



Norfolk County Council

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Your Ref:
Date: 02/12/2019

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Tel No.: 0344 800 8020
Email: norwichwesternlink@norfolk.gov.uk

Dear [REDACTED],

Further to your comments on the Norwich Western Link (NWL) SOBC received by email on 31 October 2019 we are pleased to enclose our updated SOBC. For clarity we have reproduced the comments below and provided a response on how these have been addressed.

The preferred route for the NWL was agreed in July, and the project has advanced since this time with the work being focussed around the Preferred Route Announcement (PRA). You will recall that the SOBC submission timescale was set out by DfT, to be submitted by Transport East with their Regional Evidence Base at the end of July.

Due to the strategic nature of the SOBC covering a shortlist of options, in some instances we did not feel that it was appropriate to include all the information within the SOBC itself. This has therefore been provided within this letter based on work carried out since the PRA.

Comment
<p>Highways England (HE) supports the scheme in principle: the scheme supports the trunk road network but joins the A47 RIS 1 scheme. However, HE needs to see strategic modelling to understand the junction impacts. Engagement with Norfolk CC has taken place and needs to continue as the scheme develops.</p> <p>You should work with Highways England (HE) on their strategic model so that HE can understand the junction impacts. It is understood that this engagement has begun.</p>
Response
<p>We can confirm that NCC are working collaboratively with Highways England and their design and build contractor team (Galliford Try / SWECO) in relation to the interface of the NWL scheme with the RIS 1 A47 North Tuddenham to Easton Improvement scheme. Over the last 12 months, Highways England have provided input to several NWL Project Board meetings and provided updates to the Local Liaison Group meetings with local parish representatives within the NWL study area.</p> <p>Also, since July 2019 WSP have hosted monthly interface calls with the Highways England design team, aiming to align the two schemes in respect of A47 junction works. Sharing of drawings and surveys also commenced between the two teams in September 2019, seeking to minimise duplication of surveys and maximise integration opportunities. The agenda for the monthly meetings includes (amongst others) discussion of junction design, transport modelling, constructability, strategic utilities, Non-Motorised User strategy, surveys and data collection, ecology and environmental mitigation.</p> <p>In relation to strategic traffic modelling and early stage appraisal, both Highways England delivery partners (Galliford Try / SWECO) and NCC consultants (WSP) have been undertaking assessments of the respective schemes. Galliford Try / SWECO has included the NWL within the strategic modelling work that they have been undertaking on behalf of Highways England. This work has been used to inform the A47 / NWL junction tie-in arrangement. WSP has also included the Highways England A47 scheme within the Do Minimum forecast modelling and assessment of the NWL.</p> <p>New paragraphs have been added to the SOBC covering collaboration with Highways England on the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton Improvement scheme.</p> <p>A letter from Highways England confirming that they are working collaboratively with NCC in relation to the scheme design and transport modelling for the NWL and the A47 North Tuddenham to Easton Improvement schemes is enclosed (also appended to the SOBC).</p> <p>Please see paragraphs 2.9.7 to 2.9.8 of the updated SOBC.</p>

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Comment
There is land close to the scheme which is environmentally sensitive. You should demonstrate what mitigation is in place.
Response
<p>In producing the route options environmental constraints were considered and routes were developed to limit effects on environmentally sensitive land. As explained in the Options Assessment Report (OAR) additional significance was given to the natural environment in the Early Assessment Sifting Tool process given the sensitive nature of the study area. The shortlist options produced from this were presented in the SOBC. Due to the wide geographic spread of the route options biodiversity surveys at this stage concentrated mainly on those that would impact upon route selection, such as bat activity / radiotracking.</p> <p>Since the PRA in July 2019, further work has been undertaken on the environmental mitigation measures which will form part of the NWL scheme.</p> <p>Ecological and environmental surveys are ongoing along the preferred route corridor. The scope of the ecology surveys has been agreed with the ecology specialists within Norfolk County Council and Natural England to ensure a robust baseline is established.</p> <p>To help meet the projects target of Biodiversity Net Gain a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be produced, outlining where new areas of habitat (primarily woodland and wetland) will be created. Additionally, the HMMP will look to create new habitat links between retained habitat to ensure long term benefits for protected species outside of the construction footprint long term. The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will specify industry good practice measures that would be implemented during the construction phase to ensure minimal impact on ecological features.</p> <p>New paragraphs have been added to the SOBC covering potential environmental mitigation work, the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, and the ecological and environmental survey work being undertaken during 2019 and 2020 to establish an evidence base and determine the impact of the scheme.</p> <p>Please see paragraphs 3.6.5 and 3.6.6 of the updated SOBC.</p>

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Comment
<p>As Norwich is a Cycle Ambition City, this should be reflected in the strategic case with appropriate cycle provision outlined. We would like you to ensure that appropriate cycling and walking measures are considered and incorporated unless there is a strong reason not to. With supporting all road users being one of the objectives of the MRN, not considering such measures could impact adversely on future assessments of the scheme. Cycling and walking measures should meet our soon to be published national cycle design guidance (or equivalent where applicable).</p>
Response
<p>As noted Norwich is a Cycle Ambition City, and through its City Deal is committed to building excellent cycling infrastructure to support ambitious plans for sustainable growth. NCC expect cycling measures to be included as part of the NWL Sustainable Transport Strategy (STS) and this will be developed to maximise opportunities to link with the Pedalways already developed as part of the city network.</p> <p>The option development process set out in the OAR identified an initial 82 options. The long list of options was sifted using the Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST) which identified four shortlisted options to take forward for further assessment.</p> <p>An additional 10 non- highway options were shortlisted, including improvements to walking and cycling facilities. While these options had not made it into the initial shortlist individually, they were still considered to be potentially worthy of delivering as part of the scheme and are being developed currently with input from stakeholders and, where viable, could form part of the STS and details will be presented at OBC stage.</p> <p>The NWL Local Liaison Group (LLG) is formed of about 26 Local Parish Council representatives and meets bi-monthly led by the NWL Project Team to seek input to the project from local communities to the west of Norwich.</p> <p>In October 2019, the LLG held a Sustainable Transport Workshop to discuss existing and future travel demands, seeking to understand potential changes in travel behaviour and potential severance issues for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs) which may arise as a result of the NWL scheme. The session was also intended to generate ideas for input to the STS and Mitigation package for the NWL.</p>

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In addition, NCC organised a Stakeholder Engagement Workshop to gain further understanding of the measures non-motorised user groups would like included within the NWL Scheme. Representatives of the following groups were in attendance:

- Norfolk Horse Driving Club;
- Norwich Cycle Campaign;
- NCC Countryside Access;
- Norfolk Local Access Forum;
- Ramblers;
- Pathmakers;
- NCC Passenger Transport;
- Galliford Try;
- SWECO;
- Konectbus; and
- Highways England.

The STS for the NWL would also create synergy with other city-wide sustainable travel proposals being developed or delivered through Transport for Norwich (TfN) programmes, which includes significant funding from bids such as Transforming Cities Fund (TCF). Proposals will also be developed to ensure local active travel solutions are developed to link existing communities and maximise the benefits of the wider TfN programme. As part of the STS, the NWL project will also review and maximise the walking and cycling benefits already introduced as part of the Broadland Northway project.

Any proposal developed will be designed to meet DfT's soon to be published national cycle design guidance (or equivalent) where applicable.

Please see paragraph 2.4.15, 2.12.11 to 2.12.29 of the updated SOBC

Comment

Further clarity is required on whether this scheme is linked with a Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) bid.

Response

New paragraphs have been added to the SOBC covering the TCF and confirming that the scheme is not directly linked to the TCF bid but will be complementary to the measures specified in it.

Please see paragraphs 2.1.2 and 2.9.9 to 2.9.14 of the updated SOBC

Comment
We might also have some detailed comments on the modelling and appraisal documents and will discuss these with you in due course
Response
We are happy to engage with you on any details to address any comments you have related to the modelling for the NWL project.

Comment
On public transport, whilst the MRN and LLM guidance was clear that large public transport schemes will be expected to be funded from other programmes such as the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) and through Devolution Deals, we do expect the needs of all users, including public transport users to be addressed. We expect to see consideration of bus priority measures to feature in business cases. Examples of these could include enforced bus lanes, signal and junction priority, bus feeder lanes and/or gates.
Response
Both major bus operators serving Greater Norwich (First and Konectbus) have provided letters of support for the NWL scheme which are appended to the SOBC. The traffic reassignment effects of the scheme will deliver benefits to existing bus services operating on parts of the network that will experience congestion relief, and to the users of those services.
The 10 non-highway options shortlisted in the OAR include improvements to public transport, such as improvements to existing junctions, signing and lining improvements, signal improvements, improvements to existing bus services and new bus routes. As with the other non-highway options, they are being developed currently with input from stakeholders and, where viable, could form part of the STS and presented at OBC stage
Public transport improvements were also included in discussions at the Sustainable Transport Workshop and Stakeholder Engagement Workshop, and attended by relevant public transport stakeholders.
Please see paragraph 2.11.27 to 2.11.30, and 2.12.11 to 2.12.29 of the updated SOBC

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We hope the above and revised SOBC address the comments raised. If clarification or further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We look forward to working with you and your team over the coming months.

Yours sincerely

