

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements
Meeting/Date:	Cabinet – 18th July
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development – Councillor Ryan Fuller
Report by:	Clara Kerr, Planning Services Manager (Growth)
Wards affected:	All, but specifically St Neots Wards and Wards in the southwest of the District

Executive Summary:

On the 3rd June an eight week consultation on proposals for improving the route between the A428 Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet roundabout, including the construction of a new dual carriageway and a number of new junctions, was launched. The consultation seeks feedback on the proposals for the scheme including:

- Detailed alignment of the route
- Junction designs
- Enhanced routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- Plans for environmental mitigation

This follows a previous consultation held in 2017 on preferred route options and proposals for the Black Cat roundabout.

This scheme is a key part of current investment in the area and will improve journey times for residents and businesses particularly during rush hour on the A421, A1 and A428 at the Black Cat roundabout. It will support local and regional economic growth by way of improved access to the ports of Felixtowe and Harwich and it forms part of the wider scheme Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford (CaMkOx) Expressway. The National Infrastructure Commission identified in their report "Partnering for Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc", economic prosperity is not guaranteed. Without investment in new infrastructure designed to support housing growth and link communities, the area will fall behind and fail to attract or retain the talent which helps maintain its position in the UK economy.

Due to its size, this is categorised as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project which are required to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport. Highways England plan to submit the application, subject to the outcomes of the current consultation, in early 2020. If it is successful, a Development Consent Order will be granted.

The full consultation can be found via the link to [A428 consultation 2019](#) (Appendix 1). The consultation closes at 23:59 on Sunday 28th July 2019. Page 80 of the document also lists a number of consultation events which includes St. Neots Priory centre on Friday 21st June.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is recommended to provide comments on this consultation and delegate authority to submit the Council's final consultation submission comments on this consultation to the Head of Development and Planning Service Manager (Growth), in consultation with the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an outline of the consultation on the proposals for improving the route of the A428 between the Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet roundabout, including the construction of a new dual carriageway and a number of new junctions.

1.2 The report provides:

- Feedback on the previous consultation
- Details of the section of the chosen route alignment
- Outlines improvements for walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- Seeks a formal response on the support for the scheme submitted

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

2.1 The A428 improvement scheme is one of a number of key strategic transport schemes within the district. A previous consultation was held in 2017 on the preferred route options and proposals for the Black Cat roundabout.

2.2 The preferred route was announced in February 2019. The 'Orange' route as supported by this Council was chosen with some minor changes to move it slightly further south-west from St Neots where it crosses Potton Road and the B1046 as also recommended by this Council. The Orange route is shown on pages 16 and 17 of the consultation document.

2.3 This process will inform the Development Consent Order (DCO) application to be submitted to government in early 2020, with the DCO examination anticipated later that same year. It is hoped that the Planning Inspectorate (PINs) will issue their recommendation in 2021, with the DCO decision following shortly thereafter. It is anticipated that construction would start in late 2021 with the road itself opening in 2025/26.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

3.1 The current consultation provides the opportunity to provide any feedback on the final proposals including on:

- Detailed alignment of the route
- Junction designs
- Enhanced routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- Plans for environmental mitigation

3.2 The existing A428 near to St Neots and Caxton Gibbet is the only remaining stretch of single carriageway between the two key economic hubs of Cambridge and Milton Keynes. The road is regularly congested and causes significant delays to the public and businesses. The Black Cat roundabout, where the A1 meets the A421, and the A428 near St Neots is a daily source of delays and congestion – currently in the top 20% nationwide.

3.3 Highways England aims to support economic growth in the region and across the wider country through the delivery of the proposals. The scheme has seven objectives

- Connectivity
- Safety
- Economic Growth

- Environmental Improvements
- Accessibility
- Resilience
- Customer Satisfaction

4. CONSULTATION DETAIL AND OFFICER RESPONSE

4.1 The route, including the minor changes from the 2017 consultation, is shown in Appendix 1. It includes a new three tier junction at Black Cat roundabout for free traffic flow; new junctions at Caxton Gibbet and Cambridge Road to connect the new dual carriageway to the existing A428; a new Roxton Road link to connect Wyboston and Chawston; new bridges over the new dual carriageway at Roxton Road, Barford Road, the B1046; and new bridges over the River Great Ouse and East Coast Main Line Railway. This report includes an initial officer response that has been developed collaboratively with colleagues from Cambridgeshire County Council Highways, South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Greater Cambridge Partnership and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

4.2 Proposed Scheme

For ease of understanding the scheme is broken down into the Western and Eastern sections of this scheme. The Western section focusses on the A421, through Black Cat beyond the Cambridge Road Junction to Croxton. The Eastern Section overlaps the Western section between Cambridge Road and Croxton to Caxton Gibbett. The routes are shown in more detail on pages 20 - 23 of the consultation document.

4.3 Black Cat Junction

4.4 The new Black Cat Junction will have three levels with the A1 passing under the new Black Cat roundabout and being below ground level; the new and bigger Black Cat roundabout being at ground level; and the new dual carriageway passing over the Black Cat roundabout and being above ground level. Access to Roxton via Bedford Road on the south-west side of the junction will remain the same. Full details are set out on pages 26 and 27 of the consultation document.

4.5 Cambridge Road Junction

4.6 A new two-tier junction to the east of the existing B1428 Cambridge Road roundabout will provide access to the new dual carriageway. As shown on pages 28 and 29 of the consultation document this will give greater access for those travelling to and from St Neots and provide better connections into the town and to the train station.

4.7 Eltisley New Link

4.8 As noted, the new dual carriageway will affect the current access to Eltisley from the A428 and B1040 St Ives Road. The new link, as shown on pages 30 and 31 of the consultation document will enable access to the village from the above roads using two roundabouts and a bridge of the new dual carriageway. There will be no access onto the new dual carriageway at Eltisley.

4.9 **Caxton Gibbet Junction**

A new two tier junction will be created at Caxton Gibbet to allow vehicles to travel to and from the new dual carriageway from the A1198, as set out on pages 32 and 33 of the consultation document.

4.10 **Walkers Cyclists and Horse Riders**

4.11 The needs of walkers and cyclist are highlighted in the scheme. The priority is to maintain and improve safety whilst ensuring that everyone can continue to reach their destinations.

4.12 The Wintringham development in St Neots has been considered as part of the scheme to ensure the proposals integrate and complement those of the recently approved strategic site. Key changes are identified at the Black Cat Junction, Wintringham development, Cambridge Road junction, Fox Brook bridge, Toseland Road bridge, Eltisley link and Pillar Plantation underpass and Caxton Gibbet junction.

4.13 **Officer Comments**

4.14 The initial officer response below has been developed collaboratively with colleagues from Cambridgeshire County Council Highways, South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Greater Cambridge Partnership and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Officers are currently considering drafting a joint response in addition to our individual responses to reinforce the significance of this infrastructure.

4.15 Key messages that we will want to reinforce in the Council's consultation response are: the importance of this project; the importance of ensuring that there are no further delays in the programme; the importance of the A428 as part of a multi-modal transport solution; and the benefits of the construction of the project starting at the Caxton Gibbet end. At this time of drafting this report officer discussions are still under way, and centred around 4 key themes. Any additional comments will be provided before or at the meeting:

Topic	Officer Comments
Traffic Impacts	
Traffic modelling	The traffic assumptions are unclear. Further detail is required to understand and analyse figures referenced.
	Where are the extra 24,000 vehicle movements referenced on the new road coming from, and what growth assumptions have been used? The scheme needs to support other transport initiatives, particularly those encouraging more sustainable modes of transport.
	What will the impacts be on local roads, specifically in the St Neots area? Other than the quantification of traffic flows on Cambridge Road, St Neots, and on the old A428, the information presented does not provide any information on how the scheme will impact upon traffic flows in St Neots.
	Modelling outputs will also inform the assessment of the impact of the scheme on CO ₂ emissions and climate change for the locality.
	A monitor and manage approach to potential traffic impacts on villages, with a commitment to introduce mitigation

	measures should the scheme fail to deliver expected reductions in traffic levels, or if other problems occur should be required.
Transport	
	There is no segregated cycle provision included along the route which would be anticipated to promote sustainable development. The new road needs to be part of a multi-modal transport solution including cycleways.
	Due to the growth approved and planned along the scheme, it is considered that the works should start at Caxton Gibbet.
	More needs to be understood on the traffic management of the existing A428 and the new one as it comes on line to ensure any impacts on local communities, such as St Neots, is considered and minimised.
Environmental issues	
Red line boundary	Is this wide enough? It needs to ensure there is the necessary space for enough land for landscaping. Lessons have been learnt from the A14 DCO where additional applications outside the DCO have been required e.g. due to landscaping requirements and change in land ownership
Flood risk	It is noted that the new road may potentially cross over 20 watercourses and a number of areas at risk to flooding. Where appropriate measures should be implemented to reduce the risk to existing communities such as those in St Neots. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) could be incorporated into the development.
Air Quality	An update will be provided at the meeting.
Noise	An update will be provided at the meeting
Green Infrastructure	<p>The A428 project also provides excellent opportunities to deliver objectives of Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Habitat Opportunity Map key areas for grassland, wetland and woodland creation across the county. Paxton Pits Nature Reserve, a 78 hectares of lakes, riverside, meadow, reedbed, scrub and land, is a key local initiative which could benefit from the connections with biodiversity and public access initiatives.</p> <p>The inclusion of green bridges at key locations across the scheme, such as Black Cat, River Great Ouse and Eltisley/Croxton would be expected.</p> <p>Legacy projects and their potential implementation should be considered from an early stage with partners.</p>
Zero carbon	It is unclear how this fits into the Government agenda of achieving Zero Carbon? The levels of ambition around environment need to be demonstrated.
Social issues	
Communication	It is important to understand how local communities will be engaged and kept informed during the delivery of the scheme. Further information on this is required.

Local impact	The accommodation of road crews during the build programme is not clear. Lessons learnt from the A14 have shown that not enough accommodation either onsite or at caravan sites where needed was planned for in advance.
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5. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 Subject to the DCO consent and funding for the scheme being approved by central government, it is anticipated that delivery would likely take place as part of the Government Road Investment Strategy. Construction is expected to start in late 2021 with the road being opened in early 2025/26.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND / OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The Corporate Plan includes a work programme and actions that include:

- Supporting new and growing businesses and promoting business success
- Supporting economic growth in market towns and rural areas
- Promoting inward investment
- Influencing the development of the Highways and Transport Infrastructure Strategy
- Facilitating the delivery of infrastructure to support housing growth
- Improve the supply of new and affordable housing, jobs and community facilities to meet current and future need

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The District Council is a statutory consultee to this process. As a tier 1 stakeholder it will enable the Council to participate in the Examination in Public that will consider the DCO application, if it so wishes along with other partners, including Cambridgeshire County Council.

8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 8.1 The preferred route detail has considered the recommendation by members from 2017 and:

- a) retains the local road along its whole length between the A1 and Caxton Gibbet;
- b) provides a free-flow route for the A421/A428 and the A1 through the new Black Cat junction, as well as supporting all movements within the junction;
- c) aims to support the free flow of the A1 and so should assist the future A1 improvement scheme, and
- d) aims to support and form part of the wider Cambridge – Milton Keynes - Oxford (CaMkOx) Expressway.

- 8.2 In light of the above it is recommended that:

The Cabinet provides comments on this consultation and delegates authority to submit the Council's final consultation submission to the Head of Development and Planning Service Manager (Growth), in consultation with the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader.

9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – A428 – Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements
Appendix 2 – Consultation Response From

BACKGROUND PAPERS

A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements Consultation June 2019

[Report to April 2017 Cabinet - A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements](#)

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