

A46

PARTNERSHIP



*Investing in the A46 to keep the
Midlands moving*

The case for improving the A46

The A46/M69 is a key strategic route connecting the South West with the East Midlands from the M5 at Tewkesbury to the M1 and onwards to the east of Leicester and linking a number of significant businesses, urban areas and key transport facilities with the national road network. In recent years certain sections of the route have been gradually improved, but the upgrading has been piecemeal and it has been recognised that the prospect of further improvement can be boosted by working together.

The A46 Partnership has been formed to co-ordinate the efforts of the local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships linked by this 70 mile stretch of the A46/M69; to speak with one voice in order to highlight the need for more to be done. The A46 Partnership has the support of local MPs.

The case for improvement is compelling, even more so as the main alternative route via the M5/M42 and A42 becomes increasingly congested, with incidents prompting road users to seek a viable alternative route that offers 'expressway' standards.

I hope you will feel able to support the aims of the partnership in pressing for further future investment in this increasingly important strategic route and I look forward to working in partnership to make the required changes happen.



Cllr Vernon Smith, Cabinet Member for Highways, Gloucestershire County Council and Chair of The A46 Partnership



The A46 Partnership

The A46/M69 corridor is 70 miles long and connects the counties of Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire. Although largely rural in character it also includes and links the urban centres of Tewkesbury, Evesham, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick, Leamington Spa, Kenilworth, Coventry and Leicester.

This section of the A46 links the M5 corridor to the South West with the Midlands and North East England; it is also an important route for local traffic and supports significant employment and housing growth.

However, there are constraints preventing the A46 from reaching its potential to handle both through and local traffic and also to provide a credible alternative to the M5 and M42 for linking the South West with the East Midlands. In recognition of this the A46 Partnership was established in 2015 to bring together councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) with a common aim to work together to bring forward improvements to the A46 corridor.

The A46 has been identified within the Midlands Connect Strategy as a priority route for investigation, and a study is now underway to identify potential improvements. Evidence has been gathered at a strategic level and Midlands Connect are now developing this in more detail to identify what role the A46 could play in the context of the regional and national road network, and its links to economic growth, HS2, ports and airports etc.

Appendix 1 includes the partnership's members, statement of intent and terms of reference.

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'The Players'

Key stakeholders and their roles

Department for Transport (DfT)

The government has a long-term plan to improve England's motorways and major roads in order to deliver economic growth. The first Road Investment Strategy (RIS) was announced by the government in December 2014 and it outlined a multi-year investment plan including over 100 major schemes funded by £15.2 billion of public money over the period from 2015 to 2020.

Work is now underway to develop RIS 2 covering the period beyond 2020.

Highways England

Highways England (HE) has recognised that a long term investment strategy for the A46 Corridor between M5 Junction 9 at Tewkesbury and the M1 at Leicester is needed and has been gathering evidence to support this.

The HE has fed this work in to their recently published South Midlands Route Strategy, which includes the A46 and sets out the issues for the corridor.

Local Highway Authorities and Local Planning Authorities

The planning authorities along the A46 are developing local plans that will deliver significant levels of housing and job growth along the corridor. This development will generate more traffic on the A46 corridor and local roads too that are managed by the Local Highway Authorities. It is essential that road improvements are made to ensure this growth is delivered.

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

The LEPs are critical to enable economic growth and the LEPs recognise the importance of doing this through their Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs).



MPs

The MPs across the corridor of the A46 are supportive of the need to make improvements to the A46 and work at Westminster to lobby and campaign for the improvements to be made a priority.

Midlands Connect

Midlands Connect is an independent partnership of councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) from across the region which is funded by government to develop its Transport Strategy for the Midlands (published March 2017). The focus of the strategy is to boost economic growth and contribute to the delivery of the wider 'Midlands Engine for Growth' initiative, unlocking employment and housing across the Midlands area.

Midlands Connect has commissioned a study to establish the potential economic benefits from developing the A46 corridor.

Businesses

The businesses and their employees that are located alongside the A46, and which use the road for access, are critical to ensuring the long term economic vitality of the west and east midlands. We must ensure that the needs of the businesses are known and addressed.

Tourism and visitors

We need to ensure that the tourism sector, for example at Stratford-upon-Avon is not harmed by the lack of good road access, which makes them stakeholders in this process.

The public

Finally, it is the local residents that use the A46 on a daily basis who are the most important stakeholders in the process. Their acceptance of the problem and potential solutions is essential to achieving the desired outcome.



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The Challenge

Inhibiting future economic development

If nothing is done to upgrade the A46 corridor things will only get worse in the future. A review of relevant Local Plans has revealed a number of proposed developments which will potentially increase trips in future years and which, if approved, may further impact on the ability of the A46 to serve its primary functions.

Businesses along the route are already affected by current congestion levels and future planned growth may not be possible unless improvements are made to the strategic road network. There is also a knock-on effect with growth at some locations along the A46 corridor impacting further afield.

Inconsistent carriageway standards

The A46 corridor is a mix of single and dual carriageway sections and multiple junctions. Although on some sections the junctions are 'grade-separated' with bridges carrying traffic over the A46 carriageway, many are 'at-grade' on the same level – for example at roundabouts, and so interrupt traffic flow and slow down journeys. This inconsistency reduces the capacity of the road and the attractiveness of the corridor to be used for longer distance trips.

An example of this inconsistency in the standard of the A46 route can be seen at Evesham where the six junctions around the town are matched by a further 11 junctions south of the town which all add up to a stretch of trunk road that struggles to meet its regional and national significance; put simply, the A46 through Worcestershire carries too many local trips.

Poor resilience

Currently this stretch of the A46, with its many single carriageway sections, offers limited opportunities for vehicles to pull over and take refuge and the alternative routes are poor. Improvement of the A46 corridor to 'expressway' standards would not only speed up journeys along the route itself, but enable the road to become a viable alternative to the M5/M42/A42 route for through traffic travelling from the South West to the East Midlands. This would not only take routine trips away from the heavily congested route around Birmingham on the M42, but would also present a potentially free-flowing alternative option if incidents or road works were to hamper progress on the M5/M42/A42.

Investing in the A46 to keep the Midlands moving

Congestion

Congestion is a barrier to economic growth, by reducing the attractiveness of the area to inward investors by making it more difficult to deliver development because of highway capacity constraints.

Along the A46 corridor there are a number of congestion hotspots including:

- At Ashchurch between M5 junction 9 and Aston Cross
- The Evesham bypass
- The Stratford-upon-Avon bypass
- Warwick bypass
- The Binley and Walgrave roundabouts on the Coventry eastern bypass
- The A46 and A45 junction at Festival Island near Coventry
- M69/M1 junction 21
- A46 Leicester western bypass (LWBP)

Road safety

Poor road safety can deter investors by generating a perception of danger on the road network.

- The opportunities for overtaking along the single carriageway sections are limited which can result in frustrated and impatient motorists taking unnecessary risks
- Although accident numbers have seen a downward trend there are still clusters at several junctions along the route
- Congestion at M5 junction 9 (Ashchurch) can cause queuing back towards the motorway at peak times, which poses a safety risk
- At Ashchurch pedestrians and cyclists feel at risk when they cross the A46

Dividing communities

At several locations, communities are divided by the A46, particularly where there are single-carriageway sections with at-grade junctions making it particularly difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the road. This can be illustrated at the southern end of the corridor at Ashchurch and at Evesham where six junctions around the town separate the communities and businesses from the town centre. The large volume of traffic and HGVs produces an unattractive environment for local people with noise and air pollution being particular problems.

Key junctions/locations along the corridor

1 M69 / M1 Jn 21 & A46 Leicester western bypass (east of M1 Jn 21A)

Roads Investment Strategy (RIS) 1 includes the development of proposals for M1 Junction 19 to 23a, including upgrades to junction 21, for delivery in RIS2. However, work undertaken by Leicestershire County Council suggests that the provision of a new junction (M1 Junction 20a) would provide a more beneficial and cost-effective solution to the current congestion and strategic network resilience issues in and around M1 Junction 21.

2 A46/A428 Binley Woods, Coventry

A Roads Investment Strategy 1 scheme. Grade separation of the Binley roundabout on the A46 near Coventry. Grade separation of the A46/B4082 Walsgrave roundabout, which was to have been delivered in RIS1, remains a priority for investment in RIS2.

3 A45/A46 Tollbar End improvement

A two lane dual carriageway underpass link between the A46 Coventry eastern bypass and the A45 Stonebridge highway. The junction includes an enlarged roundabout and improvement to all the existing accesses.

Completion: December 2016 Cost: £106m

4 A46/C32 Stoneleigh Road junction

Warwickshire County Council and Coventry City Council have proposals to provide a full grade separated junction at this location. Work is due to commence in September of 2018. Cost: £23m

5 A46/A425/A4177 Stanks, Warwick

Warwickshire County Council proposals to signalise the existing A46 Stanks junction, along with supporting improvements to the A425 Birmingham Road corridor. Due to commence in January of 2018. Cost: £6m

6 A46 Stratford-upon-Avon

Delay is experienced on Stratford bypass in peak times, on approaches to Bishopton, Wildmoor and Marraway roundabouts. Land is safeguarded for the widening of the A46 (Alcester Road) in the adopted core strategy.

Highways England have put forward evidence as part of the Route Strategy refresh, which will inform future Roads Investment Strategy funding.

7 A46 Evesham

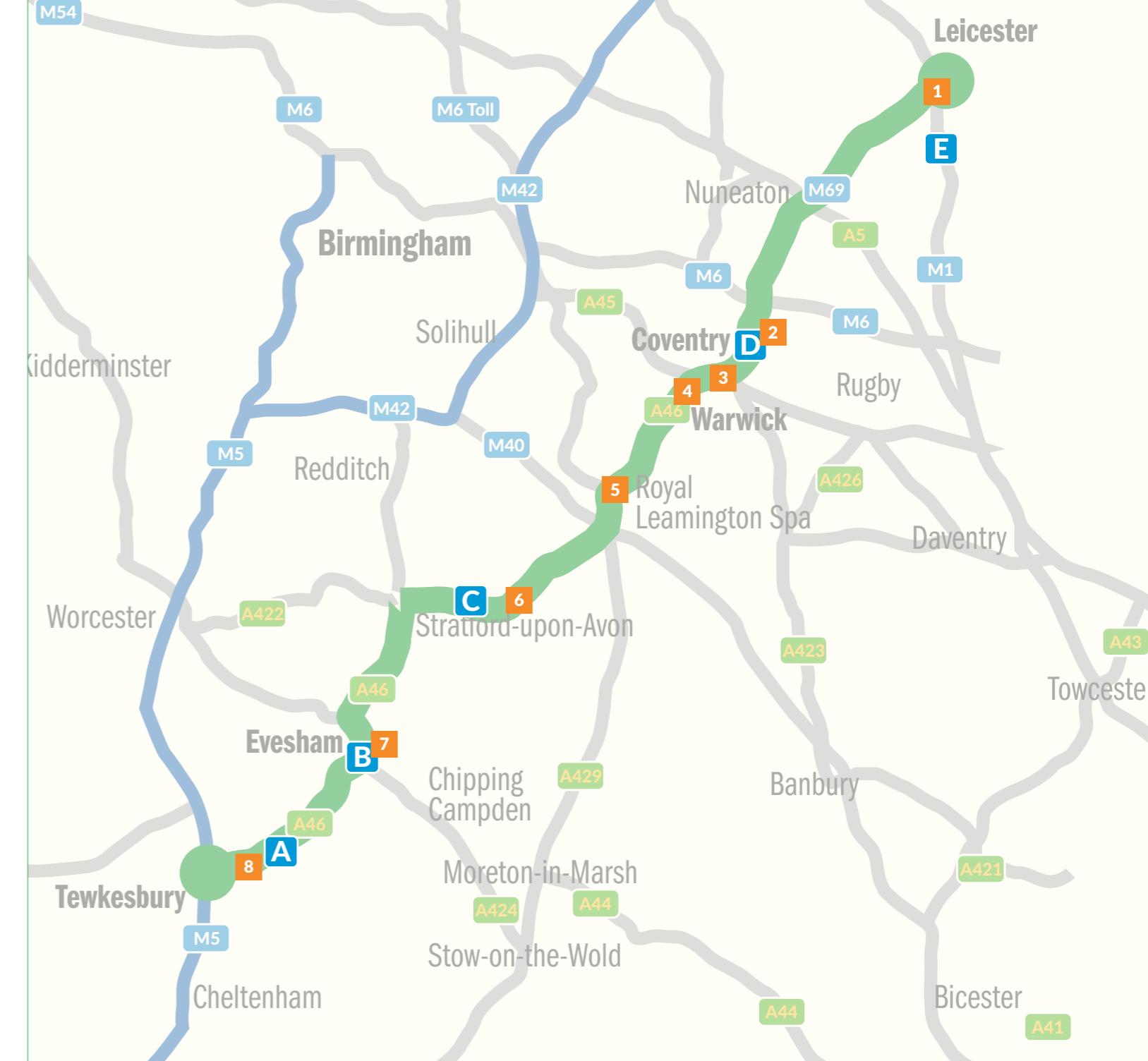
The at-grade junctions along Evesham bypass can cause congestion in peak times.

Highways England have put forward evidence as part of the Route Strategy refresh, which will inform the future Roads Investment Strategy funding.

8 A46 Ashchurch

The constrained and urban nature of the A46 corridor through Ashchurch results in congestion at peak times. This includes approaches to the M5 Junction 9.

Highways England have put forward evidence as part of the Route Strategy refresh, which will inform future Roads Investment Strategy funding.



Priorities for future investment

These are the 5 priority areas for the A46 Partnership:

- A** Teddington Hands roundabout to M5 Junction 9 at Ashchurch
- B** Evesham bypass
- C** Stratford-upon-Avon (Bishopton) to Alcester
- D** A46 Binley and Walsgrave roundabout grade separation
- E** Provision of a new M1 Junction 20A (allowing for future links to extend to the M69 and to the A46 at Syston)



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The benefits and opportunities

Improving the A46 corridor between the M5 and M69/M1 has the potential to generate significant benefits including:

- supporting economic growth and sustainable housing development
- improving road safety
- re-connecting divided communities
- relieving pressure on other routes and local roads
- reducing noise and pollution levels for our communities

All along the corridor there are key business locations that are linked to the nation's strategic road network by the A46.

In Gloucestershire at M5 Junction 9 lies the Tewkesbury Industrial Estate and Ashchurch Business Centre which currently attracts global businesses, such as MOOG and AMAG technology. Jaguar Land Rover has its global headquarters in the Coventry and Warwickshire area.

A number of the businesses would like to grow but currently see congestion as a deterrent to these plans.

In Worcestershire, the A46 provides direct access to the Vale Business Park on the outskirts of Evesham. The Worcestershire LEP has identified the park as having the potential to become a "world class business location" and an improved A46 will help to realise this ambition.

The Vale of Evesham is world renowned for growing food and stocking the country's larders and the A46 links the vale to the national distribution network.

In the future, the A46 around Coventry will form part of a southern growth arc – stretching from the M6 at Junction 2 which links to the new Growth Hub and High Speed 2 Interchange station at UK Central and currently provides a link to Birmingham International Airport (via the A45).

The A46 provides a primary distributor road for existing and planned developments in the south and east of Coventry including Ansty Park, Jaguar Land Rover, Stoneleigh Park and the University of Warwick; and access to vital community facilities, such as the hospital.

Leicestershire County Council has identified that a new M1 Junction 20a (located at the point where the M1 passes under the A426 to the south of the Leicester urban area) has the potential to unlock significant housing development and economic growth not just to meet Leicester and Leicestershire's needs but also those of the 'Midlands Engine' more widely.

As well as enabling the delivery of the planning authorities' development plans across the area, achieving the aims of the Government's Housing White Paper and economic Industrial Strategy, the corridor can also play a role in delivering a resilient strategic road network for Highways England, providing additional capacity within the Midlands area.



Gloucestershire Case Study

AMAG Technology is part of **G4S plc** the leading global integrated security company which has operations in 100 countries and a workforce of 610,000 worldwide.

AMAG's UK business operations are based in International Drive on the Tewkesbury Industrial Estate. G4S currently has 275 staff based at the Challenge House premises and that figure is set to expand by around 130 in September as additional employees are relocated to Tewkesbury from other UK sites.

As a central hub, the location right beside the M5 motorway was specifically chosen to give AMAG Technology good access to the motorway network, making the UK marketplace accessible as well as providing ease of access to international airports.

Additionally the location was selected in order to extend the company's reach further in terms of 'travel to work' areas; providing an accessible workplace for employees from Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire.

However, the reality of the traffic congestion around junction 9 of the M5, the A46 and the surrounding road network is far from ideal. On a daily basis, staff report being frustrated at how long journeys in and out of work actually take.

The impact on the business is considerable and affects everyone who needs to get to Challenge House via the road network. The traffic congestion has resulted in postponed meetings, missed deadlines, late deliveries and missed air freight connections.

To help employees manage the situation, the company has introduced flexible working times with core hours between 10.00am and 4.00pm. Unfortunately, this has introduced different issues for staff who regularly need to speak to colleagues in the United States.

Worcestershire Case Study

Vale Business Park, on the outskirts of Evesham and directly accessed off the A46, is scheduled to grow, with 34ha of land allocated in the South Worcestershire Development Plan.

Indeed Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership set an ambition in its Strategic Economic Plan for the park to become a "world class business location". Direct access to the A46, and thus onward national-links, are crucial for the park; an improved A46 would really unlock the potential for the park to grow and for it to become that world class business location.

More than 130 businesses are currently located at Vale Business Park including: Prima Fruit, suppliers of exotic produce to Waitrose, which has extended their operation by 7,588sqm; Robert Welch, designers of fine cutlery has just completed its brand new 3,500sqm distribution and archive centre; and Rotec Engineering has built a 1,800sqm manufacturing unit to include an engineering academy.

These three examples demonstrate the diverse nature of employment opportunities currently found at Vale Park. Further to this, St Modwen proposes to construct B1, B2 and B8 employment units in addition to a 90 bedroom hotel on a 22ha site adjacent to the existing park. Access to a reliable road-network is vital for these and future job creating businesses, so improving the A46 within Worcestershire would be a significant step towards greatly improved connectivity.



Warwickshire *Case Study*

The A46 forms a primary access to the world renowned town of Stratford-upon-Avon, made famous by the playwright William Shakespeare. As such it is an essential component to the function of the town as a major tourist attraction.

The A46 connects the town to the M40 providing access for visitors from London and across the UK, as well as international visitors from Birmingham Airport via the M42. It also forms a northern bypass to the town which effectively reduces through traffic. Stratford-upon-Avon attracts around 2.5 million visitors a year, who contribute approximately £155 million to the local economy as part of the wider value of £631m that tourism brings to local businesses supporting 11,000 jobs. An efficient and reliable road network is essential in maintaining and increasing this level of investment. Traffic congestion increases travel time therefore reducing the time available for visitors to spend in Stratford, not only at the numerous Shakespeare related attractions such as the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust properties or the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, but also the many shops, restaurants and other businesses that rely on custom from visitors and tourists.

The A46 also links the Long Marston Airfield Garden Village, located to the south of Stratford-upon-Avon town, to the strategic road network, providing access for residents of the proposed 3,500 homes to jobs in Birmingham, Coventry and the wider west midlands region as part of the Midlands Engine. A key component of any sustainable community is effective and efficient transportation and accessibility, that is particularly true of the strategic road network that supports rural towns like Stratford-upon-Avon.

Coventry City *Case Study*

The Coventry and Warwickshire area is home to Jaguar Land Rover's global headquarters and research & development sites at Whitley and Gaydon respectively. The A46 provides access between these two sites which support over 14,000 jobs and therefore the corridor supports operations between these critical business functions.

Transport networks perform a vital role for our business, providing the infrastructure to get our products to market, get our employees to work, components to our sites and allowing our staff to conduct business activities between sites.

Improvements to journey times and reliability provide us with enhanced connectivity to markets and employees which will greatly support our future plans for investment and growth. For example, we are finalising designs for the new Jaguar Land Rover Technology Park off the A46 south of Coventry.

Jaguar Land Rover therefore welcomes and supports the proposed priorities for investment in the A46 as outlined in this prospectus. Investment in the A46 corridor will benefit Jaguar Land Rover by providing the foundations for continued global growth. We wish to work with the A46 Partnership to develop these plans and look forward to future progression of the A46 expressway proposal.



Leicestershire *Case Study*

M1 Junction 21 (J21), at the northern end of the A46/M69 corridor, is the Leicester urban area's primary access to the strategic road network and a crucial point at the heart of the country's road network; significant traffic movements pass through it between northern and southern England, and via the M69/A46 corridor and A14 to south west and eastern England. Its effective and efficient operation is critical to the region's economy and to the UK's more widely.

Despite improvements the J21 area still suffers severe peak period traffic congestion. Combined with a lack of network resilience (frequent accidents between J21 and Junction 21a - A46 Leicester western bypass), this leads to lengthy periods of local and regional traffic disruption. The performance of the A46 (from J21a) is also deteriorating also impacting on accessibility to the M69. In the short term, works are planned to improve the performance of the A46/A5630 junction (see Leicester City case study), but ultimately a solution offering long term benefits is required to address problems on the strategic road network in and around the Leicester urban area.

The problems have economic impacts and are a potentially significant growth constraint; without new infrastructure it will be increasingly difficult to meet long term housing and employment demands. Work undertaken by Leicestershire County Council has identified that a new junction on the M1 (J20a) would bring significant, long term benefits in terms of relieving congestion at J21; improving network resilience, opening up potential housing and employment opportunities; and offering very good value for money. The scheme is being considered as part of the Midlands Connect A46 study; it could be an early deliverable of the A46 Expressway, promoted through the Midlands Connect strategy and including a new strategic road around the south and east of the Leicester urban area.

Leicester City

Ashton Green, Leicester

Ashton Green is seen as the most innovative and sustainable new development in Leicester in more than 30 years. The site is north-west of Leicester between the city's outer ring road and the A46 (N). The site offers 130 hectares of greenfield land for up to 3,000 new homes, with 10 ha of employment land, a commercial village centre and 50 ha of green space.

The A5630 Anstey Lane serves Ashton Green and is a key radial route between the A46 and the city centre. Both the 2-lane dual A46 and A5630 already experience significant congestion at peak and, occasionally, off peak times. This also impacts on the city's outer ring road (A563) which is only 1km from the A46/A5630 junction. Highways England already recognise the issues, allocating £5m to enhance A563 improvements funded by the Ashton Green development.

Strategic challenges & opportunities

Ashton Green highlights local issues but the challenges facing the A46(N) Leicester western bypass are much more strategic in nature. Current planned development would see over 12,000 houses near to the A46, north and west of Leicester.

Bearing in mind the scale of the transport challenges ahead, Leicester & Leicestershire believe there is an opportunity to consider alternative, strategic solutions of national significance.

Midlands Connect's strategy (March 2017) already highlights the potential of an eastern relief road, running south and east of Leicester between a new M1 Jn20a and the A46(N) near Syston. This could provide a new link of national importance:

- improving connectivity from the south west & Wales to the east coast & north east;
- easing existing congestion on the A46(N) between the M1 & Syston and facilitating Local Plan development north of the city
- supporting a series of major strategic growth & development sites to the south & east of Leicester, promoting further housing and economic growth to 2050.

What do we want to happen next?

The A46 Partnership would like to see:

- Government prioritise the following five sections of the A46 corridor for future investment:
 - A** Teddington Hands roundabout to M5 Junction 9 at Ashchurch
 - B** Evesham bypass
 - C** Stratford-upon-Avon (Bishopton) to Alcester
 - D** A46/B4082 Walsgrave roundabout grade separation
 - E** Provision of a new M1 Junction 20A (allowing for future links to extend to the M69 and to the A46 at Syston)
- Government allocate funding to Highways England for the development of these improvements in the Road Investment Strategy 2 period (2020-2025) with construction likely to follow in RIS3 between 2025 and 2030.

Appendix 1 – A46 Partnership

The A46 Partnership was established in 2015 to bring together councils and LEPs along the corridor with a common aim to work together to bring forward improvements to the A46. The group agreed a joint statement of intent as follows:

Joint Statement of Intent

“ The Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, GFirst (Gloucestershire) Local Enterprise Partnership, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council, Coventry City Council, Warwickshire County Council, Worcestershire County Council, Gloucestershire County Council, Rugby Borough Council, Warwick District Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Wychavon District Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council and Cheltenham Borough Council agree to work collaboratively with Highways England and other stakeholders to jointly review the cumulative impact of planned growth along the A46 between the M6/M69, M40 and M5, in order to determine a strategy for what further investment is required to ensure the corridor functions efficiently as part of the strategic road network and its continued viability as an alternative route from the east midlands to the south west.

The terms of reference of the group are as follows:

1. Develop a collective understanding of the increasing strategic role of the A46 in supporting the midlands and wider UK economy.
2. Make a clear case for investment in the A46 corridor to support future growth and address known congestion and safety issues.
3. Work collaboratively to ensure that local planning and economic objectives are realised by future investment in the corridor.
4. Develop a strategy for the A46 and review progress to ensure that a coordinated approach is taken to investment proposals in the corridor.
5. Provide timely input to the development of initiatives such as Midlands Connect and the Government's Route Strategies/ Road Investment Strategy process.
6. Undertake lobbying of business and Government to ensure the priorities of the A46 Member Partnership are understood by key decision makers.
7. Ensure transparency through the publishing of meeting agendas, minutes, terms of reference and other key documents on a dedicated web page hosted by one of the partners.

FURTHER READING

- Government Transport Strategy for the Midlands (published March 2017)
- Midlands Connect published its first full strategy in March 2017: <https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/media/1100/midlands-connect-strategy-march-2017.pdf>

Membership of the A46 Partnership:

