



A414 Corridor Strategy Consultation
Postal Point CHN 115
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall,
Pegs Lane
HERTFORD
SG13 8DN

25th February 2019

Dear Sir / Madam,

A414 CORRIDOR STRATEGY CONSULTATION

This representation has been prepared on behalf of Gascoyne Cecil Estates (The Estate) in response to the Hertfordshire County Council A414 Strategy Consultation Document (2018-19). The Estate is a major, long term landowner with landholdings covering several thousand hectares which extend from Welwyn Hatfield into Hertsmere, East Hertfordshire and North Hertfordshire districts.

In addition to its role as long term custodians of significant historic assets which include Hatfield House, its Scheduled Park and former Bishops Palace, the Estate equally recognises that it is crucial to remain fully engaged with Community and to play a constructive role in discussions about the future needs of the County. As part of this process, Gascoyne have actively considered how growth might best be accommodated through the Local Plan Process whilst also facilitating wider discussion and debate through an ongoing series of Charrettes.

Gascoyne is grateful to Hertfordshire County Council for preparing its A414 Strategy and for the opportunity to comment on this most important initiative.

Notwithstanding recognition that this Strategy is a first step towards improving east west communication with Hertfordshire (and beyond) Gascoyne would respectfully ask that the following points are given due weight as part of future deliberations;

Corridor Overview;

The A414 Corridor Strategy Report (A414 CSR) starts with the following statement:
“A414 corridor is a strategic east-west, multi-modal transport corridor extending from Harlow in the east to Hemel Hempstead in the west. In addition, the A405 extending down from St Albans towards Watford, and the A10 from west of Hertford to M25 Junction 25 in Broxbourne also act as important cross-county routes. Other key urban areas include Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City”.

The A414 CSR: “The corridor is extremely important in facilitating movements of people by different modes of transport across Hertfordshire.



Today, the corridor experiences traffic congestion along sections of the A414 and at key junctions between and within towns. There are also notably very few opportunities for continuous travel by public transport which increases dependency on the car to make journeys along the corridor. There are also limited opportunities for walking and cycling, with poor and discontinuous routes in many areas”.

Response:

- The document represents a significant step forward, showing what HCC currently know and think about the A414 Corridor alongside analysis of options for improving east-west travel both within Hertfordshire and beyond. This is an important debate which will be central to positive changes occurring in Hertfordshire over the years ahead.
- The A414 corridor currently provides overwhelmingly for the private car and commercial goods vehicles. It is primarily a road corridor with limited opportunities for public transport and walking and cycling. It serves a variety of functions which include short and medium distance trips linking key settlements and strategic north / south routes and also serves longer distance through movements acting as an alternative east / west route to the M25.
- Gascoyne support proposals to review the function of this corridor and to help to facilitate improved connectivity by non-car modes, the removal of unnecessary short trips, modal shift and the discouraging of longer distance through traffic.
- As the A414 CSR acknowledges the A414 corridor currently plays a vital role in the movement of short, medium and long-distance trips across the County and beyond and cannot be considered in isolation of alternative routes within the corridor.
- However, it is not just about peak hour movements and commuter trips. Interurban interactions should also be considered for education trips (particularly secondary schools, colleges and universities), shopping, leisure trips and night-time economies not just peak hour employment trips. The town centres and services of the main Central Herts settlements have very distinct and varying offers and a direct well-designed passenger transit system would play a key role in changing perceptions to alternatives to the private car and how people travel and would provide a realistic prospect to deliver modal shift not just in the peak hours but across the whole day.
- The peak period in Central Herts is relatively short – but this will be expected to change given the level of growth proposed and will lead to longer queues, congestion and peak spreading. Taking away road capacity will be highly contentious and we must be bold but realistic about private car usage and the difficult decisions that will be needed to allow passenger transit systems and cycling to be prioritised over the car and to penetrate town centres.

Challenges and Objectives

The A414 CSR: “Current levels of traffic congestion will only be exacerbated by the expected large growth in housing, population and employment in the coming years. At least 50,000 new homes and a similar number of new jobs are proposed within the corridor. Hertfordshire County Council has developed this draft A414 Corridor Strategy to confirm the key current and future growth and transport challenges and identify the proposed set of intervention packages in what is one of the most vital transport corridors spanning the county”.

Response:

- Hertfordshire faces significant challenges, with strong internal demand for housing, connectivity and proximity to London. Current disparity between housing targets and delivery rates and significant unmet demand, means housing growth requirements are likely to extend beyond local authority boundaries, increasing pressure on neighbouring areas.
- The level of growth proposed will present a significant challenge. The additional housing proposed will generate additional traffic and unless care is taken, this will exacerbate congestion and will place unacceptable demands on key infrastructure.
- The scale and level of growth proposed provides a once in a generation opportunity to consider how places will be created to enable happy, creative and productive citizens to go about their daily lives enabling future growth in Central Herts and beyond. The relationship of homes to jobs and the role of technology in changing commuting patterns has never been more critical.
- Gascoyne fully acknowledges and supports the view that maintaining present levels of car usage is unsustainable. The Future Strategy must advocate an evidence-based approach that takes account of deliverability, funding beyond the immediate short term and proposals that exceed infrastructure-based solutions.

The A414 CSR goes on set out the following eleven objectives on which the Draft Strategy is based;

- Support sustainable economic growth**
- Improve inter-urban connectivity**
- Define an appropriate route hierarchy**
- Improve operation, resilience and reliability of the transport network**
- Enhance sense of place and town centre viability**
- Enable and facilitate modal shift to active travel**
- Enable and facilitate modal shift to public transport**
- Implement demand management to support efficient use of the network and enable behaviour change**
- Incorporate the benefits of new technology to support efficient use of the network and enable behaviour change**
- Ensure safe and secure travel**
- Deliver better environmental outcomes**



Response:

- Given the relatively short nature of many trips within Hertfordshire, significant opportunities exist to encourage people away from existing car usage patterns. Whilst resources are obviously finite an efficient transport system can achieve substantial economic and social benefits and proper consideration of transport matters should be at the heart of future planned growth.
- Addressing the lack of east west connectivity to provide realistic alternatives to the A414 is a fundamental issue in tackling congestion in Central Herts. Significant Government led investment is required to deliver an integrated public transport system to serve Central Herts and to address the lack of east-west connectivity across the County. Funding solutions, however, should be equally creative and consideration given to answers over and above today's status quo.
- Investment needs to be properly planned, phased and implemented in a coherent manner as opposed to as part of a reactive piecemeal approach. Gascoyne support the approach that residents and businesses should be provided with a range of viable transport options including measures which substantially improve the quality of pedestrian and cycle linkages alongside improved public transport services whilst medium to long term planning should deliver a bolder vision for public transport to fundamentally alter existing perceptions about public transport.
- The current towns of Central Hertfordshire; Hatfield (39,300 population), Welwyn Garden City (48,400), St Albans (72,200) and Hertford (26,800) struggle, in isolation, to provide a critical mass to make large infrastructure project viable. However, the combined population of these towns (186,700) reaches a level comparable with the like of Oxford or Cambridge. Indeed, the combined population of the three Central Hertfordshire Districts of St Albans (145,000), Welwyn Hatfield (110,000) and East Herts (140,000) is 395,000 which reaches a level of population comparable with the likes of Liverpool, Manchester or Bristol.
- Each of the four towns has struggled to define its role in Hertfordshire. Developing a coherent plan has been difficult and none of the towns, in isolation, has the critical mass to make large infrastructure projects viable and hence, key transport and housing decisions have either been postponed or attempted in a piecemeal fashion.
- The key focus of the proposals should be to better connect the key Central Herts settlements including St Albans, Hatfield, Welwyn GC and Hertford (which have a critical mass population of 200k plus significant growth planned). Any proposals which fail to directly penetrate or serve the town centres and transport interchanges of these key settlements would represent a significant missed opportunity.
- Delivering greater connectivity, and seeking to address barriers to movement in order to maximise accessibility to non-car modes will be critical in helping to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, education, and other activities, and for the self-containment of trips within proposed developments, principal settlements and the surrounding area.
- In order to achieve a satisfactory and sufficiently challenging vision it is essential for meaningful targets to be set whereby significant modal shifts are achieved away from



private car usage whereby more efficient use can be made of the existing highway network.

The Proposals

The A414 CSR: The corridor has been divided into fourteen segments which reflect how the corridor is currently used differently along its length, and how it is predicted to be used in the future. Some segments carry more longer distance trips mainly in terms of cars and lorries. Other segments carry more of a mixture of shorter and longer distance trips with cycling, bus and rail also being used. The draft A414 Corridor Strategy has drawn from existing adopted plans and strategies to develop a list of interventions which seek to address the growth and transport challenges in the corridor which also align with the priorities described in Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4 (2018).

The A414 CSR: Thirty packages are proposed, each containing two or more interventions. Interventions are wide ranging and can include improvements to footways, new cycle routes, new or improved bus services, better access to railway stations and highway improvements including alterations to junctions.

Response:

- As with the LTP4, there is much to commend and plenty of positive language. We must ensure, however, that these sentiments are translated into bold approaches to a robust transport network for the decades ahead.
- The aim should be to breakdown political boundaries not be steered by them. It is important that the future strategy is not constrained by political boundaries and considers truly cross district and cross county requirements.

The A414 CSR: A Mass Rapid Transit system will provide a high quality, attractive, fast and continuous public transport link from Hemel Hempstead and Watford in the west, to Broxbourne and Harlow in the east via the key urban areas along the corridor.

Response:

- Services across Central Herts must be direct and continuous. The initial proposals appear too fragmented and almost too focussed on committed growth areas. An effective passenger transit system directly connecting the settlements of Central Herts should be at the heart of the proposals. As a minimum the aim must be to directly link and serve the main town centres, not bypass them, and to provide multi-modal interchanges to connect with key north south rail services, cycle routes and to serve major employment areas.
- Buses are heavily favoured in the Document, understandably given the flexibility they can offer. Yet, the consultation document also acknowledges the perception issues around bus transport - will a renewed network be sufficient to encourage the significant modal shift which will benefit the county and its citizens in the years ahead?

Is there more evidence or detail for the various options - both in terms of upfront and lifetime costs, and solidly researched timescales? Would it be useful to study alternatives in greater detail in order to further the general public's understanding around the options for future mobility?

- Trams are dismissed on grounds of cost, inflexibility and an inability to use the existing A414. The calculations are at present unclear, and ought to be judged against future use of the A414 as a main artery of a bus network on a like for like basis - comparing the costs associated with the road network, bypasses, and their maintenance, as well as costs of buses, maintenance, replacement, drivers and a twenty-first century ticketing system appropriate to encourage modal shift. Trams clearly have to carry the cost of the dedicated track and rolling stock, which is initially heavy, but if they - or similar alternative - solutions are not chosen as an approach, the evidence base and discussions behind this should be properly researched and entirely transparent for citizens of the county to see and understand.
- We live in a time of great technological and demographic change. It is difficult to take decisions given the kind of uncertainty around possible options that this brings.
- However, technological advancement is a relentless part of the human story. It will never stop. Nobody could foresee railways when they built the canal network. Likewise, railways were usurped in the postwar years by cheap private cars. Are advancements in technology a legitimate justification to opt for simpler options, or should we opt for the best technological solution available today which meets the criteria above and which we know is sufficiently advanced to serve for the next 30-40 years?

The A414 CSR: A southern bypass around Hertford will open up opportunities to improve walking, cycling and public transport routes and services within the town by removing traffic. Junctions will be improved to help relieve traffic congestion, for example at M1 Junction 8 (Hemel Hempstead) and the A414/A1081 London Colney Roundabout.

Response:

- Whilst the Hertford Bypass would in theory reduce congestion on the A414 through Hertford, the additional capacity would release suppressed demand thereby encouraging greater car use and attracting more traffic into the corridor and impacting on upstream and downstream links.
- Why is building a bypass around Hertford an appropriate response when many existing high streets and town centres are struggling? Why is an A414 rapid bus network a favourable solution in the same context? Both questions must be answered convincingly by a robust evidence base. Indeed, if not, a well-designed passenger transit system could provide a significant boost to towns across Hertfordshire.

- Collectively, we have a once in a lifetime window of opportunity to deliver real change to how people travel that has the potential to benefit future communities and generations. A Hertford Bypass scheme will arguably run counter to what could be achieved and will simply attract more traffic and drain funds that could be better spent elsewhere.

The A414 CSR: The interventions will be accompanied by broader initiatives aimed at encouraging more sustainable travel behaviour. The aim is to make better use of existing infrastructure and services, aim to discourage traffic using less appropriate roads to avoid traffic congestion elsewhere; remove actual or perceived barriers to pedestrians and cyclists; and provide a real alternative to the car for inter-urban travel in the form of a new cross-county public transport system.

Response:

- The document states it is keen to find more efficient ways to use existing infrastructure. This is admirable, and it will be a necessary part of any solution. What does it mean for a Hertford Bypass?
- The strategy discusses the basic and fundamental nuts and bolts of moving people from A to B. Should it not also think, discuss, expand and plan on a wider basis than this? For example, thinking about the role transport can play in stimulating existing town centres, such as Hatfield, new developments, such as the many proposed across the corridor, attracting employers and positively contributing to community cohesion. Should all of these wider effects be included, or even key aspects of, any investment decisions made on transport?

Delivery and Funding;

The A414 CSR: Many of the interventions put forward in this draft A414 Corridor Strategy are concepts. Following public consultation, if there is support for packages of interventions, there will need to be a process of assessing proposals in more detail. If however circumstances change, for example key housing and employment developments do not come forward in the way that has been envisaged, or new priorities emerge, a review of the Corridor Strategy may lead to a potential revision or evolution of the proposals.

If supported and approved, interventions will be adopted by Hertfordshire County Council in partnership with the Local Planning Authorities as well as relevant infrastructure operators, service providers and private developers. Not until more detailed investigations are completed which will involve engagement with communities and stakeholders on a case-by-case basis will interventions be implemented. In many cases, these will need detailed business cases to be developed that assess overall value for money and wider impacts.

Funding is also critical. Continual recognition and monitoring of potential funding opportunities is critical. Local Authorities are increasingly reliant on making bids to funding competitions often promoted by Central Government. It is important therefore that a robust case can be put forward for successfully obtaining funds. The availability of sufficient funding will play a crucial role in the implementation of proposals put forward.

Response:

- Who will deliver whichever system is chosen; how will it be funded? Have HCC considered, or are they going to consider, the possibilities of private finance or social enterprise transport networks? Are there creative funding models which exist which the County might look at? Hertfordshire will be competing for public funds against other towns and regions - any proposal must deliver tangible benefits whilst also being sufficient innovative to stand out from the crowd.
- How can we analyse and use the existing wealth of data we have available to provide an integrated ticketing network and real-time information? How will these be

integrated into whichever options are taken forward in to provide an attractive, useful and affordable public transport network which encourages modal shift and delivers a higher quality of life for the citizens of Hertfordshire?

In closing, the recent 'Constructing Excellence' report on UK Procurement contains some worthy observations, notably; *it is essential not to underestimate 'the importance of a clearly defined and robust pipeline of projects to enable procurement behaviour that is sustainable in the long term...Less than 8% of the projects and programmes presently listed in the National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline are sufficiently certain that contractors can invest in the skills and technology required to deliver them. This is driving unsustainable behaviours such as procurement based on lowest cost as opposed to value for money, high risk transfer to the private sector and inadequate investment in skills'*. Hertfordshire is not immune to such challenges and mindful of initiatives in other regions it is important that a solution is found which offers an effective, long term solution as opposed simply to a short term 'cheap and easy' quick fix.

Previous Charrettes have served to emphasise the great level of interest which exists within the wider community for devising effective solutions both to present congestion and the challenges posed by future growth. It is considered essential for any evolution of the present A414 Strategy to be devised with input from as many stakeholders as is feasibly possible. These should include institutions from both public and private sectors with a long-term interest in ensuring that Hertfordshire can become an attractive, equitable and prosperous place in which to live and work in the years ahead.



This reflects a strong desire to maintain a spirit of collaboration and aspiration with the hope that it is possible to deliver opportunities, not only for transport but indirectly for those with implications for public health and the environment.

I trust that these comments will be considered helpful and assist Hertfordshire County Council in progressing the A414 and related LTP strategies. I very much look forward to future opportunities for continuing open discussions on these matters in the future.

Yours faithfully

Anthony Downs

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