

Cabinet

11 June 2019

Warwickshire Major Road Network (MRN) - Proposed Programme and Priorities

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Agrees the proposed Warwickshire Major Road Network (MRN) programme and priorities;
2. Approves the submission of a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the proposed A426/A4071 Avon Mill/Hunters Lane Improvement scheme in Rugby as the initial MRN priority for delivery during the period 2020-2025; and
3. Notes scheme development work already undertaken or in progress on the other initial priority schemes and proposed longer-term priorities for delivery during the next MRN period 2025-2030.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 In July 2017, the Government's Transport Investment Strategy included a commitment to create a 'Major Road Network' (MRN) comprising the busiest and most economically important local authority 'A' roads in England.
- 1.2 Originally proposed by the Rees Jeffrey's Road Fund study¹, the MRN sits between the Strategic Road Network (SRN) comprising motorways and major 'A' roads which are managed by Highways England, and the rest of the local authority managed network.
- 1.3 The Rees Jeffrey's study recognised that the Government had created an effective and well-resourced regime for planning and delivering successive five-year investment programmes for the SRN through its Roads Investment Strategy (RIS).
- 1.4 However, it also highlighted that no such arrangements existed for the most important local authority 'A' roads which are also heavily trafficked and which often carry a large proportion of commercial vehicles. The performance of these roads is therefore considered to be critical to supporting the local and national economy.

¹ <http://www.reesjeffreys.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A-Major-Road-Network-for-England-David-Quarmby-and-Phil-Carey-Rees-Jeffreys-Road-Fund-October-2016.pdf>

- 1.5 In December 2018, following a consultation period the Government confirmed its proposals for the MRN and committed to allocate a proportion of the National Roads Fund (NRF) which will be created by ring-fencing vehicle excise duty (VED) towards improving it from 2020/21.
- 1.6 At the November 2018 Budget, the Government announced a proposed NRF allocation totalling £28.8 billion during the period 2020-2025, £3.5 billion of which is expected to be spent on local roads including the MRN.
- 1.7 The types of scheme eligible to bid for MRN funding are:-
- Bypasses or new alignments which alleviate congestion on the MRN and make through journeys quicker, safer and more reliable.
 - Missing Links – new roads that link existing stretches of the MRN or SRN.
 - Widening of existing MRN roads where there is a known congestion point or safety risk.
 - Major structural renewals on roads, bridges, tunnels and viaducts on MRN roads, where significant work needs to be done to renew the carriageway or prevent closure or weight restrictions.
 - Major junction improvements such as a grade separation that would improve the safety, performance or flow of an MRN road.
 - Variable message signs, traffic management and the use of smart technology and data to raise the performance of the MRN.
 - Packages of improvements to the MRN which may include elements of safety, widening, junction improvements and new alignment.
- 1.8 The potential Department for Transport (DfT) contribution for MRN interventions will normally be between £20 million and £50 million, although the lower threshold will not be applied rigidly.
- 1.9 Schemes seeking a contribution of more than £50 million are to be dealt with as potential Large Local Major Schemes (LLMs).

2.0 Options and Proposal

- 2.1 In December 2018, DfT confirmed that the MRN in Warwickshire includes the A446/A4097, A435, A426/A4071, A444/A47, A452 and A45 (south of the M45) as shown on the plan in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 These roads meet eligibility criteria specified by the DfT for a road to be designated as part of the MRN which principally relate to the volume and composition of traffic, and their role in providing strategic connectivity to and wider network resilience for the SRN.

- 2.3 Government has asked Midlands Connect, the Sub-national Transport Body (STB) for the pan-Midlands area, to develop and submit the Regional Evidence Base (REB) identifying priorities for the initial MRN investment period 2020-2025.
- 2.4 To inform this process, the County Council has been developing a pipeline of schemes for the MRN with supporting evidence to justify why it considers these should be its priorities.
- 2.5 Proposed MRN priorities for delivery during 2020-2025 are as follows:-
- (a) A426/A4071 Avon Mill/Hunters Lane improvements, Rugby.
 - (b) A46/A452 Thickthorn Island to Bericote Road dualling, Kenilworth.
 - (c) A444 Nuneaton Town Centre (part of Transforming Nuneaton project).
- Proposed longer-term MRN priorities for delivery post-2025 are as follows:-
- (d) A435 between Alcester and Gorcott Hill.
 - (e) A446 Coleshill/Hams Hall.
 - (f) A426 Leicester Road Corridor, Rugby.
 - (g) A4071 Blue Boar to Potsford Dam Roundabout south west of Rugby.
- 2.6 The current status of each of these schemes is outlined below followed by a summary of proposed maintenance schemes on the MRN during the initial funding period 2020-2025.
- (a) A426/A4071 Avon Mill/Hunters Lane improvements, Rugby.**
- 2.7 The proposed Avon Mill/Hunters Lane Improvements are a key priority in the Local Transport Plan (LTP 3) and a 'critical' requirement in Rugby Borough Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to mitigate the cumulative traffic impacts of significant committed and proposed housing and employment growth, the key strategic sites being:-
- Malpass Farm (Climafuel manufacturing facility).
 - Rugby Radio Station, Houlton (6,200 dwellings, 16 ha B1/B2/B8).
 - Gateway Rugby, Eden Park (1,300 dwellings, 26.5 ha B2/B8).
 - Rugby South West (5,000 dwellings, 35 ha B8).
 - Coton Park East (800 dwellings, 7.5 ha B1/B2/B8).
 - Daventry International Railfreight Terminal (DIRFT III) (c.9,000 new jobs).
- 2.8 Scheme assessment work shows that the proposals would significantly reduce queues and delays at Avon Mill Roundabout, a key bottleneck on the A426 Leicester Road corridor which currently experiences significant congestion during weekday commuter and Saturday retail peaks.
- 2.9 The scheme will also improve journey time reliability for strategic traffic on the MRN travelling between M1 Junction 20 (Lutterworth), M6 Junction 1 and the M45/A45 at Thurlaston south of Rugby via the A4071/A426 corridor.

- 2.10 In May 2015, Cabinet authorised the addition of the scheme to the County Council's Capital Programme and to allocate £617,000 developer funding for further design and feasibility work.
- 2.11 A significant amount of work has since been undertaken to develop a preferred scheme layout, feasibility design and initial cost estimate. The main scheme elements are listed below and shown on the plan in **Appendix 2**.
- Enlargement of the existing Avon Mill Roundabout.
 - A new roundabout at A426 Newbold Road/Hunters Lane to replace the existing priority junction.
 - Construction of a short length of dual carriageway to connect the two roundabouts including a new bridge over the River Avon.
 - New foot/cycle bridge parallel to the existing River Avon bridge.
- 2.12 To the south of Avon Mill Roundabout, the proposed new A426 Newbold Road/Hunters Lane roundabout will make it easier to make right turn manoeuvres which are currently problematic due to significant traffic volumes on the main road.
- 2.13 The proposed new segregated foot/cycleway bridge and dedicated Toucan crossing facilities on the A426 Leicester Road will also improve sustainable access opportunities in the area, particularly for students and staff seeking to access Avon Valley School.
- 2.14 The proposals at Avon Mill/Hunters Lane are at a relatively more advanced stage of development than those being progressed on other MRN routes referred to above, due to the significant amount of work already undertaken over several years to identify a preferred scheme layout and feasibility design.
- 2.15 In view of its current state of readiness and strategic role in providing access to major economic centres, Midlands Connect has identified the Avon Mill/Hunters Lane Improvements as one of seven 'Investment Ready' priority schemes across the STB area which is capable of being delivered by 2025.
- 2.16 With a proposed construction start date of 2023/24, DfT Investment Planning Guidance² for the MRN indicates that it is desirable for the scheme to be supported by a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to be submitted alongside the REB.
- 2.17 Midlands Connect has advised the County Council that the deadline for submission of the SOBC for inclusion in their REB submission to Government is 5th July 2019.

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765680/mrn-investment-planning-guidance.pdf

2.18 In view of the potentially significant external funding opportunities which would be unlocked through the MRN process to expedite scheme delivery, it is proposed to submit an SOBC in support of the Avon Mill/Hunters Lane Improvements to Midland Connect and DfT in July 2019, subject to Cabinet approval.

(b) A452 Thickthorn Island to Bericote Road Dualling, Kenilworth.

2.19 The County Council has developed an indicative design for a new dual carriageway between A46/A452 Thickthorn Island and C36 Bericote Road Roundabout.

2.20 It is proposed to include completion of the Kenilworth to Leamington Spa Cycle Route (K2L) as part of the scheme (i.e. section between Bericote Road Roundabout and Kenilworth).

2.21 It is proposed to progress further scheme development work in 2019/20 and beyond to ensure that the scheme can be brought forward for delivery towards the end of the initial MRN period, or early during the following period. It could however come forward before then if other funding opportunities become available.

2.22 The scheme will complement developer-funded proposals to signalise and widen Thickthorn Island and signalisation of A452 St John Gyrotory, Kenilworth, which are expected to be delivered by 2023/24.

(c) A444 Nuneaton Town Centre (part of the wider Transforming Nuneaton project).

2.23 This scheme is being promoted by the County Council and Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council as part of the wider Transforming Nuneaton project which is a corporate priority, with support from key partners including Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP), the West Midlands Combined Authority and Midlands Engine.

2.24 The key transport elements of the project include the following:-

- Re-configuration of the ring road in the vicinity of the rail station including consideration of options for improving access by removal of the current gyratory / one-way system.
- Widening of the ring road at Vicarage Street / Church Street and over the River Anker near Coton Road so the whole ring road is dual carriageway standard.
- A potential new bus bridge over the River Anker to facilitate the re-development of the bus station site, or provision of a new bus interchange at the rail station.

- Improvements to the rail station itself, including provision of a new pedestrian/cycle access from Weddington Terrace.
- 2.25 In autumn 2018, the County Council secured £7.5 million of funding from the Government's Local Growth Fund through CWLEP, part of which has been allocated to progress the transport scheme development work referred to above.
- 2.26 The next stages of the project due to be undertaken during 2019/20 are to develop a preferred package of measures and progress preliminary design work for preferred scheme options.
- 2.27 This will help to ensure that the scheme can be brought forward for delivery towards the end of the initial MRN period, or early during the following period. It could however come forward before then if other funding opportunities become available.

(d) A435 between Alcester and Gorcott Hill.

- 2.28 In November 2018, representations made by the County Council and Worcestershire County Council to Midlands Connect to inform their regional prioritisation process emphasised the serious traffic and environmental problems affecting the communities on the A435 corridor.
- 2.29 Officers from both authorities are currently in the early stages of developing a joint MRN initiative which seeks to address problems which affect the A435 and parallel A441 corridor, and are looking to identify a complementary package of measures to maximise potential scheme benefits.
- 2.30 Once an initial set of concept scheme options has been identified during 2019/20, it is proposed to invite parish councils and other local stakeholders to provide feedback on which of these should be taken forward to the next stage of scheme development, or to identify any other options which should also be considered.
- 2.31 If there is a clear consensus to pursue a particular course of action, subject to formal approval by each respective authority, the County Council (working with Worcestershire County Council) would propose to develop feasibility scheme designs for inclusion in a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC).
- 2.32 It is envisaged that the SOBC would comprise a package of agreed measures for both the A435 and A441 corridors for delivery during the next MRN period 2025-2030.
- 2.33 In the short to medium term, the County Council is continuing to pursue other localised initiatives which seek to address a number of environmental and safety issues along the A435 corridor.

(e) A446 Coleshill/Hams Hall.

- 2.34 An indicative scheme has been developed which would upgrade a key ‘pinch-point’ on the A446 between Hams Hall (south of Faraday Avenue) and Gorsey Lane near Coleshill from single to dual carriageway standard.
- 2.35 Upgrading the 1.3km single carriageway section described above to dual carriageway standard will remove the ‘pinch point’ on the A446 which acts as a major constraint to further economic growth at key employment sites in the vicinity of the scheme and across the sub-region post-2020.
- 2.36 It is proposed to further develop the scheme for delivery following HS2 Phase 1 construction which is due to be completed by 2024.
- 2.37 The improvements will not only support planned growth within North Warwickshire and Birmingham, but will also facilitate enhanced access to the HS2 Interchange and wider UK Central area post-2026.

(f) A426 Leicester Road Corridor, Rugby.

- 2.38 Predictions show that existing congestion problems on the A426 Leicester Road corridor in Rugby will be exacerbated by further significant proposed Local Plan housing and employment growth at Coton Park East (on the corridor) and South West Rugby, in addition to committed growth at Gateway Rugby (on the corridor) and Rugby Radio Station at Houlton.
- 2.39 A feasibility study is currently evaluating options for potential additional interventions over and above those already proposed for Leicester Road as part of the mitigation strategy for the current and proposed Rugby Local Plan.
- 2.40 These high-level options include possible access improvements into Swift Valley employment area, corridor widening and a high-level review of potential bus priority and demand management measures including park and ride.

(g) A4071 Blue Boar to Potsford Dam Roundabout south west of Rugby.

- 2.41 This section of the A4071 is likely to constrain future housing and employment growth in Rugby due to capacity and safety problems at the following key locations:-
- A45/A4071 Blue Boar Interchange - outdated junction layout which significantly constrains exit capacity.
 - A4071 Cawston Bends - insufficient carriageway width which narrows to less than 7m with HGVs mounting the verge to avoid colliding with oncoming vehicles.
 - A4071/B4642 Potsford Dam Roundabout – profile requires remediation.

- 2.42 It is proposed to commence option development work in 2020/21 to identify potential improvements at these locations once other current assessment work in the area has been completed.
- 2.43 This work is currently investigating alignment options for the proposed Potsford Dam Link (PDL) which is being designed to provide a strategic connection linking the M45/A45 at Thurlaston to the south of Rugby and the A4071 Rugby Western Relief Road (RWRR).
- 2.44 The PDL (in combination with other strategic highway infrastructure) has been identified as an essential element in the mitigation strategy for the proposed Local Plan allocation at South West Rugby.

(h) Major Structural Renewals.

- 2.45 There are currently 13 planned maintenance schemes located on the Warwickshire MRN, six of which are considered to be ‘major’ based on the scope of works, likely duration and potential for disruption on the MRN.
- 2.46 Three of these schemes are programmed for completion during the initial MRN period 2020-2025, as shown in **Table 1** overleaf.

Table 1 – Proposed Major Maintenance Schemes on the MRN 2020-2025

Bridge Code	Bridge Name	Scheme Description	Financial Year
A452/008	Chesford Flood Spans	Waterproof & resurface. Upgrade parapets.	2023/24
A426/018	GEC Access River Avon, Leicester Road Rugby	Re-waterproof & replace joint (planned preventive)	2022/23
A426/015	Brownsover, Leicester Road Rugby	Re-waterproof (planned preventive)	2023/24

- 2.47 The County Council will take all reasonable steps to co-ordinate the works outlined above with the delivery programme for the A4071/A426 Avon Mill/Hunters Lane Improvements and A425 Thickthorn to Bericote Dualling schemes, to reduce the risk of potential additional network disruption.

3.0 Financial Implications

- 3.1 DfT Investment Planning Guidance for the MRN notes that schemes should aim for a local or third-party contribution to be at least 15% of total scheme costs.
- 3.2 Potential and existing local or third-party funding sources for the three initial MRN priority schemes are outlined in **Table 2** overleaf.

**Table 2 – Potential Funding Sources for Initial Priority MRN Schemes
2020-2025**

Scheme	Cost Estimate (£ million)	Current Status
A426/A4071 Avon Mill/Hunters Lane improvements, Rugby.	£10.4 (initial feasibility estimate. A revised estimate is currently being prepared for inclusion in the SOBC).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet decision to add scheme to Capital Programme - May 2015. • Cabinet decision to allocate £617,000 S106 funding received from Malpass Farm for design and feasibility work - May 2015. • Spend on scheme design and feasibility to date is £334,395, current forecast spend for Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) development is £51,314 leaving a balance of £231,291 - June 2019. • Further S106 funding totalling £704,846 has been received in 2017/18 from Gateway Rugby residential Phase R4, Gateway employment and Elliott's Field Phase 2. • Approx. £1.1 million S106 funding is secured but not yet received from Malpass Farm. Payment is due no later than 12 and 24 months after commencement of waste processing – it is understood that the units on site are not currently operational and it is therefore uncertain when these payments will be triggered. • Approx. £1.8 million S106 funding is secured but not yet received from committed residential development at Gateway Rugby and Rugby Radio Station – please note however that the timing of these payments is dependent on development phasing and associated triggers. • Proposed Capital Investment Funding (CIF) Bid (WCC) of £4 million to be submitted prior to completion of Full Business Case (Q3 2023/24). • In combination, the proposed level of CIF and S106 funding (£5.3 million) would significantly enhance the financial case for the scheme and thus demonstrate to Government that there is a strong local commitment to facilitate scheme delivery. • Potential MRN funding bid for the balance of total scheme costs to be submitted to DfT (Q3 2024/25), subject to Cabinet approval.

<p>A46/A452 Thickthorn Island to Bericote Road dualling, Kenilworth.</p>	<p>£17.9 (initial estimate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet approval to be sought to add the scheme to the Capital Programme (likely to be 2021/22). • Complementary developer-funded proposals to signalise and widen Thickthorn Island and signalisation of A452 St John Gyrotory, Kenilworth, expected to be delivered by 2023/24. • Proposed CIF Bid (WCC) of £2.7 million to be submitted prior to completion of Full Business Case (Q2 2024/25) to complement S106 developer contributions (to be secured). • Potential MRN funding bid for the balance of total scheme costs to be submitted to DfT (Q3 2024/25), subject to Cabinet approval.
<p>A444 Nuneaton Town Centre (part of the wider Transforming Nuneaton project)</p>	<p>£25.26 (design dependent)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 106 contributions (secure) = £0.8 million. • Anticipated s106 estimated based on additional housing numbers = £1.78 million. • Proposed CIF Bid (WCC) of £3.8 million to be submitted prior to completion of Full Business Case (Q3 2023/24) to complement S106 developer contributions. • Potential MRN funding bid for the balance of total scheme costs to be submitted to DfT (Q3 2023/24), subject to Cabinet approval. • Further DfT National Productivity Investment Funding (NPIF) opportunities to be investigated (funded the A47 Hinckley Road scheme). • Rail investment - Train Operating Company investment opportunities etc. possibly through franchise operator's commitments.

3.3 The proposed level of local funding contributions to be sought from Capital Investment Fund (CIF) towards the three initial priority schemes outlined in **Table 2** above is £10.5 million, which represents 20% of currently estimated total scheme costs (£53.5 million). Capital investment of this level will cost £840,000 a year to meet the revenue cost of the additional borrowing.

3.4 The proposed level of funding to be sought from CIF would also be supplemented by S106 developer funding contributions (£2.1 million received to date with a potential further £4.6 million secured but not yet received).

- 3.5 In combination, the proposed level of CIF and S106 developer contributions received to date for the initial priority schemes listed above is £12.6 million. This represents 24% of currently estimated total scheme costs and exceeds the target minimum 15% local funding contribution for MRN schemes.
- 3.6 It is considered that the proposed level of local funding contribution to be sought via CIF and anticipated total level of S106 developer contributions would enhance the financial case for the above priority schemes and demonstrate to Government that there is a strong local commitment to facilitate scheme delivery.
- 3.7 Any future application for resources from the CIF will be dependent on the level of resources available and the Council's priority areas for capital investment at the time. In the event that it is not possible to secure funding either via CIF or the DfT MRN initiative, then it is proposed to pursue alternative funding opportunities.
- 3.8 These could potentially include the Government's National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) which is part of the funding package for the A47 Hinckley Road scheme in Nuneaton and proposed A3400 Birmingham Road improvements in Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 3.9 At the November 2018 Budget, Government announced that the NPIF is increasing to a total of £37 billion, to further increase investment in areas that are important for economic growth including unlocking more new homes in high demand areas by spending an extra £500 million on the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and extending it to 2023/24.
- 3.10 As noted in paragraph 3.4 above, there may also be opportunities to secure further S106 developer funding contributions, although the availability of this is largely dependent on development phasing and associated triggers for payment.

4.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 4.1 Subject to agreement of the proposed MRN scheme programme and priorities set out in this report, it is proposed that the SOBC for Avon Mill/Hunters Lane is submitted to Midlands Connect on 5th July 2019 for inclusion in their Regional Evidence Base (REB) submission to Government.

Background papers

None.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): See Note below.

Other members: Clarke, Cockburn, Fradgley, Chilvers

Note:-

A Briefing Note summarising proposed MRN priorities was issued to the following Local Members prior to publication:-

A4071/A426 - Cllr Warwick, Cllr Timms, Cllr Roberts, Cllr Simpson-Vince, Cllr Dahmash, Cllr Butlin, Cllr Kaur, Cllr Webb, Cllr O'Rourke, Cllr Roodhouse.

A435 – Cllr Cargill, Cllr Rickhards, Cllr Horner

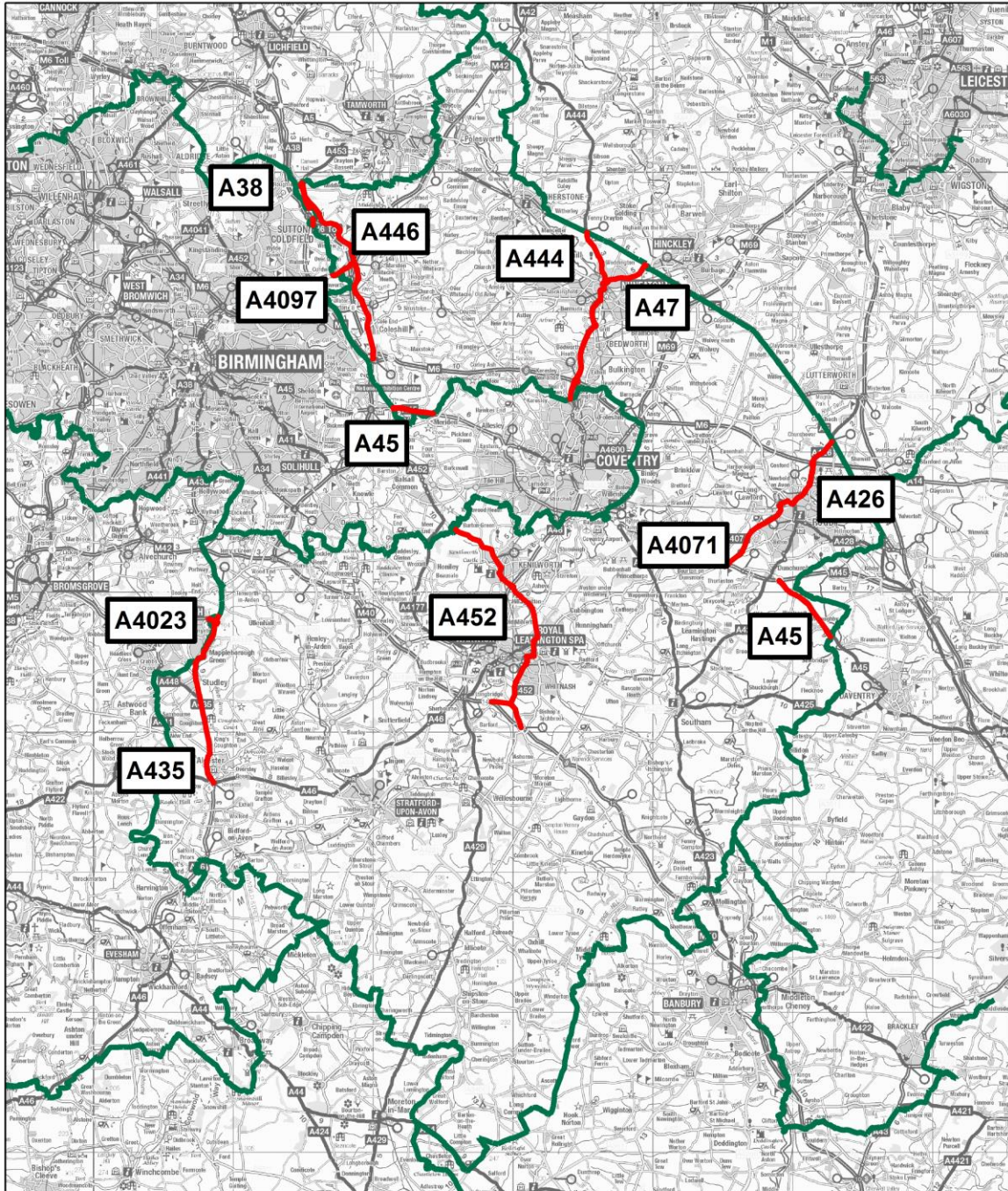
A444 – Cllr Butlin, Cllr Clarke, Cllr Olnier, Cllr Gissane, Cllr Golby, Cllr Sargeant, Cllr Davies, Cllr Phillips, Cllr Kondakor

A446 - Cllr Jenns, Cllr Reilly, Cllr Hayfield

A452 - Cllr Cooke, Cllr Cockburn, Cllr Shilton, Cllr Redford

Appendix 1

Warwickshire Major Road Network

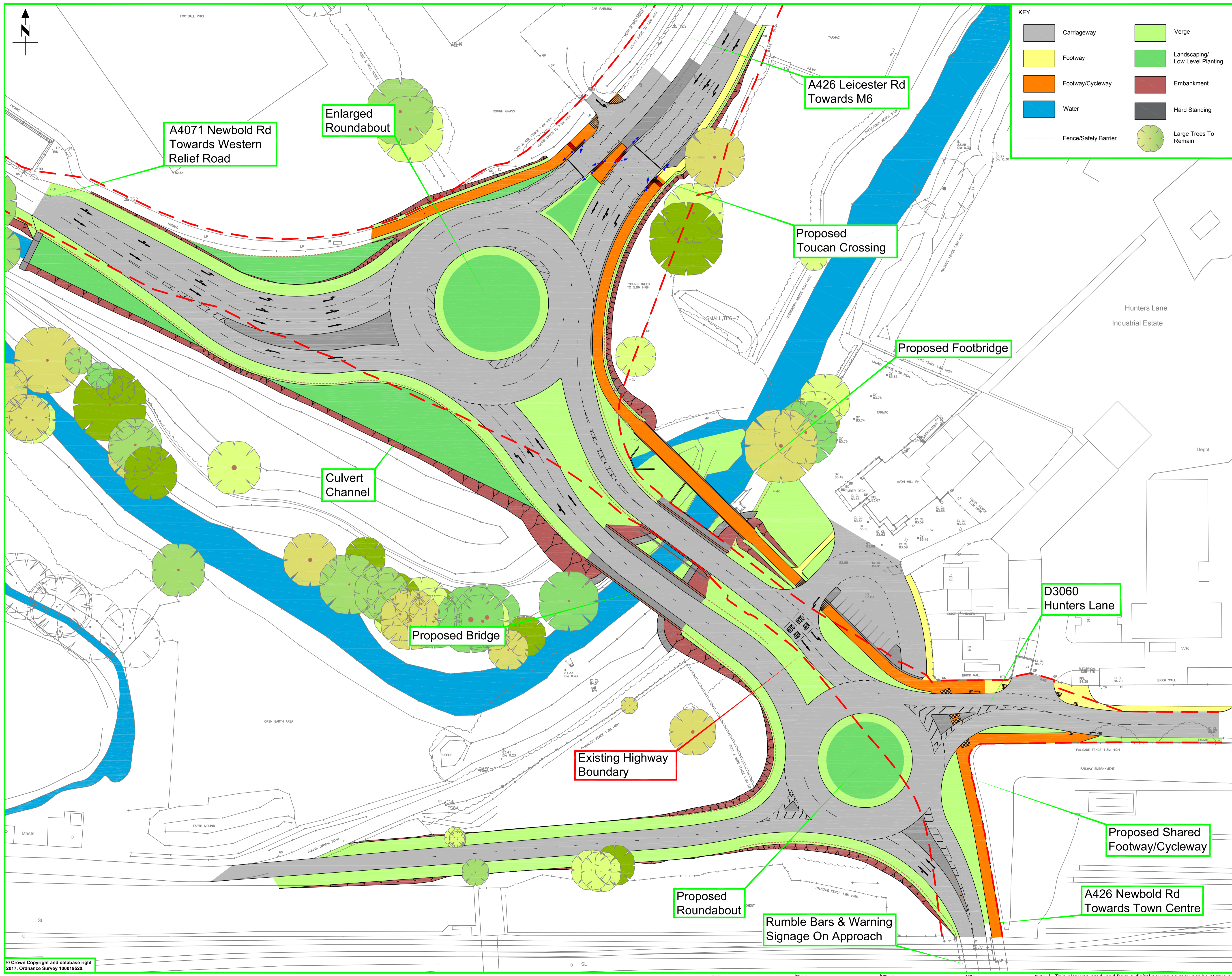


Legend
— WCC_Major Road Network



Communities
18 Apr 2019

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KEY

	Carriageway		Verge
	Footway		Landscaping/ Low Level Planting
	Footway/Cycleway		Embankment
	Water		Hard Standing
	Fence/Safety Barrier		Large Trees To Remain

NOTES

J	RJP	Road Safety Improvements	04/05/17
H	RJP	Issued for Report	29/03/17
G	RJP	New Car Park layout & Culvert	29/11/16
F	RJP	Realigned Cycleway	12/10/16
E	RJP	New Toucan Crossing Design	12/08/16
D	RJP	New Scheme Design	10/08/16
C	RJP	Improved road markings	08/03/16
B	RJP	Added road names	29/02/16
A	RJP	Added highway boundary	26/01/16
REV	DRN	AMENDMENT	DATE



Design Services
 Communities, Shire Hall Post Room
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PROJECT
**A426/A4071 Avon Mill and Hunters Lane
 Improvement Scheme**

TITLE
**Scheme Layout
 (Option B - South Alignment)
 Purpose of Drawing: Feasibility**

Dim	RJP	Chk'd	RJP	App'd	AC
Date	15-01-16	Date	04-05-17	Date	04-05-17
Status	Approved (Level 2)				
Scale	1:500		Sheet size A1		
DRG. NO.	9.2-333-010-0007				Rev. J