

Open Report on behalf of Paul Coathup - Assistant Director, Highways and Transportation

Report to:	Councillor W S Webb (Executive Councillor for Highways & Transport)
Date:	20 March 2012
Subject:	Spalding Western Relief Road
Decision Reference:	02009
Key decision?	Yes

Summary:

This paper presents the rationale behind the recommended Preferred Route for the Spalding Western Relief Road Phase 2. It is recommended that the Executive Councillor (Highways & Transport) adopts the Preferred Route in order that the land can be protected from development and that the legal status of the route is established. It is further recommended that the Executive Councillor approve the submission of a planning application for the road.

Recommendation(s):

Based on the assessment, consultation and design work undertaken to date it is recommended that the Executive Councillor (Highways & Transport):

1. Approve and protects Option 2A as the Preferred Route for Phase 2 of the Spalding Western Relief Road, as described on the drawing attached at Appendix A.
2. Approve taking the scheme to a planning application.

Alternatives Considered:

1. The most recent development work for the relief road has focused on two route options for Phase 2. Following the assessment, consultation and design work - as outlined in this report - Option 2B is discounted because of the increased impact on properties, allotments and because it may prove more restrictive in the long term if the area becomes allocated for further housing development in the future.
2. At an early stage in the development of Phase 2 of the relief road, an assessment was made in March 2010 of various options to mitigate the impact of increased level crossing barrier down-time. Within this assessment the western relief road was demonstrated to provide the best value for money and be the most deliverable option. The other options considered were:

Eastern Route, Improvements to the eastern bypass to incorporate a link over the railway;

Western Corridor New Road, now referred to as the Spalding Western Relief Road;
Bridging Level crossings;
Railway Bypass for Freight;
Upgrade of Existing Western Distributor Road, i.e. The Broadway/ Monks House Lane route.

Reasons for Recommendation:

This report makes two recommendations to the Executive Councillor.

- 1 Recommendation to adopt Option 2A as the Preferred Route for Phase 2 of the Spalding Western Relief Road. Following the assessment work to establish the most advantageous method of mitigating the effects of increased level crossing barrier down-time, the option of providing a relief road to the west of Spalding was assessed as most effective. Of the two route options available there is very little difference in terms of effectiveness, cost, engineering difficulty etc. However, Option 2A has less negative impacts and would be less restrictive if South Holland District Council allocates land in the area for further housing development. Option 2A is, therefore, recommended as the preferred option.
- 2 Recommendation to submit a planning application for the Preferred Route. Given the need to provide a relief road to the west of Spalding it is necessary for LCC to ensure that such an aspiration remains achievable. With a single location available for the route to link up to A151 Bourne Road it is essential that the alignment is protected from development. The adoption of the preferred route and gaining planning permission will provide this protection. It will also enable the scheme to be constructed in a shorter timescale when funding becomes available.

1. Background

1.1 Scheme History

The relief road featured in the South Holland Local Plan adopted in July 2006, albeit at that stage it was envisaged that Broadway would form part of the route.

In September 2007 the Holland Park Development Brief was consulted upon by South Holland District Council. This document set out the requirements for the developer to provide Phase 1 of the relief road in preparation for the Phase 2 link (to Bourne Road) in the future. In this document Broadway was identified as a link for the development, and not part of the relief road. This principle was adopted and consulted upon in the Holland Park Master Plan in 2009.

In the 2nd Local Transport Plan, published in March 2006 the relief road was identified as a longer term major scheme, not likely to be funded before 2021 through the LTP. In March 2011 Lincolnshire County Council published the 3rd Local Transport Plan which identified the County Council's intention to develop proposals for the relief road and apply for planning permission in 2012.

1.2 Route Location

Phase 2 of the Spalding Western Relief Road forms the second link in a long term aspiration to provide a complete route around the west side of the town. The first Phase, the southern section, starts at the B1172 Littleworth Drove and includes a new bridge over the railway, extending to the boundary of Holland Park. Phase 1 will be provided by the developer for Holland Park.

Phase 2 will continue the route northwards, linking the Holland Park development to A151 Bourne Road, with a new roundabout constructed at Bourne Road. Phase 2 is the subject of this committee report.

Phase 3 is a longer term aspiration, and would link Bourne Road to the B1356 Spalding Road, in the vicinity of Enterprise Way.

1.3 The reasons for the road

The development of the Phase 2 proposals was prompted by local factors within Spalding.

- The upgrade of the rail Joint Line and increase in rail freight passing through Spalding will increase the amount of time the level crossings are activated. As the rail line passes through Spalding, with level crossings on the vehicle routes, this will have a severing affect on the town and impact on traffic flows. The increase of rail freight is expected to start in December 2013.
- The Holland Park development located at the south-west extent of Spalding will provide Phase 1 of the relief road and include a bridge over the railway.

Throughout the development of the proposals the scheme's objectives have been to:

- facilitate and mitigate against the impact of rail development;
- manage the severance caused by the increase of rail traffic due to the plans to transfer freight from the East Coast Main Line;
- facilitate SHDC's Local Development Framework and mitigate against impacts resulting from the development of housing and planned growth in Spalding.

The proposals developed for Phase 2, would meet those objectives. However, it should be noted that the proposed Phases 1 and 2 of the relief road would not be in place in time for the increase of rail freight in December 2013.

1.4 Public consultation

An extensive public consultation exercise for Phase 2 of the relief road was conducted in July and August 2011. The consultation sought to gain the views of local residents, businesses and stakeholders. Two route options for the relief road were presented and information supplied about the need for the relief road. Two public exhibitions were held in Spalding's Red Lion Quarter, with a further exhibition held in both Pinchbeck and Deeping St Nicholas.

The public consultation resulted in lively discussion and debate among those that attended, but the response was not very high. In total 366 questionnaires were returned, along with a handful of letters and e-mails. There was no overall consensus of opinion emanating from the consultation.

Of the two route options presented Option 2A, the western route, gained more support. However, the level of support was quite low (42% support and 37% opposition). Full results are contained in the Consultation Report, published in November 2011.

The key themes from the consultation related to the proximity to existing housing, the loss of allotments, scepticism that the road would achieve the stated benefits, concern that the route would feed more traffic onto local roads (especially Winsover Road and Monks House Lane) and a feeling that the relief road could utilise existing routes.

The accompanying report to the consultation report, 'Response and Actions Arising from the Public Consultation', identifies existing or proposed mitigation to address the main areas of concern. It also identifies that issues related to the proximity to housing and re-location of allotments are likely to remain issues that generate opposition.

The consultation results indicate a preference for Option 2A.

1.5 Traffic Assessment

The traffic modelling for the relief road shows that it will deliver benefits when compared to the do-nothing scenario. This means that in the 2030 design year Phase 2 would improve traffic flows compared to the situation if Phase 1 only were in place. It should be noted that all 2030 forecasts are considerably worse than the current situation.

Because of the lukewarm reception at the public consultation and the scepticism that the scheme will deliver the stated benefits, further work has been conducted within the traffic assessment which has modelled the junctions on the key routes (A151, Woolram Wygate, Hawthorne Bank) to demonstrate the improvement to traffic flow and benefits to pedestrians that could be gained by Phase 2 of the relief road. This work demonstrates that a reduction in traffic will be experienced at some locations, particularly along Hawthorne Bank and through the junctions at each end.

The modelling also indicates that the junction where Littleworth Drove meets the old A16 will be over-capacity in the future, regardless of whether or not Phase 2 of the relief road is constructed. Phase 2 would exacerbate these capacity issues. The need to increase capacity at this junction is acknowledged but should not form part of the planning application.

In addition to the junction modelling work a Transport User Benefits Appraisal (TUBA) evaluation has been conducted. This demonstrates that Phase 2 of the relief road, combined with Phase 1, provides a good ratio of benefit to cost. This work will help to support the case for the relief road through the planning application.

The traffic assessment work indicates no notable differences between the benefits of Options 2A and 2B.

1.6 Design Progress

Following the consultation, design work has continued. Amendments to the design as a consequence of the consultation include: a re-alignment at Bourne Road to ensure the new road ties into the existing Monks House Lane crossroads; a priority junction with right turn lane into the western section of Horseshoe Road; a pedestrian / cycle refuge near Horseshoe Road.

The geometric alignment of the route is now designed. The drainage design, adopting sustainable drainage techniques, is also nearing completion and will have a major influence on fixing the planning application boundary, as will the landscaping works currently being designed.

The design process indicates no notable advantage of one option over the other.

1.7 Ground Investigation

The ground investigation surveys and interpretation have been completed. The surveys indicate that the ground conditions are generally quite poor, with predominantly sandy or silty layers. These conditions are not ideal for carriageway construction, but will be made suitable through careful design. All assessment and design work is being fully and independently checked. There is an area of land where we could not gain access and, as a result, assumptions about the ground conditions have been made based on information collected on either side.

Both route options have similar ground conditions and neither is expected to present any additional engineering difficulties.

The ground investigation indicates no notable advantage of one option over the other.

1.8 Environment and Archaeology

Landscape and Visual - Both options will result in arable land take and severance of field boundaries. Option 2B crosses a larger area of the allotment land than 2A. Both options have the potential to be visually intrusive and may require mitigation measures.

Ecology - Within the hedgerows there is very little foraging habitat for bats. No reptiles were found during the surveys. There is a badger sett at Spalding Common. Badger habitat mitigation would be required for both routes.

Land Quality - From an initial look at the chemical test results, there appear to be no contamination issues with either route, but further screening will be required before a final assessment can be made.

Water Environment - The scheme is located within a floodplain area and is surrounded by a number of watercourses.

Heritage - Data from the Sites and Monuments Record shows that the scheme (both routes) is located within an area of Romano-British cropmarks. An area of Romano-British pottery finds is located towards the northern section. Evidence exists of a possible enclosure with salterns on the route of Option 2A. These features would need to be excavated and recorded, prior to construction but would not preclude construction on this alignment.

Air Quality and Noise - The alignment of Option 2A is located further away from the residential receptors on the western periphery of Spalding. However, the proposed roundabout for Option 2A is closer to those residential receptors than Option 2B. In Option 2A the alignment bisects Horseshoe Road in close proximity to residential housing along the road.

Option 2B bisects Horseshoe Road at a location further from residential receptors, but closer to the western periphery of Spalding.

Based on the environmental findings to date the landscape, visual, noise and air quality aspects would suggest that Option 2A has less impact. With the other environmental aspects there is little difference between the two options. Whilst further environmental assessment work will be required before and after a planning submission the investigation work to date indicates that there are no issues that would prevent either route being constructed.

1.9 Current Construction Cost Estimate

The latest cost estimate for the scheme was developed for the report entitled 'Spalding Western Relief Road and Alternative Options Stage 1 Workshop Report'. This valued the scheme at £11.8m including optimism bias, design, land and compensation. This estimate was calculated on 2010 price basis. This estimate was based on a route length of 2.13km, which is slightly longer than the current design, which is around 2.0km long.

When the design has been refined further, the cost estimate will be re-visited. Both options start and end in a similar location, are about the same length and neither has any particular engineering difficulties that the other doesn't. It is expected that the two route options would have similar construction costs.

The likely construction costs for both routes are expected to be similar and would not justify the selection of one option over the other.

1.10 Land cost estimates and land purchase

Initial assessments for land cost and compensation has been undertaken, based on versions of Options 2A and 2B. These valued the options at £582k and £936k. This assessment will be repeated based on the recommended alignment and the actual value is likely to be somewhere between the two figures above. It should be noted that these valuations are based on agricultural land values which may be below the final value paid for the land. This will be clarified as part of the updated assessment identified above.

All affected land owners have been contacted, but proceedings to purchase land have not been initiated. The road passes through mostly agricultural land, but also passes through allotments and through the yard of a haulage company. Prior to the planning application being submitted all affected land owners will be contacted to bring them up to date with the proposals. A meeting with allotment holders will be held to establish what they require from an alternative allotment site.

The southern section of the relief road passes into land that falls within the Holland Park boundary, as defined by the developments planning application red-line. This section of land is to be transferred by the developer, to the County Council, on a no-cost basis to facilitate the construction and adoption of the southern section of relief road. This covers a length of around 280m.

The easternmost route, Option 2B, passes closer to a higher number of residential properties. This route may, therefore, be subject to a greater number of claims for discretionary blight or Part 1 claims under the Land Compensation Act.

1.11 Scheme funding

At the outset of the development of this scheme there was a possibility that a contribution may be provided by Network Rail, due to the impact of increased rail traffic through the town. This is now unlikely.

The most likely funding source for Phase 2 will be developers, either through S106 agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy. At present there is some uncertainty regarding planning policy and the method of collecting such contributions in the future so the exact mechanism for gaining funding is not clear. However, it should be noted that this report is part of the process of adopting a preferred route and gaining planning permission so that the alignment is protected and can be delivered when the funding is available.

Funding for the scheme will include the construction of the southern section of the relief road, which falls within the Holland Park planning red-line boundary.

Of the two route options, Option 2A, the westernmost route, would create a greater land area between itself and the existing housing on the edge of Spalding. This route may, therefore, release more land for development.

2. Conclusion

The results of the public consultation indicate a preference for Option 2A, the westernmost route. A considerable factor is the proximity of the alternative options to residential properties.

The traffic assessment work indicates that the provision of Phase 2 of the relief road, when combined with Phase 1, will deliver benefits to traffic flows in the town.

The ground investigation has identified similar ground conditions for both routes, with neither having a particular advantage over the other.

Similarly with the environmental and archaeology work, both routes encounter similar conditions that can be mitigated. However, when considering the landscape, visual, noise and air quality aspects Option 2A will have less impact than 2B.

Both route options are about the same length and constructed in similar conditions. It is expected that both options would have similar construction costs.

With regard to land value and compensation, Option 2B would be likely to give rise to more claims for discretionary blight or Part 1 claims under the Land Compensation Act. Option 2B is likely, therefore, to have a greater cost in settling claims. It should also be noted that the greater potential for claims arises because more residences are more closely affected, impacting on the occupiers of those properties.

With regard to scheme funding, Option 2A may create a greater area of land that could be incorporated into the South Holland's strategic planning for development.

In light of the factors listed above, it is recommended that Option 2A, as modified following the public consultation, be adopted as the preferred route for the Spalding Western Relief Road.

3. Legal Comments:

The Executive Councillor has the remit to approve the preferred route and the submission of a planning application accordingly, provided he has the delegated authority of the Leader.

4. Resource Comments:

The Council has allocated £10m for this scheme in its current capital programme in advance of developer contributions. All expenditure will be cashflowed from this amount in the expectation that external income from developers will be received over the life of the project.

5. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

Yes

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

The Highways, Transport and Technology Scrutiny Committee considered the report at its meeting on 9 January 2012 and made the following recommendations: -

- (1) That the report and comments made be noted.
- (2) That the Executive Councillor for Highways and Transport be recommended to approve and protect the route of the Spalding Western Relief Road as described at Appendix A to the report.
- (3) That the Executive Councillor for Highways and Transport also be recommended to approve the scheme to be taken to planning application process.

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

- The Spalding Western Relief Road Phase 2, when linked with Phase 1, will assist with a number of LCC Strategic policies:
- By diverting some traffic from the centre of Spalding it will provide better opportunities to improve provision for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. There may be some reduction in the amount of walking and cycling that occurs in the immediate vicinity of the relief road;
- By diverting traffic away from some key routes in Spalding there is expected to be a reduction in the impact of noise and pollution from vehicles;
- Use of sustainable drainage techniques will support the Council's moves towards controlling and reducing the impact of draining areas of hard surfacing;
- The relief road will support the likely aims of a future Local Development Framework (or future strategic planning document) for South Holland;

- During future design stages options for the use of sustainable construction materials, and those with less impact on the environment, will be evaluated. Further, all opportunities to re-use, rather than dispose of waste materials from the site will be investigated;
- The relief road will improve traffic flow in the area; thereby providing positive transport benefits to local businesses, particularly the agriculture and food distribution sectors.
- There are some strategic policy areas where the impact in the immediate vicinity of the relief road is negative:
- The relief road will impact upon the current rural setting and require the relocation of allotments. Measures to mitigate these impacts will be incorporated into the detailed proposals;
- The relief road is aimed at re-routing existing journeys but, in effect, may lead to some additional car usage;
- The impact on nature and biodiversity is being investigated and will be mitigated, with improvements provided where practicable.

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Spalding Western Relief Road - Route Plan - drawing No. A/HCZZZ0046/01/0001

7. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Spalding Western Relief Road - Highways Transport and Technology Scrutiny Committee Report	www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/committeerecordsresults.asp
Spalding Western Relief Road - Public Consultation Report – November 2011	www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/swrr
Spalding Western Relief Road - Response and Actions Arising from the Public Consultation - November 2011	www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/swrr

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