

Cabinet

14 October 2021

A46 Strategic Link Road Consultation

Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Consider the feedback from the A46 Strategic Link Road consultation
2. Acknowledge that as set out in the recommendations of Cabinet in September 2019 a further report will be brought to set out the preferred scope of the new transport corridor

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In September 2019 Cabinet approved the development of the A46 Link Road scheme, requesting that reports were brought back to Cabinet to describe progress at key milestones.
- 1.1.2 This report describes the process and response of the public consultation and sets out the work completed to date in respect of the feasibility design and preparation of the Outline Business Case submission to the Department for Transport, and the proposed next steps.
- 1.1.3 The proposed A46 Strategic Link Road was initiated in the context of planned and anticipated residential and employment development sites in the area to the south of Coventry. Should these development sites be confirmed it is likely that highway infrastructure will be required for all modes of transport given the capacity of the existing network. This will include a greater emphasis on the opportunities for sustainable modes of transport provided by the establishment of this new transport corridor.

1.2 Public Consultation

- 1.2.1 The purpose of the public consultation was to inform stakeholders and residents about the need for and aims of the scheme, allowing them time to evaluate these and comment on the options. This would support the identification of the scheme scope, inform the outline feasibility design and DfT business case submission, the development of funding applications, and the initiation of site survey and data collection.
- 1.2.2 Within the consultation, the key aims of the scheme were set out as follows:

- To facilitate and support the housing and employment proposals contained within the Local Plans for Warwick District and Coventry City
- To support the growth aspirations of the University of Warwick (UoW), Stoneleigh Park and other key existing and proposed employment sites within the immediate area and wider A46 corridor in the context of the adopted Local Plans,
- To ensure the Coventry and Warwickshire area is well connected to the economic opportunities which will arise as a result of growth and development in the region including HS2 and associated growth at UK Central;
- To help reduce congestion in the A45 corridor which will allow further housing growth to come forward in North West, West and South West Coventry and parts of Warwick District; and
- To unlock land to help realise the opportunity for a number of strategic sustainable transport infrastructure improvements in the area, including a new railway station/interchange to serve the University of Warwick, improved access to Tile Hill railway station, bus priority and a network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

1.2.3 The scheme was presented through three main options:

- Option 1- to provide no new infrastructure,
- Option 2 - to provide a new link from A46 Stoneleigh junction to A429 Kenilworth Road
- Option 3 - to provide a new link from A46 Stoneleigh Junction to Westwood Heath Road.

Questions were asked around these options and the associated benefits and issues and also to gather views on transport priorities for the area.

1.2.4 The consultation took place between 30th November 2020 and 14th February 2021 and sought responses and engagement from a range of partners, stakeholders and people who live and work in, or visit and travel through, Warwickshire and Coventry. This was promoted using a range of channels including press releases, social media, and mail shots to residents in the surrounding area. Due to Covid restrictions it was not possible to offer face to face engagement opportunities. However, two online broadcasts were hosted which could be accessed live and as recordings. These enabled people to listen to proposals and ask questions. People were invited to feedback via a survey. This was primarily accessed online via Ask Warwickshire but could also be requested on paper or in an alternative format or language. People could also respond directly in writing or via email. A full report on the process and output of the consultation is contained in Appendix 1-3.

1.2.5 In Summary:

- 522 responses were received via the on-line survey;

- 63% of the respondents lived in the area covered by the consultation
- 98 written submissions were received, from a range of residents, businesses and stakeholders; and
- 201 individuals or organisations joined the two live broadcasts which took place in December 2020 and January 2021.

1.2.6 The key outcomes of the consultation are as follows:

- Around half of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with each of the options. Whilst Option 3 had the highest levels of agreement (39.5%), the highest proportion of respondents also strongly disagreed with this option (41.6%).
- Overall, just over 40% of respondents thought that all options would have a negative impact on their travel experience. But 39.1% felt the impact of Option 3 would be positive or very positive – a slightly higher proportion than for the other options.
- When asked overall which option they preferred responses were mixed with no clear nor apparent favourite. Over a quarter of all respondents (27.0%) stated that none of the proposed options were their preference.
- Those respondents who selected ‘none of the proposed options’ were asked what option(s) should be considered instead. The most common response was support for continued development of walking or cycling active travel options. Other common themes included improvements of specific junctions, public transportation improvements, and minor changes/alterations to aspects of Option 1, 2 or 3.

1.2.7 The outcome of the consultation shows a reasonably strong level of opposition towards the proposal of a road scheme alone from residents, who primarily live in the south Coventry and Kenilworth area. The reasoning for these responses varies and key themes are summarised in section 1.3.

1.2.8 The development of a broader view of improved travel choices in the area was supported by residents and included improved cycle and pedestrian facilities, development of Very Light Rail (VLR), improved bus services and a new rail station /transport hub.

1.2.9 The broad view of the written stakeholder consultees was more supportive. These were generally businesses, and private and public sector organisations in the local and wider area.

1.3 Key Themes and Proposed Response to the Consultation

1.3.1 In response to the feedback received during the consultation a number of key themes have been identified that are either a concern or priority from the

respondents. County Council officers have considered these concerns which are summarised in the table below:

Proposed Revisions to the Scheme as an Outcome of the Consultation	
Theme/Description	Response/Action
<p>Concerns regarding increasing congestion/traffic volume associated with the proposals</p> <p>Concerns Options pushes problems (e.g. congestion) to new areas</p>	<p>Work has been carried out to analyse the impacts of the proposed options. While overall network performance does improve, there are certain roads such as Westwood Heath Road, Coventry which would have additional traffic as a result of the scheme.</p> <p>Work will continue to find solutions to reduce the impacts of any proposed scheme. During the consultation alternative locations were suggested for the connection to the South West of Coventry. These options are currently being explored.</p>
<p>Environmental concerns associated with the proposals (e.g. pollution/air quality, noise, destruction of Green Belt land, wildlife, flooding)</p> <p>Suggestions that proposals will have a similar (negative) impact as per HS2</p> <p>General concern around climate change/climate emergency</p>	<p>Currently only a desk top study has been conducted into the effects on the local environment. As we are in the early stages of the scheme no specific surveys have been undertaken. The route of the scheme will be designed to minimise impact on trees and wildlife habitats, including the ancient woodland on Kenilworth Road and those to the south of the University of Warwick</p> <p>During the next stages of work surveys will be carried out to establish more detail regarding environmental impacts/issues. The scheme will include landscaping and habitat protection or replacement with the aim of maintaining or improving the biodiversity of the area. This will be tested and monitored through the planning process. The scheme will comply with all relevant legislation and current council policies.</p>
<p>Impact of option on sustainable travel/Support for continued development of sustainable/active travel options (e.g. walking/cycling routes, public transportation improvements)</p> <p>Concerns new road(s) are not the answer (and proposal options would push problems (e.g. congestion) to new areas)</p>	<p>The proposals include alternative modes of transport, with segregated cycle and footways, and provision for buses and Very Light Rail. The intention is to encourage active travel and the proposal is to enhance the existing provision. However, these provisions alone are unlikely to cater for the predicted travel demand resulting from residential and employment growth over time and therefore a joint solution is needed.</p> <p>Further design and modelling work is proposed to assess the impact of a 'sustainable transport only' solution. If the Strategic Link Road scheme does move forwards, sustainable transport measures will be a key aspect of the scheme. These will be</p>

	designed to the latest Government guidance.
<p>The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel/use of the area and how changes to the way people travel should be considered in any proposals and before any changes to the infrastructure are made</p>	<p>We are monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on travel patterns across Coventry and Warwickshire. Home working is likely to become a more significant element of life for some professions that have previously been mostly office based, and this may impact travel demand during the peak periods; in this period however deliveries and off-peak travel have increased. It is worth noting that traffic levels are currently at 90% of the pre-COVID-19 levels when compared year on year.</p> <p>Sensitivity testing will be carried out to assess the proposals against previously predicted and currently expected travel patterns and this will be done in accordance with current Government guidance. Through the funding application process the needs of the roads are thoroughly assessed therefore the design of the road will be based on demand, which is independently reviewed by the funding bodies.</p>
<p>Impact of increasing population(s)/housing and/or commercial developments on the area meaning changes need to happen</p> <p>The role/impact of Warwick University on the area</p>	<p>The current local plans for Warwick District Council and Coventry City Council set out expectation in terms of residential and employment sites until 2029 and 2031 respectively. The proposals are to meet these demands. Any further development in this area would be subject to the planning process or be part of future versions of the local plans, which in turn would be subject to consultation and scrutiny.</p> <p>Warwick District Council are currently reviewing their local plan in conjunction with Stratford-on-Avon District Council, with a view to producing a joint South Warwickshire Local Plan. If any further proposals for the area result from this these will be reviewed as to the impact on the scheme. Until then the scheme will be designed to the known developments in the current local plans. Any additional devolvement proposals outside that process will be assessed if they are successful in securing planning permission.</p>
<p>Consideration given to minor changes/improvements to Options</p> <p>Specific junction improvements (e.g. roundabouts, exit/access points, road widening/narrowing, road lengthening/shortening)</p>	<p>Junction improvements have been proposed, to reduce the foreseen impact of the scheme. Work will continue to identify solutions to reduce these impacts further. If any additional improvements are required on review these will be considered as part of the scheme.</p> <p>Work is being undertaken to ascertain if alternative connections to the south west of Coventry are viable. During the next stages of work the scheme will be</p>

	refined to ensure the objectives of the scheme are met, taking into consideration the views of local stakeholders where possible.
Concerns that the proposals are a waste of money/resources.	An outline business case is being produced to confirm the scheme is viable. This will include the BCR (Benefit to Cost Ratio). This score will show whether the scheme represents value for money or not. If this is not strong, funding would not be secured, and the scheme would not be viable.
Impact on the quality of life and wellbeing of residents in the area	During the next stages of work surveys will be carried out to establish more detail regarding the effect of noise and air pollution. The scheme will be designed to have as little impact on local residents as possible, both during construction and once the scheme is complete.
Suggestions of survey/consultation bias	This consultation was based on the broad principles of the scheme. The aim was to understand people's key concerns, in order to help steer the design of the scheme. As such the finer details of impacts and issues were not included at this stage. The on-line survey was reviewed independently prior to going live. A further consultation will be held with greater detail of the scheme at the appropriate time. There will also be opportunity to comment further through the planning process.
Concerns regarding the modelling assessment/data/information presented Further data collection/evidence gathering required	We are currently in the early stages of the scheme. Only desk top studies have been conducted into the effects of the scheme. No specific surveys have been undertaken other than traffic. Modelling work has been undertaken using pre-Covid traffic count data and prediction of increased traffic based on known developments. Additional surveys and analysis will be undertaken as part of the ongoing design work. Including, sensitivity testing to assess the proposals against previously predicted and currently expected travel patterns in accordance with Government guidance.
Reconsideration and or postponement of proposals (in light of the COVID-19 pandemic)	We are currently in the early stages of the scheme, with the overall programme still a number of years away from possible construction. The scheme will take into account any changes due to Covid.
Importance of safety (e.g. reducing traffic speed, road/traffic calming measures)	Safety is a key aspect when designing any new scheme and assessing the impact of new proposals. As such this scheme will be designed to ensure public safety. The scheme will be designed to comply with all relevant design codes, guidance and best practice.

1.3.2 The Outline Business Case, which is part of the DfT funding application process is currently being produced to confirm if a scheme to provide a new transport corridor representing one of the options is viable. This work

assesses the viability through a number of factors including the BCR (Benefit to Cost Ratio). In response to the consultation results the OBC will also include an analysis of the opportunities for improved travel choices.

- 1.3.3 The completion of the OBC production, which will set out the presentation of all the options including one relating specifically to sustainable transport modes, is an important part of the process of building towards the development of a scheme. The completion and submission of the OBC will allow the DfT to determine if funding for continued development can be allocated to the scheme. This will allow the development of the scheme to incorporate an enhanced set of features for improved travel choices.
- 1.3.4 The options which were put forward in the consultation were the result of feasibility work carried out to date, based on an indicative design. If the scheme is successful in the next stage of the Department for Transport funding application process, the further work outlined above will be included in the next phases of work. During the detailed design of the scheme, those concerns outlined will be explored and the scheme modified as appropriate. This process will also include additional consultation exercises to gain further public and stakeholder views on the scope and detail of the proposed scheme and allow further modification of the scheme in response.
- 1.3.5 In response to the consultation analysis and with reference to the planned and anticipated residential and employment development sites in the area, it is proposed that the development of the scheme be continued to the submission of the Outline Business Case to the DfT. This submission will include a greater emphasis on the opportunities for sustainable modes of transport provided by the establishment of this new transport corridor.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The development of the A46 Strategic Link Road has, to date, been delivered jointly between officers from the County Council, Coventry City Council and Warwick District Council.
- 2.2 Initial funding for the scheme development has been obtained from the Department for Transport (DfT), West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP). This funding has supported the work completed to date and part of the feasibility design stage, but it will not cover all the work necessary to prepare the scheme for implementation. Funding for the remainder of the detailed feasibility design, the detailed design and the construction of the scheme is still to be sought. If Cabinet continues to endorse the preparatory work proposed in this report, it will be managed so that the County Council is not at any stage committed to expenditure exceeding that covered by secured external funding without a further report having been brought to Cabinet.
- 2.3 The funding allocated to date is held by Coventry City Council for the scheme development, and will include costs for site investigations, feasibility design,

and the development of the funding applications. There is a risk that, should future approvals not be forthcoming, these costs will be abortive. However, these costs will be met by external funding already in place.

- 2.4 Funding secured to date for scheme development is currently forecast to be all be spent. This is not conditional on securing additional funding and will not have to be returned if additional funding is unsuccessful.
- 2.5 The proposed overall funding package for the scheme is as follows:

Funding Source	Amount (£)
<i>Scheme Development (funding secured and received)</i>	
CWLEP Growing Places/ Growth Deal (committed)	500,000
WMCA SOBC for Coventry South (committed)	200,000
DfT Large Local Major Scheme (committed)	1,250,000
TOTAL	1,950,000
<i>Design & Construction Potential Funding Sources Applications</i>	
DfT Large Local Major Scheme (OBC application to be submitted)	35,000,000
Homes England (Investable Proposition application currently rejected) further application to be made subject to Government spending review.	35,000,000
WMCA Devolution Deal (to be secured)	35,000,000
S106 Developer Funding (to be confirmed)	Est. 10,000,000

- 2.6 Applications for funding from external sources will be through each organisation's funding application template. There is a degree of similarity between these processes, and preparation of the overall project business case will follow the DfT Transport Business Case five case model.
- 2.7 The funding applications will be made by either Coventry City Council or by Warwickshire County Council. Where the application is made by the City Council, they will undertake the role of accountable body and will enter into a Grant Deed Agreement with Warwickshire County Council to set out the terms of funding transfer for the completed works and services. Where applications are made, both authorities will be required to confirm support of the application through endorsement by letter.
- 2.8 Initial cost estimates for the work currently anticipates a project cost of between £70m and £100million. This estimate will be further developed and refined as part of the detailed feasibility design stage. The estimate will include an allocation for contingency and inflation and will recognise the risk of increased works costs as a result of anticipated levels of construction in the area.
- 2.9 Further reports for Cabinet and, where required, Council will be prepared on completion of the detailed feasibility design (setting out the preferred scope of the new transport corridor) and the detailed design stages setting out the proposed funding package for the construction works, and the estimated cost of the scheme, in order to consider the continued development of the scheme

and, eventually, the inclusion of the scheme in the County Council's Capital Programme.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 The route of the scheme will be designed to minimise impact on trees and wildlife habitats, including the ancient woodland on Kenilworth Road and those to the south of the University of Warwick. Early desktop studies have been completed to ensure these assets are not impacted by the scheme. During the next stages of work environmental surveys will be carried out to establish more detail regarding the habitats along the route. The proposals for any infrastructure will also include landscaping and habitat protection or replacement with the aim of maintaining or improving the biodiversity of the area. This will be tested and monitored through the planning process, complying with current national policy and legislation.
- 3.2 The proposals include alternative modes of transport, with segregated cycle and footways, and provision for bus and Very Light Rail. The Councils want to encourage active travel and are proposing to enhance the existing provision. However, these provisions alone are unlikely to cater for the predicted travel demand resulting from residential and employment growth over time and therefore a joint solution is needed.
- 3.3 The scheme will bring performance and resilience benefits to the wider transport network on routes such as the A45, which plays a key role in linking local employment sites. This is expected to result in a reduction in air pollution, in areas that currently suffer from congestion from redirection of traffic as a result of introducing the scheme. During the next stage of design, the effects of noise and air pollution will be assessed in greater detail, with the intention of minimising impact along the route. Along with the additional sustainable transport improvements which are aimed at reducing the dependency on car journeys particularly where they can be avoided.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Outline Business Case for the scheme is currently being compiled and is programmed to be submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) during autumn 2021. This document will make the case for the scheme and request continued support for the scheme from the Government.
- 4.2 A further report will be brought to Cabinet to set out the preferred scope of the new transport corridor, taking into account the development of the scheme to include and promote a range of sustainable travel options, the response of the DfT and other funding bodies, and any changes to the planning context in the area.
- 4.3 A letter of support from University of Warwick is included at appendix 4.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 If the scheme is successful in the next stage of the Department for Transport funding application process, the further work outlined in the Cabinet Report will be included in the next phases of technical work which will be carried out. During the detailed design of the scheme, the concerns highlighted by the consultation will be explored and the scheme modified as appropriate. This process will also include further consultation in order to gain public and stakeholder views on the detailed scheme and allow further modification of the scheme in response.
- 5.2 The current programme for the A46 Strategic Link Road is as follows:
- (i) Initial public consultation completed March 2021
 - (ii) Outline Business Case DfT Funding Application autumn 2021
 - (iii) Cabinet report setting out the preferred scope of the new transport corridor earliest Q1/Q2 2022
 - (iv) Public consultation on detailed scheme earliest 2023
 - (v) Cabinet report at detailed design stage
 - (vi) Full Business Case Funding Applications earliest 2024
 - (vii) Construction complete earliest 2026
- 5.3 These timescales are dependent on the successful completion of each previous stage and recognition made of dependency on processes and approvals of project partners, as well as delivery of other key construction projects in the area.
- 5.4 The programme will be kept under review as the project progresses.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1 – A46 Strategic Link Road Consultation Analysis Report
2. Appendix 2 – A46 Strategic Link Road Public Consultation Leaflet
3. Appendix 3 – A46 Strategic Link Road Consultation Q & A's
4. Appendix 4 – UoW letter.

Background Papers

1. WDC Cabinet report July 2021

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

Local Member(s): Councillors Redford, Cooke, Spencer, Drew

Other members: Councillors Clarke, Chilvers, D'Arcy and Fradgley