



Suffolk County Council

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# SUDBURY TRANSPORT STUDY

Options Assessment Report





Suffolk County Council

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## Options Assessment Report

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## ***APPENDICES***

### APPENDIX A

#### ENVIRONMENT CONSTRAINT MAPS

### APPENDIX B

#### EAST ASSESSMENT

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 PURPOSE

- 1.1.1. This options assessment report (OAR) describes the selection of a preferred option (and scheme) via a multi-criteria analysis to address the transport related problems of Sudbury. This report explains the selection process and the methodology, and presents the results from the assessment.
- 1.1.2. The report has been prepared in accordance with the Department for Transport's Transport Analysis Guidance<sup>1</sup> (TAG Transport Appraisal Process, WebTAG). The report documents the problem identification and option development process that has been followed to identify the best performing options to be considered for further assessment.

## 1.2 OVERVIEW

### STAGES OF APPRAISAL

- 1.2.1. WebTAG envisages a three-stage process for scheme development and appraisal:
- i Stage 1: Option Development;
  - i Stage 2: Further appraisal; and
  - i Stage 3: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation
- 1.2.2. This report covers Stage 1 (Option Development). Further scheme development and appraisal would be covered in subsequent analysis and reporting.

### STEPS IN THE STAGE 1 APPRAISAL

- 1.2.3. WebTAG sets out the steps in Stage 1 of the appraisal process, which includes the production of an Option Assessment Report to document the process of identifying the need for intervention, option development and selection.
- 1.2.4. This Option Assessment Report demonstrates that the Option Development process has followed the WebTAG guidelines and adheres to the key principles as follows:
- i There is a **clear rationale** for the proposal, based on a presentation of the problems and challenges that establish the need for intervention;
  - i There is consideration of **genuine, discrete options**, and a range of solutions have been considered across networks and modes;
  - i There is an **auditable, documented process** which identifies the best performing options to be taken forward for further appraisal; and

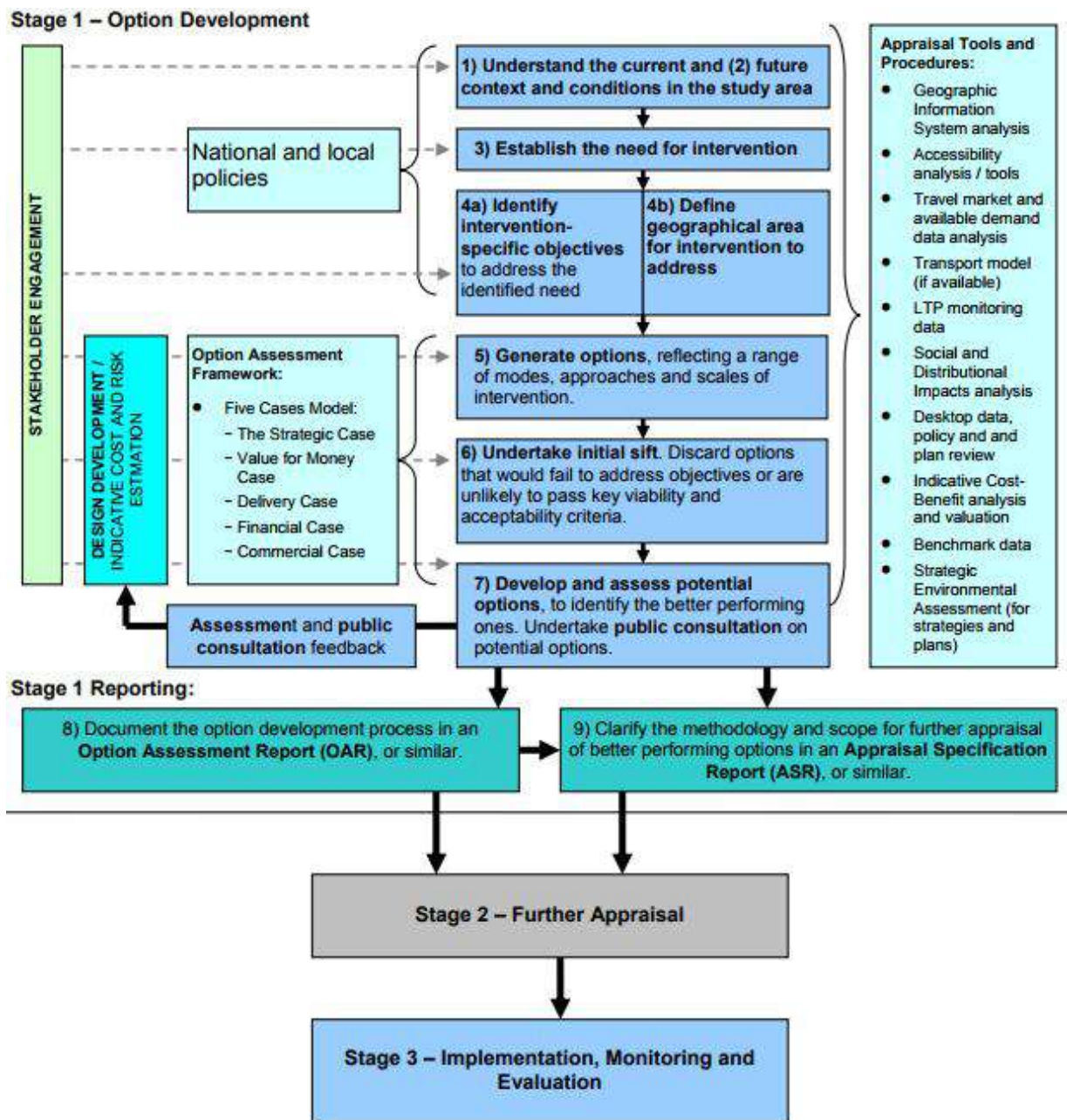
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<sup>1</sup> The Transport Appraisal Process. Transport Appraisal Guidance (TAG) Unit. (Department for Transport, May 2018)

- i There has been an appropriate level of public and stakeholder participation and engagement at suitable points in the process. This has informed the evidence base, which established the need for the scheme, guided the option generation, sifting and assessment, and will inform the subsequent appraisal.

1.2.5. Figure 1 gives an overview of the WebTAG option development process and Table 1 describes these steps and shows where they are found in this report.

**Figure 1 – Steps in the appraisal process**



**Table 1 - Steps in the Stage 1 appraisal process**

|         | Description                                                                                                                                        | Chapter                                         |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Step 1  | Understand the current context and conditions in the study area                                                                                    | Chapter 2.<br>Current Situation                 |
| Step 2  | Understand the future conditions in the study area                                                                                                 | Chapter 3.<br>Future Situation                  |
| Step 3  | Establish the need for the intervention                                                                                                            | Chapter 4.<br>The Need for Improvement          |
| Step 4a | Identify intervention-specific objectives to address the identified need                                                                           | Chapter 5.<br>Objectives                        |
| Step 4b | Define the geographical area for the intervention to address                                                                                       | Chapter 6.<br>Area of Impact                    |
| Step 5  | Generate options reflecting a range of modes, approaches and scales of intervention                                                                | Chapter 7.<br>Option Generation                 |
| Step 6  | Undertake initial sift. Discard options that would fail to address key objectives or are unlikely to pass key viability and acceptability criteria | Chapter 8.<br>Initial Sift of Options           |
| Step 7  | Develop and assess potential options to identify the better performing ones. Undertake public consultation on potential options                    | Chapter 9.<br>Option Development and Assessment |
| Step 8  | Document the option development process in an Option Assessment Report or similar                                                                  |                                                 |
| Step 9  | Clarify the methodology and scope for further appraisal of better performing options in an Appraisal Specification Report or similar.              | N/A                                             |

## 1.3 BACKGROUND

- 1.3.1. Sudbury is a market town in the southwest of Suffolk which has suffered from transport problems for many years. Previous studies, including the 2001 Local Transport Action Plan (LTAP) by Suffolk County Council and Babergh District Council and the 2017 Sudbury Relief Road: Strategic Outline Business Case have identified that traffic passing through the town is as a major cause of congestion and accidents, with the level of traffic on the constrained network in Sudbury having a severe detrimental impact on the historic town centre.
- 1.3.2. The 2001 Suffolk County Council and Babergh District Council published LTAP, and the 2003 Suffolk County Council report titled “A131 Sudbury Bypass and Related Measures” looked at ways of addressing the transport problems in the area. The LTAP also included a do-minimum scheme that could be implemented in the short term. This would improve the quality of service and accessibility to the public transport network and provide a series of sustainable transport measures.

- 1.3.3. As part of this exercise, a number of relief road options were taken to public consultation in 2002, with a western relief road receiving the most support out of the proposed options.
- 1.3.4. Work progressed on a potential alignment for a western relief road and initial analysis suggested this scheme could deliver 'high' value for money with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of above 2, as well as offering the potential for wider economic benefits by unlocking opportunities for local growth. The proposed alignment of the western relief road did however have a number of environmental and other constraints, including passing across a former landfill site and the River Stour flood plain, with associated environmental impacts. The scale of these impacts led to the scheme being put on hold for a number of years, with a review of environmental issues undertaken to consider these impacts, as discussed below.
- 1.3.5. An environmental review of the western relief road corridor was undertaken in 2015 which considered any changes to legislation and guidance, statutory designations, and other environmental constraints that may have arisen since the original route appraisal was undertaken. This review concluded that an alternative alignment could be developed that would avoid:
- i A former historic landfill site to the east of the previous alignment and adjacent to Bush Grove;
  - i Noise sensitive receptors along Bush Grove, to the east of the previous alignment; and
  - i The UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat Woodland at the south of the previous alignment.
- 1.3.6. However, there remained a number of potential adverse impacts on the landscape including Belchamp Brook County Wildlife Site, the River Stour and associated floodplain habitats and the footpaths of the Valley Line walk, all of which are key environmental constraints. Further to this there also remained the potential adverse impact on historic landscapes, as captured in a number of Gainsborough paintings (most notably "Mr and Mrs Andrews").
- 1.3.7. Alongside the 2015 environmental review the analytical work supporting a western relief road (the preferred option in the earlier study) was updated. This update demonstrated there was still a strong value for money case for the scheme, both in terms of BCR (still potentially high value for money) and the possible impacts on the wider economy.
- 1.3.8. Although these previous studies and supporting analysis provide a useful backdrop to the latest work that is being undertaken, the current work is looking afresh at the option assessment process.
- 1.3.9. This report, and the analysis that underpins it, therefore considers all the evidence available (including updating to the evidence base), and aims to identify a range of potential solutions to the transport problems in Sudbury in the context of current policies and transport planning practice.