

Response to Network Rail's consultation on the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme. **Decision of Councillor Nicky Massey:** Executive Councillor for Transport and Community Safety

20/URGENCY/P&T/20

APPENDIX 1

Network Rail stated that the "(EACE) programme is a proposal to upgrade the railway to allow more trains to run through Ely. The aim is to improve connectivity and reliability for passenger services and meet the demand for more rail freight between the Port of Felixstowe, the West Midlands and the North to support sustainable, long-term economic growth."

The consultation documents provide details to the challenges of increasing rail capacity in the Ely Area, which is shown in the consultation as covering the area down to Cambridge Station, and also details the elements of the scheme:

- removing existing speed restrictions across key bridges to allow trains to run more efficiently
- remodelling the track layout at Ely station to accommodate more train services
- modifying Ely station platforms to accommodate more train services
- remodelling the track layout at Ely North Junction to allow more trains per hour to pass through safely and efficiently
- upgrading the signalling system in line with any changes to the track layout
- upgrading or closing existing level crossings while maintaining connectivity of the road network.

On the last point running more trains would increase barrier down times at level crossings and the consultation says this may require additional measures to maintain safety for all level crossing users.

As Network Rail develop the rail options to improve capacity, they also need to understand the impact on road users and what they can do to maintain important road connections into Ely from surrounding communities.

All of these potential interventions will need to be assessed as part of the continuing development work for the EACE programme.

The consultation documents state how Network Rail want to work with the local community, local stakeholders and statutory bodies to better understand the areas they are working in.

Network Rail also outline the authorisation process they are planning to go through subject to funding being available, which will include a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application for any works not on Network Rail land.

This consultation also sets out Network Rail's proposed consultation timeline:

- Autumn 2020 public engagement about the EACE programme (this current engagement)
- Early 2021 Public consultation on Ely south area (currently funded)
- Summer/Autumn 2021 Public consultation on the options in the rest of the Ely area
- Autumn/Winter 2022 preferred options with the EACE programme (currently unfunded)
- Winter/Spring 2023 TWAO submitted (currently unfunded)
- Autumn winter 2024 TWAO decision (currently unfunded)

On the 8 February 2018 Cambridgeshire County Council's Economy and Environment Committee considered a report on a traffic study carried out in Queen Adelaide. The committee resolved:

- a) Note the proposals for wider regional and national benefits, of increased rail capacity through Ely North Junction;
- b) Note the potential impact on the whole community, residents and local businesses of increased frequency and duration of level crossing closures;
- c) Agree to oppose any measures that restrict traffic flow across the level crossings to the detriment of residents and local businesses until alternative solutions are put in place;
- d) Note the intention to explore opportunities with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to fund the options development for a road and / or rail solution and;
- e) Agree to continue to work with the Combined Authority, Network Rail and the Ely Area Task Force to develop a comprehensive solution that meets the needs of all Cambridgeshire residents and in particular the communities of Queen Adelaide, Prickwillow and Ely.

Main Issues:

The programme is looking at all the railway systems between Cambridge and Ely, Ely and Peterborough and Ely and King's Lynn. This includes:

- 126 level crossings,

- The Ely north junction track modifications
- Bridge structures
- Ely station and track modifications
- Signalling systems
- Ely station changes

Capacity:

The current capacity of Ely allows approximately six (off peak) to eight (peak) train services to run through Ely per hour in each direction. The EACE programme is looking at what interventions could be needed to increase capacity through Ely to be used by up to 10 train services per hour in each direction. This is expected to bring benefits to the national, local and regional economies and help ease road congestion across the region by taking freight off the road network.

The decision on which extra trains will run to which destinations has not yet been established, this will be established as part of the Outline Business Case. Train timetables will not be established for many years while upgrade work is being delivered.

Level Crossings:

Within the scope of the current programme, there are 126 level crossings which could be affected by these proposals. The level crossings are spread across the scope of the programme and includes the lines between Cambridge and King's Lynn, and Ely to Peterborough. Included within the scope is the Chesterton Level Crossing.

Increasing the frequency of trains also means that level crossing barriers will be closed more frequently and so Network Rail need to look at the impact to road users.

Network Rail state in some circumstances the frequency of trains running across a level crossing may mean that the barriers are down for significant periods of time, especially in peak hours impacting on traffic flow. If this happens, it may be better and safer to close a level crossing permanently and seek an alternative way for motorists to cross the railway safely. Any such proposals would need to be consulted with the local authority and the public to determine if an alternative route across the railway would be required to maintain road connectivity.

Network Rail has made no decisions at this stage regarding level crossing closures, but know that level crossings will need to be upgraded or where necessary closed if we are to increase rail capacity through Ely. Options for specific level crossings will be part of future consultation rounds.

Funding:

Network Rail has secured £13.1m funding from the Department for Transport and £9.3m funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Strategic Freight Network to understand the scale of the challenge to increase capacity through Ely. This funding will enable Network Rail to develop the Outline Business Case (OBC) and submit this to the DfT (by mid 2022) to consider the case for further funding for the next stages of consultation, design and development.

Proposed main response points:

- The Councils support capacity improvements in the rail network that enable a greater number of trips to Cambridge and other locations on the line, including Waterbeach new town, to be undertaken from Ely to Cambridge by rail as a sustainable mode of transport and reduce car trips on the network and carbon impacts but would also encourage further investment in improvements that would increase the number of services.
- The consultation recognises that the increases in capacity proposed would increase downtime of crossing gates in the area that extends to Cambridge station. This includes a particular issue at Chesterton Fen crossing (lying south of Cambridge North Station) which already experiences long waits to access the Chesterton Fen Road area, where residents and businesses have no alternative vehicular access. The impacts of further increased downtime on both safety (at the crossing and in terms of emergency access) and community and economic wellbeing need to be fully recognised and an appropriate response identified and implemented. The Councils would welcome the opportunity to continue to work with Network Rail, alongside other partners in the CPCA and Cambridgeshire County Council on this important issue.

Appendix A: Proposed joint response by South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council Councils to Network Rail's consultation on the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme

Background Papers

The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme consultation materials are available online: <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/our-routes/anglia/ely-area-capacity-enhancement-scheme> and <https://elyareacapacity.com/>

Cambridgeshire County Council Economy and Environment Committee 8
February 2018:

<https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/678/Committee/5/Default.aspx>

Appendix A Proposed joint response by South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council Councils to Network Rail's consultation on the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP), on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, thank Network Rail for the opportunity to comment Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme. The comments provided are high level and the GCSP recognises that Cambridgeshire County Council's response (as the highway authority) will provides detailed comments on technical aspects.

The GCSP support the proposals to increase capacity for passenger and freight services through the Ely area. Increasing the use of rail for these journeys will reduce the amount of road traffic through the region, with associated benefits to affected communities, reduction in carbon emissions, improved air quality, improved access for communities to services and facilities. It would enable a greater number of trips to Cambridge and other locations on the line, including Waterbeach new town, to be undertaken from Ely by rail as a sustainable mode of transport. The improvements should support the local, regional and national economies and with the delivery of future growth. However, the Councils would also encourage further investment in improvements that would increase the number of services.

Network Rail should ensure the full impacts, across the whole EACE area, are duly considered and appropriately mitigated. There are a number of level crossings across the EACE area which could be impacted by the increase in rail traffic, particularly as a result of longer barrier down times.

In particular the GCSP would draw attention to the need to address the existing issues with the Chesterton Level Crossing on the northern fringe of Cambridge. Chesterton Level Crossing bisects Fen Road which provides the only vehicular access to residential and business uses, including a large Traveller community. The crossing is controlled by means of a full barrier. On weekdays there are currently at least six train movements an hour in each direction, resulting in the barrier being down for around 33 minutes out of

each hour. This is having a negative impact on the Fen Road community and potentially leads to frustration and possibly encourages high risk behaviour with the associated implications for public safety. Any future increase in frequency in trains running along this line will likely further exacerbate the problems. The impacts of further increased downtime on both safety (at the crossing and in terms of emergency access) and community and economic wellbeing need to be fully recognised and an appropriate response identified and implemented.

The GCSP urge Network Rail to continue to work with the local planning authorities and the transport and highway authorities at the earliest opportunity to explore measures to address the Chesterton Level Crossing, in the short-term as well as the longer-term as the EACE scheme progresses. If Network Rail were to determine the crossing should be closed alternative vehicular access would need to be provided. The Planning Authority and County Council have sought to understand options to address this existing issue and would welcome further engagement with Network Rail's team to explore the feasibility of alternative access options available. EACE scheme development and future funding bids must in our view consider this issue further.

It is crucial that the impacts on existing and planned communities are considered and it is vital that all affected communities and businesses across the whole EACE area (not just in the Ely area) are fully engaged as Network Rail progress through future stages. This includes ensuring consultation methods are fully inclusive to everyone, and target 'hard to reach' groups.

The GCSP would urge Network Rail to accelerate planning and delivery of the EACE scheme to provide clarity and greater certainty for the local planning authorities in delivering future growth in Greater Cambridge and Cambridgeshire, and to realise the benefits to local communities.

The GCSP looks forward to working with Network Rail going forwards to deliver this important scheme.