

1 A27 Feasibility Improvement Study

Context

- 1.1 The A27 improvement study was one of a series announced by the Government in 2013 to help identify and fund solutions to tackle some of the notorious and long standing hotspots in the country.
- 1.2 The study focussed on the A27 corridor between Portsmouth and Pevensey. It considered and analysed the evidence available and the potential issues/future pressures that may arise; the priority needs for investment and reviewed a number of potential investment options, and also assessed the strength of the economic case of the potential options including whether they demonstrated value for money and are deliverable.

Stage 1 – Evidence Gathering

- 1.3 Consideration of evidence and data, including from previous studies, identified a number of key issues with the A27 between Lewes and Polegate.
- 1.4 At present, there is an inconsistency in the quality of the road compared to other parts of the A27 and the safety record shows that the A27 is in the top 10% worst sections in terms of total casualties per billion vehicle miles. This section of the A27 is in the top 20% in terms of network delay and there are significant journey time reliability issues. These existing problems will be further exacerbated with the planned growth in East Sussex, and without improvement to this section of the A27, the road will be over capacity in 2021 and 2031 leading to further congestion.
- 1.5 When presented together, the evidence clearly set out that there are major operational challenges with the A27 east of Lewes:
 - it needs to be fit for purpose to provide greater connectivity to the A23/M23 corridor and Gatwick, the M25/London and beyond;
 - ensure journey time reliability which is important for business in terms of the movement of people/goods;
 - carry the long distance strategic traffic that it is supposed to cater for;
 - accommodate future growth plans; and
 - have greater resilience.
- 1.6 Therefore, the A27 was identified as a priority area for further consideration.

Stage 2 – Options

- 1.7 Consequently a number of on and offline options were identified by the HE/DfT for assessment:
 1. Off line dual carriageway between Beddingham and Cophall (£390 - 405m)
 2. Off line single carriageway between Beddingham and Cophall (£290 - 310m)
 3. Selmeston bypass (£30 - 45m)
 4. Wilmington bypass (£70 -90m)

5. Folkington Link (£35 - 50m)
6. Do minimum option: A22/A27 junction improvements (£5m) + sustainable transport improvements along length of A27

1.8 A plan showing these options is at Annex A.

Stage 3 – Option Appraisal

1.9 Each of the options was appraised against the Government’s WebTAG (Transport Appraisal Guidance). The forecast modelling used to support the appraisal of each of the options used the land use assumptions in terms of housing and employment identified in the Lewes, Eastbourne and Wealden Local Plans at the time.

1.10 The Appraisal Summary is shown below:

VALUE FOR MONEY	Strategic	Economic	Env'tal	Social	Financial	VfM - Journey time savings
A – Dual offline	High	Large Beneficial	Moderate Beneficial (Noise/AQ)	Large Beneficial	£405m	Poor – Low
			Large Adverse (Landscape/Biodiversity)			
B – Single offline	High	Large Beneficial	Moderate Beneficial (Noise/AQ)	Large Beneficial	£310m	Low – Medium
			Large Adverse (Landscape/Biodiversity)			
C - Selmeston	Poor	Neutral	Large Adverse	Slight Beneficial	£38m	Poor
D - Wilmington	High	Moderate Beneficial	Large Adverse	Large Beneficial	£85m	Poor
E – Folkington	Low	Moderate Beneficial	Moderate Adverse	Slight Beneficial	£44m	High/Very High

1.11 In summary, whilst the larger scale schemes – dual and single carriageway options – scored well against the strategic, economic and social criteria, and would improve noise and air quality but have an adverse impact on landscape and biodiversity, their value for money in terms of journey time savings were poor to low (Benefit:Cost Ratio of <1.5) in the case of the dual carriageway, and low to medium for the single carriageway option (BCR of <2).

1.12 The other smaller scale schemes didn't score as well as the single/dual carriageway options but the value for money in terms of journey time savings for the Folkington Link was above 2.

A27 Reference Group's position

1.13 The A27 Reference Group, which brings together local MPs, local authority leaders and the Local Enterprise Partnerships, lobbied Government and Highways England (formerly Highways Agency) at the time that the Feasibility Study was being undertaken for an offline dual carriageway improvement to the A27 between Lewes and Polegate (Option 2 as shown on plan at Annex A). The case was based on three elements:

- a) **Improved connectivity** - An improved A27 between Lewes and Polegate would strengthen the east-west links between our growth areas in Bexhill/Hastings, Eastbourne/South Wealden and Newhaven, providing greater connectivity and assurance in journey time reliability for existing and new markets to flourish between growth areas and driving economic growth across the county.

In addition, the ability to connect the Sussex economy quicker across the region to Brighton and the A23/M23 corridor; a potentially expanding Gatwick Airport; and the wider markets of the south east and beyond is also important to facilitating growth in East Sussex.

- b) **Delivering Planned Growth** - Improvements to the A27 east of Lewes is a vital component to facilitating and accelerating our economic growth plans as set out in in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Coast to Capital LEP Strategic Economic Plans and the borough and district local plans.

The current adopted Local Plans identify that across the Hastings/Bexhill, Eastbourne/South Wealden and Newhaven growth areas, over 20,000 new homes and over 250,000sqm of employment space will be delivered over the next 15 years. In addition, there will be further significant development over and above this level coming forward in the Hailsham and Polegate area as a consequence of Wealden's review of its Local Plan.

- c) **Benefits to local communities** - An improvement to the existing A27 will open up considerable benefits for local communities in enhancing their quality of life.

It will encourage traffic to more readily use the strategic road network for long distance and inter-urban journeys rather than using other less suitable routes through local villages to travel east – west through the county or through the South Downs National Park.

If substantial improvements are made, the existing A27 could to be used to create a gateway to the Park, provide enhanced facilities for vulnerable road users, as well as address the existing community severance issues. It will also address the significant safety issues with the A27 which currently affects journey time reliability and results in transfer of traffic onto less suitable routes through local villages to try and avoid delays, causing wider impacts on the safety and maintenance of the county road network.

Study Outcomes

1.14 The outcomes of the studies were announced as part of the Chancellor's 2014 Autumn Statement and are set out in the Department for Transport's (DfT) Roads Investment Strategy: Investment Plan. In relation to the A27 east of Lewes, the Road Investment Strategy identifies that £75m of funding had been allocated towards smaller scale improvements to increase capacity and improve safety as well as provide sustainable transport measures for pedestrians and cyclists along and across the A27.

2. A27 Smaller Scale Interventions Proposals

2.1 Following the outcomes of the A27 Feasibility Improvement Study, Highways England/DfT appointed consultants Atkins last year to take forward the development of smaller scale capacity improvements and sustainable transport improvements on the A27 corridor using the £75m available in the Department for Transport's Road Investment Strategy.

2.2 Over the last 12 months, Atkins have been gathering further evidence and developing proposals on these smaller scale interventions to increase capacity and improve safety as well as provide for pedestrians and cyclists along and across the A27 corridor between Lewes and Polegate.

2.3 Highways England will be consulting on various proposals between 28 October and 8 December 2016. Exhibitions displaying the options will be held at Lewes, Selmeston, Berwick, Polegate, Hailsham, Willingdon and Eastbourne over the consultation period.

2.4 The scheme options (including costs and benefit:cost ratios) being put forward for consultation are:

Option	Cost (£)	Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)
Selmeston		
A. an online improvement	47m	0
B. a near offline improvement (from Alciston to west of Charleston) or	45m	0.5
C. a far offline improvement (from east of Alciston to Middle Farm)	55m	0.8
Berwick		
Enlarge existing roundabout near Drusillas	10m	9.0
Wilmington		
A. Upgrade to single lane dualling junction, realign minor roads to introduce staggered junction and provide pedestrian crossing refuge areas on both major and minor arms	10m	0.9
B. Upgrade to ghost island right hand junction, realign Thornwell Road to introduce staggered junction and provide underpass	12m	0.9
Polegate		
A. Partial reconfiguration of the existing A27/A2270 junction to improve turning arm capacity and waiting time	12m	11.5
B. As A plus widen Polegate railway bridge to allow for a two lane dual carriageway with central reserve	17m	8
C. As A plus an additional lane is introduced on the northbound lane running over a widened Polegate railway bridge between this junction and Cophall roundabout	28m	8.6
Shared footway/cycle route		
Facility along the whole length of the A27 corridor and improved facilities at crossings	12m	0.9

- 2.5 In terms of timescales, Highways England are working towards the identification of their preferred scheme option by summer 2017. The development phase of the project - which includes the preliminary design, statutory procedures and construction preparation – would be completed by spring 2020. The construction phase would be between spring 2020 to spring 2023. However, depending on the outcome of the consultation and which scheme options go forward, Highways England could look to accelerate the delivery of the preferred option.
- 2.6 Whilst there are benefits with some of the proposals being put forward by Highways England in helping to address the existing capacity deficiencies on the A27 – in particular at Polegate and Drusillas – and less so with others, we would not want to see any of these short term improvements compromise our wider ambitions for more comprehensive improvements between Lewes and Polegate coming forward. As a consequence, we along with other partners - business and political - will also continue lobbying Government in parallel for further funding towards delivering an offline solution between Lewes and Polegate.

3 Roads Investment Strategy 2 (2020 -2025) and Making the Case for Further Investment

- 3.1 Over the next 12 to 18 months, Highways England (HE) and DfT will be reviewing their Roads Investment Strategy for the five year funding period 2020 – 2025. This presents an opportunity through the A27 Reference Group to strengthen our case to the Department for Transport for seeking further funding and a more comprehensive solution for the A27 between Lewes and Polegate to be included in the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS) period.
- 3.2 In particular, making the case will focus on the impact of the additional housing and employment growth in the Hailsham and Polegate area that Wealden are proposing as part of their Local Plan review in terms of:
- the impact that the additional development will have on the overall transport network and how an offline A27 between Lewes and Polegate fits into the package of mitigating strategic infrastructure improvements required to support the planned level of growth, and
 - updating the land use assumptions previously within the A27 Feasibility Improvement Study - which was the evidence base used by DfT for the allocation of the £75m towards the A27 in RIS1 - to reflect the significant levels of additional housing/employment coming forward in the Hailsham/Polegate area as part of the Wealden Local Plan review. The update to the study would appraise how the revised land use assumptions affect the transport benefit:cost ratios for the various scheme options, as set out in paragraph 1.7, considered in the original study.
- 3.3 In addition, we will continue to engage our business community through the LEP. Team East Sussex and the Alliance of Chambers in East Sussex regarding evidence they have on the positive benefits that an offline A27 improvement would have to existing businesses in the county as well as encouraging new businesses and jobs into the area.

Annex A – A27 improvement options considered in DfT/HE A27 Corridor Feasibility Improvement Study

