

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 19th August 2013
Report of: Corporate Manager of Strategic Infrastructure
Subject/Title: Notice of Motion - High Speed Rail 2 (HS2)
Portfolio Holder: Cllr David Brown, Strategic Communities

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report has been prepared in response to a notice of motion proposed by Councillor David Brickhill at Council which states that if HS2 is to be built, Council will only support its construction if, where possible, to avoid agricultural land and buildings, the Cheshire East section is underground.
- 1.2 The Motion draws attention to the fact that the sections through Crewe and Manchester are planned to be underground and that by extending the tunnelling work would save the blight and eventual loss of high quality agricultural land and numerous residential and business properties.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to:
 - Update Cabinet on the Government's plans and programme for delivering a high speed rail network in the UK, the next steps and what is being done by HS2 to lessen the impacts of the proposal on land and property.
 - Identify what actions have been taken by the Council to date to ensure these impacts are addressed
 - Provide a response to the Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor David Brickhill.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the ongoing activities being undertaken to ensure that the Borough derives maximum economic benefit and minimal harm to land and property from the HS2 proposals.
- 2.2 That Cabinet note the response to Council to the Notice of Motion stating its commitment to continue to work with the local community and HS2 to change the current proposals, wherever possible and prudent to do so, to avoid the loss of agricultural land and buildings.

3.0 Reason for recommendations

- 3.1 HS2 needs to provide a much greater focus and scrutiny on the local impacts and work harder to understand these and resolve them. The Borough needs to

secure the best outcome in terms of maximising the potential economic benefits whilst ensuring the harm caused to its environment and communities is minimised at the local level.

- 3.2 The Council's aim is to secure changes to the proposals for HS2, wherever it is possible and prudent to do so, to increase the amount of tunnelling, cuttings and false cuttings, for example, and to reduce the severance of communities and farms by providing bridges and under bridges along the route. Where such changes can be secured, the Borough would suffer reduced blight, maintain the maximum amount of productive farmland and reduce the loss of property.

4.0 Ward affected

- 4.1 Crewe North, Crewe South, Crewe East, Crewe West, Crewe Central, Leighton, Haslington, Wybunbury, Bunbury, High Legh, Mobberley, Chelford, Brereton Rural.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Councillors Mo Grant, Dorothy Flude, Steve Hogben, Peggy Martin, David Newton, Chris Thorley, Peter Nurse, Michelle Sherratt, Irene Faseyi, Derek Bebbington, John Hammond, David Marren, Janet Clowes, Michael Jones, Steve Wilkinson, Jamie Macrae, George Walton, John Wray.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 A major national project such as HS2 has national policy objectives (see Section 10.0). Addressing the development impacts of a project of this scale will cover all the Council policy areas within the scope of the emerging Local Plan and would form the policy framework for considering the proposal.

7.0 Financial implications

- 7.1 None

8.0 Legal implications

- 8.1 None

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 None

10.0 Background

- 10.1 The Government has made HS2 one of its priority national infrastructure projects, which will aim to deliver key economic and transport objectives. The Government's key policy drivers behind its plan to deliver HS2 are:

- Transforms travel in Britain.
- Keeps Britain competitive.
- Changes the country's economic geography.
- Ensures the investment delivers a sound macro business case.
- Achieve huge increases in rail capacity.
- Slashes journey times between cities.
- Significantly reduces the demand for internal UK flights.
- Promotes long-term and sustainable economic growth.
- Helps to bridge the north south divide.

10.2 The HS2 key specification is:

- New High Speed Trains and new Classic Compatible Trains, the later being capable of running on the existing rail network.
- Maximum speeds of 225miles/hour, enabling a maximum line capacity of 18 trains per hour.
- To operate at maximum speed the track should be on a curve of no greater than 1m in 7200m. The total train length would be 2 units 400m, which can be split, and carry around 1100 passengers.
- Stations would have platforms around 500m long with an approximate 1km to 1.5km widening on each approach and associated roads, parking (up to 4000 spaces) and other access arrangements

10.3 The Government is planning to develop the HS2 network in 2 phases.

- Phase 1 would see the construction of a line from London Euston to the West Midlands with a link back onto the West Coast Main Line (WCML) in the Lichfield area. The line would have a spur off into the centre of Birmingham and a link to HS1 and the Channel Tunnel via the North London Line.

New stations are proposed for Birmingham City Centre, Birmingham International Airport, Old Oak Common (for interchange with Cross Rail, Great Western Line and Heathrow Express) and changes at Euston Station.

Classic Compatible High Speed Trains would operate from Lichfield back onto the WCML to serve destinations in the north west, including within Cheshire East. The target first year of operation is 2026.

- Phase 2 would see the completion of proposed HS2 "Y" network. A branch would be taken from the Phase 1 line north of Birmingham to serve the East Midlands, South Yorkshire and Leeds with a link back onto the East Coast Main Line from this point.

The second branch of the "Y" would see the continuation of the Phase 1 line from the Lichfield area to somewhere either north or south of Preston where it would link back onto the WCML. This would include a spur line to serve a station in the centre of Manchester and at the

Airport. It is proposed that the Classic Compatible Train services would continue to operate in the north west once this Phase 2 is operating, including through Crewe.

Three broad lines of route were considered; ones through the east of the Borough with no station, ones following the M6 corridor and ones following the West Coast Mainline. The West Coast Mainline option has been preferred as it was believed to provide the best balance between economic, environmental and community impacts. The target first year of operation is 2032/33, 6 to 7 years after Phase 1.

For both Phases of the project, the HS2 team has identified potential depot and maintenance site locations to support HS2 operations. These have been strategically placed along the route and would support growth and job opportunities in the areas identified. An Infrastructure Maintenance Depot is proposed at Crewe.

- 10.4 The Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP announced the initial preferred line of route and station options in January this year and the first round of public consultation was launched in July and this will run until the end of January 2014. It is expected that the decision on the final preferred option for Phase 2 will be made toward the end of 2014.
- 10.5 The HS2 project would have significant transport, economic, environmental and social impacts across the Borough. The Council has been and will continue to be engaged with the Government and HS2 Limited at both political and officer levels as to influence the HS2 proposals. A key success to date has been to ensure the initial preferred route is via Crewe, which, if confirmed, would enable access to high speed services to London at a reduced journey time of 55 minutes and boost jobs and economic activity in the Borough.
- 10.6 HS2 Limited did give consideration as to how the strategic impacts can be reduced. By selecting a route that follows the existing national infrastructure corridors of the West Coast infrastructure corridor, major roads and power supply lines, means rural areas currently less affected by major infrastructure remain so. They have also shown the use of bunds, cuttings, tunnels and natural features, as well as soft landscaping and highlighted areas for noise protection and reduction measures all to reduce the impacts.
- 10.7 Having said this, in the south of the Borough at the point where both the Classic Compatible Trains join the HS2 network and the Basford Sidings connects to the West Coast Main Line, the proposals require an extremely high layer of rail connections which would have very significant noise and visual impacts and community severance.
- 10.8 In the north of the Borough, the height at which the route is proposed to cross over the Manchester Ship Canal means the optimum route is to go over the M56 due to line gradients. With the inclusion of the triangular delta junction to provide a spur into Manchester, this means the links on and off the HS2 north

to south route have a more significant impact on its surrounding areas as well as seriously affecting numerous farms.

- 10.9 In total, of the approximate 40km of proposed route proposed through the Borough, there is around 4.4km in a tunnel under Crewe, 12.7km broadly along the line of the West Coast Main Line, 9km in cutting and 4.5km broadly along the line of existing overhead power lines.
- 10.10 Overall for the Borough, it is considered that the HS2 proposal would cause significant detrimental local impacts, particularly in our rural areas during its construction and once completed. This will include the years of blight and eventual potential loss and demolition of many properties, including farms. For others they will be affected by dust, noise pollution and the visual impact of the corridor as well as the impacts of severance of farms and communities as land is divided and local roads diverted, disrupted or even closed.
- 10.11 HS2 needs to provide a much greater focus and scrutiny on the local impacts and work harder to understand these and resolve them. Members and officers have already been working hard to influence HS2 to ensure a better balance is achieved between maximising the potential economic benefits to the Borough whilst ensuring the harm caused to its environment and communities is minimised at the local level.
- 10.12 The quality of our Borough both as a place to live and farm demands the highest standards of design, environmental protection and mitigation and compensation and this needs to be given greater recognition in the HS2 work going forward.
- 10.13 In response to this, the Leader of the Council and officers have attended a number of local engagement events within the local Parish Councils along the proposed route at which the serious concerns of local people, farmers and businesses were heard and relayed to HS2 Limited.
- 10.14 An on line portal has been established on the Borough's web site to enable people to highlight their concerns and these will be used to lobby HS2 through the consultation process.
- 10.15 The Leader of the Council has secured an agreement with HS2 Limited that they meet with a representative from each affected Parish Council to discuss the route proposals in detail ahead of the formal consultation events planned later this year. These meetings will enable a critical review of the local impacts and a discussion about how the proposals might be changed and additional mitigation provided.
- 10.16 Tunnelling would be the best engineering solution to remove the local concerns as expressed in the Notice of Motion. Having said this, the scope to introduce extra or extended tunnels is limited by certain constraints of the current proposal, the major ones of which are described in 10.7 and 10.8 above. Further, it would be a more expensive engineering solution, which could result in the overall project being unaffordable and poor value for money.

- 10.17 Having said this, meetings have already taken place with HS2, and will continue to do so, as to how the proposals can be changed. Wherever possible and prudent to so, our aim should be to increase the amount of tunnelling, cuttings and false cuttings, for example, and to reduce the severance of communities and farms by providing bridges and under bridges along the route. If such changes can be secured the Borough would suffer reduced blight, maintain the maximum amount of productive farmland and reduce the loss of property.
- 10.18 As such, this report recommends that the Cabinet should inform Council of its commitment to continue to work with the local community and HS2 to change the current proposals, wherever possible and prudent to so, to avoid the loss agricultural land and buildings.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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