

Summary of the Development and Delivery of Strategic Infrastructure

1.0 Rail

1.1 Whilst the County Council does not have a statutory responsibility for rail, we work with and lobby Government, the rail industry and others for improvements to rail services and infrastructure serving the East Sussex. Much of the Council's lobbying for rail infrastructure improvements is through Network Rail's Route Studies process. However, there may be opportunities through devolution deals for the County Council to have a far greater input in the rail infrastructure planning process, to ensure Network Rail's investment programmes are aligned to deliver our growth plans.

Rail Strategy Priorities

1.2 The County Council's Rail Strategy, 'Shaping Rail in East Sussex' and supporting Action Plan were adopted in November 2013. This identified two main priorities for improving rail infrastructure and services in the County that improve connections to employment, education and training and support economic growth in the County. These were improvements (electrification/dual tracking) to the Marshlink line between Hastings and Ashford and electrification of the Uckfield line between Hurst Green and Uckfield.

High Speed Rail to Bexhill/Hastings

1.3 Network Rail undertook an in-house review in 2013 on how the rail service to Bexhill and Hastings could be improved. This initial work identified that there was potentially a good business case for electrifying the Marshlink line between Hastings and Ashford and running high speed rail services to Bexhill and Hastings. It would provide significant journey time savings.

1.4 To support this technical work, East Sussex, Hastings and Rother on behalf of the Hastings & Rother Taskforce appointed consultants Mott MacDonald to undertake a study last year to identify whether a strategic economic case existed for extending the high speed rail Javelin services from London St Pancras (HS1) to Hastings and Bexhill.

1.5 The report was published in October 2015 and identified that running high speed rail services will be a real game changer for the Bexhill/Hastings area and has the potential to 'super charge' the local economy and generate £354m of economic and regenerative benefits to the local area by 2044. It also identified that increased business investment and growth in Hastings and Bexhill will improve the image and perception of the area as a business location and increase the attractiveness of the area as a place to work and live.

1.6 This information will be used to feed into Network Rail's Kent Route Study which looks at the long term rail infrastructure requirements in the study area – which includes the Hastings-Tonbridge line and the Marshlink between Hastings and Ashford - to 2044. As part of the Route Study, Network Rail are looking at the various options for delivering high speed rail services to Bexhill, Hastings and Rye in more detail. Ultimately the study will set out options for funders on the infrastructure required to meet the expected demand and address the capacity gap as well as costs. In particular, the study outcomes will be used in Network Rail's negotiations with Government on the schemes that should be brought forward through the Initial Industry Plan (IIP) of potential schemes for delivery in Network Rail's Control Period 6 (2019 – 2024). In addition, there may also be opportunities for other funders (LEP's for example) to bid for funding that can

contribute towards the cost of the scheme. The Kent Route Study will be published for consultation in Autumn 2016 with the final version coming out in Summer 2017.

Sussex Route Study

1.7 The Sussex Route Study was published in September 2015 and sets out the long term rail infrastructure requirements in the study area - which includes the Brighton mainline and connecting routes (to Lewes), East Coastway from Brighton to Bexhill, Newhaven/Seaford branch line and the Uckfield line. The study developed options to deliver against the key challenges, subject to value for money, deliverability and affordability. The study primarily focuses on the Control Period 6 (2019-2024) but also looks ahead to 2043.

1.8 The study identifies a package of infrastructure improvements primarily to the Brighton mainline to support future rail capacity needs. The following schemes identified in the Study are currently under development and are proposed for delivery in Control Period 6 (2019 – 2024) schemes include:

- Victoria Platform 8 access and reversible working
- Additional track and grade separation at Windmill Bridge junction and an additional platform at East Croydon
- Coulsdon North grade separated junction
- Gatwick Airport track layout changes
- Haywards Heath turnback

1.9 Schemes for further development for Control Period 7 (2024 – 2029) and beyond include:

- Clapham Junction track layout changes
- Grade separation at Keymer Junction and additional platform at Wivelsfield

London – South Coast Rail Corridor Study

1.10 The Chancellor announced a study in his 2014 Autumn Statement, which was re-affirmed in his July 2015 post-election Budget, to look at improving rail links between London and the south coast. This includes upgrades to existing routes, consideration of the Brighton Main Line corridor improvements identified in the Sussex Route Study and re-examining the previous Lewes – Uckfield reinstatement proposals.

1.11 The Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned consultants in the Autumn to undertake this work. In summary, the work has been undertaken in three stages – firstly, an assessment of the anticipated demand in the short, medium and long term; secondly, an assessment of proposals and their feasibility; and thirdly, determining priorities. As a key stakeholder we are engaging with the consultant on the study at an early stage and ensuring the involvement of our Borough and District Councils, as this could influence their future growth plans, as well as other stakeholders in the process.

1.12 The consultant issued a draft report to DfT in early January, and is understood to be working on a final version. In terms of publication, the latest official statement from the Rail Minister, Claire

Perry MP (on 19 January in response to a question from Caroline Lucas MP) was “The Study is expected to be completed early in 2016, and the Government will subsequently consider the timeframe for releasing the study findings, including our response.”

Other Rail Investment

1.13 As part of their ongoing investment programme, Network Rail will be investing £30m on the Lewes – Newhaven – Seaford line over the next 2 to 3 years. £20m will be invested in re-signalling the line, refreshing the equipment and eliminating that which is redundant, with the project programmed for completion by 2017. In addition, Network Rail will also be upgrading the local power supply on the line, at an estimated cost of around £10m, as part of their resilience improvements to the East Sussex network.

2.0 Strategic Road

A27 Corridor

2.1 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.

2.2 The study focussed on the A27 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. The study also assessed the strength of the economic case of the potential options including whether they demonstrated value for money and are deliverable.

2.3 The A27 Reference Group, which brings together the local Members of Parliament, local authority leaders and the business community, lobbied that an offline dual carriageway was the only option which would improve connectivity, deliver planned (and future) growth and provide benefits to communities along or adjacent to the existing road. The outcomes of the study 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. This identified that around £75m had been set aside for improvements east of Lewes.

2.4 The DfT and Highways England (HE) have appointed consultants to take forward the development of the smaller scale capacity improvements and sustainable transport improvements using the available funding.

2.5 However, the A27 Reference Group are still advocating that a more comprehensive solution for the A27 east of Lewes is required, particularly as Wealden have identified in their Local Plan review - Issues and Options document that the substantial growth in the south Wealden area around Hailsham and Polegate will be dependent on improvements to the A27 corridor. This message was reinforced at a meeting between the Reference Group, Highways England and the DfT in January this year.

2.6 Rather than seeing the allocated funding used on smaller scale improvements, the A27 Reference Group continues to lobby Government for further funding towards delivering an offline dual carriageway between Lewes and Polegate that will meet the existing and future needs of the county, especially with the planned growth in Eastbourne/South Wealden and Newhaven.

Appendix 1

2.7 In the medium to long term, Highways England (HE) and DfT will be reviewing their Roads Investment Strategy for the five year funding period 2020 – 2025. This presents East Sussex with an opportunity to strengthen our business case for further investment in the A27 beyond the £75m. Therefore, to support our case a study is to be commissioned by the Reference Group (and potentially involving HE & DfT) to assess the wider economic and regenerative benefits an improved A27 would bring to East Sussex.

A21 Corridor

2.8 Improvements to the A21 corridor will support the previous and current investment in economic growth in Bexhill and Hastings as well as the future growth plans for the area set out in the SE LEP's Strategic Economic Plan. HE is currently constructing a dual carriageway improvement to the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury which is due to open in Spring 2017 at a cost of around £70m.

2.9 There have been long-standing proposals for improvements to other sections of the A21 over the years. Through the LEP and other forums, the County Council are and will continue to lobby Government and HE for these improvements to the A21. Particularly Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst and around Hurst Green, which provide greater journey time reliability between Bexhill/Hastings, Kent, London and beyond.

Bexhill Hastings Link Road

2.10 The Bexhill Hastings Link Road (BHLR) opened on 17 December 2016. The Link Road is an integral part of the strategic infrastructure package, along with the North Bexhill Access Road, North East Bexhill Gateway Road and Queensway Gateway Road, that supports the delivery of the housing and employment growth in the A21/A259 Bexhill/Hastings Growth Corridor. Specifically, the Link Road will enable the delivery of around 2,000 new homes and an estimated 3,550 gross jobs from the allocation of at least 51,000 sqm of employment space in North Bexhill. The North East Bexhill development is expected to generate an overall economic impact of £1bn in terms of GVA contribution to the sub-regional economy.

Devolution Deals

2.11 At present, investment decisions on improvements to the strategic road network are made by HE. These decisions have been influenced by the outcomes of their Route Strategies and Studies which we are consulted and provide evidence on to demonstrate the need for strategic road improvements. With devolution, there may be opportunities for the County Council to have a far greater input in HE's investment programmes to ensure these are aligned to deliver our growth plans over a longer timeframe. An initial devolution deal is being prepared to be submitted in 2016, working with our Three Southern County partners (West Sussex, Surrey and East Sussex County Councils).

3.0 Aviation

Airport Capacity in South East

3.1 As the Committee will be aware, the Government commissioned Sir Howard Davies in 2012 to examine the need for additional UK airport capacity and to recommend how this can be met in the short, medium and long term. The Commission's December 2013 interim report identified the need for one additional runway in the south east by 2030 and a further runway by 2050. The interim report

identified three potential options – two at Heathrow and one at Gatwick – for providing the additional runway capacity by 2030.

3.2 The Airport Commission's independent assessment of these three options was published in late 2014. As a County Council, we carefully considered the evidence presented by the Commission's assessment of the Gatwick proposals and held a full and open discussion at Full Council on 27 January 2015. A clear majority of County Councillors supported a second runway at Gatwick Airport on the basis of the economic benefits to East Sussex and job creation in the County, whilst recognising appropriate action by the Airport was needed to provide the necessary infrastructure and mitigate noise, environmental or other negative impacts on the residents of East Sussex.

3.3 The Commission concluded in July 2015 that a third runway at Heathrow was the preferred option for providing the additional runway capacity. Having considered the Commission's report, Government confirmed in December 2015 their support for the need for airport expansion in the south east. However, the decision on whether Heathrow or Gatwick should be expanded has been delayed to enable further assessment work to be undertaken on four key areas - air quality, noise, carbon emissions and managing the impacts on local communities - and identify an appropriate package of measures to mitigate the impacts on local people. This is now expected to be completed by Summer 2016.

3.4 Notwithstanding the outcome of the Government's decision, the majority of strategic road improvements on the A23/M23 & M25 corridors and rail improvements on the Brighton Mainline identified as critical to support a second runway are already identified as committed schemes in HE's and Network Rail's respective investment programmes. This will be supported with investment by DfT, Network Rail and Coast 2 Capital (C2C) LEP in re-developing Gatwick Rail Station to double the size of the concourse and improve access to all platforms.

Gatwick Arrivals Review

3.5 An independent review of westerly arrivals into Gatwick Airport (i.e. arriving in over East Sussex/Kent) was commissioned last Autumn by Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) in response to the substantial increase in complaints about aircraft noise from local communities.

3.6 The review team's final report was presented on 28 January 2016 and made 23 recommendations to the aviation industry which address the noise at source or seek to provide fair and equitable distribution of noise – 20 of which could be implemented within just 12 months. They include modifications to aircraft, a steeper ascent and descent, variation of flight paths to give residents respite from aircraft noise and the establishment of an independently chaired noise management board. The review team's report and recommendations have directly addressed a significant number of issues that the County Council have raised over the past two years.

4.0 Ports

4.1 Whilst the first phase of the Newhaven Port Access Road (NPAR) has been completed as part of the Eastside development, the County Council have been continuing the development work for the construction of phase 2 of the NPAR across the Newhaven – Seaford railway and Mill Creek to the harbour mouth.

4.2 Within the County Council's capital programme there is £13m allocated towards the scheme and this will be augmented with £10m in C2C LEP Local Growth Deal funding. The DfT have

identified the NPAR as one of their 'portfolio' schemes and therefore will retain the overall decision making responsibilities, rather than C2C LEP, for approving the release of the Growth Deal funding. Preparation of the business case is underway and we are working towards procuring a design and build contractor this year. At the same time we will be submitting the business case to DfT for approval in Summer 2016 to enable construction to start in early 2017/18.

4.3 The NPAR will support the wider investment being made by Newhaven Port and Properties (NPP) in the Port facilities. This includes the proposal for a deep water berth by E.ON energy in their windfarm operation and maintenance facility which will create 60 jobs. Furthermore, the continuation of the Newhaven – Dieppe ferry service has been secured with the French local authorities agreeing to take over its operation.

5.0 Local Growth Fund Projects

5.1 As highlighted in paragraph 1.2 of the covering report, in March 2014 the SE LEP and C2C LEP's submitted their proposals to Government for a Growth Deal to drive economic expansion in their respective areas over the next six years up to 2021. Within these are specific growth plans for East Sussex focussed around its three growth corridors – Newhaven Maritime and Clean Tech, A22/A27 Eastbourne/South Wealden and A21/A259 Hastings/Bexhill.

5.2 Both LEPs' initial Growth Deals were agreed in July 2014 with further Growth Deals agreed in February 2015. Within East Sussex, over £71m of Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies across the two LEPs has been secured to date towards infrastructure projects that will bring new jobs and homes until 2021. Over the last 12 months we have been developing business cases which demonstrate that the following LGF schemes represent good value for money and consequently have unlocked £11.35m of LGF monies allocated to East Sussex in 2015/16 to enable their delivery:

- Queensway Gateway Road (QGR) - a single carriageway road between the A21 Sedlescombe Road North and Queensway. The road is being promoted by Sea Change Sussex (SCS) and will facilitate access to the employment sites allocated in the adopted Hastings Local Plan Planning Strategy to the north and south of the road. The road will facilitate approximately 12,000sqm of employment space on these sites, creating around 900 jobs. The business case was approved by the SE LEP in March 2015. Planning permission was granted in December 2015, site clearance has been completed and construction is expected to start in March 2016.
- Newhaven Flood Alleviation Scheme (NFAS) - comprises flood defence works to the east and west banks of the tidal Ouse in Newhaven and was identified in the Environment Agency's 'River Ouse to Seaford Head Strategy' approved in 2012. The implementation of the scheme would reduce the flood risk to over 1,060 existing residential and 476 commercial properties. It will directly create some 1,460 jobs, open up 9,125 sqm of commercial floor space and enable the delivery of 494 new homes. The business case was approved by the SE LEP in June 2015. The Environment Agency (EA) are currently tendering for the main works and they are expected to start in 2016/17 and completed by 2019.
- Eastbourne/South Wealden Walking and Cycling Package – the package comprises a number of routes and complementary measures that will provide an expanding walking and cycling network for the area. These routes will encourage walking and cycling between existing residential areas and key trip attractors in Eastbourne and South Wealden area, along with supporting the 10,000 new homes and 80,000sqm of employment space identified in the respective adopted Local Plans. The scheme's business case for £2.6m of the £8.6m

allocation, was approved in June 2015 and the first schemes from the package (£0.6m) will be delivered by the end of the financial year.

- North Bexhill Access Road (NBAR) - a 2.4km single carriageway road link between the A269 Ninfield Road and the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road (BHLR). The road being promoted by SCS will unlock 38,000sqm of employment floor space in North Bexhill identified in the 2006 and 2014 Rother District Local Plans. The NBAR also provides the road infrastructure to unlock the proposed urban extension in North East Bexhill with potential to directly unlock land for (approximately) up to 780 new homes. The business case was approved by the SE LEP Accountability Board in November 2015. Planning permission was granted on 11 February 2016 and land acquisition/site clearance planned for the end of the financial year. Construction is expected to commence in July 2016.
- Swallow Business Park - is a 3.4 ha (8.4 acres) greenfield development site near Hailsham in East Sussex with extant planning permission for 14,829 m² of employment space in the business use classes. The developer is required under the planning permission to construct a junction and new access road from the A22 to service the site as well as wider site infrastructure works before any development can commence. On completion of these works, the developer will speculatively build out 1,952 m² and support the creation of 508 jobs. The business case was approved by the SE LEP's Accountability Board on 12 February 2016 and works are planned to be undertaken in 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- Site Infrastructure Investment Package – In the Growth Deal extension approved in February 2015, £1.7m was allocated towards a package of site infrastructure at Sovereign Harbour. Since then SCS have reviewed the outline business case and identified that the costings for the infrastructure at Sovereign Harbour were less than envisaged. Accordingly, SCS have developed a full business case to use the £1.7m to develop site infrastructure across three sites – Sovereign Harbour, North Bexhill and North Queensway. This change in scope has been approved by the SE LEP and Government with the business case being approved by the SE LEP's Accountability Board on 12 February 2016.

5.3 With further Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies allocated to other schemes or packages in future years, we are continuing to develop the business cases to unlock these remaining monies available up to 2021. This includes a business case to unlock £3m of the £6m allocated to the Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package which will be used towards the cost of the Terminus Road improvements associated with the extension to the Arndale shopping centre.

5.4 As more schemes are approved and allocated funding from 2016/17 onwards, this will enable much greater flexibility in the movement of financial resources between identified LGF infrastructure projects and allow the County Council and its delivery partners to continue to deliver its programme more effectively. We are also fully expecting further LGF rounds from central Government calls, for which we estimate the opportunity to access between £30-50m. As such, we are continually engaging with our Borough/District Councils and other private and public sector delivery partners on developing a strong pipeline of projects that we can put forward in future bids.

6.0 Superfast Broadband

6.1 Communications networks are vital for economic growth and prosperity. They enable existing businesses to survive, grow and prosper as well as enabling new and innovative businesses to emerge and develop. They enable global market presence from a local scale. The commercial and

business model changes enabled by communications networks are delivering benefits to the private sector and they can also apply in the public sector. New means of delivering public services to all, and new ways of interacting with citizens mean that more and better public services can be delivered at lower costs, resulting in cost efficiency and service benefits for citizens. Having the right communications network is therefore vital to deliver on economic growth. It is a key component for attracting inward investment and retaining, growing and developing skills in the workforce that are necessary to compete in the modern economy.

6.2 However, it is not just about public and private sector economic benefits. Universal communication and access to a broadband network supports and sustains a connected society. It can empower citizens and consumers to engage effectively across health, education, politics, commerce, social inclusion and all aspects of life, delivering benefits well beyond economic benefits.

6.3 Whilst private sector telecoms providers continue to roll out superfast broadband across the country in response to the market, there are significant parts of the UK that remain commercially unviable for investors. East Sussex, where BT Openreach is the incumbent telecoms infrastructure provider, is no different. In response, East Sussex County Council signed a contract in May 2013 with BT to deliver a 3 year programme of infrastructure improvements that will improve internet access for homes and businesses in the county. East Sussex County Council contributed £15m; Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK, the Government department located within the Department for Culture Media and Sport) provided £10.64m and BT c£4.4m capex.

6.4 The project is one of 44 across the UK, all of whom signed contracts with BT for the delivery of Next Generation Access infrastructure. The East Sussex project will mean that by 2016, alongside existing commercial broadband rollout plans:

- 96% of all properties in the county will have access to superfast broadband of at least 24 megabits per second (mbps)
- Every property in East Sussex will have a basic broadband offering of at least 2mbps

This compares very well to other areas, some of whom are still struggling to meet 80% coverage levels.

6.5 The project deploys fibre solutions as far as possible for future proofing. BT's technical solution is based on a proven set of fibre-based solution components (Generic Ethernet Access or GEA) that are currently being deployed across the UK as part of BT's main Next Generation Access rollout. GEA is capable of delivering speeds of up to 80mbps through Fibre-to-the-Cabinet (FTTC) and up to 330mbps via Fibre-to-the-Premises (FTTP).

6.6 FTTC is currently one of the most globally deployed superfast broadband technologies and is deployed following BT's standard planning rules to identify clusters of premises and their associated telecoms cabinets that can be upgraded to fibre. In some cases customers are connected directly to the exchange (Exchange Only lines), usually because they are either very close to the exchange or are in outlying areas where flexibility provided by a local Primary Cross Connection Point (PCP) is not necessary.

6.7 In these cases BT can do network rearrangements to facilitate FTTC solutions as a means of increasing the coverage of fibre speeds. East Sussex was one of the first areas to deploy network rearrangement, which BT does not do as part of its own rollout and so helped set the standard for the business process that is now in general use. Where conditions do not allow FTTC to be deployed, the

project explores the alternative of deploying FTTP. This generally happens in areas that do not have suitable cabinets, or where distances exceed the limits for superfast speeds to be delivered over FTTC. However, it is the most expensive option to deploy by far and is generally not cost effective compared to FTTC. In all cases, BT re-uses existing assets (ducts, poles etc) as far as possible to keep costs to the project as low as possible.

6.8 Coverage levels in East Sussex will be extremely high by the end of the project in 2016. Because of this, what remains will be premises for which the economic viability or value for money from the public purse is much harder to justify. Nonetheless, the County Council successfully negotiated a second contract with BT which extends coverage into the more “hard-to-reach” areas. It should be noted that hard-to-reach does not mean more geographically or technically challenging but much more expensive to deliver to.

6.9 The new contract, signed in June 2015, will run until at least 2017 and is funded by the following contributions: ESCC £4m; BDUK £2m; BT £265,060 capex. £4m from County Council sources was removed from Contract 1 as there were no coverage outcomes attached to the funding. Deployment under the new contract will focus on extensive network rearrangement in order to overcome the most common drawback of FTTC deployment, which is the issue of long copper lengths (where fibre speeds drop away over the last line of copper from the fibre-enabled cabinet to the end user). Coverage under this contract is expected to increase overall coverage to 97%.

6.10 Basic Broadband of 2mbps. A satellite voucher scheme is being used to deliver the Government’s “Universal Service Commitment” to ensure that all homes and businesses have access to download broadband speeds of at least 2mbps. Under the scheme, residents and businesses which have speeds below 2mbps are able to apply for support for a satellite broadband connection. It is expected that some 2,000 premises in East Sussex will fall into the sub-2mbps category. A subsidy is being provided to cover most of the cost of installation and commissioning of a satellite broadband service. The applicant will be responsible for paying any remaining cost of installation and commissioning (if any), for choosing the features of the satellite broadband service required, and for paying the monthly subscription for the service. The scheme was launched nationally in December 2015 and is being administered locally by the County Council’s Broadband Team.

6.11 The “Universal Service Commitment” is part of the existing contract, signed in May 2013, and is being run by BT as holders of the contract with local authorities. BT, in turn, has contracts with the satellite broadband platform providers and the satellite broadband retail services providers (i.e. infrastructure and retail service providers). Currently there are 11 retail service providers on the approved list. The scheme is open for applications until the end of 2017.

6.12 The performance on the current project continues to deliver to time and within budget. All contractual milestones continue to be met (some ahead of schedule) with 63,674 premises out of 65,000 connected to Next Generation Access infrastructure as at 31 December 2015. Of these, 53,913 premises are able to receive speeds of 24mbps and above (85%). This figure will grow as the project completes. Speed band splits are:

- Access Line Speed (ALS) > 100mbps = 1,077
- ALS > 50mbps and ≤ 100mbps = 39,077
- ALS ≥ 30mbps and ≤ 50mbps = 9,977
- ALS ≥ 24mbps and ≤ 30mbps = 3,782
- ALS ≤ 24mbps = 11,087

6.13 It should also be noted that BT is currently re-running speed data as its previous data were not completely accurate – for example, in Isfield, where the exchange area has gone from dial up speeds to superfast, the speed files are currently showing 0mpbs which we know to be untrue. Speed data will be reported once new information is received and it is anticipated that superfast figures will increase. All 76 exchange areas now have live structures, 340 FTTC cabinets have been installed, 10 FTTP areas have been completed (with more underway) and 629km of fibre cable has been installed as at end December 2015. The project is due to complete by end June 2016. The extension project (contract 2) begins deployment early in 2016 and will cover an additional 5,000 premises. Take up of fibre broadband is currently running at 25.6% against the target benchmark for all projects of 20%.

6.14 East Sussex will continue striving to find solutions for the remaining premises that are not currently benefitting from the commercial or public investments. This includes working with BT to look at emerging technologies over the course of Contract 2 deployment. Dialogue with alternative suppliers and assessment of alternative technology solutions such as fixed wireless continues.

7.0 Mobile Telephony Infrastructure

7.1 Mobile services are now at the heart of how most people stay in touch. In the UK, 95% of households use mobile phones and 16% have no voice landline at all. Mobiles are also important to business. Research commissioned by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in 2014 found that almost three quarters (71%) of small businesses say that mobile phones are crucial or very important to their business. The Government has identified two issues with mobile coverage in the UK: “not-spots” – areas where there is currently no coverage available; and the “partial not-spots” – areas which have coverage from some but not all of the four mobile networks.

7.2 To tackle “not-spots” the Government provided £150m (compared to £530m for Next Generation Access broadband) to improve mobile coverage in areas where there is currently no coverage from any of the Mobile Network Operators through its Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP). This funding supported the construction of mobile infrastructure, while the mobile network operators provided funding for each site’s operating costs for the 20 year life of the project. To tackle “partial not-spots” the Government put in place a new legally binding agreement by mobile operators to invest a guaranteed £5bn to improve infrastructure by 2017; and to guarantee voice and text coverage from each operator across 90% of the UK geographic area by 2017.

7.3 Two sites in East Sussex were identified by the MIP project for investment: one at Colliers Farm, Rushlake Green was granted planning permission in February 2015; the other at Town Row, Rotherfield unfortunately failed to come forward for planning permission before the funding deadline passed. Although having no formal role in the MIP, the County Council met with Arqiva (the Government’s contractor) and Wealden District Council as the Local Planning Authority on several occasions to assist in bringing forward both sites. The County Council will continue to work with the SE LEP and/or other stakeholders to lobby for and facilitate investment in East Sussex.