

# Public Document Pack

## BRECKLAND COUNCIL

### At a Meeting of the

## LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP

Held on Tuesday, 29 October 2013 at 11.00am in  
The Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Dereham

### PRESENT

Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris  
Mrs L.S. Turner

Mr M. A. Wassell (Chairman)

### Also Present

Mr S.G. Bambridge  
Mr T R Carter  
Mr A.P. Joel

Mr K. Martin  
Mrs J A North  
Mr A.C. Stasiak

### In Attendance

Julie Britton  
Philip James  
Phil Mileham  
Sarah Robertson

- Senior Committee Officer
- Planning Policy Team Leader
- Deputy Planning Manager
- Planning Policy Officer (Capita Symonds for Breckland Council)
- Environmental Planning Officer (Capita Symonds for Breckland Council)

Jamie Smith

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#### **25/07 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

#### **26/07 NON MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

Councillors J North, G Bambridge, T Carter, A Joel, K Martin and A Stasiak.

#### **27/07 ATTLEBOROUGH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

Members were provided with a brief update on the Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) process and it was recommended that the ANP be a standing item on future agendas.

The Local Plan area had now been defined and it was now the responsibility of Attleborough Town Council to progress the Local Plan in accordance with the Core Strategy.

Councillor Martin was pleased to with the new boundaries but had concerns in relation to Old Buckenham and Bunns Bank. Councillor Joel said that he would rather have the land at Old Buckenham considered in the Local Plan rather than in the Neighbourhood Plan.

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It was agreed that the Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan would be included on future agendas as a standing item.

**28/07 ATTLEBOROUGH TRANSPORT STUDIES (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

Attleborough had been earmarked as one of the two principal areas for growth and change in the District. The Council's adopted Core Strategy allocated 4,000 dwellings and 10Ha of employment land to the town in the period up to 2026. A further 20Ha of employment land had also been identified at Snetterton Heath.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris presented the findings of the Attleborough Transport Studies that had been under preparation since 2012. The report had been split into three parts, all of which would provide evidence base for the Local Plan:

- Smarter Choices Study
- Town Centre Study; and
- The Link Road Study

Further work was required in relation to any cost constraints.

The Deputy Planning Manager said that he would try and provide a reasonable summary of a 1600 page report.

**Smarter Choices Study**

The Smarter Choices Study would form part of the overall Transport Strategy and looked at:

- Reducing the need for travel in the first place: i.e. working from home, receiving shopping through supermarket deliveries.
- Active Travel: walking and cycling routes and promotion.
- Public transport: improvements to existing rail and bus services and facilities and new bus services.
- Car share: potentially a key element of Travel Plans
- Reducing the number and length of trips: through use of master-planning (e.g. primary schools provided locally).
- Using more efficient, lower carbon vehicles/fuels: e.g. electric cars
- Using existing vehicles more efficiently: green driving tips and techniques to reduce fuel consumption.

The Council's Core Strategy links residential growth in Attleborough to the promotion of further employment at Snetterton Heath, which was a strategic employment site in the district. To help provide greater transport linkages between the two areas, one of the key recommendations of the Study was the implementation of an Attleborough to Snetterton Heath orbital bus service. The Study sets out a possible route, but also considers that this could potentially be extended to link through the proposed Urban Extension area to Snetterton Heath. Options had been suggested that the orbital bus service be extended further into the existing residential areas which could provide greater opportunities to access the service. Many of

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these findings could be implemented by the Town Council or Norfolk County Council.

The Study also considered making better use of the rail station at Eccles Road to access the Snetterton Heath employment area and opportunities for walking and cycling improvements in the town centre. Appendix A of the Smarter Choices Study provided a detailed list of potential improvements to Attleborough's walking and cycling network along with associated costs. Some of the key improvements had been identified as follows:

- New cycle link across Gaymer's Meadow, and convert to bridleway
- New pedestrian and cycle bridge over the railway linking existing town with Urban Extension
- New footway south of London Road
- New foot/cycleway linking Eccles Road station to Snetterton Heath
- Resurfacing to provide more attractive links
- Improved signage to highlight cyclists
- Better maintenance of existing routes.

The full list of improvements could be seen at pages 107-114 of Appendix B to this report.

The Study also recommended greater use of travel planning as one method of helping to enhance modal shift.

#### Town Centre Study

The Town Centre report sought to investigate the Town centre gyratory system and the town centre travelling environment as a whole. The report examined the existing state of the network and proposed a range of potential interventions to aid capacity and traffic flow. The Town Centre report had also considered Smarter Choices including the potential for wider footways, more crossing points and improved cycle parking.

The Town Centre; however, had a number of physical constraints imposed by buildings and on-street parking provision which have been taken into consideration. There were also constraints that arose from the historical landmarks situated within intersections such as the War Memorial at the Queen Street/Church Street junction and the Obelisk at the Connaught Road/Surrogate Street junction which would impact on the potential for some forms of intervention.

The consultants also reviewed existing traffic data from a range of sources. Traffic modelling would be required with an accompanying need for further data collection.

The traffic model used assumptions about how the town currently operated and might grow in order for it to operate effectively. The assumptions the consultants used were as follows:

- Employment: there were two options for the location of the

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10Ha. The first was to have employment all to the north of London Road, the second was having half to the north of London Road and half to the south of the railway.

- Two thirds of the residential land allocation would be to the west of Buckenham Road towards London Road, with the remaining to the east of Buckenham Road, but also some east of Silver Street, Besthorpe. Members noted that these indicative figures were for transport modelling purposes only and not binding on the emerging Local Plan process. A map of the zones had been included at page 68 of Appendix C.

In addition to the above development assumptions, four different scenarios had been tested to help understand the impact of particular interventions. These were as follows:

- Do-nothing – committed network changes only. This assumed no development or any new transport schemes. This approach showed the continuing effect of the status quo and had been used to compare present situation but also usefully indicated background growth.
- Do minimum – roundabouts at London Road to allow for employment, two priority junctions with London Rd (connection between Dodds Rd and New Rd), roundabout junctions north of Borough Lane to provide start of link road. All roads south west of Attleborough at 30mph.
- Do something – all changes in ‘do minimum’, plus Surrogate Street reverting to two-way traffic, Connaught Rd reverting to two-way traffic, tightening of turning radii at Norwich Rd/ Besthorpe Rd/ Surrogate St/ Church st to facilitate two-way traffic.
- Do something Option 1 – all of the above plus Link Road option 1 (30pmh), HGV ban for all routes into town centre
- Do something option 3 – all of the above with Link Road option 3 (60mph, with 50mph at Hargham Rd/ London Rd), with accompanying roundabout junctions moved towards Breckland Lodge at northern extent, and Bunns Bank to southern extent.

As the above scenarios described, the proposed Link Road had been included in the modelling as a route internal to the Urban Extension and a route external to the Urban Extension. A ‘middle’ link road option was not separately included in the modelling as it was considered to exit at London Road too close to option 1 and with such similar characteristics that it would not make a discernable difference beyond the modelling outputs for option 1.

The transport model had enabled a greater understanding of what effect the proposed Link Road would have on capacity in the gyratory system as well as changes to the town centre road network. The consultants had been able to recommend a preferred option for the link road and town centre improvements.

In addition, the proposed town centre improvements under the ‘do-minimum’ and ‘do-something’ scenarios had been modelled using different approaches. These options were as follows:

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- roundabout junctions,
- priority junctions; and
- signalised junctions.

The Study had found that in all modelling situations, providing signalised junctions at Surrogate St/Station Rd/Connaught Rd, Norwich Rd/Besthorpe Rd/Surrogate St/Church St and Surrogate St/Thieves Lane/Station Rd/Connaught Rd delivered improvements to their saturation levels beyond that which would otherwise be achieved by roundabouts or priority junctions.

There was some evidence that under the 'do-nothing' scenario, the junction of Church Street (right ahead and ahead movement) exceeded the ration flow to capacity in both am and pm peaks. Otherwise, the modelling indicated that even with current permitted schemes, around a further 225 dwellings could be accommodated without detriment to the network, although any proposals would still require their own evidence through Transport Assessments.

The study found that based on the notional growth scenarios identified above, using signalised junction arrangements, the junctions of Norwich Rd/ Besthorpe Rd/ Surrogate St/ Church St would then become over-saturated in 2024 (in the am peak) although there was evidence to suggest that flow exceeded capacity of junctions by 2021 in the pm peak. The town centre junctions would become over-saturated (degree of saturation over 100%) from 2028 as a result of the major residential and employment growth identified to be delivered in these periods.

Therefore, the study had considered that in the future years scenarios parts of the current one-way gyratory could become open to two-way traffic and signalised to help reduce traffic congestion in the town centre. These interventions could allow for approximately 3 phases of development or 1,450 dwellings/ 1,500 jobs. These measures would need to be implemented by around 2021.

The study had also indicated that by the year 2028 neither all town centre improvements plus a link road would fully mitigate the impact of development traffic. This was due to the fact that post 2024, average journey times would be slightly longer than the 'do-nothing' scenario, but it should be recognised these were still shorter than the 'dominimum' of the corresponding year. However, the report indicated that at full development of the planned Urban Extension (i.e. at 4,000 homes by 2031) there would still be some residual detriment on town centre traffic. However, this might be able to be mitigated (potentially a further 15% capacity) with further advances in the signalisation technology although it had been noted that these further additions had not been separately considered in the report.

It should be noted that the preferred approach of signalised junctions had been identified as the most expensive of all of the junction options at £932,000 (compared to £140,000 for roundabouts), and excluded any third party land costs. However, the modelling results indicated that signalisation had the greatest impact in terms of junction flow and capacity within the town centre. In addition to the signalisation, the

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identified town centre improvements set out in the Smarter Choices study would cost £235,000 which would form a more complete package of interventions to improve traffic and movement in the town centre.

Any upgrades to the town centre gyratory would need to be delivered by Norfolk County Council as the local highway authority, although funding would be sought from developers. This was due to the fact that the impacts had been identified in these studies as being as a result of new housing and employment growth. The study indicated a relationship between the planned residential and employment growth in Attleborough and the increases in traffic that required mitigation, evidenced by the cumulative effect of the notional 'phases' of development. However, even under the 'do-nothing' scenario, there would continue to be effects on the network due to background growth but this was at a significantly reduced level than would be the case with additional growth.

In addition to the above, the study had recommended that HGV restrictions were implemented for the town centre in the scenarios that included a link road. This would not only aid traffic movement, it would reduce concerns about the dominance of HGVs on the town centre environment, particularly where pavements were narrow and traffic single file. However, the study did indicate that it might not be practical for a total HGV ban due to the need for delivery access; however, the potential for transshipment facilities at Snetterton Heath might enable this to be achieved.

Link Road Study

The Link Road Study was a significant element of the report to unlock growth and the town centre environment. The Study examined the transport merits of different road types and three link road options had been considered against the following transport objectives:

- To cater for traffic generated by the proposed development south of the railway
- To reduce traffic impact in the town centre
- To act as a diversionary route for traffic between London Road and the B1077
- To provide more appropriate access to and from Bunns Bank and Gaymers industrial estates in relation to wider highway network
- To function as an integrated public transport route
- To provide street like characteristics to the east and link road characteristics to the west

The consultants had recommended that the external link road (Option 3) was preferable in terms of meeting the above aims and objectives. Option 3 was considered to have the greatest diversionary effects on taking traffic from the town centre. Furthermore, Option 3 had also been identified as having a greater benefit than the other options for improving access to the Bunns Bank and Gaymer's industrial estates.

The consultants sought the views of various technical stakeholders to understand whether there were any technical issues that could affect their recommendation. Option 3 was the favoured route for the majority

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of technical stakeholders and reinforced the view that option 3 was preferred.

The study had found that link road Options 1 and 2 whilst being technically 'deliverable' in highway terms, were less preferable against the above objectives. In terms of stakeholder comments, of particular relevance were comments made by Network Rail who raised concerns in respect of Option 2 due to a potential effect of a bridge crossing on signalling on this section of track. It had been noted that both link road Option 1 and Option 2 were also in proximity to a greater number of residents and businesses which could affect the delivery and costs of the road.

The preferred route has been costed at approximately £16.42million. This was currently the most expensive of all three options in terms of physical construction costs, when compared against Option 2 (£13.1million), and option 1 (£9.55million). However, an understanding of the other potential costs of delivering a link road could mean that a total scheme costs (section 5 of the report, considers further work necessary) could result in the final figure for delivery being closer and as such, the higher construction cost should not automatically affect the delivery of this alignment.

**Further Work Required**

This report focused on the technical aspects of the three transport evidence studies which enabled an understanding of whether the proposed link road options were technically deliverable, the range of town centre improvements that could be implemented to aid capacity in the town centre and the role of smarter travel choices in reducing the use of private cars. As indicated, with specific reference to the proposed link road, it was necessary to understand whether there was a technically deliverable route(s) in the first instance in order to aid the Council with any subsequent decision on how to ensure the route was delivered.

Therefore, having received evidence to indicate that there were potentially three technically deliverable alignments, further work would now be required to help the Council determine how to deliver the full link road. This further work would require specialist input and should focus on collecting information to understand the viability of the Council using its powers of Compulsory Purchase. This was due to the fact that all of the identified link road options required land that had not been offered for development through the Local Plan/ Local Development Framework process or was not in the control of the promoters of the Urban Extension south of the railway line. This was highly likely to require additional financial resourcing to engage specialists and further officer time.

In determining whether the Council wished to use those powers the legal costs, land acquisition costs, impact on residential property, businesses, and potential compensation payments for those formally blighted by such a proposal must be fully understood. This further information would be crucial for the Council in order to reach an informed decision on how it wished to progress the delivery of growth in

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Attleborough in future.

It was expected that once completed, such work would be reported back to the Council's Cabinet in order to determine whether the Council would utilise its Compulsory Purchase Powers to unlock the delivery of a road route.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris asked Members to be aware that the Council was producing a Local Plan that varied from that produced in 2004 and 2009. If Attleborough wanted to go forward without the Local Plan it would have to find someone to build the houses and the link road.

Councillor North congratulated the Deputy Planning Manager and his Team on the detailed reports. She had made several comments herself but would speak to the Team after the meeting; however, she felt that it would be a retrograde step to signalise the town centre and preferred a roundabout as this would not stop the traffic even though she knew that the cost of installing a roundabout would be much higher.

Councillor North asked about the approximate timescale. Councillor Kiddle-Morris advised that the timescale would be in time to inform the Local Plan going forward and to allow the Inspector to make a decision on whether it was robust or not. He did not know whether the preferred options were deliverable due to the land costs and the developers' costs.

Councillor Joel agreed with Councillor North's point about traffic lights as he felt that the traffic must be allowed to flow around the town. He suggested removing the parking in Church Road as this would assist the flow of traffic. The Deputy Planning Manager advised that a roundabout had been modelled in the process and had proved that a roundabout junction would make the traffic flow worse; signalling would provide the most robust method.

Councillor Stasiak stated that roundabouts were far preferable than traffic lights. Referring to the proposed traffic measures, he reminded the Group that Norfolk County Council had installed cycle-ways in Surrogate Street making it impossible, in his opinion, to create a two way traffic flow. He felt that more joined up thinking was required. He also felt that these studies had taken an absolute age to get to this stage.

Looking at the bigger picture, Councillor Martin thought it would be nonsense not to put the link road to the outer limit.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris said that the options were not set in stone; there were a number of infinite link road options that had to be considered and all stakeholders were being asked to look at three forms of link road that went round the development.

Councillor Stasiak had noted in the report that the new link road was critical for future growth in the town but it had reached the point that peoples' lives were being affected. How long was this supposed to carry on? To him, it seemed that Breckland Council was not taking the lead and developers should be told where the road should go. Firm direction

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and leadership was required as the public needed to know what was being done and where this was going.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris explained that it was a long process but there was a great deal of detail to include and to work through; additionally, all Plans had to conform to the Council's Core Strategy.

Members were provided with information on the next steps in the short term. The next iteration of the Local Plan scheduled for April 2015 needed to identify/consider the preferred route link road option to try and provide some certainty to the community. In response to a question, it was explained that the route would be developer led due to costs. Councillor Stasiak asked if there was any mechanism in place for this authority to borrow money from the treasury to build this road. Councillor Kiddle-Morris advised that the only way he could envisage the road being delivered was through using CIL and S106 monies.

Councillor Stasiak said that he, and most of the Attleborough Members, still felt like spectators in all this even though they were the ones who knew what was needed and the best way to proceed. Members were informed that now that the Council had all these studies, it now needed to continue with more work so that the best way forward could be found.

The Chairman asked what the timescale was for the Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan. He further asked if the Neighbourhood Plan took precedent. The Group was informed that it could take Attleborough Town Council as long as it was taking Breckland to complete the Local Plan, and it could potentially take longer if they came up with different options. In response to the latter, the Local Plan took precedent over the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Chairman referred to the timescales and asked for more clarity in terms of what was expected in April 2015. Members were informed that the preferred alignment route for the link road following consultation; taking into account the Council's powers in relation to compulsory purchase.

Councillor North asked if a six month timescale was realistic. The Deputy Planning Manager advised that there was some provision in the Local Plan budget for work to be commissioned and reported back to Members prior to the issues and Options Study going out to consultation. The transport evidence had been subject to a number of delays due to the scale of work commissioned but the Council now had a good starting point and he was keen to move this forward.

Councillor Joel asked if Breckland Council should be working in parallel with the Neighbourhood Plan or visa versa. Members were informed that Breckland Council would be engaging with Attleborough Town Council and with relevant Ward Members in terms of producing the Neighbourhood Plan. Councillor Martin pointed out that the Neighbourhood Plan Committee was meeting quite regularly which he felt was helpful to unite views.

Councillor Stasiak asked if the Planning Policy Team was up to full strength since David Spencer left. Members were introduced to the

new Planning Policy Team Leader, Philip James, who provided the Group with his planning background.

Councillor Kiddle-Morris reminded Members that Breckland's five market towns had all been designed around horse and carts, with narrow streets and silly junctions and trying to work a modern traffic system around all this was a complete nightmare for all concerned. He thought that the local Plan Working Group was important as it brought all documentation into the public domain and to have local Members in attendance was very good.

In response to a question in relation to the Attleborough Task Force, Councillor Martin informed Members that this Group had been superseded by the Attleborough Neighbourhood Plan Group of which he and Councillor Joel were Members of.

There were two options available to Members:

Option 1 – Members to consider the contents of the report and appendices and accept the transport studies as technical evidence to support the preparation of the Council's emerging Local Plan and to endorse the commissioning of the further work indicated in the report to aid the consideration of options for delivering a link road route.

Option 2 – Members to consider the contents of the report and **not to** accept it for the purposes of evidence base to underpin the Local Plan, and **not to** agree to the commissioning of further evidence to understand the costs of using statutory powers to unlock the link road.

**RESOLVED** that Option 1 of the report be endorsed; subject to further liaison with Attleborough Town Council.

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The meeting closed at 11.55 am

CHAIRMAN