

Independent Examination of the Chetwynd: The Toton and Chilwell Neighbourhood Plan, November 2022.

1. Purpose of note

1.1 A public hearing has been called to consider a number of issues relating to the above Neighbourhood Plan. These issues include the routing of a proposed extension to the Nottingham Express Transit tram route, and specifically a reference at paragraph 10.23, which states;

‘Nottingham Express Transit (NET / ‘the tram’) intend to access the East Midlands Hub Station through the centre of the area west of Stapleford Lane. If this extension is moved northwards, to run next to the A52, adding extra stops will encourage Stapleford residents (southside) as well as Campus residents to use the tram to/from Nottingham.’

1.2 The purpose of this note is to explain the City Council’s current position on the proposed routing within the Plan.

2. NET route extension from Toton park and ride site

2.1 Nottingham City Council is the Promoter for the Nottingham Express Transit (NET) tram system. NET Line One, operating between Hucknall / Phoenix Park and the City Centre, opened in 2004, and extensions to Clifton and Toton commenced operations in 2015.

2.2 Following the publication of the East Midlands Growth Strategy in September 2017 (note 1), the Council was heavily involved in the development of the Access to Toton Study published in May 2020 (note 2), which set out the transport proposals required to secure maximum regional benefit from the HS2 station and associated development. The latest proposals identified an extension of NET through the development site at Toton and west to the East Midlands HS2 Station, continuing on to Long Eaton. The route was 1.5 kms in length, with an intermediate stop which would also serve the proposed Innovation Campus. Extending NET to serve HS2 was seen as essential to maximise the connectivity benefits, providing direct access from HS2 and the development to all the stops along the Beeston leg of the NET system into Nottingham City Centre, with existing services running on to all stops on the NET route north to Hucknall. A Strategic Outline Business Case for the NET extension identified the proposal had a benefit to cost ratio of 3.59 to 1, which represents high value for money.

2.3 In March 2020, the Council’s Executive Board approved the preparation of an Outline Business Case for the extension, along with other proposals to extend the tram system in the south and east of the City.

3. Current position.

3.1 Since the earlier work was undertaken there have been significant changes in circumstances as follows;

- HS2 is no longer proposed to serve the area, although the Integrated Rail Plan identified the potential for a local station to be provided to serve the development area.
- Public transport has been particularly hard hit during the pandemic, with both tram and bus patronage yet to recover to levels achieved previously.
- Inflation linked construction costs have significantly increased.

- The Council has had to put Outline Business Case work for NET extensions on hold, primarily due to budgetary constraints.

3.2 The above factors mean that the route of a westward extension of NET from the Toton Lane park and ride site will need to be reassessed before taking it forward to the Outline Business Case stage. This reassessment will need to consider the viability of the proposal, particularly as passenger demand accessing HS2 was a significant element of the benefits identified, together with further assessments of the environmental and engineering constraints. It is worth noting that the suggested route is circuitous, and fast end to end journey times are also critical to the business case and cost – benefit ratio, and this would be particularly important if the line was extended beyond the development site into Long Eaton. It also appears to cross land within the environs of George Spencer school, and the A52 may be a significant barrier in attracting users from the south Stapleford area. There are also some significant gradients to overcome in the area which will impact on a route alignment analysis, and the route will also need to be considered in the master planning for the development area, to ensure it is fully integrated into the local environment and tram stops are optimally located in the land use planning for the area.

3.3 In summary, an options appraisal will be required to identify the preferred route in the light of the new circumstances. This work would consider different route options and could consider the option put forward in the draft Plan (or a variation if there are land constraints) as part of its overall assessment.

Note 1 - https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/write/East_Midlands_HS2_Growth_Strategy_-_September_2017.pdf

Note 2 - <https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/media/1706/final-access-to-toton-report.pdf>

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