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| REPORT TO EXECUTIVE | | | |
| PORTFOLIO AREA: INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT | | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 28 JANUARY 2002 | | |
| Public | | | |
| Key Decision: | Yes | Recorded in Forward Plan: | Yes |
| Inside Policy Framework | | | |

Title: M6 EXTENSION CARLISLE TO GUARDS MILL

Report of: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Report reference: EN 004/02

Summary:

This report outlines the consultation currently being undertaken by the Highways Agency on the proposed improvements to the A74 trunk road between M6 Junction 44 Interchange at Carlisle and A74(M) interchange at Guards Mill.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Council welcomes the route as an improvement to the previously published route having taken into account environmental and local transport concerns and sought to minimise the impact. The route is supported subject to detailed design and consultation with the Council. The Council request that detailed plans take into account the opportunity to minimise disruption during construction.

Mike Battersby

Director of Environment and Development

Report to the Chairman and Members of EN.004/02

Executive

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

1.1 The Secretary of State announced proposals in June 1991 for an upgrade of the existing A74 to motorway standard. Following a public inquiry in July 1996 a route was confirmed. This route passed to the west of the existing A74.

1.2 Following the 1998 Roads Review, the Secretary of State sought a lower cost and a less environmentally damaging scheme. This has been undertaken and the previously published route is now not being taken forward.

1.3 It is now proposed to provide a dual three-lane motorway between M6 Junction 44 and the A74(M) Guards Mill to match the standards of the M6 and A74(M). A separate route for non-motorway traffic for motorway access would be provided alongside.

1.4 The proposed route mainly follows the line of the existing A74, which would be widened on both sides. A short section (Todhills Overbridge to Hespian Wood) would be moved off line away from properties at Todhills. Existing bridges at Harker, Todhills and Floristonrigg would remain with minor modification. Metal Bridge would be modified to accommodate the new motorway.

1.5 A new bridge is needed over the West Coast Main Railway to replace the Mossband Viaduct. The bridge is considered to be in poor condition and will need to be replaced regardless of the upgrade. The new bridge will be constructed to the west side so that traffic can use the existing bridge during construction. The present service areas would be connected to the motorway and the Vehicle Testing Area relocated.

1.6 In order to provide access for local residents, businesses and non-motorway traffic a single carriageway road will be provided using existing local roads and sections of the old redundant A74. Junction 44 to Todhills the route will be west of the motorway. Using the old A74 at Todhills, the route would continue on the east side of the motorway to the A6071. The local traffic route would cross the River Esk on a new bridge to be built adjacent to the existing Metal Bridge.

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1.7 The Highways Agency has considered several options but these do not form part of the consultation. Alternative routes have been rejected on the basis of adverse impact on the local environment and facilities, and higher costs involved.

2. CONSULTATION

1. Consultation with the City Council has been undertaken on this route since 1988. The current consultation requests views on one route in order to assist the Secretary of State in determining whether it should receive further study. Comments are requested by 17 February 2002.
2. No further consultation is proposed.

3. STAFFING/RESOURCES COMMENTS

3.1 There are no implications for staffing or resources as the Highway Agency undertakes this route.

4. CITY TREASURER'S COMMENTS

None

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

None

6. CORPORATE COMMENTS

None

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7. RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

7.1 The A74 currently carries three-quarters of all cross-border traffic. Twenty three per cent of vehicles are HGVs compared to a national average of 8%. There have been 65 personal injury accidents in the last 5 years. The existing road is below the standard of the motorway network to which it connects. With several junctions and access for local communities it is hazardous due to the amount and speed of traffic. Upgrading the route to a motorway and providing a local route for traffic will improve road safety.

8. EQUALITY ISSUES

8.1 The combination of motorway and route for local traffic between Carlisle and Guards Mill will mean continued access for all vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Some local residents may be disadvantaged, as direct access via local roads on to the A74 will be removed when it is upgraded.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The road is to be designed as sensitively as possible. Earth mounding or fencing may be used in conjunction with native tree and shrub planting. This will help to knit the road into the landscape reflecting and extending the surrounding pattern of hedges and woodlands.

9.2 Attention has been paid to avoid incursion into the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in particular the Upper Solway Flats SSSI, European candidate Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area and International RAMSAR wetland. The impact will need to be minimised on locally important sites of Harker Moss, Rockcliffe Moss and Hespian Wood, which are recognised in the consultation document.

9.3 The following environmental impacts are noted:

- Noise levels for properties within 100m will generally be reduced
- An overall improvement in roadside air quality
- Small contribution of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere
- Measures will be introduced to minimise the impact on the landscape however the local setting for small settlements will be improved

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- There will be a slight encroachment into the World Heritage Site Buffer Zone and the route will cross potential archaeological finds

- Measures will be introduced to reduce the impacts on the ecology of the River Esk and Solway Firth
- Measures will be introduced to minimise any adverse effects on river water quality
- The new route for local traffic will improve cycle and pedestrian access

9.4 Officers consider that the route provides a balanced approach and offers environmental improvements on the original published route.

7. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 It is recommended that the Council welcomes the route as an improvement to the previously published route having taken into account environmental and local transport concerns and sought to minimise the impact. The route is supported subject to detailed design and consultation with the Council. The Council request that detailed plans take into account the opportunity to minimise disruption during construction.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 Officers consider that provided adequate measures are taken to minimise the environmental impact as referred to in section 9 of this report, the proposed route is an improvement on the previously published route.

12.2 The provision of a route for local traffic and continuation of crossings at Harker, Todhills and Floristonrigg will reduce the impact on residents and businesses in the area.

Contact Officer: CHRIS HARDMAN

Ext: 7190