

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 24 th April 2018
Report Subject	Cheshire / Flintshire Access Road Study
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for the Streetscene and Countryside Cabinet Member for Economic Development
Report Author	Chief Officer - Streetscene & Countryside Chief Officer – Planning, Environment & Economy
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mersey Dee Alliance “Unlocking our true potential” prospectus, published in 2017, highlights the significant contribution that this sub-region currently makes to the national economy and it makes the case that further economic potential can be unlocked that will support the ambitions of both the North Wales Growth Deal and the Northern Powerhouse. Investment in transport infrastructure is considered essential to enable this to happen by improving connectivity and by providing better links between key development sites, housing sites and skilled labour.

A number of road and rail schemes are identified within the prospectus which are considered essential to unlock future development and drive growth in the MDA area and include the construction of the Chester Western Relief Road. The Chester Western Relief Road (CWRR) is the long standing name given to a proposed new road to the west of Chester which has for some time been identified as a potential solution to address and mitigate congestion issues in and around Chester City Centre.

Dialogue between Welsh Government (WG), Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC), and Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) has shown that there is considerable interest in broadening the analysis of a potential future scheme to consider the options, implications and longer-term joint benefits of a revised alignment. It is believed that an alternative route could provide greater opportunities to improve connectivity on both sides of the border and enable improved access to new and emerging development sites. These include Hawarden, Broughton and the existing retail park, Warren Hall as well as potential sites that may be considered beyond the current planning horizons. The potential alignment could also help reduce congestion on the Chester inner ring-road and at the A55 / A483 Posthouse junction.

An alternative route could also open up access to a proposed new rail based park and ride station in the vicinity of Broughton serving the Chester - North Wales Coast railway line.

This report provides details of a study that will make recommendations on the preferred option for a potential new cross-boundary highway scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	That Cabinet approves the joint commission with WG, CWAC and WCBC to engage a specialist partner to make recommendations on the preferred routing option for a potential new cross-boundary highway scheme.
2.	That Cabinet request a further report detailing the outcome of the study once the work is completed.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY
1.01	The Chester Western Relief Road (CWRR) is the long standing name given to a proposed new road to the west of Chester which has for some time been identified as a potential solution to address and mitigate congestion issues in and around Chester City Centre. A potential route, wholly on the English side of the border with Wales, was identified in the 1990's and was included within Cheshire County Council's Transport Strategy for the city. This route has subsequently been protected in the former Chester City Council Chester District Local Plan (2006) and in the current Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan - Part One.
1.02	Subsequent development and appraisal work has shown that the protected route could help contribute to reducing traffic congestion within the city centre and along part of the A483 Wrexham Road. However, traffic modelling suggests that it would potentially have a negative impact elsewhere on the local network, not least in the vicinity of the A55 / A483 junction and also along the A548 and A5480 in the vicinity of the Sealand Basin. Concerns also exist that it would have limited ability to enable the release of any significant housing or development land. Estimated scheme costs are high and, as such, it is clear that the current scheme would demonstrate poor value for money. This being the case it would fail to meet the necessary criteria required to access the necessary funding in order to be delivered.
1.03	In order to explore longer term options which would ensure that the highway network across the region operates effectively and efficiently, discussions have been taking place between officers of WG, CWAC, FCC, WCBC and Highways England to explore potential network solutions for the wider Deeside and Chester area, including identifying an alternative route for a CWRR.
1.04	The benefit from Flintshire County Council's perspective would be improved access to new and emerging development sites in the areas around Hawarden, Saltney and Broughton and the provision of direct access to Broughton Retail Park from the A55, removing traffic congestion from the local network. Any alternative route could also open up access to a

	proposed new rail based park and ride station in the vicinity of Broughton serving the Chester - North Wales Coast railway line.
1.05	<p>The study will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering evidence to identify an initial long-list of potential alignments for the potential new route. • Undertake a high level feasibility and sifting exercise to identify a short list and also consider any alternative measures to this. Include an assessment on the proposed timescale and phasing (if necessary) to bring this forward. • Review land ownership to highlight any potential constraints and / or opportunities for the delivery of a preferred route and identify any potential mitigation works that may be necessary. • Undertake a high level, desk top Environmental Assessment for the scheme highlighting any adverse impacts and identifying any environmental benefits of the scheme.
1.06	<p>The study will reach the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the preferred options for a potential new cross-boundary scheme. • Set out high level scheme costs. • Make recommendations relating to any further traffic modelling work necessary to support the scheme development. This to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consideration of the validity of the current Chester 'Saturn' traffic model. - An assessment of all other current traffic models covering this geography including the Welsh Government 'Deeside Corridor model'. • Prepare an outline programme of work showing the steps necessary to progress the scheme to a Strategic Outline Business Case / Outline Business Case that must be compliant with the respective frameworks and Green Book requirements of both UK and Welsh Governments. Consideration should also be given to the status of potential options and future funding opportunities in relation to the Major Road Network and Road Investment Strategy. • A budget cost estimate and timetable will be provided for preparing a Strategic Outline Business Case.
1.07	It is expected that this work can be undertaken within a maximum of four months following which a further report will be presented to Cabinet with details of the outcome of the study.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	It is expected that FCC contribution to the cost of the study will be in the region of £15k. The funding will be found from the 'Client Commissioning' budget within Streetscene and Transportation.
2.02	The study will be commissioned through the Warrington Borough Council Transportation and Public Realm Consultancy Services Framework Contract 2014 and will be managed by CWAC.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	A key outcome of the study would be to identify all potential high level stakeholders, over and above those represented by the commissioning organisations, and conduct initial dialogue to establish shared goals and objectives (and equally any concerns or constraints) that may impact on the development of the planned study.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	An Officer Project Management Group, made up of representatives of Welsh Government, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Flintshire County Council, Wrexham Borough Council and Highways England will be established to oversee the development of the study work. Other interested stakeholders may be invited to attend as required. From a Flintshire perspective, the Project Group will include officers from the Planning & Environment and Streetscene & Transportation Portfolios.
4.02	The study will be tendered and Project Managed by CWAC through the Warrington Borough Council Transportation and Public Realm Consultancy Services Framework Contract 2014.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk</p> <p>Contact Officer: Andrew Farrow Telephone: 01352 3201 E-mail: Andrew.farrow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None.

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