

21 January 2020		ITEM: 9
Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
A13 Widening Update		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: Not applicable
Report of: Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing & Transport Infrastructure Projects		
Accountable Assistant Director: Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing & Transport Infrastructure Projects		
Accountable Director: Andrew Millard, Director of Place		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

This is to update Members on the progress in delivering the A13 Widening scheme.

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on the progress on the A13 Widening scheme.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This project involves widening the A13 Stanford le Hope By-pass from 2 to 3 lanes in both directions, from the junction with the A128 (Orsett Cock roundabout) in the west to the A1014 (The Manorway) in the east and replacing four bridges. Once the project is completed, there will be a continuous three-lane carriageway from the M25 to Stanford le Hope, reducing congestion, improving journey times and supporting further economic growth.
- 2.2 Since the last update to the PTR Overview & Scrutiny Committee in January 2019, some progress has been made, however, there have been a number of issues which have arisen that have had an impact on the cost and programme of the Project. These issues are summarised in paragraphs 3.2 to 3.9 of the report.

- 2.3 In March 2019, various traffic management measures were implemented on the A13 and A1013 including temporary speed limits, temporary barriers, narrow lanes, speed enforcement cameras and free vehicle recovery service.
- 2.4 These measures enabled the main works to start.
- 2.5 The archaeological mitigation works were completed in early July 2019, freeing up areas of the site for construction.
- 2.6 In recent months, activity has increased significantly along the A13, with drainage installation works, earthworks, piling and utilities works taking place at the side of the road.
- 2.7 At Horndon Road bridge, the piled foundations and pile caps have been completed and work is progressing with the abutments and wingwalls.
- 2.8 At the end of August/ beginning of September, Saffron Gardens Bridge was safely demolished during a weekend closure of the A13 and the carriageway was reopened to traffic two hours early. During this closure, BT Openreach took the opportunity to divert some of its apparatus at the BP Services, thereby avoiding the need for further road closures
- 2.9 As a result of the traffic disruption that occurred at Horndon on the Hill and A1013, Stanford Road during the above weekend closure, an action plan was developed for future weekend closures. Officers continue to review and monitor closures to ensure safety and efficiency on the road network.
- 2.10 At Orsett Cock roundabout, the piled foundations and pile caps have been installed and work is underway to construct the abutments and central piers for the new Orsett Cock East and West bridges.
- 2.11 The project team are working hard to get the remaining Statutory Undertakers' diversions completed over the winter to ensure that earthworks and drainage can continue in March when the weather and site conditions improve.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 It is often the case with projects of this scale and complexity that a start on site reveals issues that impact on the anticipated delivery of the project and which cannot readily be anticipated and planned for. A risk register is reviewed and updated with the contractors on a monthly basis.

Key issues

- 3.2 Below is a summary of the key issues that have arisen:
- 3.3 Diversion and protection of statutory undertakers' assets impacted by the Project has been delayed;

- 3.4 Ground investigation works in particular locations along the route has revealed a need to adapt and change construction methodology and change specifications;
- 3.5 There were some discrepancies and gaps between what was in the as-built drawings for the existing road and what was discovered once work commenced. This in particular impacted significantly on the cost of the drainage works;
- 3.6 Topographical study work was found to be unreliable and had to be repeated;
- 3.7 The substructure and wing walls at the Orsett Cock east and west bridges had to be significantly redesigned to overcome concerns about public safety and buildability;
- 3.8 Change requests which have been driven by the need to satisfy key stakeholders (in particular local residents and landowners) have been a consideration and where possible incorporated into the design;
- 3.9 A number of these issues has impacted on the ability of the Project to bring forward the design in a timely way resulting in works being undertaken in parallel as opposed to sequentially;
- 3.10 Delays in finalising the detail design of the bridges and structures and obtaining Technical Approval Authority approval and check certificates.

Mitigation

- 3.11 Given the issues set out in this report, Thurrock Council and its contractors have undertaken a number of steps to mitigate any further impacts. These mitigation measures include:
- Usual project management tools are being used including risk registers, change logs, approvals, clear systems and processes and ways of working etc.
 - Appointment of external auditors – Thurrock Council appointed expert transport infrastructure auditors to undertake a detailed review of the scheme. As a consequence there is a clear action plan of project improvements that has been substantially implemented
 - Strengthened the project team – Thurrock Council has brought on board an additional project management resource to focus on commercial issues and retained the services of the external auditor. Together, they will work their way through the outstanding compensation events and quotations. Aecom has also brought on board a senior quantity surveyor, risk manager and programme manager.
 - Programme challenge workshop – a report identifying ways in which time and cost can be saved. This is already identifying efficiency savings in particular with regard to costs.

- Collaborative planning – the parties are undertaking collaborative planning to understand the inter-dependencies on the project and how they can be effectively managed to avoid impacts on critical path
- Ways of working – co-location of contractors on site to ensure efficient agreement on issues which can then be quickly resolved
- A monthly dashboard reporting mechanism to track blockers and identify ways of relieving them
- Elements of parallel working which can ensure the workforce and plant and equipment is being utilised to maximum effect
- Early warnings and improvements to communication to ensure efficiency

Update on Project expenditure

- 3.12 As a consequence of the above issues including a number of compensation events, the Project is no longer within the budget envelope and the rate of spend has increased over the course of the last couple of months.
- 3.13 The potential options available to bridge the forecast funding gap are currently being explored and have not been confirmed. It is likely that a combination of funding sources will be required to meet the funding gap. The main options under consideration include:
- An increase in grant funding towards the delivery of the Project;
 - Funding contributions from the private sector; and
 - Funding contributions from Thurrock Council.
- 3.14 Thurrock Council recognises the need to seek alternative funding through whatever route is available and the use of its own funds.
- 3.15 The Council has recently been successful in securing additional funding from SELEP to contribute to the project. This indicates that despite the challenges, partners locally and across the region continue to support the project and remain committed to its success, not least because of the mitigation which has been put in place.

Update on programme

- 3.16 At the time of the January update, the Project was expected to complete in autumn 2020. Since then the further issues arising with the Project and highlighted in this report have meant that the timeframe for delivery is under review.
- 3.17 At the time of writing this report, there is no change to the current published programme. It is acknowledged that when the current issues with regard to delays have been addressed, there will be a need to re-profile the forecast spend on the project and produce and publish an update to the programme to manage stakeholder expectations.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To comply with the reporting arrangements agreed by Cabinet and ensure democratic scrutiny of the A13 Widening scheme.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 A communication plan has been prepared and agreed.
- 5.2 Member briefing sessions are held periodically at the A13 Site Offices and provide an opportunity for Members to receive a presentation from the contractor and raise issues on behalf of local residents.
- 5.3 Meet the team sessions are held monthly at the A13 Site Office and are a popular way for residents and road users to find out more about the works and ask any questions.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The A13 Widening scheme supports the corporate priorities by encouraging and promoting economic prosperity.
- 6.2 The A13 Widening scheme also supports the Thurrock Transport Strategy (2013 – 2026) and in particular policy TTS18: Strategic road network improvements by creating additional capacity to reduce congestion, improve journey times, facilitate growth and improve access to key strategic economic hubs.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Rosie Hurst**
Interim Senior Management Accountant

There are no financial implications arising specifically from this update report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Acting Head of Law, Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Since this an update report, there are no specific direct legal implications. Legal Services will provide any legal advice in relation to this project as and when required.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

There are no direct implications arising specifically from this update report.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children)

The contractor is required to risk assess all aspects of this project and put in place appropriate procedures and measures to safeguard lives as well as the environment.

The contractor is also required to prepare a sustainability plan that reduces carbon emissions and reduces the project's carbon footprint.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

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Place