

Ward affected:

Spratton and Moulton

Strategy Group – 14th April 2016

NCC Consultation on Northampton Northern Orbital Road

Strategic Planning Issues

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the proposals of the County Council for the Northampton Northern Orbital Road (NNOR) and to agree a response to the consultation.

2. Advice

That it be RESOLVED:	<p>That the issues set out in this report form the response of this Council to the Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) consultation on the proposed Northampton Northern Orbital Road, in particular that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NCC is urged to give full consideration to the southern option.2. NCC should re-consult with fuller information on the five options, their impacts on expected traffic flows both on the options and in the villages.
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3. Introduction

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) is currently consulting on four options for the provision of an orbital road around the north of Northampton. NCC is inviting comments on the proposals by 8th April 2016, but has agreed that this Council's response submitted on the 15th following this Strategy Group meeting.

The consultation material produced by the County Council can be viewed at <http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/northamptonshire-highways/major-highway-projects/Pages/northampton-northern-orbital-route.aspx>. A hard copy of the information is also available in the Members' Room.

4. Information

4.1 Overall proposals for the road

NCC suggests in its (limited) consultation material that it considers that a Northampton Northern Orbital Road is needed to support growth proposals to the north and west of Northampton. However, it has not published any information to substantiate this view. The Joint Core Strategy does not identify the road as an essential infrastructure requirement to support growth in this area.

NCC states that the new road would reduce the amount of traffic passing through the northern parts of Northampton, and a number of surrounding villages such as Boughton, Moulton and Pitsford. Clearly, a reduction in traffic through these villages would be welcome. NCC also identifies that the road would also create a new route for traffic heading to the Moulton Park industrial estate.

There are no funding arrangements in place for the scheme currently. NCC anticipates funding from a combination of government and developer funding.

4.2 NCC's four route options

NCC's consultation suggests four route options. Some elements are common to two or more of the options. A plan showing these options is attached as the Appendix.

At the western end, all options are proposed to start from a new roundabout on the Northampton Road at its current junction with Sandy Lane. Previously NCC had envisaged that the route would start from a roundabout at the junction of Welford Road and Brampton Lane where it would connect with the Northampton West Bypass. There is only limited information available with the current consultation, and there is no explanation in the published documents as to why this different alignment for all four options has been chosen, and other options not considered.

All four options are proposed to terminate at the eastern end at the same point on the A43 Kettering Road. All also include a southern link to the Moulton Park industrial estate. NCC suggests that one of the key traffic movements the road would address is between the industrial estate and places to the west; it therefore regards this link as essential to all four options.

No information is currently available about where any of the new road alignments would be in cuttings or on embankments. However, given the undulating topography in the area to the north of Northampton, and the need, for example, to cross the Brampton Valley Way, the upper reaches of the Nene and the Brampton Valley Heritage Railway it is likely that these would be extensively required. This would have implications for the level and type of impact on the landscape, as would any decisions about the type of road e.g. single or dual carriageway either now or in the future. The absence of this information makes it difficult to make a full assessment of the options. However, given the above it is likely that there would be significant visual intrusion for at least part of all of the routes. This would have an adverse impact on landscape character.

Report reference: SG.140416/11

Similarly, it has not been possible to make a proper assessment in respect of air quality or noise impacts. From a noise perspective, the distance from any new road to a noise sensitive receptor is key, with the topography and nature of the intervening ground a significant contributing factor. A noise assessment will be required to establish the distance of the road to noise sensitive receptors and to measure the background noise level at these receptors and then use this data to design a scheme of noise mitigation.

4.3 Constraints Plan

The County Council has published a 'constraints plan', which identifies listed buildings and registered parkland, and has invited a response on any constraints that may have been omitted. The following omissions from the constraints plan have been identified:

- Conservation Areas at Pitsford, Harlestone, Boughton and Moulton
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- County Wildlife Sites
- Special Landscape Area
- Green Wedge
- Rural Access Area

It is proposed that NCC's attention is drawn to these omissions.

4.4 Impacts of the four NCC options

Option 1

From the common westerly point at the junction of Sandy Lane/Northampton Road, option 1 arcs round to the west and north of Brampton View Care Home and then takes a route part way between options 4 and 2/3. It then uses the route of the existing Moulton Road/Pitsford Road (south of Pitsford Centre, Moulton college), and then involves further new carriageway on an east-west alignment to the A43.

This route passes through the northern part of Boughton Park, a registered historic parkland. Although this would sever the parkland, unlike options 2 and 3 it does not result in the severance of monuments from the parkland to the south.

Given the location of the route to the east of the A508 (and this section of route 4) to the north of the woodland known as Duke's Clump, there would be a degree of screening when viewed from the south in this location, and when travelling south from Pitsford, the vegetation around the quarry would provide some screening for part of the route.

Part of this route follows the line of the existing Moulton Road/Pitsford Road, but it is not clear from the material available as to what work this would entail. Given the increased volume of traffic that would use the road, it is likely to require re-aligning and widening, which would have an adverse impact on the roadside hedgerows and trees including a shelterbelt to the south. The easterly section passes through land currently occupied by Moulton College. The need for

Report reference: SG.140416/11

increased road width, roundabouts etc. is likely to have an adverse impact on this area, which is currently characterised by low stone walls. To the very east, the route cuts across the southern edge of Hog Hole Spinney, which is a woodland protected by a tree preservation order.

Option 2

Option 2 starts from the common westerly point and then takes a more southerly arc than option 1. Because it takes a more southerly route, it impacts more significantly on the Boughton historic parkland, severing the physical connection between the monuments north of the lake (including The Grotto and Bunkers Hill Farm) and the rest of the park. The route of the NNOR across the northern side of the valley would be visually dominant in views across the park. This would fundamentally harm the character, significance and setting of these designed elements of the 18th century landscape.

This route would also affect the stone boundary wall that encloses Boughton Park. This is a major feature of the designed landscape and has great physical and visual presence. The stone walls on either side of the A508 are important built features of the landscape. When travelling along this road between Boughton and Pitsford there are currently pleasing open views across the valley, as the land rises either side of the stream/lake. This option and option 3 appear to require a break in these walls in a very prominent location, which would harm the strong sense of enclosure they provide and would open up clear views of the road as it crosses the valley sides.

This route then heads in a south easterly direction to a point west of Spectacle Lane, from where it then has a link both to the employment area to the south, and a northern route arcing around Pitsford Centre of Moulton College (with alternative routes to the north and south), before joining the A43 to the east.

The route would affect a group of trees, north of Moulton, which is of landscape and potentially ecological value.

The route of this option is rather convoluted and it is therefore questionable as to how effective this would be as an orbital route.

Option 3

This option is largely similar to option 2, differing in the connection point between the westerly and easterly arcs, which for option 3 is further north at Moulton/Pitsford Road rather than at Spectacle Lane as per option 2. Therefore the impacts are largely the same as option 2, although, as a consequence of the more northerly alignment for part of the route there is less severance of the historic parkland than option 2.

The easterly section adopts a route to the north of Pitsford Centre of Moulton College.

Option 4

Report reference: SG.140416/11

This option takes the most northerly route of all options. Of all the options it has the least impact on the historic parkland, however, it does still intrude into the northern part of it, and the link into Moulton Park results in severance of some features from the wider parkland.

Given its northerly line, it is understood this would be the least useful solution in terms of attracting traffic away from the villages, particularly in connection with Moulton Park industrial estate.

Southern Link to Moulton Park Employment Area

All of the options include a southern link to Moulton Park employment area. The route of this link passes close to Spectacle Lane, and past 'Holly Lodge' and 'The Spectacle', which are both Grade II listed buildings and are key elements of Boughton Park. Although these are not within the area designated as Historic Parkland by English Heritage in 1994, the listing entry notes that 'their interconnection with the site is a highly important part of its character'. The routing of the NNOR through this area would sever these important elements from the wider parkland.

4.5 Brampton Valley Way

When detailed proposals are being worked up for whichever option is chosen, it would be necessary to ensure that appropriate provision is made for walkers and cyclists, who currently enjoy the north-south route of Brampton Valley Way, to continue to safely enjoy the use of this route, and to ensure the heritage railway can continue to operate.

4.6 Relevant Development Plan Policies

Policy BN5 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy provides policy protection for designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings and protection for landscapes. Clearly, the proposals in all options to varying degrees offend this policy, but as noted above given the limited information currently available it is difficult to make a full assessment of this conflict.

All of the western parts of the options run through an area designated as Special Landscape Area in saved policy EN1 of the Daventry District Local Plan. This designation does not preclude the provision of a road, as the benefits of providing it would have to be weighed against the policy, but it recognises that this landscape has a special quality that needs to be taken account of in the choice of route and the design of any carriageway and associated structures to minimise impact.

4.7 County Wildlife Sites

The options have the potential to adversely affect County Wildlife Sites. Further work is required to evaluate any potential harm and consider what mitigation might be appropriate.

4.8 Potential for other options

Report reference: SG.140416/11

One of the difficulties in assessing the four options, and considering if other options may be more suitable is the lack of information about origin and destination of journeys. This information would enable a better understanding of what routes would meet people's desires and how likely it would be that a new route would divert them from less suitable routes.

Nevertheless a possible alternative route (the "southern route") has been explored. Following initial impact assessment (below) along the same lines as the four NCC options (above), it is considered worthy of further evaluation along with further evaluation of the suggested options. This alternative route uses more of the existing road network in Northampton than the four NCC options and significantly reduces intrusion into open countryside. It does however result in other impacts, which would need to be carefully evaluated in detail to see if this route is to be seen as a possibility. The indicative southern route has been added to NCC's options 1 – 5 as shown in the Appendix. This option has been discussed with local Members and the parish clerks of Moulton, Boughton and Pitsford.

4.9 Impacts of the southern route

The western part of the route would use an improved Brampton Lane, it would then take a route which would require the demolition of existing houses (probably two) and would have an adverse impact on other residential properties, the loss of the existing sports field and part of Boughton Spinney which is protected by a Tree Preservation Order which is a pocket park maintained by Boughton Parish Council and potential impact on The Obelisk (grade II listed structure). The sensitivity of these losses is understood. They could be replaced in relatively close proximity, which would go some way towards mitigating the loss. Whilst these harms weigh in the decision making process, they have to be weighed against the harms of the other routes currently under consideration.

The route would then use existing roads to the west through or around Moulton Park industrial estate, before joining the A43 at the Round Spinney roundabout.

4.10 Engagement

It is suggested that NCC be urged more closely to involve the Council and parish councils in this project as it progresses and to provide more information on the impacts of the various options. This would enable a fuller assessment of the relative merits of each option (including the southern option) to be made before any decisions are taken about which option should be taken forward.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial – None as a direct result of this report.

5.2 Personnel – This report has been produced from with existing resources within the Local Strategy and Development Control Services.

5.3 Legal/Constitutional – The Council has the power to respond to the consultation under, among other powers, the general power of competence provided by Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

Report reference: SG.140416/11

- 5.4 Environmental** – These are considered in detail in the body of the report.
- 5.5 Policy** – Dealt with in the main body of the report to the extent that it can be given the limited consultation material.
- 5.6 ICT** – None as a direct result of this report.
- 5.7 Crime and Disorder** – None as a direct result of this report.
- 5.8 Human Rights** – None as a direct result of this report.
- 5.9 Equalities** – None as a direct result of this report.
- 6. Conclusions**

NCC believes that a Northampton Northern Orbital Road is required, and has conducted initial consultation on four options. It is considered that the consultation has not provided sufficient information to make a rounded assessment of the options possible, and that it has omitted consideration of a potentially useful fifth option to the south. Accordingly, it is proposed that NCC be asked to reconsult with fully information including on the southern route.

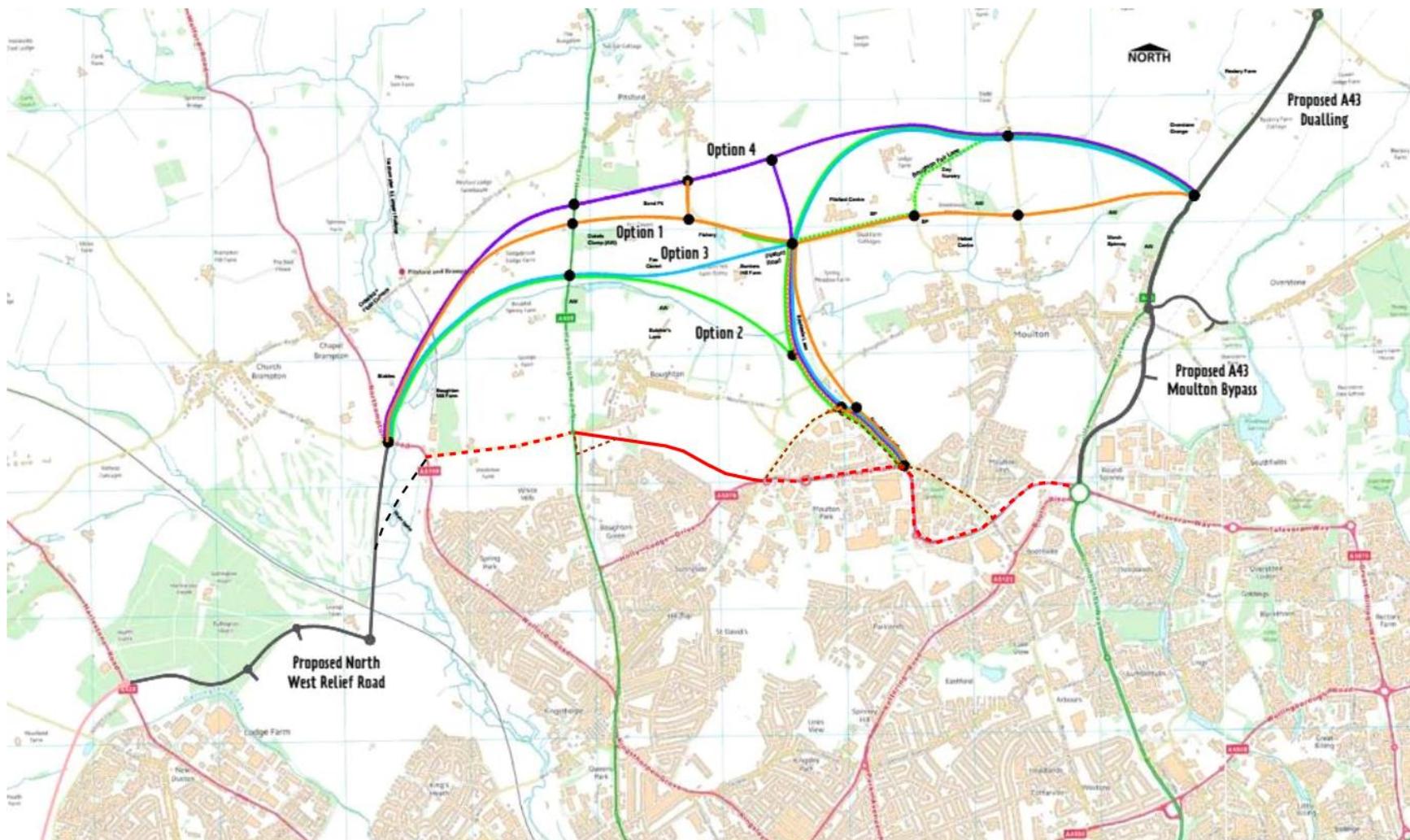
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Background papers:
None

Previous minutes:
None

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Appendix: NCC route options 1 - 4 with addition of new Southern Option



- Southern option (new road)
- Southern option (improved existing road)
- Southern option sub-options
- - - - Realignment of NWRP to meet Southern Option