

SUBJECT:	Assessment of National Infrastructure projects- cumulative environmental impacts
REPORT OF:	<i>Healthy Communities Portfolio Holder</i>
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	<i>Martin Holt, Head of Healthy Communities</i>
REPORT AUTHOR	<i>Martin Holt 01494 732055, mholt@chiltern.gov.uk</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All South Bucks Primarily Iver and the South Eastern Corner</i>

1. Purpose of Report

To discuss the implications of the current National Infrastructure projects planned or commissioned in South Bucks and the resources needed to undertake a baseline assessment and prepare a brief relating to the multiple impacts to quality of life in the district particularly the Southern Parishes.

RECOMMENDATION

To debate the cumulative impacts of major developments on South Bucks and recommend to the Portfolio Holder the approach to be adopted in response.

Agree and recommend to the portfolio holder that a baseline assessment be carried out to establish the current environmental, air quality and noise conditions in affected areas and the likely impact of the major developments identified to sensitive communities primarily in Richings Park, Middle Green, Taplow and Dorney to inform responses.

To consider and approve the necessary additional resource for the first stage of the process of monitoring, challenging and mitigating against adverse environmental impact in the form of funding a project to employ consultants to review the impacts on behalf of the authority.

2. Executive Summary

Despite pressure from both local and national developments South Bucks has always managed to protect the local environment and the peace of local residents as far as possible through local planning policy.

South Bucks District is located at an intersection between motorways, rail and air transport routes so has been adversely affected by significant national infrastructure developments over many years including Heathrow, Motorways and Railways, all of which have had a significant adverse impact on the quality of life in the District. Since the introduction of the National Infrastructure Plan in 2010 there has been increasing pressure to meet national demands and to achieve this growth local planning control has been steadily eroded for certain major projects.

Currently there are a number of proposals which will have a further significant impact on South Bucks primarily to the South and West around Iver including:

- Cross Rail
- Western Rail Access to Heathrow
- Smart Motorways
- Relocation of Heathrow Express to Langley (HS2)
- Heathrow 3rd Runway

Despite representation made to the developers in each separate consultation there is little consideration given to the cumulative effect of these works by either central government or by the project teams.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- To Debate the level and range of major impacts on the district and consider the resources required going forward to monitor and challenge adverse impacts
- To agree to resources to develop a reasoned case in response to HS2 off route proposals and the cumulative effect of major developments
- Ensure that there is sufficient well researched data to inform reasoned arguments and responses to proposals
- To ensure that the authority continues to represent the best interests of the resident and businesses in South Bucks

4. Content of Report

The quality of life in South Bucks is currently under threat from major infrastructure developments including changes to the railway network, road network and expansion of Heathrow.

The cumulative impact of these projects will have a variety of significant effects on the quality of life in parts of South Bucks.

A prime example is the current proposal for Heathrow Express relocation to Langley as part of the HS2 project, there is likely to be a direct impact on the communities in Richings Park and Middle Green as a result of this proposal. Additionally and within a similar timescale there are proposals to tunnel from Langley to Heathrow for the Western Rail Access project and the M4 Smart Motorway project will mean the demolition and reconstruction of all of the road and foot bridges along the M4. Each will have equally damaging impacts, however due to the phasing of the approval processes these impacts are currently being considered in isolation.

Due to the number and range of threats to the district it is important that a robust process is in place to provide environmental information and establish the current baseline, identifying the significant risks to the quality of life for communities in the district in terms of noise, air quality and water resources / flooding.

Environmental Health will support the planning policy team in developing a position statement for each of the identified infrastructure projects and by monitoring the application and environmental impact process. This will include where necessary undertaking baseline noise and environmental surveys to identify the current situation and assess the threats to residents and the environment. However due to current resources and with so many threats at once to this area internal resources are insufficient to address all of these issues and provide considered responses.

Members of the group are asked to consider the current situation in relation to resources for monitoring and responding to these threats and recommend their preferred approach to the Portfolio Holder including an agreement to make available a fund of £20,000 in order to improve our current knowledge, assist planning policy in providing well researched responses to each threat - primarily the proposed Heathrow Express Project which is being petitioned against as part of HS2 but to develop a baseline assessment and risk identification project.

The scope and nature of the proposed work will be designed to support and advance the specific responses to each project including the current rail and motorway projects and the proposed expansion of Heathrow.

In addition to the initial project to assess the likely impact of proposed schemes it is opportune to consider the ongoing resource requirements associated with monitoring for adverse

impacts, dealing with and challenging requests for such works which are likely to impact on residents or the environment within South Bucks.

5. Consultation

Not Applicable at this stage

6. Options

1. Agree and note that the significance of the threat to the quality of life in areas impacted by the current range of major infrastructure projects.
2. Approve the allocation of £20,000 from the fund already set aside to challenge or mitigate against the impact of infrastructure projects to fund a baseline assessment and inform the Authority’s environmental responses to major infrastructure projects.

7. Corporate Implications

Finance

The proposal is to set aside £20,000 from the budget relating to infrastructure challenge to cover the costs associated with commissioning a competent consultancy to undertake the work.

Legal

The authority is required to represent the best interests of its constituents. Although there is not a specific obligation to undertake an environmental assessment for a particular community in advance of major developments it is good practice to

8. Links to Council Policy Objectives

Links to Council Aims of Protecting the Environment and Promoting Sustainability.

9. Next Step

Commission a baseline environmental impact assessment to focus on the cumulative effects of major infrastructure projects on sensitive communities within South Bucks with a focus on the multiple projects impacting on the M4 corridor.

Background Papers:	None
---------------------------	------