

1 February 2022		ITEM: 9
Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
A13 East Facing Access Update and Outline Business Case Proposal		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Report of: Mat Kiely, Transportation Services Strategic Lead		
Accountable Assistant Director: Leigh Nicholson – Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Public Protection		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers – Director, Public Realm		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

In 2018 the Council submitted a funding bid for £48.5m through the Major Road Network (MRN) programme for an east facing access scheme on the A13 next to Lakeside. Following this, the Department for Transport (DfT) invited Thurrock Council to make an Outline Business Case (OBC) and detailed design for the scheme.

This briefing paper provides Members with an overview of the progress that has been made developing the OBC, delivery options and an assessment of likely costs of the scheme.

The paper recognises that additional work is required to fully understand the opportunity to work with National Highways (formerly Highways England) to determine whether National Highways will take the EFA scheme forward for future funding and delivery.

This will require a formal process to be applied to ensure National Highways are able to transfer the EFA scheme from the identified DfT MRN funding process, enabling National Highways to become the scheme promoter and take EFA forward as a funded and deliverable scheme.

It is clearly preferable for National Highways to take ownership of the project and deliver the scheme. Further engagement with National Highways and DfT is needed to understand future responsibilities and this is expected to be clarified through a set of meetings with all relevant parties in February / March 2022.

1. Recommendations

1.1 Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny provide comment on the report and the following Cabinet recommendations:

1.2 Members are asked to note the work undertaken to produce the EFA Outline Business Case to date, to endorse the approach that has been taken and to provide comment on the OBC.

1.3 Members are asked to note and comment on the proposed approach to work with National Highways to identify how the OBC submission and responsibility for the scheme can be progressed.

1.4 Members are asked to note and comment on the proposed cost and risk implications identified within the report.

2. Introduction and Background

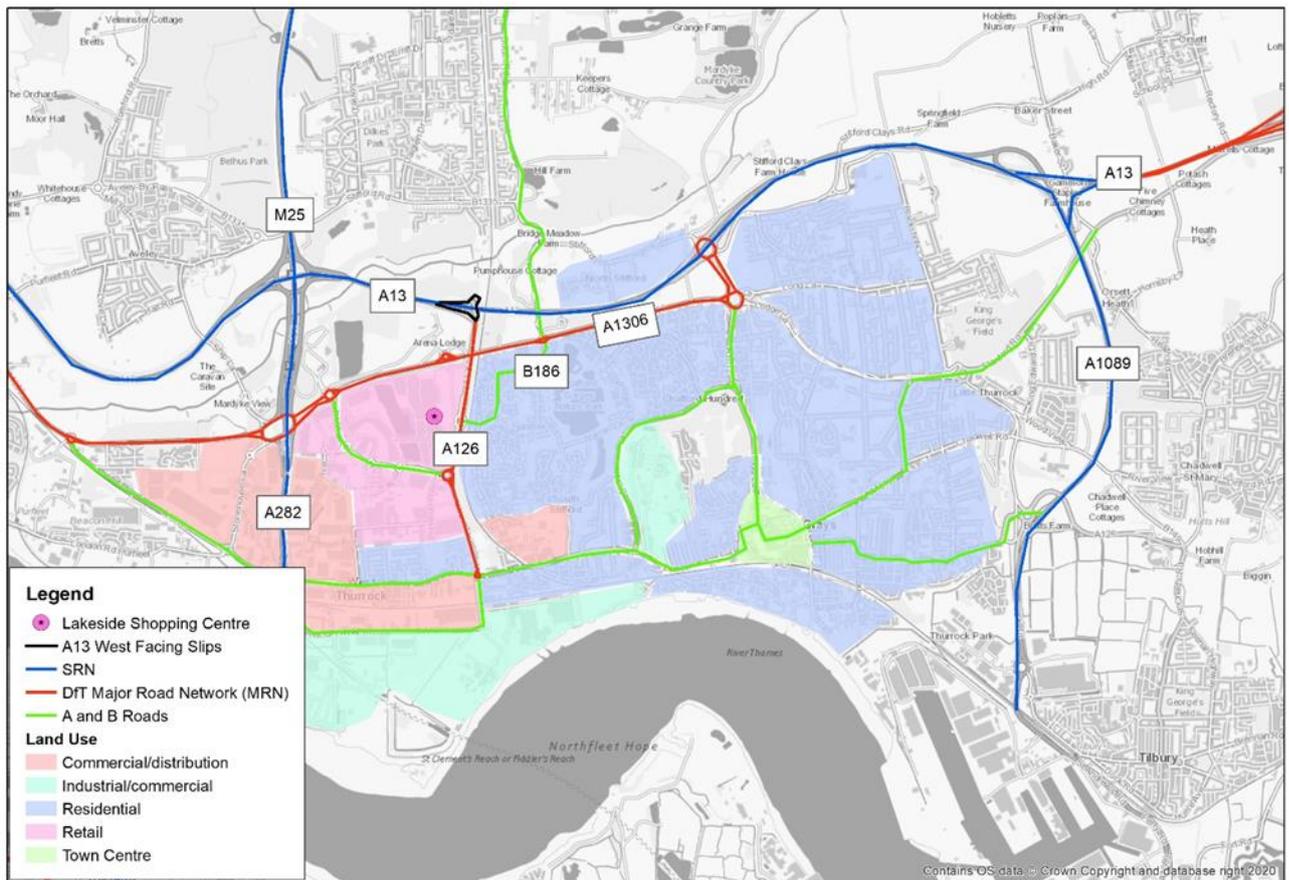
2.1 In 2018 the Council submitted a funding bid for £48.5m through the Major Road Network (MRN) programme for an east facing access scheme on the A13. Following this, DfT invited Thurrock Council to make an OBC and Detailed Design for the scheme.

2.2 The OBC and initial design has been informed by a robust process of Options Assessment which highlighted the scheme option that has been taken forward to inform the OBC.

2.3 The OBC has been produced to support the application for funding to improve access from the A13 in West Thurrock in South Essex. The Scheme aims to achieve a step-change in connectivity, improve the operation of the highway network by reducing congestion, achieve environmental improvement for local communities and to provide capacity for planned growth.

3. Issues and Options

3.1 The scheme seeks to address the lack of a direct east facing connection from the strategic A13 towards the major Lakeside Basin commercial and retail area in West Thurrock. Access is along congested local roads, or by using the west facing access at the A13/A126 interchange and U-turning at M25 Junction 30, increasing congestion at that location. Figure 1 shows the location of the scheme in relation to the strategic and main local highways.



- 3.2 A need to address the east facing access has been a long-held aspiration of the Council and is manifested in local policy. Thurrock Council's Core Strategy (Policy TSR3), adopted in 2011 and amended in 2015, has a requirement to improve access at this location. This would facilitate the transformation of the Lakeside Basin into a regional centre which, together with the wider area, could provide between 7,000 and 9,000 jobs through the expansion of office, retail and leisure floorspace as well as 3,000 new dwellings and community facilities.
- 3.3 The scheme is at the heart of the A13 corridor which has been identified as the largest single growth opportunity by the South East Local Economic Partnership (SE LEP). This corridor has significant levels of existing and proposed development including the Thames Freeport, London Gateway Port, Logistics Park, Thames Enterprise Park, expansion at Tilbury and new development in Grays.
- 3.4 The scheme has two further dynamics; the proposed Lower Thames Crossing will have a marked impact on strategic traffic movements in the area with a shift of traffic flows east of Lakeside. The second, whilst providing a better connection to the National Highways managed Strategic Road Network (SRN), this OBC is being promoted and led by Thurrock Council. Engagement and liaison has taken place with National Highways throughout the progress of this OBC, and will be developed further at the next stage, the Full Business Case (FBC).

Options Assessment

- 3.5 The OBC has assessed two options known as Option 1A and Option 6B. These have been tested against the HM Treasury 5 Case Model and is aligned with Department for Transport (DfT) TAG guidance. This process identifies the need to undertake a 3-stage process to support the selection of scheme options. The process includes the following:

A - Appraising a range of strategic level solutions (rather than specific interventions) including all transport modes, managing demand as well as an option to do nothing.

The result of Stage A was the identification of online and offline highway approaches to be the focus for the remainder of the appraisal process.

B - Undertaking a long-listing exercise identifying many feasible online and offline highways options which fall under the preferred strategic approach, and then assessing those options against a range of social, economic and environmental criteria to lead to a shortlist.

The outcome of Stage B was the progression of options 6B, 1A, 4B, 4A and 2A to Stage C for further appraisal.

C - Appraising the shortlisted options (6B, 1A, 4B, 4A and 2A) to understand in greater depth the likely impacts and deliverability of the scheme options.

The result of Stage C was the identification of a set of preferred options to take forward for detailed assessment in the Outline Business Case (OBC).

Five short-listed options were reappraised at Stage C, including undertaking preliminary traffic modelling to understand the relative impacts. The preferred options (1A and 6B) were progressed to the Outline Business Case (OBC) stage.

The full Options Assessment Report for the EFA scheme proposals is available if required.

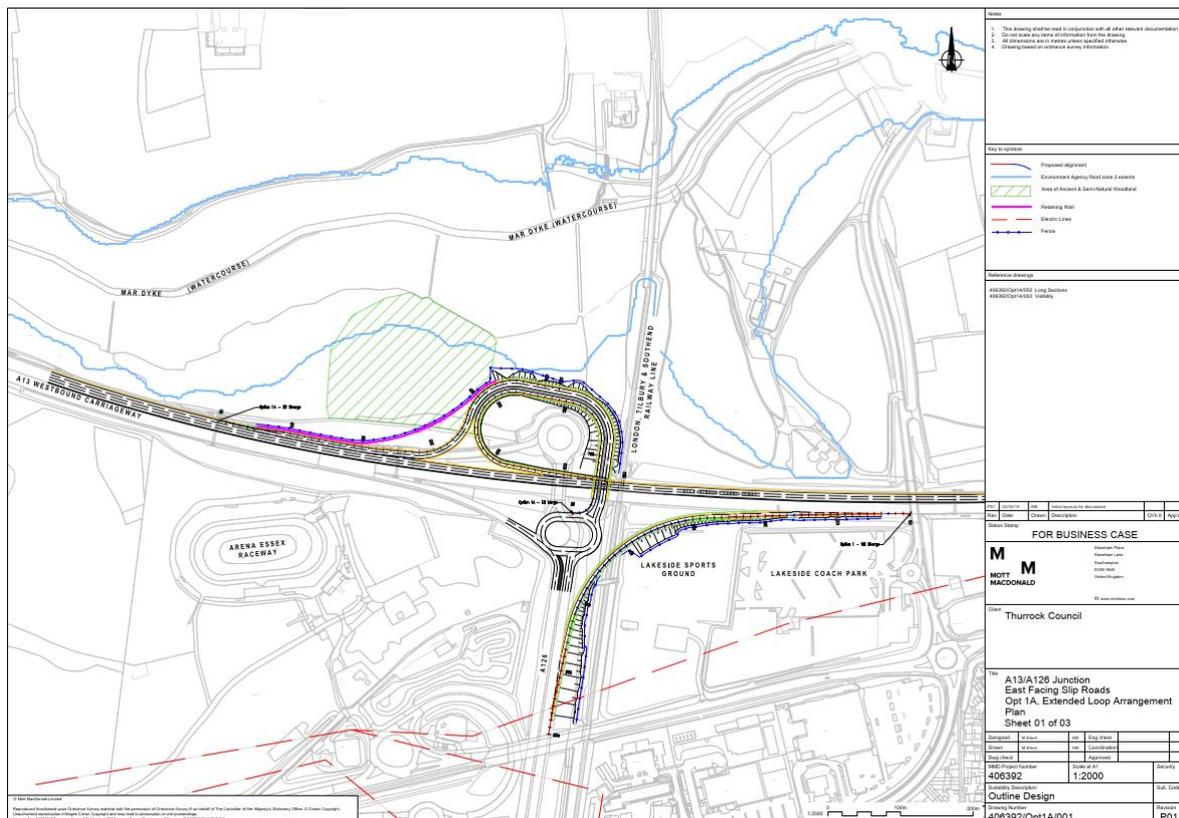
Recommended scheme option

- 3.6 The assessment and supporting analysis recommends Option 1A to be progressed to Full Business Case (FBC) stage. Option 1A comprises the construction of a realigned eastbound off-slip and additional entry slip, realigned A126 roundabout linked to eastbound slips by a new overbridge and the construction of a westbound off-slip crossing the rail line to the east. This option would require the demolition of the existing off-slip and bridge and the overbridge.

This option is preferable on the basis that:

- Option 1A would provide better value for money principally from shorter journey times arising from more direct access to and from the A13;
- Would result in a lower level of collisions;
- Make a greater contribution towards the reduction in greenhouse gases;
- Result in a lower level of adverse impacts on the local community especially on existing active travel routes and severance.

Option 1A



Strategic case

3.7 The OBC provides a clear rationale for investing in the A13 EFA Scheme, setting out the reasons why change is needed. These include:

- **Congestion and delays on the local road network –Westbound** journeys take 20% longer for the AM peak period (08:00 to 09:00) and 46% for the interpeak period (14:00 to 15:00) compared to the off-peak period. These differences are also reflected in the PM peak period (17:00 to 18:00) with up to 77% delay and Saturday and Sunday afternoon peaks.
- **Localised adverse impacts on communities –** Traffic volumes have resulted in poor air quality and the designation of two AQMAs (Thurrock AQMAs number 4 and 5) along the A1306 in the immediate vicinity of the Scheme as well as creating community severance

- **Collision hotspots from the A13** – including a concentration of collisions at Stifford interchange, the Pilgrims Lane junction of the A1306 and B186, and in the vicinity of the Clockhouse Lane junction with the A1306.
- **Exacerbate existing congestion** – Modelling shows that the expected growth in car trips between 2018 and 2036 is 17-26% in the AM and PM Peak periods and 28% in the Inter Peak period.
- **Increase adverse impacts in West Thurrock/Chafford Hundred** – Increased congestion is likely to exacerbate the adverse impacts on the local community in the area. This includes the poor air quality areas on the A1306, severance impacts on local communities as well as increased risk of further collisions and personal injuries.
- **Hinder economic aspirations and potential** – The capacity of the local highway network to accommodate the growth in traffic flows will constrain the economic aspirations and potential particularly of the Lakeside Basin. The Spatial Policies make provision for a provision for 2,600 dwellings between 2021 and 2026, on top of 3,365 dwellings between 2009 and 2021. Translated into job creation this represents 7,000 to 9,000 new jobs in the period up to 2026.

Scheme costs and delivery options

- 3.8 As set out above, the project came about because the Council was successful in bidding for funding through the Major Road Network programme (MRN) in 2018. The Council assumed the role of Scheme Promoter to ensure the OBC is developed and progressed. However, a requirement of the MRN programme is the expectation for the Scheme Promoter to contribute 15% of the scheme costs.
- 3.9 The quantified outturn cost estimate for **Option 1A is £77.22m** at 2021 Q1 prices. These costs include construction, land, preparatory work and risk which is estimated at 24%.
- 3.10 Funding for the A13 EFA scheme will principally be through the DfT Large Local Majors programme. This will equate to 85% of the funding if successful, resulting in **£11.58m to be funded by the Scheme Promoter**.
- 3.11 It should be noted that any additional cost increases resulting from the scheme will be taken on by the Scheme Promoter. DfT have been explicitly clear that additional cost, in addition to that identified in the OBC, will be the responsibility of the Scheme Promoter to identify and fund.
- 3.12 However, given that the scheme would connect to the Strategic Road Network (SRN) it is logical that National Highways would deliver the project. This view has been expressed and National Highways have shown a willingness to take on the project; the Council has accordingly shared the OBC and background assessment work with National Highways. At the time of writing, National Highways were reviewing the OBC to understand the technical, cost and risk issues so that they can finish developing a scheme progression proposal to be discussed with the DfT.

- 3.13 It is clearly preferable for National Highways to take ownership of the project and deliver the scheme. The Council expects to engage further with National Highways in late February – early March 2022 to progress the process that will allow National Highways to become the scheme promoter for the EFA scheme.

4 Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Endorsing the recommendations set out in this report will highlight that O&S are happy to endorse the work and approach set out within the EFA OBC and the need to work collaboratively with National Highways to identify responsibility for funding and delivering the scheme going forward. It is also important to understand member input relating to the cost and risk implications associated with the scheme.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Initial consultation for the OBC focused on receiving input and comments on the scheme options process.
- 5.2 Many parties are expected to be impacted by the scheme or involved in scheme delivery. The scheme promoter will be required to undertake initial public consultation on the preferred options for the A13 EFA once established through the OBC process.
- 5.3 Local residents, interest groups and key stakeholders will be engaged as the consultation process is developed and delivered.

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

- 6.1 Delivery of the A13 East Facing Access scheme has been a long held aspiration of the Council. Implementation has the ability to improve and enhance the transport network within the Borough making it safer, less congested and more accessible, thereby promoting and supporting the Council's long term growth agenda and overarching corporate priorities.

7 Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mark Terry**
Senior Financial Accountant

The financial implications associated with the East Facing Access scheme are set out within paragraphs 3.8 – 3.12 of this report.

The OBC calculates the total cost of EFA Option 1A to be £77.22m (at 2021 Q1 prices).

As agreed and clarified by DfT, 85% of the scheme cost will be met through the Government's Major Road Network / Large Local Major scheme funding programme, if the submission is successful. This equates to £65.637m to be allocated through the above funding mechanism.

A requirement of the MRN / LLM programme is the expectation for the Scheme Promoter to contribute 15% of the scheme costs.

This equates to £11.58m to be funded by the Scheme Promoter.

It should also be noted that any additional costs arising from the scheme would also be funded by the Scheme Promoter. It is currently unclear if additional costs will apply when this scheme is delivered. It is noted that a significant risk calculation (24%) has been applied to the calculations within the OBC. However, this does not preclude the required level of funding from increasing if unforeseen issues lead to increases in scheme costs.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Mark Bowen**
Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations included in the body of the report. However, if the Council takes on the role of Scheme Promoter there will be a need to consider the legal implications of delivering, procuring and funding the EFA scheme. A Cabinet decision will be required at this point and more detailed implications can be assessed.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities

Delivery of the EFA scheme will support improved quality of life in the Borough and its social and economic regeneration. If implemented, the scheme has the ability to have a positive impact on congestion & CO2 mitigation, accessibility, safety and air quality in the immediate scheme area and across the borough. A CEIA will be completed to assess the impact of the scheme through construction and operational stages.

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

None

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):

N/A

9 Appendices to the report

None.

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