road scheme as it allows a focus on a single route as the basis of more detailed work.

8.2 Essentially, there are three processes which are then followed in taking a major road scheme forward. The design of the scheme develops as these processes are followed.

8.3 The first element concerns the statutory process to prepare a planning application, with the most significant work being the environmental assessment. Following the receipt of planning approval, it is then necessary to secure the land required for the scheme either by negotiation or through a Compulsory Purchase Order. If any sections of existing highway are to be closed off as part of the scheme, it is also necessary to seek a Side Roads Order. If objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order or Side Roads Order cannot be resolved, a public inquiry is required. All three elements of this process may involve an independent inquiry or judgement which will

have the risk of being refused. Only once we have carried out the initial work will the overall risks of this be understood.

- 8.4 In parallel with the statutory processes, it is necessary to obtain funding for the scheme. The likely funding source is Government funding, which requires the preparation, submission and acceptance of a series of business cases in accordance with the Department for Transport's methodologies. Without the funding in place an application for a Compulsory Purchase Order will not be successful.
- 8.5 Finally, it is necessary to appoint a contractor to construct the scheme. While Early Contractor Involvement or Design & Build are usually preferred, so that the contractor inputs to the design of the scheme, the appointment to construct the scheme is not made until all statutory powers and funding are in place and a final cost for the scheme has been agreed.
- 8.6 Assuming a decision on a preferred route before the end of 2021, the earliest dates at which the scheme can be expected to progress are as follows:

Late 2022	Submit Strategic Outline Business Case
Mid 2023	Complete Preliminary Design
Early 2024	Submission of planning application and Outline Business Case
Mid 2024	Planning permission granted and Cabinet decision to progress scheme
Early 2026	Confirmation of Compulsory Purchase Order and Side Roads Order (if required); completion of detailed design
Mid 2026	Approval of Full Business Case; Cabinet decision to award construction contract
Mid 2028	Earliest opening date for scheme.

- 8.7 However, the timescales for submissions of business cases and securing funding would be dependent on there being a suitable funding round open at the appropriate time.

9. Interim Measures

- 9.1 As this report highlights the overall timescales to construct the bypass are significant with a number of steps and issues to be resolved before any certainty can be provided to the residents, many of them outside the control of the Council. This unfortunately leaves a challenging situation for the residents and users of the road for at least the next 6 – 7 years.
- 9.2 In order to assist with this the Council will prepare a plan which will identify possible interim measures that will alleviate the safety issues and concerns at the pinch point where it is difficult, if not impossible for large vehicles to cross. It is proposed that traffic lights be positioned on this road, reducing traffic to one lane and therefore removing the particular safety concern that has been identified. This however does not reduce the growing number of vehicles going through the village and hence the need for a bypass remains.
- 9.3 It is proposed that an initial proposal is drafted and further consultation take place with the Parish Council and residents prior to developing a more detailed business case and costings.

10. Implications (including financial implications)

10.1 Resources and Financial

10.1.1 There are no resource or financial implications directly arising from this report, as the current work to prepare a design for the scheme is funded from £1.65m which has previously been committed to the scheme (£250k Community Infrastructure Levy from South Northamptonshire Council and £1.4m accumulated Section 278 balances by the County Council). Of this funding, £231k has been spent to the end of June 2021.

10.1.2 Further funding will be needed in due course to progress the planning application and Outline Business Case, and to continue work through to construction. Further details of funding required will be included in a future cabinet report. As mentioned in section 7 of this report, it is anticipated that a bid for Government would be necessary to fund the construction costs for the scheme, although some funding rounds do require a local contribution. Currently the Levelling Up Fund which includes the opportunity to bring forward road schemes is being considered however this will be further reviewed following development of the business case and consideration whether this proposal meets the bidding criteria at that time.

10.1.3 The designation of a preferred route by a resolution of the Council, which is expected to be the subject of a further Cabinet report before the end of 2021, would open the way for blight claims to be submitted to the authority from those whose land would be acquired for the chosen route if they are able to show that, after appropriate marketing, they are unable to sell otherwise than at a substantially reduced values as a result of the scheme. If a blight claim is successful then there will be a financial impact on the authority, although much of this impact can be mitigated by subsequent sale of the property.

10.2 Legal

10.2.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report, although as mentioned in section 7 above it is likely that Compulsory Purchase and Side Roads Orders will be required in due course. These Orders require significant work and take time to confirm (especially if a public inquiry is required) and therefore this must be taken into account when considering the timescales for scheme delivery. More information will be available on this when a preferred route is designated.

10.2.2 As noted in section 10.1.3, a formal resolution to adopt a preferred route may, at that stage, open the authority to blight claims because land identified in that resolution would then fall into the categories of blighted land set out in Schedule 13 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1991. A successful blight claim is not automatic and the Council is able to reject claims where the required evidence has not been provided by service of a counter-notice. Once again, this does not become a concern for the Council until a preferred route has been adopted by resolution.

10.3 Risk

10.3.1 There are no significant risks directly arising from the recommendations in this report.

10.3.2 As noted in section 10.1.3 above, designation of a preferred route, which is expected to be the subject of a further Cabinet report before the end of 2021, opens the way for blight claims to be submitted the authority from those near the route who are unable to sell their property as a result of the plans for the route. If a blight claim is successful then there will be a financial impact on the authority, although much of this impact can be mitigated by subsequent sale of the property.

10.3.3 It should also be noted that submitting a bid for funding at an early stage of scheme development can expose the Council to financial risk if costs subsequently rise, and it is not possible to bid for additional funding. It is recommended that a bid for funding should only be submitted before the planning application and Outlines Business Case have been prepared, and the scheme design has been developed to at least that stage, if there is flexibility to increase the amount of funding sought as more information on costs becomes available.

10.4 **Consultation**

10.4.1 Consultation is dealt with in section 6 of this report.

10.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

10.5.1 Farthinghoe Bypass has not been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10.6 **Climate Impact**

10.6.1 The Scheme Assessment Report predicts that construction phase of each of the proposed options is predicted to generate adverse effects by causing an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. During the operational phase of the Proposed Scheme, each option is predicted to create beneficial effects by reducing operational emissions compared to the baseline.

10.7 **Community Impact**

10.7.1 The scheme is expected to have an overall beneficial impact on the community of Farthinghoe by removing traffic from the centre of the village. However, there will be an adverse impact for those near to the bypass.

11. **Background Papers**

11.1 Scheme Assessment Report

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/northamptonshire-highways/major-highway-projects/Pages/a422-farthinghoe-bypass-consultation.aspx>.