Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Examination

Note on Infrastructure Provision – Ipswich Northern Route

1. This note responds to the Inspector’s post hearings letter, dated 31 January 2020, within which it is suggested that should a preferred route for a new Ipswich Northern Route be identified this should trigger an immediate review of the strategic policies of the Plan and that Policy SCLP2.2 should be amended accordingly.

2. In summer 2019, a consultation was undertaken by Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and East Suffolk Council on three potential route options. This is explained in the Council’s ‘Factual Note from East Suffolk Council on the Ipswich Northern Route for the Inspector’ (Document H9, July 2019). The consultation ended on 13th September 2019.

3. A Strategic Outline Business Case on the Ipswich Northern Routes was published in January 2020.

4. Following the publication of the Strategic outline Business Case, a report was considered by Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet on 25th February 2020 and at this meeting, the Cabinet decided to cease work on the Ipswich Northern Route. This decisions that the Cabinet were being asked to take are listed below, as set out in the Cabinet report:

“The Cabinet is being asked to receive the Strategic Outline Business Case, SOBC, for the Ipswich Northern Route (INR) project and note its conclusion that there is a strong case to continue the development of the Ipswich Northern Route, INR, project.

The Cabinet is being asked to acknowledge that completion of the SOBC marks the end to the current funding for the project. To progress the project would require widespread political support at all levels and evidence of the timely provision of detail of additional growth ambitions.

The Cabinet is being asked to acknowledge the responses by the district and borough councils to the issues of; a commitment to further housing growth beyond that outlined in current and emerging Local Plans; to confirm political support for the project. East Suffolk Council, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have stated that they cannot support these issues. Ipswich Borough Council support the project.

On balance, it is recommended that the Cabinet does not support progression of the project to the next stage.
The project has a broad range of objectives. The Cabinet is therefore asked to continue to support; ongoing work to secure improvements to the A14, its junctions and the Orwell Bridge by Highways England; to identify improvements to support economic growth in Suffolk, and to bid for funding; to set up a Task Force to build on existing initiatives to optimise existing road capacity and promote modal shift in Ipswich and the wider area to reduce congestion and support growth.”

5. The Suffolk Coastal Final Draft Local Plan contains reference to a potential Ipswich northern route in the context of this potentially forming a basis for the consideration of future options for housing and employment growth in a future local plan (Document A1, page 19). Policy SCLP2.2 Strategic Infrastructure Priorities of the Final Draft Local Plan identifies the Ipswich Northern Route as a strategic infrastructure priority and that the Council will work with partners to support and enable the timely delivery of the project.

6. In his letter dated 31st January 2020, the Inspector stated that given the potential significant implications for development in the Housing Market Area, should a detailed scheme be approved this should trigger an immediate review of the Plan and Policy SCLP2.2 should be amended accordingly.

7. Owing to the recent decision of Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet, the Council suggests it is appropriate to put forward alternative modifications which reflect the position rather than to follow the approach set out in the Inspector’s letter. It is acknowledged in the Ipswich Strategic Planning Area Statement of Common Ground that “Evidence informing the current adopted plans did not identify the need for a northern route, although all ISPA local authorities support the merit of the future project.” (Document A13, page 16, outcome H1). References to the route were therefore included in the Final Draft Local Plan in the context of future local plans reviews and not as being required to support growth planned for in this Local Plan.

8. Modifications are shown in strikethrough for deleted text and in underline for additional text. The Council will include these revisions in the schedule of modifications that has been collated as part of the Examination.

Modification to paragraph 1.29:

“The only trunk road in the District is the A14 that connects Felixstowe with Ipswich, Cambridge and the Midlands. The A14 is an important freight route and is fundamental to the success of the Port of Felixstowe and communities surrounding Ipswich. At times the A14 can become blocked which creates major impacts for residents, visitors and businesses in the area as there is no suitable alternative route. Over the plan period managing the capacity of the A14 as well as considering alternative strategic routes will be necessary. The Council fully supports the ongoing work of Suffolk County Council in considering potential options for routes to the north of Ipswich.”
Modifications to paragraph 3.34:

“The communities neighbouring Ipswich have in the past seen large proportions of growth directed towards them which has resulted in the established communities of Rushmere St Andrew, Kesgrave and Martlesham. These locations provide a comprehensive range of services and facilities which meet the needs of the local community and those of surrounding settlements. In April 2018, the Council granted outline planning permission (DC/17/1435/OUT) for the delivery of 2,000 homes at Brightwell Lakes as set out in the 2013 Core Strategy. The Brightwell Lakes site is significant in terms of infrastructure provision and housing delivery and therefore it is not currently considered appropriate to focus the strategy of the Plan on development in this part of the District. However opportunities are taken to plan positively for specific sites, including redevelopment of the Martlesham Police Headquarters and development of land at Humber Doucy Lane to support the delivery of housing in Ipswich Borough. In future Local Plan revisions, the Council will reconsider growth opportunities in the parts of the District neighbouring Ipswich, taking into account delivery rates at Brightwell Lakes and opportunity to bring forward development that supports the Business Case for strategic road routes to the north of Ipswich (as promoted by Suffolk County Council).”

Modification to paragraph 2.16:

“In addition to enhancements to the existing highway network and integrated transport solutions, including bus network improvements within the town and increased capacity of the local rail offering, a northern route around Ipswich is expected to be needed to enable growth in the longer term. The route would improve connectivity between the A14 and A12, reducing pressure on the A14 and improving network resilience, especially near the Orwell Bridge and Copdock interchange. Suffolk County Council published an Ipswich Northern Route Study in January 2017, which assessed three indicative broad routes. The Council fully supports the ongoing work of Suffolk County Council in considering potential options for routes, and it is expected that the next review of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (along with other Local Plans in the Ipswich Strategic Planning Area) will examine route options in more detail, including the extent to which the options might support potential future scenarios for housing and employment growth beyond that which is being planned for within this Local Plan.”

Modifications to Policy SCLP2.2:

“The Council will work with partners such as the other local planning authorities in the ISPA, Suffolk County Council, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Suffolk Constabulary, utilities companies, Highways

1 Previously known as Adastral Park. References in this document to Adastral Park relate to the adjoining area of employment uses occupied principally by BT.
England and Network Rail in supporting and enabling the delivery of key strategic infrastructure, and in particular the timely delivery of:

a) Ipswich Northern Route;
b) A12 improvements;
c) A14 improvements;
d) Sustainable transport measures in Ipswich;
e) Improved walking and cycle routes;
f) Increased capacity on railway lines for freight and passenger traffic;
g) Appropriate education provision to meet needs resulting from growth;
h) Appropriate health and leisure provision to meet needs resulting from growth;
i) Appropriate police, community safety and cohesion provision to meet needs resulting from growth;
j) Provision of green infrastructure and Suitable Alternatives Natural Greenspace;
k) Improvements to water supply, foul sewerage and sewage treatment capacity; and
l) Provision of appropriate digital telecommunications to provide mobile, broadband and radio signal for residents and businesses.”

Modifications to paragraph 12.178:

“Suffolk County Council has consulted on the potential for an Ipswich Northern Route. Decisions on any potential route have not yet been taken and the Council will continue to work in partnership with Suffolk County Council. Working in partnership will ensure that any Northern Route provides a number of significant benefits to the local community as well as realising the economic benefits that may be brought about in the future. Due to the uncertainties surrounding the Ipswich Northern Route at this stage, the Local Plan does not seek to identify any large scale developments which could potentially blight future options.”

Modifications to paragraph 12.324:

“Previous Local Plans have identified the A12 as the western limit of the town, beyond which growth would not be supported, and this Local Plan continues this approach. This Local Plan seeks to
continue that approach until such time as further detail and justification is available for the Ipswich Northern Routes and the situation can be reviewed. Consultation undertaken by Suffolk County Council in January 2017 identified a number of potential routes. These routes may have an impact on the town of Woodbridge and the Council is concerned that any development west of the A12 will blight the choices relating to this significant piece of infrastructure.”