SUMMARY OF PROOF OF EVIDENCE PROVIDED BY

DAVID SPRUNT IEng MCIHT, FIHE

OF ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO:

Department for Transport Reference: NATTRAN/E/LAO

THE ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL (GIIDEN WAY/SHEERING ROAD (B183) IMPROVEMENT/WIDENING/REALIGNMENT, A1025 NEW LINK ROAD FROM B183 TO M11 AND GRADE SEPARATED JUNCTION/ROUNDABOUTS AT M11 JUNCTION 7A SCHEME) (PHASE 1) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2018

and

THE ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL (GILDEN WAY/SHEERING ROAD (B183) IMPROVEMENT/WIDENING/REALIGNMENT, A1025 NEW LINK ROAD FROM B183 TO M11) SCHEME) (CLASSIFIED ROAD) (SIDE ROADS) ORDER ("SRO")

and

THE HIGHWAYS ENGLAND COMPANY LIMITED (M11 HARLOW NORTH JUNCTION (7A) (SLIP ROADS, SPECIAL ROADS) SCHEME 2018 ("SPECIAL ROADS SCHEME")

Essex County Council

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1. **Introduction**

1.1 My name is David Sprunt and I am an Incorporated Engineer, Member of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) and Fellow of the Institute of Highways Engineers (IHE). I am a Principal Transportation and Infrastructure Officer with Essex County Council responsible for transport planning and infrastructure in the West of Essex and have been involved with the project since I joined ECC in 2008/9.

1.2 My evidence sets the overall approach to the proofs provided by other colleagues.

2. **Scheme Background**

2.1 Harlow is part of the M11 corridor, one of four key growth areas set out in the government's 2003 Sustainable Communities Plan. It was also a key centre for development under the 2008 East of England Plan (revoked in 2013). The A414 connects Harlow to the M11 via the existing Junction 7. It also

2.2 In recognition of growth planned in the Harlow area Harlow and Gilston were designated a Garden Town in January 2018 by the Ministry for Homes, Communities and Local Government (MHDLG). The Garden Town is an exciting opportunity to regenerate the area and to deliver homes, jobs and infrastructure that the community needs. New development will complement the natural environment, embrace new technology and enable all residents and workers to travel by foot, bicycle and public transport in and around Harlow on high quality routes.

2.3 In 2010 Harlow District Council, supported by Essex County Council, was successful in achieving an Enterprise Zone for the town. This was a major success in supporting the regeneration of the town. However, during the planning process the Highways Agency (now Highways England) capped the number of jobs that could be developed on the site before additional

capacity was provided onto the M11, due to the congestion at M11 J7. The impact of this was not only to limit the number of jobs on the Enterprise Zone, but also effectively to prevent any further large-scale growth in town.

2.4 Congestion in Harlow and the whole Garden Town will increase as committed development is built. Further development to support economic growth through the Local Plan process, will place additional pressure on the local and strategic road network. In addition, Harlow currently has only one connection to the strategic network, Junction 7 on the M11, accessed via the A414, which is already subject to congestion in peak periods. This single connection to the M11 also suffers from being the route traffic diverts to when incidents occur on the M25 causing severe congestion across whole town.

2.5 The overall plans for Harlow and Gilston Garden Town include for a balance of key road capacity improvements, with an emphasis on sustainable modes within the town. The provision of M11 J7a is however the key piece of infrastructure that unlocks the future growth, regeneration and prosperty of the whole garden town. Without M11 J7a the local plans of East Herts, Harlow and Epping Forest would be unsound impacting severely economically on the town. There are no other options that would be pursued should M11 J7a not proceed and it is also likely that the significant funding package put together for the junction would be lost.

2.6 The proposed M11 J7a is a priority infrastructure intervention highlighted as a priority in the Local Transport Plan and the Growth and Infrastructure publication as well as being seen as necessary in Local Plan documents currently going through Examination in Public. The scheme achieved Preferred Route Status in December 2016. The proposed junction is located between Junction 7 and 8 of the M11 motorway and includes a grade seperated junction and link road joining the M11 with B183 Gilden Way east of Harlow, Essex. In addition to the new motorway junction and link road an upgrading of Gilden Way is required to facilitate the efficient

operation of Junction 7a, and as a result the works are required to be completed simultaneously with the construction of the new junction. Gilden Way upgrading was a scheme submitted to the South East LEP and awarded funding to construct in the Local Growth Fund (LGF3) award.

2.7 The purpose of the current scheme is to provide additional access to the wider road network and alleviate the existing congestion across the town, making it a more attractive place to invest, retain existing business and to allow the town to grow and regenerate. Without an additional highway access to the town, economic vitality and growth will not happen and the potential of the town to support sub-regional growth and prosperity will be lost. The scheme will improve access to Harlow and improve network resilience to open up key development sites, provide additional access to the strategic road network, reduce congestion on the A414 and reduce congestion at M11 J7.

2.8 The key drivers for the implementation of the proposed scheme therefore are: -

2.8.1 To faciliate the future housing developments in and around Harlow (16,000 homes rising to 23,000 post 2033) and employment growth (15,000 jobs) as identified in the emerging Local Plans of Harlow, Epping Forest and East Hertfordshire. These were identified in the Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAN) and Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) accordingly.

2.8.2 To release the constraints that have already been placed on the development of the Local Enterprise Zone by Highways England, which by default would applly to any majopr develeopment across the town.

2.8.3 To enhance connectivity to the strategic road network to support growth in and around Harlow

2.8.4 To improve network resilience

3.0 Scheme Description

3.1 The proposed M11 J7A scheme is located between Junctions 7 and 8 of the M11 motorway and includes a grade separated junction and a link road joining the M11 with B183 Gilden Way east of Harlow, Essex.

3.2 Harlow currently suffers from significant congestion at peak times, which will increase as committed development is built. In addition, further development to support economic growth through the Local Plan process, will place additional pressure on the local and strategic road network.

3.3 Constraints have already been placed on the development of the Local Enterprise Zone by Highways England, which can only be relieved by additional road improvements, primarily improving access to the M11.

4.0 Strategic Case

4.1 The Strategic Case establishes the need for intervention and considers the extent to which potential options will meet the specific objectives they are intended to address, and whether they are consistent with, and will contribute to, wider policy aims and objectives in transport and in other areas.

4.2 The transport infrastructure of Harlow has been recognised as a major issue for both businesses and residents. The situation is

exacerbated by the location of key industrial sites on the northern and western sides of the town, which are the furthest points from the single connection to the strategic road network, the M11 Junction 7 which is to the south-east of the town.

4.3 However, over the years there has been a change of focus in the drivers for change and the objectives which the schemes and proposals are intended to address. This is illustrated in the summaries of the historic studies outlined below, which forms part of the Options Assessment Report (OAR).

4.4 The historic studies include:

4.4.1 *Evaluation of Alternative A1184 – M11 Connections, A414 – M11 Link Road (1994)*

4.4.2 *The Harlow Transportation Study 2005* -

4.4.3 *The A414 - M11 Link Road Feasibility Report (2007)*

4.4.4 *The Harlow Junction 7a Feasibility Study (2011)*

4.5 Current and Future Transport Related Problems and Impacts

4.5.1 The key current transport related problems is the existing configuration of the existing M11 J7 which is inadequate for the current traffic volumes with peak hour congestion.

4.5.2 The future transport impacts if M11 J7a does not go ahead, but growth in the town continued, would mean that peak hour congestion, air quality and potential accidents would continue to deteriorate, assuming this would be possible with Highways Englands objection to

further growth without additional highway capacity.

4.5.3 The local plans of East Herts, Harlow and Epping Forest would be unable to proceeded with in the Greater Harlow area, jeopardising all 3 of these plans.

4.6 Policy Context

4.7 National Policy – this includes the following:

- Localism Act
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Department for Transport Business Plan
- Highways England

4.8 Regional and County Policy Guidance – these include the following documents:

- South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- Essex Transport Strategy: the Local Plan Context
- West Essex Area Implementation Plan

4.9 Local Policy – This includes:

- Harlow Council Corporate
- Harlow Local Development Plans
- Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership Community Strategy
- Epping Forest District Council Corporate Plan
- Epping Forest Local Development Plan

5.0 Scheme Objectives

5.1 The objectives of the scheme are to relieve congestion at M11J7 which will allow the opening up of development land on the east side and the north side of Harlow. This will unblock major commercial property investments which support the needs of business and will ensure housing growth develops appropriately to

meet the needs of businesses and communities. The scheme will improve access to Harlow and improve wider network resilience to open up key development sites, provide additional access to the strategic road network, reduce congestion on the A414 and reduce congestion at M11 J7.

6.0 Success Criteria

The transport improvements of the intervention options will result in a range of measurable impacts on traffic and travel conditions. Impacts and measurable indicators relevant to improving conditions and sustainability could include:

- Delivery of identified housing and employment growth in line with the Core Strategy.
- Reduced congestion and improved journey reliability.
- Improved connectivity.
- High quality of life and natural environment

7.0 Options Considered

7.1 The options considered included solutions that combined physical highway alterations, including junction modifications and various alignments of relief road. A solely sustainable transport option was not identified, due to the wide distribution of trip origin and destinations through the corridor.

7.2 Options appraised

At this stage of the process the traffic model and the TUBA software were used to calculate the benefits for the preferred M11 J7a scheme and for a further five alternative schemes. These were

- M11 J7 Improvements
- M11 J7a and J7 Improvements

- A Northern Bypass
- A North Northern Bypass
- A Southern Relief Road

8.0 Stakeholders

8.1 The Stage 1 scheme appraisal process was informed by the consultation and engagement strategy. The strategy consisted of a number of key stages to ensure that stakeholders' views were captured and helped to inform the option generation and development process.

8.2 Key stakeholders included Harlow, Epping Forest and East Hertfordshire District Councils who all included reference to the need for the new M11 J7a in their Local plans. Hertfordshire County Council also supported the scheme. SELEP supported the scheme also allocating funding for the widening of Gilden Way.

9.0 Strategic Fit

9.1 The impacts of the proposed options should be regarded in the context of the intervention-specific objectives identified for the scheme. These can be summarised as:

- Support growth
- Manage congestion hotspots and maintain or improve journey time reliability
- Improve connectivity
- Maintain a high quality of life
- Promote both social inclusion and community cohesion

9.2 The identified scheme objectives are consistent with the wider transport policy objectives, thus by meeting the former, a scheme satisfies the latter. As detailed above, the scheme strongly contributes to:

- Leading to congestion benefits to the A414 and network resilience
- Improving accessibility and north/south connectivity
- Supporting economic and residential growth and regeneration
- Facilitating the delivery of complementary sustainable transport measures and improved local air quality which may bring minor health benefits

10.0 Financial Availability

10.1 The source of funding has been agreed whereby £41.7m would be provided by the Highways England and the remaining costs would be provided by ECC and other sources, including £10.5m provided by SELEP. No developer contribution or borrowing has been assumed.

11.0 Conclusions

11.1 The proposed M11 Junction 7A (M11 J7A) scheme is located between Junction 7 and 8 of the M11 motorway and includes a grade separated junction and a link road joining the M11 with B183 Gilden Way east of Harlow, Essex.

11.2 Harlow currently suffers from significant congestion at peak times, which will increase as committed development is built across the Garden Town.

11.3 Harlow currently has only one connection to the strategic network, Junction 7 on the M11, accessed via the A414, which are both subject to congestion in peak periods. Junction 7 will be at capacity with existing committed growth and suffers from poor network resilience.

11.4 Constraints have already been placed on the development of the Local Enterprise Zone, which can only be relieved by additional road capacity improvements, primarily improving access to the M11.

11.5 Further development to support economic growth through the Local Plan process, in Harlow and the surrounding districts of Epping Forest and East Hertfordshire which includes 16,000 new homes to 2033 (and a further 7,000 in the next plan period at Gilston) together with 12,000 new jobs. This will place additional pressure on the local and strategic road network and without the M11 J7a this planned local plan growth would at best be delayed significantly, or potentially be undeliverable during the plan period.