

# Executive

## Proposals for High Speed Rail – Hs2

7 March 2011

### Report of Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide information on the Government's intentions with regards to High Speed Rail and its impact upon the District, and to enable consideration of the need to co-operate with and financially contribute to an emergent group of Councils along the declared preferred route to contest the proposals.

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To agree to join with other Authorities along the preferred route to campaign against the proposals.
- (2) To agree to the making available of up to £50,000 from Planning Control Reserve
  - (i) as a contribution towards the fund being formed to campaign against the proposals and;
  - (ii) To fund consultancy work required to assist in the detailed assessment of the impact upon individual properties and communities along the Cherwell section of the preferred route (notionally £20,000).
  - (iii) delegate to the Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder the final distribution of this funding
- (3) To ask the Planning Committee to steer the detailed assessment of impact and to make the Council's representations thereon.
- (4) To require the Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy to bring a further detailed report to the Executive towards the end of the consultation period to enable consideration of Council's formal response to the consultation.

## **HS2 Proposals**

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- 2.1 On 20 December 2010, The Rt. Hon. Phillip Hammond MP (Minister of Transport) announced in Parliament the Government's plans for the development of a national high speed rail network and the proposed route that they will put forward for public consultation. He explained that one of the Coalition's main objectives is to build an economy which is more balanced both sectionally and geographically that will deliver sustainable economic growth while delivering on their climate change targets. Investment in transport infrastructure will, he said, play a key part in this. He explained that there is a need to provide attractive alternatives to short-haul aviation while addressing the issue of scarce rail capacity between city centres.
- 2.2 The Government believe that the best long-term solution to these challenges is the development of a national high speed rail network with a line to Birmingham from London with onward legs to Manchester and Leeds with a Y-shaped format. This would deliver substantial reduction in centre to centre travel times and release capacity on the west coast mainline helping to provide faster commuting on that line.
- 2.3 Work undertaken at the request of the Minister also assessed the capability of this network (of which the London-Birmingham (HS2) line would be the first part) being connected to Heathrow airport via a spur, and connecting to the HS1 (London to Continent) line.
- 2.4 The Minister indicated that upon his appointment he reviewed the proposals published in March 2010 by the previous administration and as a consequence significant amendments were made to the alignment. He published detailed route alignment at that, which is available on the DfT website. He also announced at that time that these routes would be the basis of a public consultation commencing in February 2011. He also intends to publish a revised business case, a full appraisal of sustainability, noise contour maps, and route visualisations. He also made it clear that the consultation will encompass the Government's strategy for a national high speed rail network, the choice of corridor, and the detailed line of the route from London to West Midlands.

## **The Consultation**

- 3.1 At the time of writing this report the formal consultation had not been instigated. From comments made by HS2 Ltd. it is expected to commence on 28 February 2011. It is expected to last until the end of July 2011. As noted above it will be a multi-layered consultation, and will have copious amounts of information available. An update on this will be given to Executive.
- 3.2 The Council, as a key stakeholder, will be formally consulted. It is expected that technical seminars will be held that your officers can attend to improve their understanding of the submissions. It is known also that DfT/HS2 intend to hold regional seminars on the business case/wider strategy element of the consultation.

- 3.3 Public exhibitions/roadshows will be held. No information is available yet, albeit your officers have been asked for their opinions about venues. It is likely that our section of the line will see these events in May/June.
- 3.4 Dependent on the level of details it is anticipated that the Council may need to engage specialist consultants with respect to transport economics, landscape/visual impact and amenity/noise matters, although some elements of this may be able to be handled in-house. It is also possible that it may be possible to combine with adjacent authorities (especially South Northants Council) to lower the cost of such environmental assessment work, and on the strategic/business case (see below)
- 3.5 During the final stages of budget discussions it was identified that up to £50,000 should be made available for such activities. It is known that most other authorities in the local authority grouping (see 4.2 below) have indicated their willingness to give similar (or in some cases much larger) amounts to the "campaign fund". In your officers opinion whilst this is appropriate, it is also necessary to consider what proportion of this £50k (or maybe additional) money should be set aside for detailed assessment work. In terms of potential future expenditure it should be recognised that we have a relatively short section of proposed route and that other Councils have significantly more and therefore should be prepared to make a larger input. The Council is particularly short of expertise in transport economics and may need specific advice in commenting in detail upon the strategic and business cases.
- 3.6 It is suggested that at this stage £20,000 of the £50,000 should be reserved for the possibility of direct consultancy support for CDC work on the analysis of impact and mitigation on the Cherwell part of the route. This will allow negotiation of the campaign contributions and shared approaches to consultancy advice.
- 3.7 The outcome of this assessment work is expected to be fed back to a meeting of the Executive in June/July to enable the Council's formal response to the finalised. It is suggested that the Planning Committee be asked to contribute to the assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposals, and to make the Council's detailed representations on such matters as the HS2 detailed drawings.

#### **Activity to Date**

- 4.1 It will be recalled that in October 2010 the Council resolved that  

"This Council notes the Government proposal for a High Speed Rail route from London to Birmingham and that the publicised route impacts on Villages in the District. This Council believes that there is an insufficient Business Case for this proposal. This Council therefore instructs Officers to prepare a report to the Executive setting out how the Council will campaign with like minded neighbouring Councils to "Stop HS2".'
- 4.2 The portfolio holder and the lead officer (Mr Bob Duxbury) have attended co-ordinating meetings of the Councils in Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire held in January/February 2011. These have resulted in the formation of a formal grouping of these District and County Councils (yet to be formally named) which will work together to campaign against the proposals. The Portfolio holder has indicated the Council's

willingness to be part of this group. The Executive are invited to confirm your willingness to participate in this way. The grouping is seeking to form a campaign fund which will be used to implement an agreed strategy for contesting the strategic case for the proposals and against the promotion of the preferred route. That strategy may include legal challenge at appropriate times, and a co-ordinated approach to assessment, publicity and lobbying. There should be one important caveat to any decision to work jointly on campaigning against HS2 and to assessment of the environmental impact; that Cherwell should not be seen to be implying that consideration is given to alternative routes that push the line further to the west and therefore worsen the impact upon this District.

- 4.3 Your officers have taken opportunities to attend briefings/seminars from HS2 Ltd/DFT, and others to improve their understanding of the proposals. This also involved going to Kent to see the impact of HS1, talking to Kent authorities and speaking to Kent interest groups about their role, and impact, during the planning and construction phases, and their views about the line now. In addition the line of the preferred route has been walked, issues identified, and specific properties likely to be directly affected have been identified. Hopefully, therefore we will be able to react swiftly to the consultation documentation and identify the support that we may need, or additional information needed from HS2/DFT to be able to fully contribute to the consultation.
- 4.4 Many of the issues caused by this development that will face the communities in Cherwell (such as noise impact, visual amenity, effect upon protected species, access issues, impact upon footpaths) are shared by or colleagues in South Northants, albeit that they have a significantly greater length of line than our 4 miles. Initial contact has been made with their officers with a view to sharing our assessment framework, analysis, and potentially using a common consultancy team if appropriate.

## 5 **Next Steps**

- 5.1 Further meetings of the group of Councils have been arranged (next on 9 March 2011) at which the governance of the group needs to be established hopefully with a steering group and officer's group.
- 5.2 The consultation documentation will need careful assessment to ascertain its scope and completeness, and to assess the extent of outside/shared assistance that we will require. Discussions will be held as soon as possible with the Portfolio Holder and the ward member to give an early indication of the likely views.
- 5.3 Your officers will maintain contact with the affected Parish Council's, any existing or latent pressure groups and individuals to aid their understanding of the proposals and to receive comments which can feed into our assessment work and conclusions thereon.

## **Key Issues for Considerations/Reasons for Decisions and Options**

- 6.1 The key issues considered in this report are the degree of involvement to be had with the emergent group of local authorities, and the extent of financial commitment to that grouping, and to the need to hire in consultancy support for the assessment of the strategic case and environmental impact.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

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| <b>Option One</b>   | Agree to co-operate with the emergent group of authorities, and our adjacent colleagues in South Northants, with a financial undertaking of £50,000 towards the campaign against the proposals, and for consultancy assistance. |
| <b>Option Two</b>   | Agree to the above co-operation with a greater or smaller, financial contribution   |
| <b>Option Three</b> | Be self contained in our assessment of the proposals within our own existing resources  |

## **Implications**

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| <b>Financial:</b>       | <p>The assessment of the soon to be publicised consultation is likely to require support from external consultancies which cannot be met entirely within existing budgeting provision.</p> <p>The contribution to a campaign fund steered by the recently formed group of Local Authorities will require money to be set aside for such purposes. It can be envisaged that continued resources will be needed for similar spending heads, plus the possible need for legal and parliamentary agent expenditure if this proposal proceeds to Hybrid Bill stage</p> <p>Comments checked by Joanne Kay, Service Accountant 01295 221545</p> |
| <b>Legal:</b>           | <p>None at this time</p> <p>Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Team Leader – Planning and Litigation 01295 221687</p>   |
| <b>Risk Management:</b> | <p>No implications stemming from this report</p> <p>Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566</p>   |
| <b>Equalities</b>       | <p>None</p> <p>Comments checked by Caroline French, Equalities and Diversity Officer 01295 221586</p>  |

## **Wards Affected**

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**Fringford**

## **Corporate Plan Themes**

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**A safe and healthy Cherwell  
A cleaner, greener Cherwell**

## Executive Portfolio

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**Councillor Gibbard**  
**Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing**

### Document Information

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
None	
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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