**Statement issued Cllr. Steve Harrod on November 20th 2017**

As the national organisation responsible for the Strategic Road Network, Highways England is leading work on an Oxford Cambridge Expressway.

The next stage is now starting and the consultants Jacobs have recently been appointed to undertake this work, examining in more detail the potential corridors and routes.

No decision has been taken on a preferred route and one is not expected until around 2019.  The County Council will be working closely with Highways England and Jacobs to understand the pros and cons of different options and how well they would meet the project’s aims and objectives.

Highways England has planned a programme of stakeholder engagement as part of this next stage of work and, following an initial meeting last month, there are some further sessions being set up, starting next month.  It is their intention to select a preferred corridor (following stakeholder engagement) by July 2018 and a preferred route within that chosen corridor by July 2019 (which will be subject to formal public consultation).

The county council will consider all proposals carefully as they come forward, as well as the views of District Councils, local communities and other stakeholders.  We have not yet adopted a position on this project and will not do so without member input.  This is likely to be in the form of a cabinet advisory group followed by a decision by full council.  We plan to set this advisory group up soon in order to influence Highways England's stakeholder engagement process as we would be one of the key respondents to their proposals.

Without pre-judging the county council's position, it will clearly be important to consider the various points that you and other correspondents have raised.  These include the case for the proposed expressway in principle and its environmental, social and economic impacts.  In relation to the choice of corridor and then route, it will be important to consider how the various options relate to plans for housing and employment growth and other transport schemes, notably East West Rail.

Whilst the proposed Expressway could be an opportunity to help address longstanding problems on the A34, it does not remove the need for short term safety and capacity improvement measures, for which funding has already been agreed.  The County Council is pressing for these to be introduced as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the position.