

Chelmsford North East Bypass and Beaulieu Park Station briefings – notes and actions

MPs and county members session

Date: 30/06/22

Time: 10am – 11am

Attendees:

Gareth Burton – Essex Highways (GB)
Cllr Lesley Wagland – Essex County Council (LW)
Phil Moat – Essex Highways (PM)
Cllr Marie Goldman – Essex County Council (MG)
Gary Macdonnell – Essex County Council (GM)
Cllr Paul Thorogood – Essex County Council (PT)
Kris Corbett – Essex County Council (KC)
David Wilkinson – Office of Vicky Ford MP (DW)
Ian Allen – Essex County Council (IA)
Cllr Mike Steel – Essex County Council (MS)
David Leaf – Office of Priti Patel MP (DF)
Cllr John Spence – Essex County Council (JS)
Tim Rushton – Essex Highways (TR)
Hannah Nelson – Office of Vicky Ford MP (HN)
Alexander Woodgate – Essex Highways (AW)
Alison Bielecka – Essex County Council (AB)
Cllr Ross Playle – Essex County Council (RP)
Billy Parr – Essex County Council (BP)
Ella Fitzsimmons – Office of Kemi Badenoch (EF)
Geoff Loader – Essex Highways (GL)
Cllr Peter Schwier – Essex County Council (PS)
Cllr Lynette Bowers-Flint – Essex County Council (LBF)

Questions and answers:

MS asked what would be done to encourage people to use the A120/A131 when travelling from Stansted, rather than the B1048 Ford End, and whether construction traffic would also be sent via that route.

TR said improvements to signage across the network, not just on the bypass, would be considered as part of the scheme to ensure signs display the most appropriate routes. He added that managing the movement of traffic from the general public was more difficult because, without a Traffic Regulation Order in place, people would use the routes they want to use. However, he emphasised the project team would make sure there were strategically placed and visible signs where there were decision points.

With construction traffic, TR said the team had more control to ensure contractors could not use other routes. He said that if they did have to deviate from the traffic management plan, which was a condition of planning approval, then they would need prior approval from the highway authority and there would have to be strong reasons, such as the closure of strategic roads, and mitigation put in place.

MS asked who it should be reported to if the contractors did contravene the traffic management plan.

TR advised that the contractor would appoint a construction traffic and travel plan coordinator, who would be the single point of contact and any issues would be fed back to the construction management team through Essex Highways.

JS said he was mindful Bulls Lodge Quarry had extended planning permission which would also result in extra traffic. He asked whether everything was being done so that the bridges would be capable of accommodating an extra lane when the bypass is potential dualled in the future. JS asked whether the revised timescales for the widening of the A12 caused any particular complications. He questioned whether Junction 19 of the A12 would be able to cope with the volume of traffic caused by the North East Bypass taking strategic traffic away from central Chelmsford and instead joining the A12 at Junction 19. Finally, he asked whether the scheme had been inflation-proofed.

GM advised the project team was still looking at modelling data regarding Junction 19. He said they had only just received that data from National Highways and were looking to see whether they agreed with the findings. He stated that the data would have to be reviewed very quickly because, not only were the bypass and station projects going into delivery, but also National Highways was looking to submit its DCO in July. In terms of finance, GM said the station was OK but there was a budget shortfall for the bypass and more money would be needed. He added that more money would be required than was allowed for in the HIF bid and the council would have to look at that and work with Homes England.

JS asked whether he could be given assurance that the projects are past the point of no return.

LW said she could not give that assurance now but was happy to talk to JS in more detail outside of the meeting. She added that the project had reached a point that it was well underway and that the council had conspicuous support from Network Rail. She acknowledged there were issues around inflation, which would have to be addressed, and stressed that the two schemes had to progress in a consecutive manner. LW said inflation was being priced into contracts and she had asked officers to include more in contingency rather than pricing inflation so that it comes more into balance. She concluded that she could not give anyone any assurances in the current climate, but that the projects had got to a stage in the process which was exactly where you would want them to be in order to have the best possible chance of success.

ACTION: LW to speak to JS about impacts of inflation on the project, if required

PS remarked that he was pleased to see there would be 500 spaces for cycle parking and asked whether it would be secure cycle parking. He also questioned if there would be power for electric bikes to encourage active travel and whether there would be space for a company like Tier to use e-scooters to encourage residents to use those as well. Finally, he asked if cycle routes had been designed.

GM confirmed the cycle parking would be secure. He said he was unsure about power for electric bikes, but would feed the request back. He added that the proposed cycle routes were segregated so cyclists would not have to interact with vehicles. He said the design had been completed by J Murphy & Sons - Network Rail's contractors for detailed design.

ACTION: Confirm with PS if there are charging facilities planned at the station for e-bikes and whether e-scooters could be accommodated

RP asked if there would be improved cycling infrastructure between residential areas and the station.

GM confirmed there would be fully LTN 1/20 compliant, segregated cycle routes to and from the station and there would also be a bus route.

LW suggested the project team would aim to organise a site visit for the group.

ACTION: Organise a site visit for county members and MPs if/when practical

PT said it was disappointing the bypass scheme was not tied in and joined up with the proposals for a new A120 from Braintree to the A12 at Kelvedon South. He also questioned the rationale for not dualling the bypass straight away when it would likely need to be dualled within ten years of completion. PT said it was disappointing the dark purple line on the diagram (the bypass) did not link to the A12. Finally, he asked if Hatfield Peverel Station would remain once Beaulieu Park Station was open.

LW said it was absolutely crucial to keep people using the county's rail stations and there was recognition of the services available. She added that with all stations it was a use it or lose it scenario. LW said the county council had taken some risks in relation to passenger traffic under the terms of its contract, but the scheme had been modelled based on a coherent train service, although pre-covid. She concluded the council wanted all stations to be successful and there was no intention of grinding Hatfield Peverel down to nothing.

GM acknowledged there had been a lot of discussion around Hatfield Peverel in the early stages of the project and that it was decided the station did have a future. He emphasised it was not a case of opening one station to close another and that the future of Hatfield Peverel Station was secure.

LW said the council was in the hands of National Highways with the A120. She added that traffic modelling for the bypass did not support dualling it now but the scheme had been designed in such a way that it could be dualled in the future with limited barriers. She said there was more progress with National Highways regarding the A12 and there was a clear indication the junction plans would not preclude joining up with the A120.

GM acknowledged that, in an ideal world, the council would have liked to dual the bypass straight away, but it would have meant creating a network that had more capacity than was required. He said everyone expected dualling to be required at some point in the future – whether it be 10 or 12 years - but it was not by any means certain. He added that Homes England had wanted the council to commit now to dualling it in 10 years' time, and that the council had not committed to dualling, but had committed to putting in place the necessary conditions so the network did not limit housing growth. He said it was widely expected the answer would be dualling the bypass, but it could be something different, e.g. a sustainable transport corridor, bus lanes or something else entirely. GM said paying for the council would be looking to use some of the contributions from the housing developers who are benefitting from HIF and to recycle the money back to pay for any dualling in the future.

TR clarified that the RDR would link to the A12, so you could get access directly to the A12 from the A131 at Dere's Bridge using the bypass and the RDR. He explained the reason for the different colours on the image was just to delineate the extent of the bypass.

City/district member and parish councils

Date: 30/06/22

Time: 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Attendees:

Gareth Burton – Essex Highways (GB)

Gary Macdonnell – Essex County Council (GM)

Phil Moat – Essex Highways (PM)

Geoff Loader – Essex Highways (GL)

Alexander Woodgate – Essex Highways (AW)

Barbara Larken – Springfield Parish Council (BL)

Kris Corbett – Essex County Council (KC)

Cllr John Burrow – Little Waltham Parish Council (JB)

Billy Parr – Essex County Council (BP)

Elliot Smith – Essex County Council (ES)

Cllr Ian Fuller – Chelmsford City Council (IF)

Ian Allen – Essex County Council (IA)

Tim Rushton – Essex Highways (TR)

Cllr James Raven – Chelmsford City Council and Great and Little Leighs Parish Council (JR)

Cllr Dan Clark – Chelmsford City Council (DC)

Questions and answers:

JB asked whether any modelling had been done to look at how the traffic affects Little Waltham, suggesting the village was already used as a rat run. He also asked for reassurance there would be sufficient parking available at the station now plans for a multi storey car park at the station had been abandoned.

GM said he could give full assurance there would be adequate parking at the station. He said a study had been carried out to look at car parking and the team did not want to create a white elephant. He emphasised that the study there was adequate parking without the multi storey car park which is why it had been removed from the proposals. He said there would be a ground level car park at the station and another adjacent car park, as well as cycle storage and bus facilities.

TR said there had been extensive traffic modelling as part of the bypass scheme and the transport assessment was publicly available, detailing the traffic impacts. He said the project team had not only assessed the traffic impacts once the bypass scheme was completed, but also how construction traffic would impact on the network in the interim. He stated the local authority would impose restrictions on the contractors to make sure traffic impacts were managed and mitigated before they could start on site. He added that a construction traffic management plan was a stipulation of the planning approval and would include proposed access routes. TR emphasised efforts would be made to reduce the impacts of construction traffic as much as practicable and Essex County Council also had enforcement powers it could use to ensure contractors comply with the construction traffic management plan.

JB asked whether any work had been done in the traffic modelling to look at the impact on the Sheepcotes Roundabout area.

TR stated traffic modelling had not been restricted to just the bypass and covered the area as a whole. He said he did not have information about the impacts on specific areas available to hand but would be happy to provide JB with it.

ACTION: Provide JB with traffic modelling data and/or explanation

Proposed response:

Dear Cllr Burrow,

Thank you again for attending our recent update briefing about the Chelmsford North East Bypass and Beaulieu Park Station schemes.

Following your query about the impact of the proposed bypass on traffic in Little Waltham, we have looked again at our traffic modelling results specifically to advise on the likely impacts of the Chelmsford North East Bypass (CNEB) scheme on roads within Little Waltham. This specific information was not provided in the original transport assessment issued as part of the planning application because the predicted changes in levels of traffic due to the CNEB on B1008 Blasford Hill/Main Road, Brook Hill and The Street were negligible and did not trigger any thresholds for more detailed assessment.

Our assessment suggests that the implementation of the CNEB will generally slightly reduce traffic flows in Little Waltham. This is because of the increased capacity that the CNEB provides on the transport network to the east of Little Waltham. Any potential increases in traffic are negligible in the traffic modelling carried out and residents of Little Waltham will be able to access the B1008 without any significantly increased delays.

We hope this summary is helpful.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

The Chelmsford North East Bypass project team

IF asked whether there was expected to be significant traffic on RDR 4 and if it was likely to be a pinch point.

TR said all roundabouts can act as pinch points but the modelling did not show any particular issues. He said minor tweaks were being made to the roundabout to make sure it could accommodate the increased traffic.

IR said he was concerned about the name of the station.

GM said he was aware of discussions about the name of the station. He said he would not go into the rights or the wrongs, but the name of the station was Beaulieu Park Station. He said the name could theoretically be changed but it would add considerable time to the programme and cost to the project. GM said he would be happy to share correspondence with Network Rail about why there would be increased time and cost.

IF said he felt common sense suggested the name of the station simply affects the plaque on the building.

GM stated it was much more complicated than that and the name had to be agreed for timetabling and ticketing.

BP said that if IF had any further questions about the name of the station then he would suggest he spoke to Cllr Lesley Wagland about the matter.