

HIGH SPEED 2 CHILTERN LONG TUNNEL PROPOSAL

Councillor N Blake

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the work that has been progressing regarding the proposed Chilterns Long Tunnel scheme and on going work regarding the petitioning process.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the content of the report and the detail of the proposed Chilterns Long Tunnel attached in appendix 1.
- 2.2 To recommend to Council that that the Chilterns Long Tunnel proposal is supported and presented to the Select Committee as a form of mitigation that is agreed by this authority.

3 Supporting information

- 3.1 The Government's proposed scheme for HS2 includes a bored tunnel element through a part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) from the M25 to Mantles Wood. From that point northwards the remaining 11km in the AONB is predominantly proposed to be at surface level, with some further areas covered by green tunnels, viaducts, cuttings and embankments.
- 3.2 Chiltern District Council have been leading on the matter of the impact of the Government's scheme on the Chilterns AONB and have long argued that the design of the route throughout the whole of the AONB does not take into account this special national designation and therefore fails to comply with key principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in particular paragraphs 115 and 116.
- 3.3 Work has been commissioned by Chiltern District Council to examine the options for alternative solutions to have an extended tunnel throughout the Chilterns AONB. This work was also supported by Buckinghamshire County Council, Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe District Councils as well as the Chilterns Conservation Board.
- 3.4 Peter Brett Associates (PBA) have produced a report supporting this proposal which attached as appendix 1 to the confidential part of the agenda. The main conclusion from the report is that a long tunnel for the whole of the Chilterns AONB is technically feasible and better protects the landscape of the Chilterns AONB. The second key conclusion is that it is a better alignment.
- 3.5 The key considerations by all parties involved in discussing this alternative option has been to ensure that the CLT proposal does not result in significant long term adverse impacts for other areas as a result and this has been the key issue for AVDC during the discussions regarding this proposal as it has evolved.
- 3.6 The overriding benefit of this scheme is that more of the route would be in a tunnel compared to Government's proposal and the tunnel route around Wendover would be realigned further to the west, moving it further way from

the communities in the built up area. This is clearly a positive improvement to the Government's scheme.

- 3.7 The key impacts for Aylesbury Vale of this alternative CLT proposal are that this proposal would result in a tunnel portal emerging into the landscape, a large temporary construction compound would need to be accommodated, together with the associated temporary impact there could be as a result of increased traffic to deal with the construction phase of an extended tunnel as opposed to the Government proposed scheme. There is also the matter of the location of any Fire Fighting Point that is required as well as an increase in the number of vent shafts required as a consequence of the proposed CLT to consider.
- 3.8 The northern portal where the train emerges from the proposed Chilterns Long Tunnel scheme would therefore be located in the Wendover area. The report details how this could be managed in terms of the impact on the visual amenity in this location and design treatments that could help to mitigate the impact in this sensitive location.
- 3.9 As the CLT scheme involves a bored tunnel, a construction compound would need to be temporarily accommodated in this area. It is suggested that a construction compound in the northern portal area would need to mirror the size of the compound at the southern end of the tunnel, close to the M25.
- 3.10 This is detailed in the section of the PBA report that deals with the tunnel impact. The PBA report outlines what area this construction compound might take, which includes an element of land adjacent to the existing railway line in the Stoke Mandeville area.
- 3.11 There is also the matter of how any tunnel arisings/spoil are dealt with and the options for these are set out in the report. There area number of alternatives, including removal by rail or a possible spoil pipeline, to deal with chalk arisings for example as well as road and all of these would need to be properly investigated by the promoters.
- 3.12 Our preference is for as much as possible of the arisings to be disposed of by rail or pipeline, as a key concern for us would be the additional impact that this could have on the local road network, as the construction period will be for a number of years.
- 3.13 The PBA report also raises some questions relating the need for the maintenance loop, which the Government's scheme proposes is at Stoke Mandeville, where it would destroy the whole of the Old St Mary's Church ruins, graveyard and deserted village. The issue of maintenance loops requires further consideration.
- 3.14 The Technical Specification for Interoperability on safety in railway tunnels requires some form of safety measure if the tunnel extends beyond 20km between portals. The proposed CLT is almost 25km in length from the southern portal to the proposed northern portal of the CLT scheme and therefore some form of safety measure will be required.
- 3.15 The PBA report has explored a number of options for this including improved Fire Fighting Points (FFP), which could possibly be accommodated at Little Missenden or the Firecrest at Wendover Dean. Our preference has been for this to be at Little Missenden, which seems to better meet the requirements.
- 3.16 The Leader of the Council and officers have met with Wendover and Stoke Mandeville Parish Councils to discuss the proposed CLT to understand their

respective positions on the matter and to help inform the Council's perspective on the alternative being proposed.

- 3.17 The conclusion of these discussions and consideration of all the matters outlined above is, that on balance and in the long term, the CLT offers a much better alternative to the Government's current proposed treatment in this part of the route and recommends that the Council should therefore support the CLT proposal and that this should be presented to the Select Committee as an alternative that has our support and should be accepted by the promoters.
- 3.18 If this proposed scheme is accepted, the promoters will need to prepare further detailed plans and proposals for how this scheme could be implemented and the impact, particularly of the northern construction portal can be mitigated and managed. AVDC would need to be actively involved in these discussions and detailed proposals, which themselves would be subject to formal consultation by the promoters.
- 3.19 As this matter relates to supporting and promoting a significant alternative proposal to the Government's scheme, a decision by Council is necessary, hence the need for this to be referred to Council.
- 3.20 More generally, our work on progressing the matters we have raised in our submitted petition continue and we do not expect to presenting our points to the Select Committee until sometime in the summer. It is hoped that the timetable for the Select Committee proceedings will be clearer after the General Election.

4 Options considered

- 4.1 Not supporting this proposal was discounted on the basis that to do so would not provide any opportunity to secure a better outcome in the long term if the HS2 scheme is to go ahead.

5 Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 To enable Cabinet to recommend to Council the approach it would recommend is adopted in relation to the CLT proposal.

6 Resource implications

- 6.1 A contribution of £10k has been made by this Council to the work on the CLT, which has been funded from the existing funds allocated by Council for HS2 related work.

Contact Officer
Background Documents

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None