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Dear Mairead

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S BID TO LOCAL MAJORS GROWTH FUND FOR BUSINESS CASE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING HEREFORD BYPASS

Highways England is pleased to support the bid to the Department for Transport for business case development costs for the Hereford Bypass scheme.

Highways England considers that a bypass for Hereford is an essential requirement to enable the city to deliver the increases in houses and jobs set out in your adopted Local Plan Core Strategy. Indeed, in making representation to the Examination in Public, Highways England made clear its position that the proposed Plan allocations would not be viable in the absence of such a bypass, since the current A49 trunk road has no capacity to absorb the traffic that this development will generate.

In that context, I can confirm that assessments undertaken by Highways England (with the full cooperation of your authority) have shown that the bypass would deliver a number of benefits to the strategic highway network.

The existing trunk road, which passes through the heart of the City, is subject to significant congestion throughout extended periods of the working day. The consequent delay to long distance through traffic, particularly freight, has significant adverse impact on the UK economy. Despite the A49 forming a key element of the most direct route linking North and South Wales many motorists choose to take the much longer route via the M5 and M6, generating unnecessary user costs and increasing demand on the critical Birmingham Box motorways.

In recent years, Highways Agency/Highways England have undertaken a number of schemes to maximize capacity of the current alignment and, unfortunately, there is no scope further improvements.

The benefits from reduced journey times and improved journey time reliability for long distance traffic that the proposed Bypass would bring, would contribute to the delivery of Highways England's own growth targets. There would be reduced delays to long distance traffic which, in turn, would encourage use of the direct route along the Welsh border and, at the same time, providing relief to the West side of the Birmingham Box.

Highways England has agreed with your authority the analysis of the likely benefits to the strategic highway network as set out in section 6 of the bid document. Highways England also notes the proposed governance arrangements for delivery of the Bypass business case and will work with the Council to support delivery of the project and take an active role supporting the development and promotion of the project.

We also note that in addition to the strategic benefits accruing to Highways England's network, the scheme would also create potential for local benefits to residents of the City.

Agreement by the Secretary of State for Transport at some future date that the Bypass should take the place of the current A49 within the strategic road network would assist delivery of the objectives set out in Herefordshire Council's Local Transport Plan. Until such a decision were to be taken, the long-distance through traffic would continue to be signed along the current alignment through the City as it would be inappropriate to direct it onto the local network.

The Council would gain the ability to introduce measures on the current route that would encourage more short distance journeys within the City to be made by bike or bus or on foot. You would also be able to reduce the severance imposed by the road corridor through the provision of additional active mode crossings and an improved public realm.

Economic considerations arising from constraints on capacity prevent the introduction of these measures whilst the A49 through the City has to cater for long distance traffic. The diversion of those strategic movements to the new Bypass would improve air quality within the built environment and may well assist in the delivery of other health benefits by encouraging a more physically active populace.

Highways England looks forward to continuing to work closely with Herefordshire Council in the delivery of this key element of infrastructure for Herefordshire, the Marches, the wider region and Wales.

Yours sincerely



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