

**A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening
junctions 19 to 23
Preferred route announcement**



October 2019

Our proposed improvements to the A12 will transform journeys between Essex and Suffolk to London by reducing congestion. This will allow traffic to flow more freely and will help to support the local and national economy.

We're improving journey times for the thousands of drivers that face long queues on the A12.

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Investing in your roads

At Highways England we believe in a connected country and the road network makes these connections happen. We strive to improve our major roads and motorways; engineering the future to keep people moving today and moving better tomorrow. We want to make sure all our major roads are more dependable, durable and, most importantly, safe. That's why we're making a multi-billion pound investment in our network – the largest investment in a generation.

The A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening is a critical part of this investment and will improve journeys from London and the M25 to the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich, which is great news for the local and regional economy.

Our plans will also help commuters and residents making journeys between Colchester and Chelmsford, and to Boreham, Hatfield Peverel, Witham, Rivenhall End, Feering and Marks Tey.

In this booklet we explain the preferred route for the A12 between junctions 19 and 23, the reasons for our decision and the results of the public consultation we held in spring 2017. We also give you details of what will happen next.



Why do we need the widening?

The A12 between Chelmsford (junction 19) and the interchange with the A120 (junction 25) is part of the strategic road network. It provides a vital link to support the national and regional economy as it helps connect Felixstowe and Harwich ports to the M25 and London. It links the villages and towns of Chelmsford, Witham, Marks Tey and Colchester in Essex.

Because of this, the current level of traffic on the A12 is very high. All sections are either close to or exceed the recommended levels of traffic for a dual carriageway with an above average proportion of vehicles being large lorries. The resulting congestion leads to delays and means that during the morning commute a driver's average speed is particularly slow for an A-road in both the northbound and southbound directions.

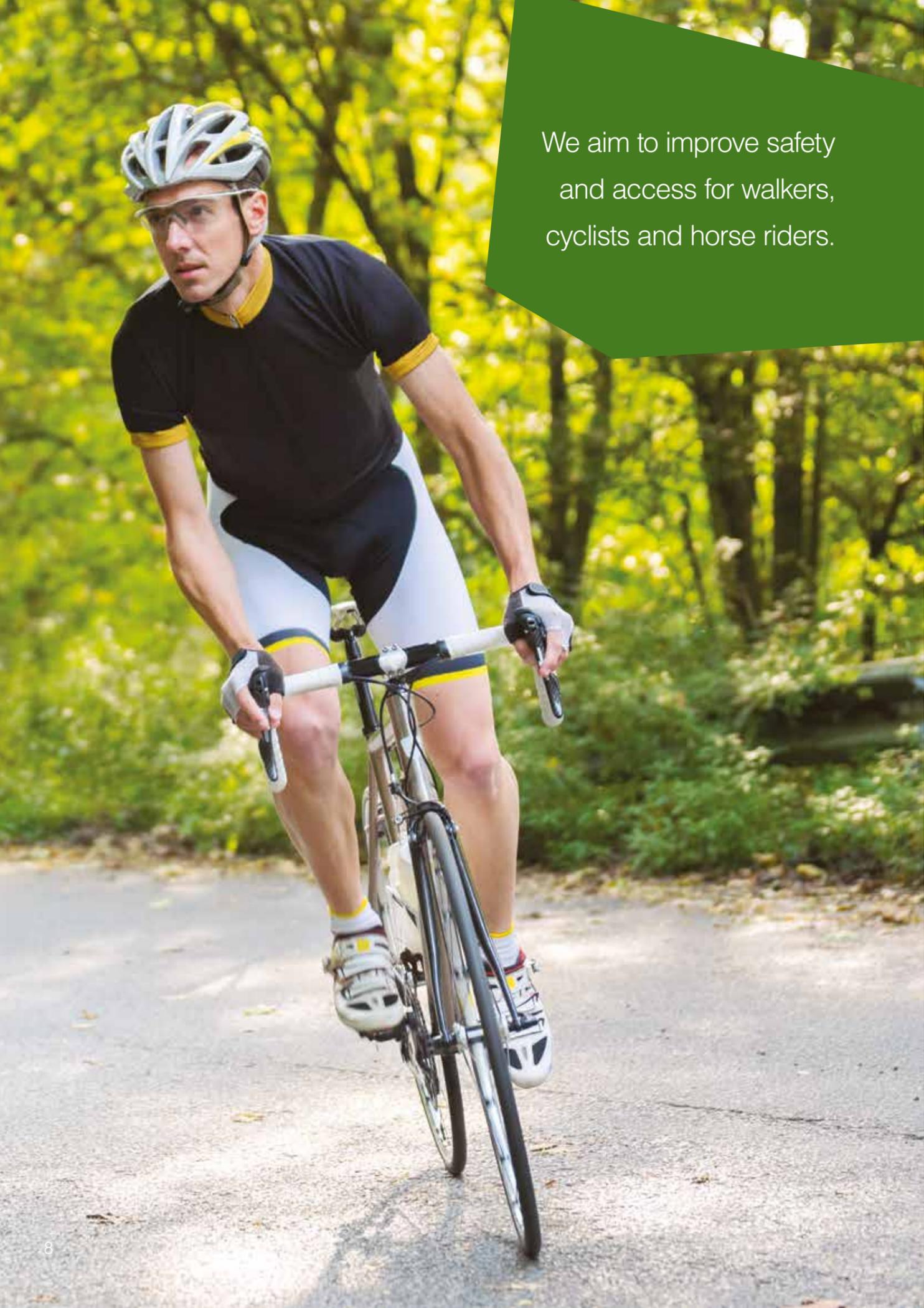
We want to:

- improve safety for drivers, especially at the junctions and slip roads through better design
- reduce traffic congestion by increasing the capacity of the road, making journey times more reliable
- take long-distance traffic off the local roads and put it back onto the A12 where it belongs, so that local roads aren't used as 'rat runs' which affect local villages and their communities
- ensure that the road can cope with the predicted increase in traffic from more jobs and homes in the area
- make improvements for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and bus users, to give them better connections and safer, more enjoyable journeys

Benefits of the A12 widening

Someone travelling daily at peak times along the A12 can expect to save over an hour a week of journey time. On completion:

- the route will be safer and journey times will be more reliable, and there will be less disruption created by collisions
- many local roads will benefit from lighter traffic. Instead traffic would be on the A12 where it belongs
- there will be safer routes between communities for walkers, cyclists and horse riders and improved safety and access for public transport users
- it will support economic growth by bringing people and businesses closer together and by creating job opportunities
- it will support long-term sustainable growth through reliable and improved journey times



We aim to improve safety and access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Background

In 2017, we held a public consultation about our plans to widen the A12 from junction 19 at Chelmsford to the junction 25 interchange with the A120. We presented four route options.

Since then, the local authorities of Colchester, Braintree and Tendring have put forward a joint Local Plan* which includes several proposed garden communities**. The proposed Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community is close to the A12. If this proposed development goes ahead, it is likely to affect the routes that we presented in our 2017 consultation, specifically on the section between junction 23 (Kelvedon South) and junction 25 (Marks Tey interchange).

We are considering alternative route options for the A12 between junctions 23 and 25, which take into account the possible planned garden community. We will be holding a public consultation on these new options. Whether the route between junctions 23 and 25 follows one of these new options, or one of those from the 2017 consultation, will depend on whether the garden community goes ahead.

The joint Local Plan, including the garden community, is currently subject to a public examination. It is important to ensure that our ambitions for the A12 meet the future needs of the area. However, it is for the appointed Government Planning Inspector to decide whether the joint Local Plan is sound. The Planning Inspector has asked for more evidence from the councils to back up their Local Plan.

Once there is a clear decision on whether the garden community goes ahead, we will make a further preferred route announcement on the route of the A12 between junctions 23 and 25. We will take in account this decision and feedback from our public consultations. After that, we will progress the whole of the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening between junctions 19 and 25 through the remaining stages of development, planning consent and construction as a single project.

We are now announcing our preferred route for one section of the A12 improvements, running from junction 19 (Boreham interchange) to just beyond junction 23 (Kelvedon South).

*A Local Plan is drafted by a local planning authority and sets out planning policies to control development and allocate sites to influence what will be built where.

**Garden communities are planned new settlements which are intended to be attractive places to live, work and visit, with a strong emphasis on sustainability. The councils' aim for garden communities is to create new housing, infrastructure, jobs and services. For more information, please see www.ne-gc.co.uk.



The widening will help connect communities and businesses, create job opportunities and support long-term sustainable economic growth in the area.

The preferred route

The preferred route between junctions 19 and 23 is based on Options 2 and 3 from the 2017 public consultation.

Our preferred route widens the existing A12 corridor between junctions 19 and 23 to three lanes in each direction where required and creates a three-lane bypass in each direction at Rivenhall End.

This decision takes into account the feedback we received on junctions, as well as concerns expressed about a Rivenhall End bypass being close to a scheduled monument.

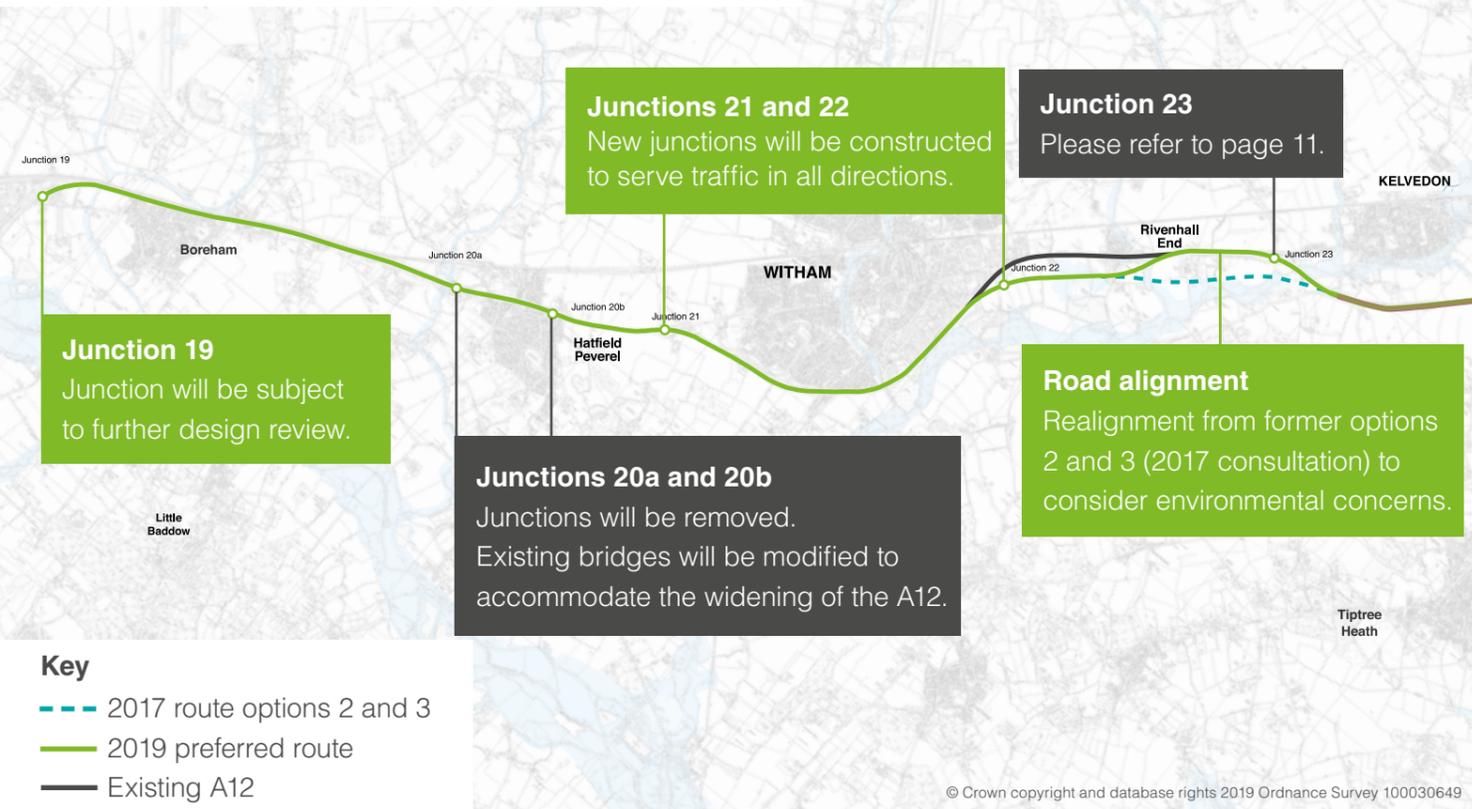
It also includes the following changes and improvements to junctions:

- junction 19 will be subject to further design review
- junctions 20a and 20b will be removed
- bridges across the existing A12 at Hatfield Peverel will be modified to accommodate the widening of the A12
- a new junction 21 will be constructed and become an 'all movements' junction serving traffic from all directions
- a new junction 22 will be constructed and become an 'all movements' junction serving traffic from all directions
- we are considering whether junction 23 could be removed, but with new access roads provided from Kelvedon to junction 22. Passive provision could be made for a potential future link to the A120 improvement proposed by Essex County Council, should it be funded through a future Road Investment Strategy.

We carefully considered many factors when we selected this preferred route, including safety, value for money, environmental impacts and the overwhelming support for creating a bypass at Rivenhall End received in the 2017 consultation.

A preferred route announcement for the section between junctions 23 and 25 will follow the separate consultation on new route options around the garden community. For information on that consultation, please visit our website.

The preferred route



Public consultation and engagement to date

Between 23 January and 3 March 2017, we held a public consultation which presented four options to widen the A12 from Chelmsford to the A120 (junctions 19 to 25).

During the consultation we held seven public exhibitions across the local area at which stakeholders were able to speak to our technical experts. We gained valuable feedback which helped us identify our preferred route.

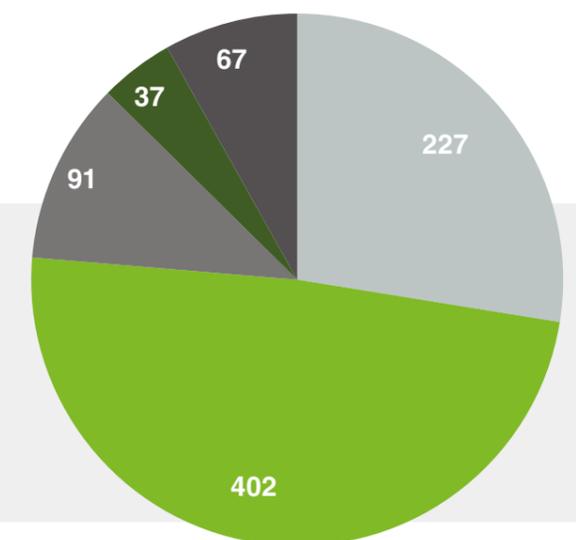
A total of 1,853 people visited our exhibitions and we received 907 responses to our consultation, of which 824 were positive. 757 supported one of our four options. 67 had no preference. 493 people supported Options 2 and 3 (65%).

Thank you to everyone that took part.

Your views are important and help shape the project.

Option preference

- Option 1
- Option 2
- Option 3
- Option 4
- None of the above



Response to the 2017 public consultation: route options

These are some of the comments you gave us about our preferred route.

By adding the two extra sections, you add overdue resiliency. If the new road becomes blocked, the traffic can use the old road (assuming it is retained and the junctions support it).

There are parts of the existing A12 where widening would be difficult. A bypass will help alleviate this.

Improves the quality of life for the Rivenhall End community.

A detailed overview of the comments received can be found on our website in the Report on Public Consultation at www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a12widening

What happens next?

Now we have announced the preferred route between junctions 19 and 23, we will continue to develop our designs for this section of the road in more detail, and we'll carry out more surveys and investigations. We expect to announce our preferred route between junctions 23 and 25 in summer 2020.

Following that, we will hold another public consultation to get feedback on more detailed designs for the overall project (between junctions 19 and 25).

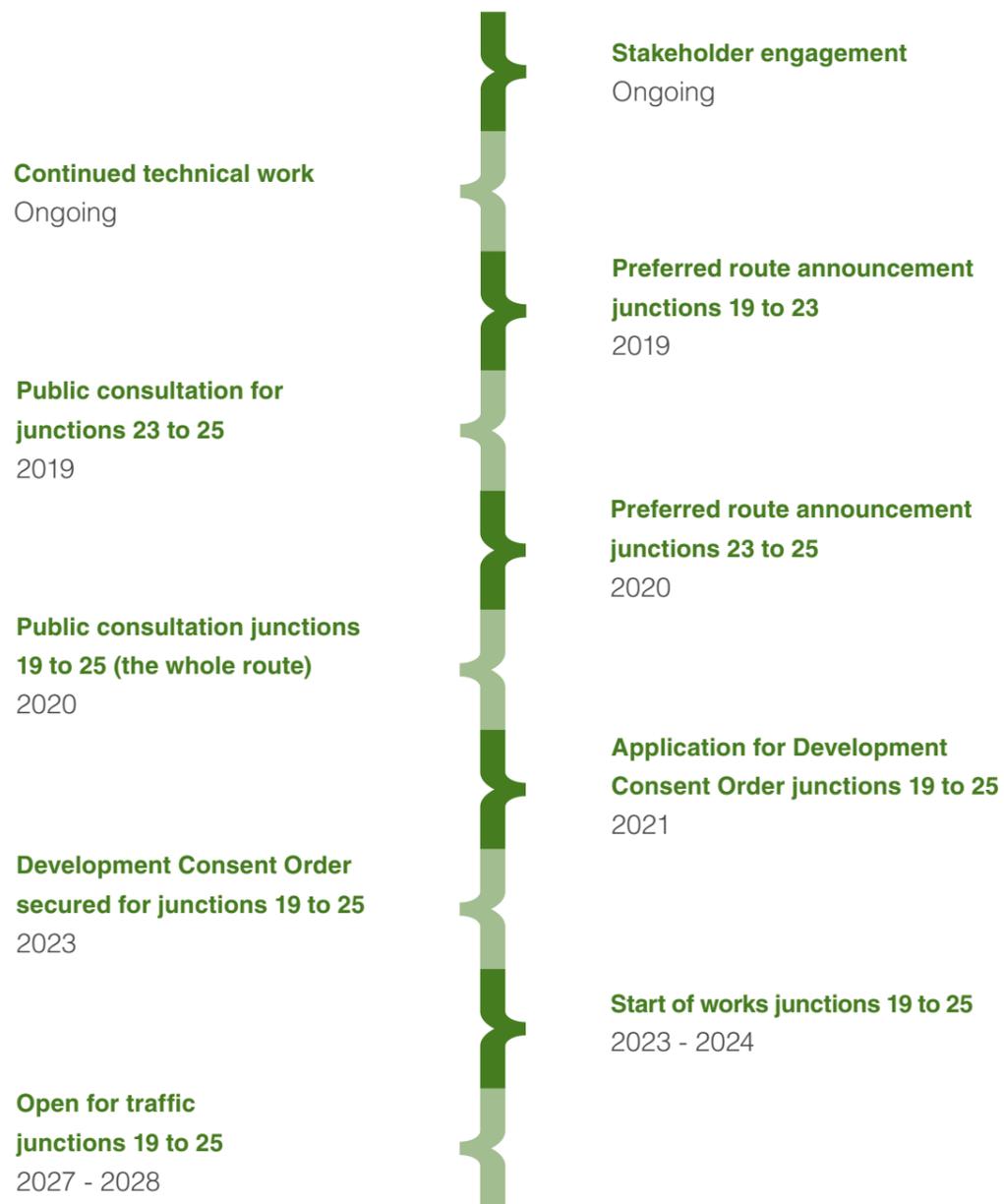
We will put project updates on our website at www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a12widening

In the meantime, we will continue to engage with our stakeholders and the local community to help us refine the design before inviting the public to submit further feedback.

In line with other transformative infrastructure projects, the government will be seeking to ensure that the benefits unlocked by the A12 improvements are felt by local communities and are appropriately captured. This includes funding contributions and developer contributions in some cases. We will be working with local authorities and key stakeholders to appropriately capture value generated and will start the process with conversations in 2020.



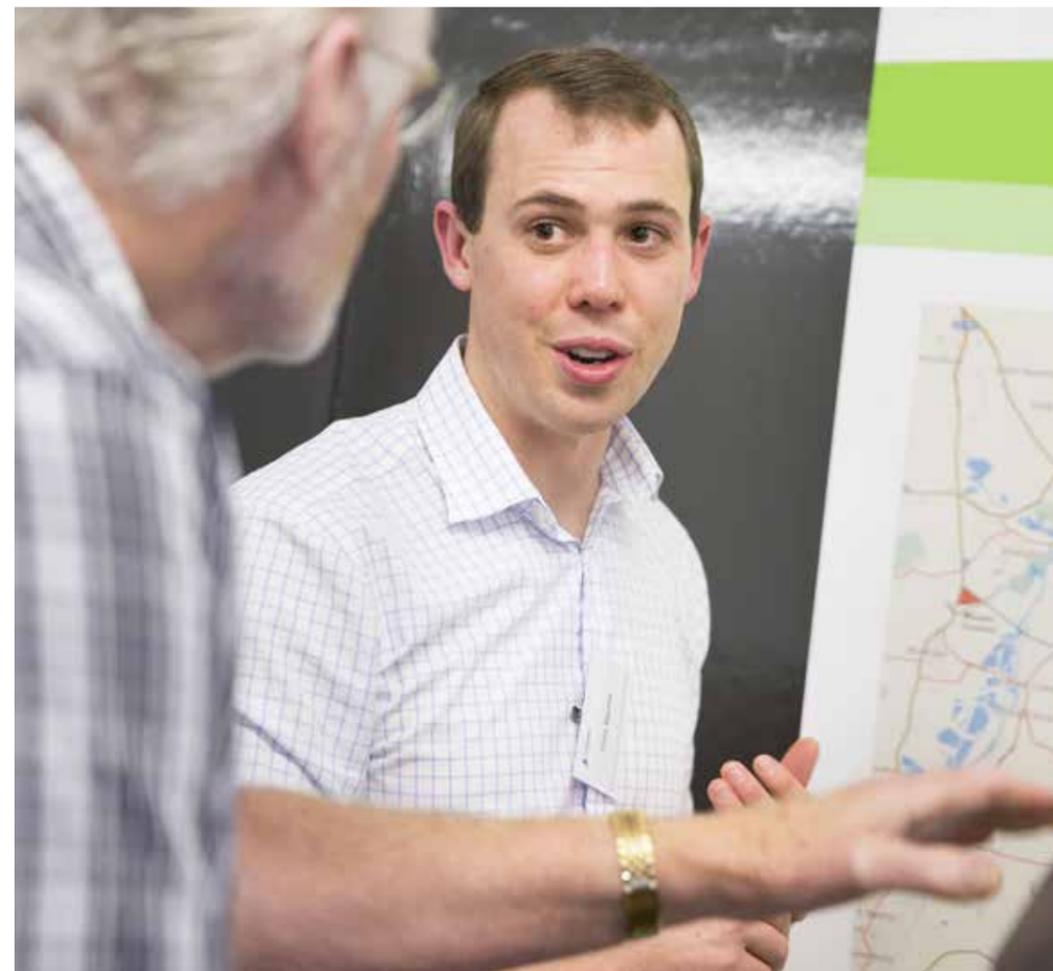
What happens next?



Public events

One of the best ways to find out more about our proposals is to come along to one of our public information events. Here you can find out more about the A12 widening project and speak to members of the project team who will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

For details of upcoming events, visit www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a12widening



Application for a Development Consent Order (DCO)

Our application for development consent will be made on the full route, from junctions 19 to 25. The A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening project to improve junctions 19 to 25 is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Planning Act 2008. This means that we are required to make an application for a DCO to obtain permission to construct the road.

The application will be made to the Planning Inspectorate, who will examine the application. The examination process is likely to involve public hearings. Following the examination, the examining authority will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will decide whether the project will go ahead. We intend to submit our application in 2021 and if approved, we expect to start construction in 2023.

Find out more

Find out more about the DCO process on the Planning Inspectorate's website:

www.infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Further information

For more information about the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening project, please visit our website where you can also sign up for email alerts: www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a12widening

The following documents are also available to read and download from the project web pages:

- Consultation brochure (spring 2017)
- A12 Options Assessment Report
- A12 Traffic Data Collection Report
- A12 Report on Public Consultation

Contact us

@ A12chelmsfordA120wide@highwaysengland.co.uk

📞 0300 123 5000

✉ A12 widening, Highways England, Woodlands, Manton Lane, Bedford, MK41 7LW

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