

From David Whiteside

Matter 6 – Transport and other infrastructure.

As my original submission concentrated on the proposed RTS, my comments are mainly confined to that topic but I wish to make three comments on the wider issue.

A. General comments

1. At 6.0.2, it states that significant progress has been made on the provision of strategic road and public transport infrastructure. I note that not one of the eight bullet points are in any way a firm commitment, being subject to planning consent, funding or bids, any one of which could prevent the proposals being implemented. On that basis, to permit the development to take place would be doing so without certainty that the transport claims made by NEGC could be delivered.
2. In support of this point, I would note that alignments for road schemes, funding for road schemes are frequently claimed but almost as frequently, discarded.
3. In the light of above, and my earlier assessment of the RTS proposals, the statement made at 6.0.4 “that there is clear evidence of the viability and feasibility of the RTS” is clearly inaccurate.

B. Rapid Transit System

1. 6.14.3 is a ‘creep back’ from statements in the Jacobs report. There, it claims that the best alignments are favoured and these are the ones which give maximum segregation. It is axiomatic that the places which are currently most congested (principally in the towns) are where segregation is most important and therefore it is in those areas that either brand new alignments or alignments currently used by all vehicles become dedicated RTS only alignments. These costs have not, in my view, been adequately included.
2. 6.16 and 6.17 place heavy reliance on modelling. Modelling for public transport use (and to a large extent, traffic flows) is notoriously difficult and the results inaccurate.
3. For infrastructure, given the potential impact on the area, the NEGC should be required to determine preferred routes, and to then provide a realistic costing for constructing those routes. This would include compulsory purchase of land, compensation payments to residents whose property is affected by an RTS vehicle passing their house every 2.5 minutes (five minute headway in each direction), acquisition of residential property on the proposed ‘greatest segregated’ alignment etc.
4. 6.18.3 is an example of wishful/muddled thinking. If there’s to be a five minute headway on the RTS, then the connecting services need to be on a similar headway, otherwise the total journey experience becomes elongated. No Demand Responsive Service within the UK operates at this sort of headway on a commercial basis.

5. 6.18.5 is a further instance of a glib hope rather than anything based on reality. To operate a frequent service over a long traffic day (eighteen hours as an example) is not going to be achieved at a cost of £225,000 per annum (per garden community). I estimate based on my knowledge of the costs of operating the Chelmsford and Colchester Park and Ride vehicles (not the sites themselves) that the cost would be in excess of £450,000 per community if a feeder/intra-community network is provided at anything like the frequencies needed to connect with the RTS.
6. In this section, there are several references to Essex County Council evolving more detailed assessments. Without access to the outcome and methodology of those assessments, it is impossible to comment in any meaningful way. This must call into question the appropriateness of proceeding on the basis that the RTS will be deliverable. That being the case, then the NEGC in totality are undeliverable.

C. Colchester Transport Strategy (Workshop December 2019)

1. This is an addition, the output from which is not available at the time of writing.
2. Regardless of the output/outcome, is it credible that a group of people can sensibly consider the volume of data etc presented, discuss and come up with a plan (even in outline) within the two hours allowed for the workshop? My answer is of course no.

David Whiteside

12th December 2019