

## **Strategic Transport Leadership Board**

5 December 2024

### **Agenda Item Number 9: Connectivity Studies 6**

#### *Recommendation:*

**It is recommended that the Strategic Transport Leadership Board:**

- a) Agrees the package of interventions for connectivity Study 6 covering the local authority areas of Luton, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford and North Northamptonshire subject to any final edits suggested by Members.**
- b) Agrees the publication of the final summary reports Study 6 (see Annex A), noting that the supporting evidence base reports and the wider call for evidence note will be published at the same time.**
- c) Notes that Study 6 package of interventions will be fed into EEH Investment Prioritisation Framework.**

#### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. The paper outlines the final packages and summary reports for the 'Luton-Bedfordshire – Corby' (Study 6) connectivity study.

#### **2. Key points to note**

- 2.1. EEH's multimodal connectivity studies have been a major part of our work programme over the last three years and are a key way in which we have been able to grow our regional evidence base.
- 2.2. The study covering the local authority areas of Luton, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford and North Northamptonshire is being presented to this Board for agreement. It has been subject to extensive engagement over its period of development, working with local authority and other stakeholders throughout.
- 2.3. It is based on the principles and policies of EEH's Transport Strategy and is framed in both the context of national policy and work being undertaken by local authorities. The packages of interventions build on the existing evidence base of our partners, bringing this together alongside wider evidence to identify strategic priority measures within each of the study geographies.
- 2.4. EEH will continue to support local authority and other strategic partners to progress planning for interventions identified within the connectivity studies, particularly in the context of the investment prioritisation framework development and EEH's range of investment brochures.

- 2.5. It is recognised that this is based on the evidence base available through development of the studies, and that further evidence on required interventions may well come forward in the future. It will be important that EEH captures any key changes to priority interventions through the on-going review and updating of the Investment Prioritisation Framework.

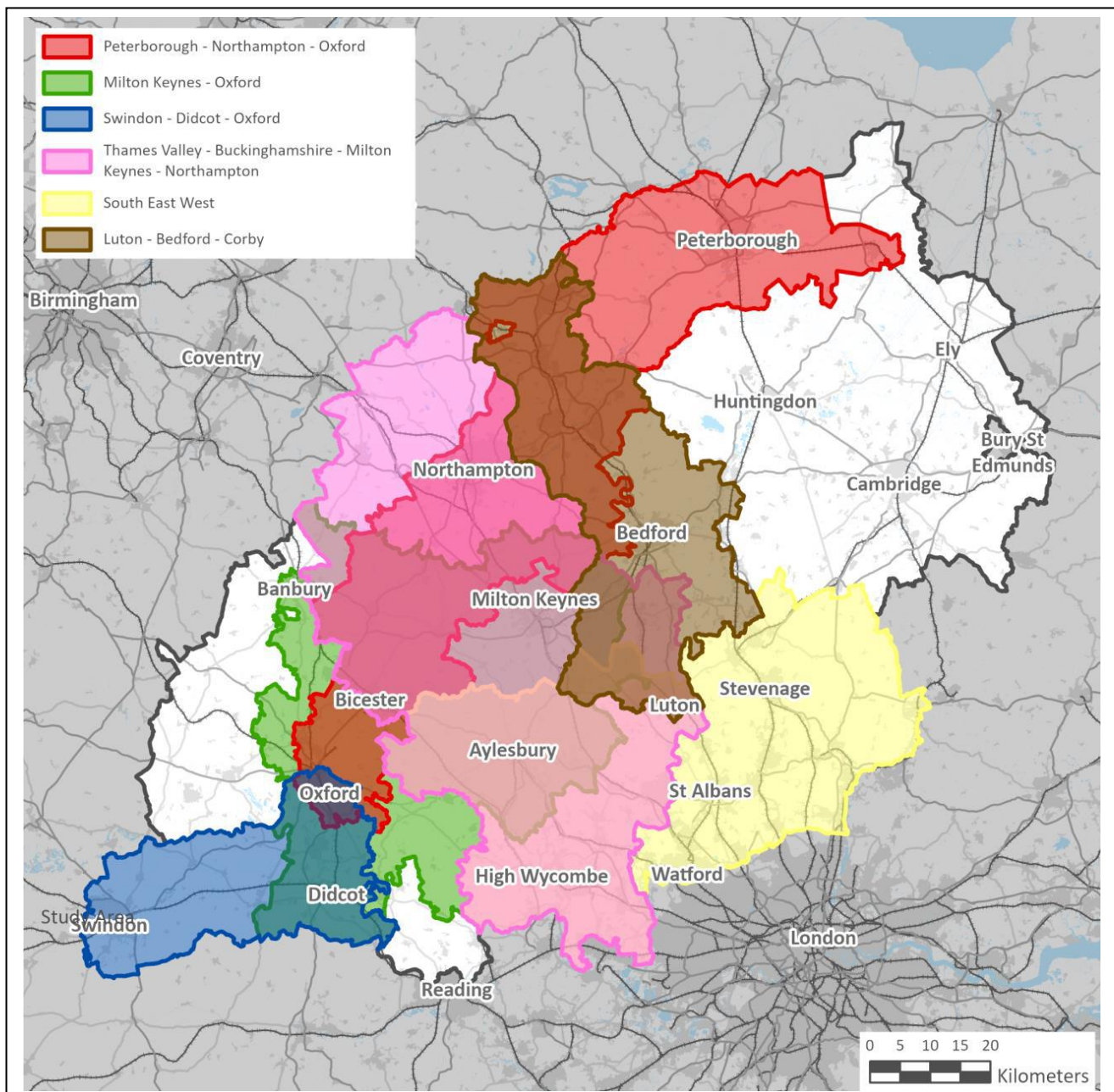
### 3. Context

- 3.1. EEH's programme of connectivity studies, include:
- Identifying opportunities that improve current and future connectivity across the EEH region.
  - Provide an evidence-based list of transport interventions for inclusion in the EEH investment prioritisation framework. Providing advice to the Secretary of State for Transport on regional transport priorities, which is a core function of an STB.
  - Provide a broad strategy for the area/ corridor to help achieve EEH's regional transport strategy ambitions.
  - Be multimodal in nature, including digital.
  - Be cumulative, with each study building on previous priorities identified, rather than duplicating work already being undertaken by partners and local authorities, to provide additionality to already committed and funded interventions.
- 3.2. Study 6 has been in development since August 2023, working extensively with local authority partners and stakeholders to progress each of the studies to shape packages of the interventions for each study area.
- 3.3. The full schedule of stakeholder meetings and briefings held for the study is outlined in **Annex A**. In summary this included undertaking four steering group meetings, two stakeholder meetings, one EEH Board Member/local authority officer briefing sessions and a summary was also included as part previous EEH Board Member briefings on EEH's Investment Prioritisation Framework, as well as a wider call for evidence process. This extensive engagement has been invaluable in enabling completion of these studies.
- 3.4. Study 6 is part of EEH's existing programme of multimodal connectivity studies, with previous studies relating to 'Oxford-Milton Keynes', 'Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford' and 'Swindon-Didcot-Oxford', 'Thames Valley-Northampton' and the 'South East Movements' (please see location map overleaf) are already complete and published.<sup>1</sup> Study 6 is shown in the map overleaf in brown and overlaps with the 'Thames Valley-Northampton' in pink and the 'Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford' Studies in red.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/our-work/connectivity-studies/>





**Connectivity Study 1 to 6 Locations Map**

3.5. The outputs from all the connectivity studies are being integrated into the regional investment prioritisation framework. Identifying regional transport priorities is a core function of a STB and on that basis, we have been iterating our work to build an 'investment prioritisation framework'.

#### **4. Key Outcomes**

4.1. The packages of interventions included in Study 6 (including road, rail, bus and active travel modes) have been tested using a strategic land use model (EEHELUM) and their impact compared to a business-as-usual scenario by 2049. Overall, the model results show an increased use of rail, bus and active travel across each of the study areas because of the interventions identified, as well as an increase in Gross Value Added and decrease in carbon emissions.

- 4.2. The study packages for enabling sustainable, planned development and a decarbonised road fleet includes targeted interventions for highways measures, addressing known issues, planning for a future ready network as well as placing communities at the centre of interventions, specifically where the strategically important road network impacts the communities along them.
- 4.3. The packages for the study include both place-based and theme-based packages and are summarised and shown in **Annex B** map. Overall, the study, builds a picture of connectivity across the local authority areas of Luton, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford and North Northamptonshire in an evidence-based manner. This approach has enabled a balanced package of options which could be progressed.

## 5. Study 6 (Luton – Bedfordshire – Corby)

- 5.1. The full detail of each package for Study 6 is set out within the summary report in **Appendix 1**, but include the following five packages:
- **North Northamptonshire Conurbation** - this package focuses on a series of multi-modal transport improvements which transform connectivity within and between Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Rushden and Higham Ferrers to nearby settlements and the rest of England.
  - **Greater Bedford and East West Rail** - this package focuses on improvements to strategic east-west connectivity unlocked by the delivery of Phases 2 and 3 of East West Rail; and improved inter- and intra-urban bus and active travel networks better connecting areas within and around Bedford.
  - **Greater Luton and airport connections** - this package focuses on improved and integrated bus, rail and active travel connections across the Luton area.
  - **Sustainable Rural and Freight Connectivity** - this package includes delivery of more frequent or on demand rural bus services, new active travel routes, and e-mobility initiatives. Additionally, delivering improvements which optimise and decarbonise freight movements.
  - **A More Integrated North-South Transport Network** - this package focuses on journeys using the Midland Main Line and A6, these interventions better integrate modes, thereby reducing the overall cost of travel for users, and minimising the impact on the environment by encouraging multi-modal journeys that more sustainably meet individual travel needs.

## 6. Next steps

The outputs of Study 6 (and other supporting technical programmes), if agreed will be integrated into EEH investment prioritisation framework.

The investment prioritisation framework (containing all the connectivity study interventions) will be utilised to inform discussions with government and planning for advocacy of schemes, such as the recently published 'Connecting Economies' investment brochures.

**Trevor Brennan**  
**Project Lead**  
**December 2024**



## Annex 1: Stakeholder engagement

The below table summarises the external stakeholder engagement sessions for the connectivity studies **Luton – Bedford – Corby Study 6**

\* The steering groups was formed of Local Authority officers (Local Transport Authorities and Local Planning Authorities), National Highways, Network Rail and DfT.

\*\* The stakeholder groups involved organisations such as (non-exhaustive list), Natural England, Historic England, public transport operators, Sustrans, statutory environmental bodies, Chamber of Commerce

Updates on study progress have been provided to Transport Officer Group, Strategic Transport Leadership Board updates throughout and written comments from officers were invited on all outputs of the study.

Date	Meetings
5 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	Steering group * 1
12 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2023	Steering group 2
13 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2023	Stakeholder group ** 1
10 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	Steering group 3
12 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	Stakeholder group 2
29 January 2024 to 1st March 2024	A general call for evidence, inviting wider groups and the public for comments on transport issues within the study areas to help inform the study
18 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2024	Steering group 4
18 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2024	Member Briefing for Connectivity Studies 6- Luton Borough Council



## Annex 2: Intervention Summary Maps Study 6

### Luton – Bedfordshire – Corby Study 6 Intervention Summary Map

