



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**REPORT TO THE CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND
ENVIRONMENT**

23 March 2023

Report of the Executive Director - Place

**A61 South (Chesterfield to Clay Cross) Public Engagement Update and
Preparation of a Strategic Outline Business Case**
(Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Environment)

1. Divisions Affected

- 1.1 Birdholme; Clay Cross North; Clay Cross South; Spire; Sutton; and Wingerworth and Shirland.

2. Key Decision

- 2.1 This is not a Key Decision.

3. Purpose

- 3.1 To update the Cabinet Member on the outcome of a recent public engagement exercise to seek views about how people use the A61 South of Chesterfield and options for improvement.
- 3.2 To seek approval to accept £50,000 grant funding contribution from Midlands Connect Major Road Network to support the preparation of a Strategic Outline Business Case for transport infrastructure priorities which could be delivered by 2030.
- 3.3 To note that the Executive Director – Place intends to use £50,000 from the Regeneration Kick Start Fund (previously approved) to comprise the

required local match funding to support the Midlands Connect investment.

- 3.4 To seek approval to commence work to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for the A61 South of Chesterfield for a possible bid to be included in the Major Road Network Investment Fund.
- 3.5 To note that a further report will be brought to update on the outcome of an A6 Corridor study and make recommendations for next steps regarding potential options for the Corridor between Buxton and the A623 junction as part of the Major Road Network.

4. Information and Analysis

- 4.1 The A61 Corridor south of Chesterfield forms a vital link for communities and businesses between the A61/A617 Hornsbridge roundabout in the north, to the junction with the A6175 in the market town of Clay Cross to the south. The route also functions as an important strategic connection to the M1 Motorway via the A617 and A6175 and facilitates a direct connection to South Yorkshire via the A61 Chesterfield Inner Relief Road and Dronfield Bypass. See map in Appendix 3.
- 4.2 The A61 Corridor is a critical artery within the North Derbyshire Growth Zone, facilitating development at two priority sites for the district council - 'The Avenue', Wingerworth and the 'former Biwaters' Site, Clay Cross, in addition to several other economic growth and housing sites. The County Council has been leading several workstreams to develop a high-quality integrated transport system to enable 'clean growth'. A first phase of transport interventions on the Corridor has been underway over the past few years, including traffic signal upgrades, real time bus information, transport technology and cycling and walking improvements.
- 4.3 The Council, however, recognises that further implementation of transport infrastructure projects is required to tackle the long-standing transport issues and congestion, as well as supporting decarbonisation and improving health and well-being. Consequently, on 6 December 2021, Cabinet made a commitment to carry out a public engagement exercise to understand issues for transport users and residents living alongside the A61 and gauge support for short, medium and long-term options, that could deliver a transformational impact on these (Minute No.201/21 refers).

Public Engagement

4.4 The public engagement exercise was undertaken between 25 July 2022 and 16 October 2022. The Council promoted this widely and included the Cabinet Member presenting a promotional video to explain the issues along the corridor as a means of encouraging as many people as possible to get involved and give their views. The level of response was extremely good for a project in its early stages with 1,041 people contributing to the engagement exercise. The full results of the survey are presented in the Consultation Report in Appendix 2 of this report. This remains marked as 'draft' but, following approval of this Cabinet Member report, will be accepted as 'final' and made available to the public. Some key findings from the public engagement exercise are:

- Other than cycling improvements, the majority of respondents thought that the first package of transport measures had resulted in no change. Although this is disappointing, the improvements undertaken to date are incremental in nature, rather than major interventions and further benefits will flow in due course through mobilisation of the Urban Traffic Management and Control system. Another factor may be that some of the interventions (such as parking guidance) may be of most value to occasional users of the Corridor who may not have noted or responded to the survey.
- 32.2% of drivers and bus passengers said the single location with most severe delays was between St Augustine's Road and Storch Lane junctions. Hornsbridge roundabout, Hornsbridge to St Augustine's Road and Clay Cross town centre were also identified as locations where there are severe delays.
- Achieving future modal shift may be a challenge with 64.9% of drivers saying they would not consider taking a bus for their journey, 76.8% would not walk for their journey, and 76.4% would not cycle. Various reasons were given, with length of journey a key barrier for walking and cycling. Nevertheless, approximately one in four drivers would be willing to consider changing mode for their journey.
- The provision of a new link road between the A61 and A617 was the most popular possible solution (32.5%), followed by Hornsbridge roundabout (22.8%).
- Where people live influenced the choice of solution, e.g. Clay Cross residents favoured delivery of Clay Cross rail station and a Clay Cross Relief Road.
- The response to closing side roads was mixed, with the importance of retaining access and concern about displacing the problems elsewhere being highlighted as reasons for not supporting. There was, however, some support for re-introducing the temporary one-way scheme on St Augustine's Road which had been put in place to facilitate utilities work.

- For public transport, service frequency and wider installation of real time bus information systems had most support. Further crossing points for pedestrians had good support. Provision of segregated cycle routes was also supported.

Next Steps

- 4.5 There is clear support among all partners and respondents to the public engagement exercise for the Council to continue to seek opportunities to bring forward improvements. The A61 Corridor is designated as part of the national Major Road Network (MRN) which is the middle tier of the country's busiest and most economically important roads, i.e. below the tier of the Strategic Road Network (SRN). SRN routes are operated directly for Government by National Highways but MRN routes are operated by the relevant local highway authority. Notably, this designation offers a potential route to delivery of a second phase of improvements under the Government's MRN Investment Programme in the period 2025 to 2030. Midlands Connect, the sub-national transport body covering Derbyshire, takes an active role in sifting and prioritising MRN projects for the East and West Midlands and has set aside funding to support the early preparatory stages of possible MRN proposals.
- 4.6 Midlands Connect has made a funding offer of £50,000 to assist with developing a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for a possible future bid to the MRN Investment Fund. The Council is required to match this amount which can be met from its Regeneration Kick Start Fund. At SOBC stage, the potential transport options are appraised to establish those which can demonstrate good strategic fit, economic case and value for money. Eligibility for consideration for the MRN Investment Fund, requires alignment with the HM Treasury Green Book, the Government's Transport Analysis Guidance, and criteria set out in MRN Investment Fund Guidance. It is anticipated that this technical work can be completed by July 2023 in readiness for a future Government call for MRN projects. Approval is therefore sought from the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Environment to accept grant funding from Midlands Connect and commence technical work to develop the SOBC.
- 4.7 In addition to work on the A61 Corridor as outlined above, similar work is being undertaken as part of an A6 Corridor Study and pending outputs will include recommendations for next steps and potential options for the route between Buxton and the A623 junction – also as part of the Major Road Network.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 An overview of the results on the recent public engagement exercise for the A61 South has been outlined above but full details are provided at Appendix 2 of this report.
- 5.2 Preparation of the SOBC will involve further consultation with key partners including Chesterfield Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, local MPs and Midlands Connect. A future report for approval to carry out a further public engagement would be required following completion of SOBC technical work to inform adoption of a preferred package of transport options for consideration for a MRN Investment Fund bid.

6. Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 The MRN in Derbyshire covers several 'A road' route sections in Derbyshire, including parts of the A6, A61, A52, A516, A511, A610, A6007, A6096, A617, A6135, A619, A53 and A38. A strategic review of a total of 33 route sections was undertaken to consider which locations align most closely with criteria for future consideration for financial support from the MRN Investment Fund. This review gave most importance to locations where there was a congestion problem to solve as these are more likely to demonstrate good value for money from improving journey times and reliability of the network. Wider issues were also considered, including collision history, air quality, noise, economic growth opportunities, linkages with SRN, and sustainable travel opportunities.
- 6.2 A total of nine route sections were shortlisted for further investigation. The A61 South Corridor between Chesterfield and Clay Cross was identified as the highest priority due to congestion levels being medium to high, particularly within Chesterfield and Clay Cross town centre. The route section has the most hours of traffic delay (3,092-5,587 hours) per annum in Derbyshire and journey times being 72% slower in the peak hour when compared to overnight free-flow conditions.
- 6.3 The A6 between Buxton to the junction with A623 might be eligible for inclusion in a future MRN Investment Fund Programme due to the long-standing congestion issues on Fairfield Road. This route section is currently being reviewed under the A6 Corridor Study (Buxton to Stockport) to identify possible short, medium and long term transport options. It is therefore considered premature to commence SOBC preparation until the Study reports in 2023. It is recommended the Cabinet Member receives a further report regarding recommendations

on the next steps for the A6 corridor once the A6 Corridor Study has reported.

6.4 Four route sections were not considered for MRN preparation because they were already under scope of other workstreams. These are:

- A511 West of Swadlincote – the recent opening of the Woodville Swadlincote regeneration route provides additional highway capacity to the west of Swadlincote. The impact of this scheme requires monitoring to understand whether further investment options need to be considered.
- A61 (A38 to Little Eaton roundabout at the Derby City boundary) – this route section is included within the scope of the National Highways A38 Derby Junctions project which is awaiting a decision on a Development Consent Order.
- A61 Hornsbridge Roundabout to A619 Tesco Roundabout – a future planning application and Transport Assessment (TA) for the proposed Chesterfield to Staveley Regeneration Route (CSRR) will need to assess the impact on the existing network. It is therefore considered premature to assess options ahead of the CSRR planning application.
- A38 M1 junction 28 to Nottinghamshire boundary – Midlands Connect has included a proposal to consider future options for the M1 Junction 28 and approaches within its Strategic Transport Plan. It is anticipated that any future proposals would be brought forward by National Highways Roads Investment Strategy, rather than the MRN Investment Fund.

6.5 Two route sections were identified as localised congestion pinch-points that merit further investigation for local improvements. Solutions at these locations are not anticipated to be of a magnitude that would grant entry into the MRN Investment Programme and would need to be considered alongside other local priorities for investment through annual transport capital programmes:

- A617 Hornsbridge Roundabout to M1 Junction 29 – Hornsbridge roundabout is included within the scope for the A61 South corridor. A localised signalisation of the M1 Junction 29 junction roundabout has been discussed with National Highways but it is not anticipated to be of a scale for inclusion in the MRN Investment Fund programme.
- A610 Codnor to A38 Junction at Ripley – the A610 Ripley-Codnor-Woodlinkin improvement proposal has previously had status within the Amber Valley Local Plan linked to land-use development. This

proposal no longer has Local Plan status and therefore any future proposals are anticipated to focus on tackling a local pinch-point at the A610/A6007 traffic signals at Codnor. This option is not considered to be of a scale for inclusion within the MRN Investment Fund programme.

7. Implications

- 7.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Strategic Review of Derbyshire's Major Road Network route sections (2022).

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Implications.
- 9.2 Appendix 2 - Results of A61 South public engagement exercise.
- 9.3 Appendix 3 – Map of A61 South of Chesterfield area of scope for Strategic Outline Business Plan preparation.

10. Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member:

- a) Notes the results on the outcome of a recent public engagement exercise that sought views about how people use the A61 South of Chesterfield and options for improvement.
- b) Approves the acceptance of £50,000 grant funding contribution from Midlands Connect Major Road Network to support the preparation of a Strategic Outline Business Case for transport infrastructure priorities which could be delivered by 2030.
- c) Notes that the Executive Director – Place intends to use £50,000 from the Regeneration Kick Start Fund to comprise the required local match funding to support the Midlands Connect investment.
- d) Approves the Executive Director - Place to commence work to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for the A61 South of Chesterfield for a possible bid to be included in the Major Road Network Investment Fund.
- e) Notes that a further report will be brought to update on the outcome of an A6 Corridor study and make recommendations for next steps

regarding potential options for the Corridor between Buxton and the A623 junction as part of the Major Road Network

11. Reason for Recommendations

- 11.1 To enable assessment of potential projects to continue ahead of expected funding opportunities for the period 2025 to 2030.

12. Is it necessary to waive the call in period?

- 12.1 No.

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1 Midlands Connect has made a £50,000 grant offer from its Major Road Network Preparation Fund to support preparation of a Strategic Outline Business Case for the A61 South. The grant funding agreement requires the Council to provide £50,000 match funding to set a maximum budget of £100,000 for SOBC preparation. The Council's £50,000 can be met from its Regeneration Kick Start Fund. Approval of allocations from this fund is delegated to the Executive Director – Place, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Environment (which this report constitutes).

Legal

- 2.1 There are no legal implications as a direct result of this report but development of the strategic outline business case and an update on the A6 corridor study and potential options regarding the corridor between Buxton and the A623 junction will require consideration by Legal Services in due course and will be subject of further reports.

Human Resources

- 3.1 Preparation of the SOBC will be project managed by officers within the Place Department. Additional human resources will need to be procured to undertake the required technical appraisal and preparation of SOBC from a specialist transport consultant via the Midlands Highways Alliance Professional Services Framework.

Information Technology

- 4.1 Some of the potential transport options may have information technology implications. These will be considered during preparation of the SOBC.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 Some of the potential transport options may have equality impact implications. These will be considered during the preparation of SOBC.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 Delivery of the actions supports the Council Plan's ambition for a prosperous and green Derbyshire.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

- 7.1 Some of the potential transport options may have other future implications. These will be considered during the preparation of SOBC.