

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director for Place
To
The Cabinet
On
18th March 2014

Agenda
Item No.

Report prepared by: Paul Mathieson (Group Manager)
Strategic Transport and Planning Policy Group

A127 Corridor for Growth – Economic Plan
Place Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillor: Councillor Cox
A Part 1 Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The A127 is a strategic corridor for south Essex linking the M25 with Southend and London Southend Airport. To the east of Basildon it is the priority route for traffic travelling to the Borough, Rochford and the Airport with links to the A130 and A13. To encourage and support economic growth along this corridor and the wider Thames Gateway area, significant improvements are required.
- 1.2. The attached document, “A127 Corridor for Growth Economic Plan”, has been developed in partnership with Essex County Council. It sets out the case for, and details of, the improvements required to unlock this growth and create a route fit for the demands placed upon it on a daily basis. This is a working document and will evolve as further work is progressed and implemented.
- 1.3. Cabinet is being asked to approve this Plan in its current form so that it can be submitted as a supporting document to the South East Local Enterprise (SELEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) submission at the end of March, which is making the case for investment in transport as part of the Single Local Growth Fund bid of Government.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 **That Cabinet approve the draft version of “A127 Corridor for Growth Economic Plan” as a working document for further development.**
- 2.2 **That Cabinet notes that this Plan will be submitted to SELEP in support of the Single Local Growth funding bid and that further work is underway as set out in the main body of this report.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The A127 is an ageing corridor (originally opened in 1924), but one that is a vitally important primary route for the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) area which connects the M25, Basildon and the Borough of Southend on Sea, including London Southend Airport and Rochford. It also provides access to the wider area including Brentwood, Billericay, Canvey Island and Wickford. The County Council, as the Highway Authority, is responsible for the route just to the east of the M25 to the Southend Borough boundary. This Council is responsible for the remaining length of road to Victoria Gateway junction with Queensway (A13).
- 3.2 The A127 suffers from congestion during peak hours, often extending outside of these hours and throughout the day. Due to its location, adjacent to the A12 and A13, and in the vicinity of the M25, any incidents on these routes leads to traffic using the A127 as an alternative.
- 3.3 The corridor carries a significant amount of traffic, with the highest volumes in excess of 70,000 vehicles per day (comparable to a motorway in other parts of the country and equal to some of the busiest sections of the A14). However, even with existing levels of employment and residential development the A127 has significant capacity issues and flows. These will need to be addressed to support the delivery of new jobs and housing growth along the corridor to areas such as the Basildon Enterprise Corridor (BEC), and the Business Park adjacent to London Southend Airport and the Southend Central Area, City Deal location and seafront.

4 A127 – Corridor for Growth Plan

- 4.1 To improve the corridor it is estimated, with the current proposed improvements for the A127, as being in the region of £76 million, excluding any widening. Both Essex and Southend Councils have considered the short, medium and long term requirements to improve the corridor and prioritised the investment need. Fairglen interchange has been identified as a priority within the next six years along with junctions at Kent Elms Corner and The Bell. The A127 Growth Corridor will form part of the funding bid to the SELEP with further funding opportunities will be investigated as one of the future Work streams.
- 4.2 Due to the A127 being an ageing asset there are maintenance issues that urgently need to be addressed if the road is to support and facilitate the planned growth for TGSE. The existing route is of substandard quality when compared with modern designs and standards, with numerous side roads and direct accesses. As a result, it is extremely sensitive to incidents such as collisions and broken-down vehicles.
- 4.3 The Plan seeks a joint, focussed and co-ordinated approach to improve conditions along the whole length of the A127 including planned measures for junction upgrades and improvements, maintenance, signing, lighting and safety camera installation. This follows the approach adopted by the

Highways Agency in setting out their route based strategies for motorways and trunk roads.

4.4 The A127 integrated package of asset and capacity improvements to be submitted to SELEP for funding includes the following projects:-

- A127 Pinch Point - Fairglen Interchange junction improvements
- A127 Improvements – lighting, safety barriers, signing, capacity improvements
- A127 Strategic maintenance Road Safety and Network resilience package
- JAAP A127 Kent Elms Junction improvement
- JAAP A127 Bell Junction improvement
- Essential Bridge and Highway Maintenance schemes in Essex and Southend
- A127 / Nevendon interchange – capacity improvements to grade separated junction
- A129 Pinch Point – Woodmans Arms junction
- A130 Pinch Point – Improved access to Canvey
- Basildon Integrated Transport Package

4.5 Work is progressing to further develop the Plan to meet the 31st March deadline. The Plan will develop in more detail and the following steps have been identified to take this forward the Plan:-

- Engagement with businesses, the public and other statutory bodies The A127 is a key corridor to economic growth across south Essex and the Thames Gateway. Support from businesses, the public and other statutory bodies along the corridor will strengthen the case for investment into this strategic link.
- Data Collection and Modelling Data collection modelling and origin and destination data analysis will be required to inform further development of the Plan and to aid initial design and testing of the individual schemes.
- Asset Management Development of a robust asset management plan for the route. Further survey work, data collection and analysis. Conduct specific pieces of work around noise and air quality.
- Detailed Scheme Options and Initial Design Widening: further investigation and options for widening the corridor to three lanes in Essex in both directions is required along with cost estimates. Essex County Council has set aside funding to start the design of the improvement schemes for the top priority junctions on the A127, Fairglen and Morbec Corner. Southend Borough Council has funding in the Capital Programme to continue the preliminary design of the A127 schemes to Business Case submission. A robust detailed asset management plan needs to be developed. Southend Borough Council (SBC) has engaged GAIST to develop a plan for the Southend part of

the corridor. To ensure consistency of approach and to strengthen the case for funding through partnership working, it is proposed that the ECC asset management plan is developed as a joint document.

- Corridor Management Develop an Incident Management Plan - alliance with emergency services, e.g. dedicated incident response for speedy recovery.
- Community Severance interruption of north south movements, accessibility issues - Review all issues resulting from severance, especially within Southend.

The next stages for this work and a programme are currently being developed.

5. Other Options

- 5.1 The do-nothing option has not been considered. The options developed as part of the Plan are scaleable and will be developed as short, medium and long term. The progress of the improvements will depend on the actual Single Local Growth Fund allocations made to LEPs in July.

6. Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The A127 Corridor for Growth is an essential document to support the development of a coherent strategy for improving and managing the A127. In order to demonstrate strong cross boundary working and the value and importance of the A127 Essex County Council and Southend Borough Council have agreed to work together to set out a forward plan over the next six years (SEP timescale 2015 to 2021) to make the case for improvement and maintenance funding to deliver the jobs and homes as part of TGSE.

7. Corporate Implications

7.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

- 7.1.1 The plan supports the aims and objectives of the Local Transport Plan, Local Development Framework Core Strategy, the JAAP submission version and draft Southend Central Area Action Plan together with the Council's Economic Plan.

7.2 Financial Implications

- 7.2.1 The Council has included in the forward capital programme funding to develop the business cases for the A127 schemes in Southend and funding for the Business park development associated with the JAAP. The Government will announce funding allocations for LEPs in July 2014 and the outcome of this will be subsequently reported to Council for budget decision for 2015/16 onwards.

7.3 *Legal Implications*

7.3.1 There are no legal implications

7.4 *People Implications*

7.4.1 Staffing for this project are within the current resource levels. Any schemes or projects resulting from this will be subject to individual business cases which will identify staffing and resource implications on a project by project basis.

7.5 *Property Implications*

7.5.1 Nil

7.6 *Consultation*

7.6.1 This is not a consultation, but consultation will follow as part of the developing plan.

7.7 *Equalities and Diversity Implications*

7.7.1 The plan starts to address some of these issues at a high level and each scheme or project will consider these implications in more detail and in relation to the specific location. The plan itself is not expected to have any disproportionate adverse impact on any group with protected characteristics.

7.8 *Risk Assessment*

7.8.1 A risk assessment is not required at this stage, but will be developed as the plan is refined on a project by project basis

7.9 *Value for Money*

7.9.1 The strategy will seek to ensure value for money is achieved by implementing maintenance and improvement works in the most cost effective manner.

7.10 *Community Safety Implications*

7.10.1 No community safety implications

7.11 *Environmental Impact*

7.11.1 None at this stage

8. Background Papers

8.1 A127 Corridor for Growth Plan (working document)