

Meeting Minutes

Army and Navy Taskforce Meeting #10

Project Army and Navy Junction, Chelmsford

Location Virtual meeting

Date/Time 22 January 2021

Participants Cllr Kevin Bentley **KB**
Cllr Stephen Robinson **SR**
Cllr Dick Madden **DM**
Cllr Peter Sadowsky **PS**
Vicky Ford MP **VF**

	<p>Introductions</p> <p>KB opened the meeting by explaining the purpose of this Taskforce meeting was to inform about the dropping of an option for the Army and Navy junction but wanted, upfront, to express the need to phase all the upcoming roadworks that would be taking place in the Chelmsford area - A12 works at Boreham, Essex County Council works at Boreham, Chelmsford North East Bypass/Beaulieu Station and, of course, the Army and Navy – to manage the impact.</p> <p>KB acknowledged there would be upheaval, but said it was very good news to have this investment in Chelmsford and across Essex. He said there was to be a strong focus on planning and delivering the work in a way that minimised disruption.</p>
1	<p>Sustainable transport package</p> <p>The taskforce was given an overview of the sustainable transport measures that form a key part of the project, including a proposed new Park and Ride at Widford, expansion of Sandon Park and Ride and walking and cycling improvements at the junction. The importance of ensuring Sandon Park and Ride ran smoothly during construction was emphasised, with plans to extend the bus lane on Essex Yeomanry Way up to the on-slip from Maldon Road to help keep buses running freely. It was clarified that other improvement measures being progressed outside of the project were assumed as being delivered in advance of the junction options. This included proposed cycle routes, for example those being funded through the Emergency Active Travel Fund and the LCWIP routes. It was added that a cycle rewards programme was already running, through the Love to Ride app, and the council would encourage rail travel, although clearly the COVID pandemic was currently impacting on that.</p>
2	<p>Options assessment update</p> <p>The taskforce was updated on the various options assessment work that had been carried out, including transport modelling, park and ride modelling, and construction and economic assessment. It was explained that economic assessment in the UK usually favoured car-based schemes over public transport schemes because of the value placed on people's time, but that this was expected to change; a comment noted by VF. The group was told cost estimates had been updated, while noise and air quality monitoring and accident benefit analysis had also been completed.</p> <p>The four current scheme options were then presented, including a visual impression of each and a slide detailing advantages and disadvantage of the particular option.</p>

Meeting Minutes

Army and Navy Taskforce Meeting #10
22 January 2021

Starting with the Hamburger junction, the taskforce was told the option performed very well against project objectives and required a 16-month construction period.

VF asked it was possible to demonstrate the maximum hourly capacity of each option and was told this would not tell the whole story because if you let the maximum through it would flood the city centre and cause congestion. It was added that the project aimed to strike a balance.

VF felt that would be useful to help explain things if asked.

DM asked if the Essex Traffic Control Centre would still be in operation and able to change the traffic signals at the junction as required. The project team confirmed that this would be the case and that the scheme would utilise the best available technology to do this.

VF questioned the significance of 'higher noise and air quality impact', one of the Hamburger option's disadvantages. She was told that by the time the scheme is constructed that air quality is expected to have improved and the current air quality management area (AQMA) is not anticipated to be in place. It was added that none of the schemes would cause the area to return to it being classified as a specific air quality management area (AQMA). It was added that there would be increased noise because you would have more traffic going into the city centre, however that could be mitigated, particularly on Essex Yeomanry Way, by using noise barriers, which would not need to be intrusive.

KB suggested there would be a need to clarify any noise issue and was advised the issue would be covered during the public consultation in the summer.

VF said she was content with the disadvantages of the option on the basis they could be communicated. She said the Hamburger option had a good list of advantages and disadvantages that could be mitigated/explained.

The pros and cons of the Separate T-Junctions option were explained to the taskforce and the group were told it performed well against most objectives, however it had the highest impact on flood risk.

The two-way flyover option was explained, and the taskforce was told it would be significantly more substantial than the previous flyover and very visually intrusive. The option would offer the biggest reduction in queuing traffic at the junction and the highest journey time benefits for private vehicles, however it would cause increased congestion in the city centre and not align well with the Chelmsford Future Transport Network Strategy. There were a number of other disadvantages, including the longest construction programme, eight to 10 months longer than the Hamburger option and 11 months with just a single lane inbound and outbound on Parkway, significant construction impact and the highest air quality and noise impacts.

The project team then talked through the enlarged roundabout, which had a short construction programme and good opportunity to mitigate landscape impacts. The option had the lowest noise and air quality impact but the lowest journey time savings for private vehicles, delivering low value for money in economic terms. There would also be a limited reduction in queuing traffic.

The taskforce was told how the assessment of each option had been fed into a decision framework. It was described how this followed DfT business case appraisal guidance because the project was seeking Major Road Network funding. The appraisal was based on four elements - strategic, economic, managerial, and financial. A table was presented to

Meeting Minutes

Army and Navy Taskforce Meeting #10
22 January 2021

represent how each option performed in each case. The two-way flyover was the worst performing option and achieved the lowest overall score

the taskforce was told that this robust process had demonstrated a very strong case to drop the flyover option for the Army and Navy junction.

PS asked whether the team had modelled another flyover option from Princes Road to Chelmer Road and was told that this would be very difficult to build without loss of buildings and there would be very little benefit because queuing on Essex Yeomanry Way would still be significant.

PS referenced the bus lanes in Parkway and asked if they were being altered to a similar set up to Broomfield Road. If yes, he was worried this would introduce traffic back-up. He was advised there would be a bus gate which would allow buses to feed into traffic lanes and that when they were stopped they would be in the bus lane and not impacting on general traffic lanes.

VF said she believed people would understand the decision to drop the flyover option because of the construction period and impact on the environment and asked about the capital costs of the option. She was told that, despite it being the most expensive, the reasons for dropping the flyover were not based on costs.

VF advised business support was important, including the Chelmsford BID (Business Improvement District).

KB advised that upcoming project workshops included businesses. He agreed it was a good idea to talk things through with the Chelmsford BID.

DM advised he was a Director on the BID and reassured the meeting that engagement would take place. He was comfortable about removing the flyover option but felt it was important to explain the reasons for this to residents whose initial response would be that they needed a bigger two-way flyover.

KB agreed with this point because he felt people would expect to see what went before so it was, therefore, important to give them a full understanding.

SR outlined the importance of not allowing too many cars into the city centre because of congestion and emphasised the importance of encouraging sustainable transport and park and ride. He said the flyover was the worst option for encouraging park and ride usage.

KB said he believed more cars in the city centre would actually drive people away. He said fewer cars would mean more business, particularly with Chelmsford's excellent and improving public realm. The taskforce was assured that further engagement with businesses was planned.

The taskforce was advised by CCC that a planning application had now been submitted for a bridge to provide access to the Waterside development and the scheme made sure cycle connectivity was included to the Army and Navy junction.

KB advised that this should be part of the communications, that segregated cycle lanes were the way forward and this was a good example.

The taskforce was told that the project team recognised that business engagement was critically important and was planned for the following week as part of a series of partner briefings. The decision to drop the flyover option would be made public on Thursday next

Meeting Minutes

Army and Navy Taskforce Meeting #10
22 January 2021

	<p>week and the Taskforce was asked not to share the detail before then. It was outlined that all available channels would be used to communicate the message, including the scheme e-newsletter which had more than 1,100 subscribers. The main focus of the communications would be to explain the reasons behind dropping the flyover and to demonstrate the validity and benefits of the remaining options.</p> <p>VF advised it would be good to get a positive comment from the BID. The story would also be a viable proposition for radio news and possibly television as well. She noted it would be important to be clear about a date for completion. Chelmsford City Council's business e-newsletter, which is issued to about 4,000 businesses, was recommended as another appropriate channel.</p> <p>An animation, which explained the background to the project and latest progress, was shared with the taskforce. VF suggested that, in talking about the dropping of the flyover, it should be made clearer that the option would cause increased congestion in the city centre, have the longest construction time, and cause most economic damage during disruption.</p> <p>SR questioned the timing for public comment and whether it would cause frustration that people could not have a say at this stage. KB said it should be made very clear when the public would be consulted.</p> <p>The taskforce discussed the priority messages and the need to mention walking and cycling ahead of talking about cars.</p> <p>KB added the health of people needed highlighting too.</p> <p>KB requested the project team to adjust the animation script slightly without making it longer. He described the animation as making the scheme look fresh and modern and demonstrating Chelmsford going into a new phase of its existence.</p> <p>KB re-iterated the need to ensure work was planned properly in conjunction with all the other schemes that would be taking place in Chelmsford over the next eight years.</p>
3	<p>Programme of Chelmsford works</p> <p>A high-level programme of all upcoming major works in Chelmsford was displayed, clarifying current information about the timetable for these projects, which were scheduled from 2022 through to 2026. The taskforce was told that the Chelmsford North East Bypass construction was expected to be completed in advance of the Army and Navy construction and would mainly be offline works anyway so any impact would be minimal. The biggest concern and project that would likely have the most significant impact was identified as the A12 Junction 19 works at Boreham, but it was explained that more information was still needed from Highways England about its construction programme. It was added that potential for the works to overlap also emphasised the need for the Sandon Park and Ride to be expanded early so that people could instead come off at the Sandon junction of the A12 and use the Park and Ride and avoid the Boreham junction of the A12 and the Army and Navy. It was stated that the Beaulieu Station project was unlikely to be an issue because it was expected to be before the Army and Navy and construction would be offline, although it was acknowledged there could be more lorries on the road network as a result.</p> <p>KB and VF mentioned a need to brief MPs about the A12 and Junction 19.</p> <p>KB and VF stressed it was critical that the works phasing was right, including scheduling and timing of lorries using to the network.</p>

Meeting Minutes

Army and Navy Taskforce Meeting #10
22 January 2021

	<p>VF offered to write to DfT to try and reduce the programme and support the funding bid and asked the project team to assist with this.</p> <p>The task force was told the project team was aware of the need and desire to deliver a solution as quickly as possible and were doing all they could, but that DfT processes had to be followed in order to secure funding and deliver the best solution. It was added that the team had developed a good relationship with the DfT.</p> <p>VF said it was great to hear this comment and would reflect it in her letter to the DfT.</p> <p>SR suggested that works on the Beaulieu Park Radial Distributor Road (RDR1) and Radial Distributor Road 2 (RDR2) should also be considered in terms of coordinating with other major projects. He added that CCC had a desire for Park and Ride sites to become transport hubs, with park and pedal, parcel collection points and other services available.</p> <p>PS advised it would be sensible to review sustainable transport links and cycleway links from Baddow to ensure they worked; a comment supported by VF.</p> <p>VF requested a separate meeting with KB and Cllr John Spence about cycle lanes.</p> <p>The taskforce was advised there were ongoing discussions with DfT about the outline business case and that, positively, DfT had now agreed the process for review.</p>
4	<p>Risks</p> <p>The taskforce were advised of risks which could still impact the project programme, particularly mitigation of the flood risk and impact on the flood plain, land acquisition, identification of a preferred site for Widford on the overall project programme, utility diversions, and award of funding.</p>
5	<p>AOB</p> <p>It was suggested that the Waterside bridge access was added to the programme of works in Chelmsford.</p> <p>VF advised it would be good to ensure MPs offices - John Whittingdale MP (Sandon Park and Ride) and Kemi Badenoch MP (J19) – were aware of the upcoming communications.</p> <p>KB stated that the solution being developed by Army and Navy project would be for the next 100 years and must be right.</p> <p>DM confirmed the group had formally agreed with the decision to discount the two-way flyover option.</p> <p>SR asked about land negotiations for a Widford site and what support was needed from Chelmsford City Council. He was told negotiations were being taken forward by the project team and they would be in discussion with Chelmsford City Council.</p> <p>SR asked if Essex County Council was dealing with questions that had been in the media about Beaulieu Station. KB confirmed they were, saying the risks were real but being addressed.</p>

Meeting Minutes

Army and Navy Taskforce Meeting #10
22 January 2021

SR confirmed Chelmsford City Council had written to the Minister about the issue, supporting Essex County Council.

KB advised he was confident the matter would be sorted but no there was no definite answer at this stage.

KB thanked everyone for an excellent session and closed the virtual meeting.