

Strategic Transport Forum 15th December 2017

Agenda Item 5: A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Forum:

- a) Express its concern at the deferment in the announcement of a preferred route for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement.
- b) Seek urgent clarification from Highways England on the timescales for identifying a preferred route for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet.
- c) Seek urgent clarification from Highways England on the timescales for considering the next steps for the A1(M) East of England strategic study.

1. Context

- 1.1. In October 2016 the Forum published its position statement – Planning for Growth. This identified five immediate investment priorities, one of which was the delivery of the Oxford – Cambridge Expressway.
- 1.2. The Forum's agreed position on the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement is to:
 - Support the need for investment to address the issues associated with the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet; &
 - Support the need for the investment to be made to a standard consistent with the longer-term ambition to realise an Expressway standard route between Oxford and Cambridge.
- 1.3. Delivery of the improvement is identified as priority for the first Road Investment Strategy (covering the period 2015-2020).

2. The Forum's Agreed Position

- 2.1. Earlier this year Highways England consulted on the route choices for the scheme, including alternative junction layouts for the Black Cat roundabout itself.
- 2.2. In responding to the consultation the Forum supported Highways England's view that there is an urgent need to improve the A428 between Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet. As the consultation documents set out very clearly, this section of the A428 corridor as being one of the most congested sections of the Strategic Road Network, one on which there is a need to improve safety conditions.
- 2.3. The National Infrastructure Commission has identified the critical importance of improved east west connectivity in enabling the economic potential of the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge arc being realised.

- 2.4. Set in this context the Strategic Transport Forum's agreed position (April 2017) in respect of the proposals published for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet were set out in its consultation response (Annex 1)

3. Next Steps

- 3.1. It is understood that an announcement on the preferred route for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet has been deferred. Indications are that this is in part due to the need for Highways England to consider the output from the A1(M) East of England Strategic Study.
- 3.2. As the first major investment in the delivery of the 'expressway' the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet is important for the signal it gives that the Government's commitment to enable the economic potential of the arc to be realised will be followed through.
- 3.3. Equally important is the need for clarity on the preferred route for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet in order to enable this to be taken into consideration in the emerging Local Plans. The latter is important given the need for Local Planning Authorities to be able to consider infrastructure investment alongside consideration of future land allocations.
- 3.4. The latter point is all the more important when it comes to the next stage of the A1(M) East of England Strategic Study. The A1(M) corridor is of strategic significance not just in terms of its current role within the transport system, but also in terms of enabling Local Planning Authorities to consider the inter-relationships between corridor and future land use allocations.
- 3.5. With Local Planning Authorities under pressure to take investment in strategic transport infrastructure into consideration when preparing their Local Plans there is an urgent need for clarity on the timescales associated with the next stage of the A1(M) East of England strategic study.

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