

A417 Missing Link Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)

Introduction

We operate, maintain and improve England's motorways and major A-roads. The A417 Missing Link scheme is an important part of our ongoing investment. It will improve journeys between Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout, bringing benefits to the wider Gloucestershire area.

This Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) outlines our approach to consulting with the local community for the above scheme. It provides details about how you can take part in the consultation and explains how feedback will influence our proposed design.

To make sure we approach our consultation in the best way for the local community, we have consulted on this Statement with the local authorities for the area in which the scheme lies. They are Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council. At the time of writing, there have been temporary amendments made to the statutory requirements for consultation under the Infrastructure Planning (Publication and Notification of Applications) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

This document also gives you the background to the scheme and how our application to build it will progress.

Our application

The scheme is being developed under the Planning Act 2008 and we are publishing this statement under Section 47 (duty to consult local community) of that Act.

Under the Planning Act 2008, we are required to make an application to the Secretary of State for Transport for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to build this scheme. This application is made through the Planning Inspectorate, who will examine our application and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State. The decision to grant consent to build the scheme will be taken by the Secretary of State and will be based on this recommendation.

A key consideration for the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State for Transport when assessing our DCO application is the National Networks National Policy Statement (NNNPS). The NNNPS sets out the need for development of road projects on the national network, and is the policy against which decisions on major road projects will be made.

We anticipate that our DCO application for the scheme will be submitted in 2021.

When we submit our application, the Planning Inspectorate must consider whether our consultation has been adequate. The best time for you to have your say to inform our final design on this scheme is now by taking part in this consultation.

You can find more information about the Planning Inspectorate and the Planning Act 2008 on the National Infrastructure Planning website: <http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/> or by calling the Planning Inspectorate on 0303 444 5000.

The scheme

The A417/A419 provides an important route between Gloucester, Cheltenham and Swindon that helps connect the West Midlands and the North to the South of England via the M5 and M4 motorways. While most of the route is dual carriageway, there is one section which isn't. Known as the 'Missing Link', this three-mile stretch of single carriageway on the A417 between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout severely restricts the flow of traffic.

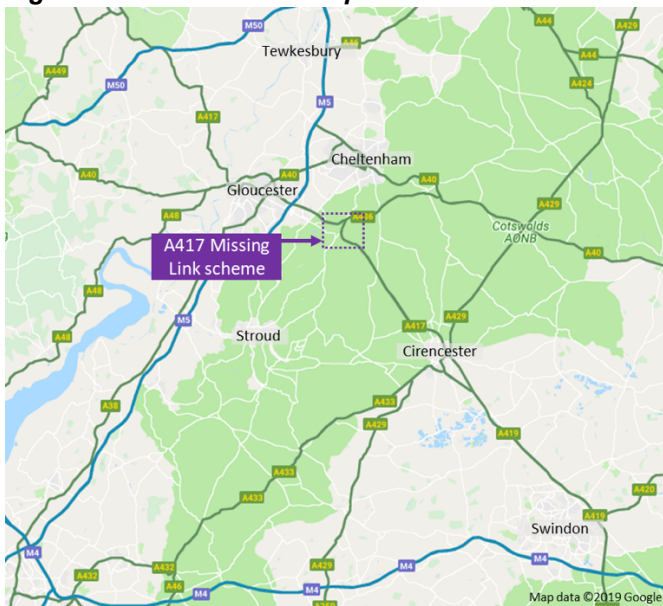
In recent years, the case for improvement has become more compelling – to improve safety, support the economy, ease congestion and reduce pollution. In recognition of this, the Government's Road Investment Strategy 2015 set out the intention to improve the A417 Missing Link between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout. This commitment was also outlined in the Government's second Road Investment Strategy, covering the period 2020 - 2025.

The objectives set for the scheme are:

- **Transport and safety:** to reduce delays, create a free-flowing road network and improve safety along this stretch of the A417
- **Environment and heritage:** to reduce the impact on the landscape, natural and historic environment of the Cotswolds and, where possible, enhance the surrounding environment
- **Community and access:** to reduce queuing traffic and pollution, improve access for local people to the strategic road network, and support residents' and visitors' enjoyment of the countryside
- **Economic growth:** to help boost growth and prosperity by making journeys more reliable and improving connectivity.

Below is a plan showing the location of the scheme:

Figure 1: Scheme location plan



In summary, the scheme consists of:

- 3.4 miles (5.5 km) of new dual carriageway connecting the existing A417 Brockworth bypass with the existing A417 dual carriageway south of Cowley;
- the section to the west of the current Air Balloon roundabout would follow the existing A417 corridor. However, the section to the south and east of the Air Balloon roundabout would be offline, away from the existing road corridor;
- a new crossing near Emma's Grove for walkers, cyclists and horse riders including disabled users, which would accommodate the Cotswold Way National Trail;
- a new junction at Shab Hill, providing a link from the A417 to the A436 (towards the A40 and Oxford) and to the B4070 (for Birdlip and other local destinations);
- a new multi-purpose crossing around 25m wide to provide essential mitigation for bats and for landscape integration, north of Shab Hill junction. It will also provide a further benefit in accommodating the Gloucestershire Way and provide an improved experience for visitors to the area;
- a new junction would be included near Cowley, replacing the current Cowley roundabout, making use of an existing underbridge to provide access to local destinations such as Nettleton Bottom and Brimpsfield. The use of the underbridge would allow for all directions of travel to be made; and
- the existing A417 between the Air Balloon roundabout and the Cowley roundabout would be repurposed. Some lengths of this existing road would be converted into a route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders including disabled ramblers. Other sections would be retained to maintain local access for residents and replacement Common Land.

A detailed map of the scheme will be available at consultation.

Consulting the community and previous consultations

We have already carried out two rounds of consultation in the vicinity of the scheme. We consulted on:

- our proposed route options for the scheme between February and March 2018 where consultees were asked for their views on the route options for the road improvements; and
- the proposed scheme design for improvements for the A417 Missing Link with a consultation between 27 September and 8 November 2019 where consultees were asked for their views on the design of the scheme including mitigation proposals and the alternative junction arrangements at Shab Hill.

More details of the previous consultations are also available to view and download at: <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a417-missing-link/>

Next consultation – why and when

Responses to the consultation in September 2019, ongoing engagement with stakeholders, landowners and emerging survey data and assessment work identified that changes to the proposed scheme were required.

It is important to us that this supplementary public consultation enables members of the public to have their say by:

- encouraging the community to help shape our proposals to maximise local benefits;
- helping people understand the benefits and local impact of our proposals;
- providing the opportunity to give feedback on updated mitigation options as a result of the revised design; and
- identifying ways in which our proposals, without significant costs, support wider strategic or local objectives.

Your comments will help us achieve these objectives. We will listen to everyone's views and consider your opinions before we submit our DCO application.

The consultation will run from **Tuesday 13 October to Thursday 12 November 2020**.

Whilst we welcome feedback on the entire scheme, since the last consultation we have made changes to the scheme's design to ensure it fits with our objectives. The changes we are seeking feedback on are:

- the introduction of new crossings, including the Cotswold Way and the Gloucestershire Way;
- the change in gradient of the A417 as it climbs the escarpment from 7% to 8%, reducing the depth of the cutting to a maximum of 15 metres, with associated benefits to reduced material excavation and construction impact;
- access to Barrow Wake car park from the B4070 with a realigned route between Birdlip and Shab Hill;
- removal of vehicular access from Cowley junction to Cowley via Cowley Lane, which would remain open to private property, walkers, cyclists and horse riders including disabled users;
- improved access with new connections for walkers, cyclists and horse riders including disabled users across the scheme;
- proposals for replacement common land; and
- the change in environmental effects as a result of the new design.

Due to the nature of the above changes, there has been a reduction to the project boundary (red line) since the last consultation in autumn 2019, and a map to show the new boundary will be made available at the consultation.

The scheme will require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and therefore we are publishing a Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report as part of the consultation material. This gives information about the potential environmental effects of the scheme and the measures proposed to reduce those effects, to assist well-informed responses to the consultation. More details of where the PEI Report will be available to view as part of the consultation can be found on page 11 of this document.

Who can take part?

Everybody is invited to take part in our consultation and we welcome all views. We will take them into account before we submit our final design as part of the DCO application.

How will we consult?

As part of Highways England's programme of consultation and engagement, we will have a two-week pre-launch period, otherwise referred to as a 'Have Your Say campaign', where we will notify stakeholders, landowners and members of the local community of the upcoming consultation, and include details of how to get involved. Details of this can be found in Table 1, below.

Highways England has taken into consideration that a digital approach to consultation and engagement, whilst more suitable for some demographics, may not be suitable for all. We will therefore endeavour to continue to utilise non-digital methods where possible and practicable to do so in line with government health guidance relating to COVID-19. Due to COVID-19, at the time of writing, it's not possible to guarantee holding face to face consultation events in the local community. To mitigate this, in line with government guidance, Highways England will explore the possibility of holding face to face events in convenient locations for local residents. Highways England is hosting a number of online events in the form of a virtual exhibition during the consultation period, where members of the project will be available at specific times to discuss the proposals.

Details of how we will formally consult with stakeholders, landowners and the local community are included in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Consultation activities

Method	Detail
Have Your Say	

Method	Detail
Have Your Say invitation	We will write to all registered users (those who have subscribed to project updates) of the Highways England project website and respondents of the previous consultation that wished to stay in touch. This will include a link to the consultation website, details of the virtual consultation events and a link to a video introducing the consultation and how to get involved.
Talking heads video	We will publish a video of members of the project team introducing the consultation on the Highways England website, social media channels and share with local media platforms.
Partnership communications	We will provide a digital pack of information about the consultation including blocks of text and images to stakeholders so that they can promote the forthcoming consultation on their own communications channels. This will include the directly affected local authorities, GFirst LEP and other stakeholders who have expressed an interest in helping us promote the consultation.
Stakeholder briefings	We will arrange to brief key stakeholders, including MPs, local authorities and parish councils, prior to the launch of the consultation to advise them of how we plan to undertake consultation and how they can get involved.
Consultation	
Virtual exhibitions	<p>Due to COVID-19, it may not be possible for Highways England to host face to face consultation events in the local community. Instead, we will host a number of online events in the form of a virtual exhibition during the consultation period. To replicate public events as much as possible, topic specialists and members of the project team will be on hand to answer questions from members of the public at allocated times, which are detailed below. The virtual exhibition room will be open 24/7 during the consultation period.</p> <p>Highways England will hold 17 virtual consultation events at a range of times and days, to include lunchtimes, evenings and weekends. Proposed dates and times are provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 October, 11am – 2pm • 13 October, 6pm – 8pm • 16 October, 8am – 11am • 16 October, 4pm – 7pm

Method	Detail
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 October, 9am – 1pm • 20 October, 11am – 2pm • 22 October, 6pm – 9pm • 24 October, 1pm – 4pm • 27 October, 8am – 11am • 29 October, 2pm – 5pm • 2 November, 10am – 1pm • 2 November 6pm – 9pm • 4 November, 4pm – 7pm • 7 November, 9am – 1pm • 10 November, 8am – 11am • 10 November, 6pm – 9pm • 12 November, 8am – 11am <p>The dates and times of the virtual consultation events will be detailed on the project website, included in consultation publicity materials, promoted via press and social media and editorial coverage will also be sought in local and hyperlocal publications.</p> <p>Comments made via the online exhibition chat function will not be considered as formal responses to the consultation. Regard will be had to written responses to the consultation, via the feedback questionnaire, and emails or letters to the project team.</p> <p>Should government restrictions about public events be eased before the end of the consultation period, Highways England may decide to hold some in-person consultation events. This would only be considered if it is deemed safe to do so, and can be delivered within government guidelines. Public health will remain the priority. Should in-person events be deemed practical and possible, these will be arranged in consultation with local authorities and notice of any alternative arrangements will be given as soon as possible, using methods similar to those outlined above.</p>
Stakeholder briefing	We will host a briefing event at the start of the consultation to raise awareness of the consultation amongst local stakeholders and organisations.

Method	Detail
Postcard mail out	<p>Working with Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council, we have developed a consultation target area for the distribution of our consultation information. This is based on who we think will be most affected by our proposals. This area is shown on the plan at Appendix A.</p> <p>We will let people within the local area know about our consultation by sending them a postcard. The postcard will provide details of the virtual consultation events, how to find out more information and provide feedback. Addresses will be taken from the latest version of the Royal Mail database.</p>
Media releases	<p>We will issue a media release to the following local press publications and media outlets at the launch of the 'Have Your Say' campaign, and issue a second media release at the start of the consultation period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloucestershire Echo • Gloucestershire Citizen • Gloucestershire Live • Western Daily Press • Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Standard • Cotswold Journal • BBC Points West/South West • ITV South West • BBC Radio Gloucestershire • Breeze FM • Heart FM <p>A third media release will be issued to these publications and outlets before the end of the consultation period to encourage people to provide their feedback before the consultation period closes.</p>
Emails and letters	<p>We will send either emails or letters advising of the consultation and how to get involved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPs in the Gloucestershire area • Elected representatives at Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council • Host parish councils • Adjacent local authorities to include parish councils/meetings.
Statutory notices	<p>Statutory notices to publicise the proposed DCO application and the SoCC will be published as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proposed DCO application - once in a national newspaper and the London Gazette and twice in local circulating newspapers • publicising the SoCC - in two local circulating newspapers.

Method	Detail
Media advert	We will place an advert advising of the consultation and promoting the public consultation events in the online edition of Gloucestershire Live.
Social media	We will promote the consultation on Highways England's South West Twitter account, @HighwaysSWEST and will also be running a Facebook advertising campaign. Consultation feedback will not be accepted through social media channels.
Partner communications	We will provide information regarding the consultation, including posters, to directly affected local authorities, parish councils and other organisations such as GFirst LEP and Cotswold Way Association so that they can raise awareness of the consultation through their own communications channels.
Hard to reach group engagement	We will contact hard to reach groups in advance of the 'Have Your Say' campaign and launch of consultation, to advise of them of the forthcoming consultation and gain insight into the best way to consult with their members.
Scheme website	Information on the proposed scheme, public consultation events, what we are consulting on and how to respond will be available on the scheme website. This information will be published on the project website following the launch of our 'Have Your Say' campaign.

Any activity(s) that cannot be undertaken due to circumstances beyond our control, where possible, will be substituted with similar activity(s) and advertised in local newspapers (via press release) circulating in the vicinity of the scheme. Any activity changes will also be published on Highways England's South West twitter account @HighwaysSWEST.

How to respond to the consultation

A consultation response form will be produced to help you provide comments on the scheme. All consultation responses must be made in writing by:

- Completing the online feedback questionnaire via <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a417-missing-link/>
- Requesting a hard copy of the feedback questionnaire to be sent to you in the post, and return via freepost to the FREEPOST A417 MISSING LINK
- Alternatively, you can:
 - Email a417missinglink@highwaysengland.co.uk;
 - Write to us FREEPOST A417 MISSING LINK

All responses must be received by **Thursday 12 November 2020 at 11.59pm**.
Responses received after that date may not be considered.

We are aware that other organisations are likely to be carrying out public consultation activities on their projects and make demands on the time of the public and their representatives. We will try to ensure that our consultation has due regard to other consultations taking place in the locality.

Information available at and details of local display/deposit locations

We will make the following documents available as part of the consultation:

Table 2: Consultation documents

Document	Detail
Requests for documents	As part of our 'Have Your Say' campaign prior to the launch of consultation, people will be able to pre-register to receive hard copies of documents on the launch of consultation. The documents that will be made available, on request, free of charge will be: the consultation brochure, feedback questionnaire and Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). However, there may be a charge for paper copies of other consultation materials of up to £200. Please contact Highways England for further details.
Consultation booklet	<p>Written in plain English, this document will provide a summary of the proposals including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the background to the scheme; • the vision for the scheme; • a summary of the proposed scheme; • information about design changes since last consultation; • information about potential benefits, effects and impacts of the proposed scheme, with a particular focus on the design changes; • how we propose to mitigate against any potential impacts; • signposts for readers to more detailed information reports and how to provide feedback on the proposed scheme. <p>This document will be available online and in hard copy on request.</p>

Document	Detail
Feedback questionnaire	Available in hard copy on request and online, this questionnaire will be available for people to provide their feedback on the specific aspects of the scheme, and provide overall feedback on our proposals.
Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report	This will contain preliminary information on the likely environmental effects of our proposals as we have ascertained them so far, for example noise and air quality, and how we propose to reduce these effects, as well as how we propose to maximise the benefits of the scheme. A non-technical summary of the PEI Report will also be made available. The PEI Report and non-technical summary will be available online.
Map of the route	This will highlight where the proposed route is located.
A set of plans of the scheme	These will provide details of the designs for the proposed scheme, including a plan showing the red line boundary of the application proposed.
A notice of application	We will publish a notice of the consultation and provide it to statutory consultees as required.
Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)	This SoCC document will be made available as part of the consultation.

We will make these consultation documents available to view in the following ways:

Table 3: Methods to make consultation documents available

Method	Detail
Scheme website	All consultation documents will be published on the scheme's website which can be accessed via https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a417-missing-link/
Deposit locations	Pre-agreed content and links to all consultation documents will be placed on the websites of the following organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cotswold District Council • Gloucestershire County Council • Tewkesbury Borough Council See Appendix B for website addresses.
Public information points / Community hubs	Highways England will also engage with the local authorities to agree a list of public information points most relevant and convenient for their constituents on which to provide links to consultation documents online. This list will be publicised as part of consultation materials, in advertising and also on the project website.

Next steps

We will record and carefully consider all responses received during the consultation, and consider these in finalising our application before we submit it to the Planning Inspectorate.

We will summarise our findings in a Consultation Report, which will include a description of how our application was informed by the responses received, and outline any changes made as a result of consultation. It forms part of our 2021 submission to the Planning Inspectorate.

The Planning Inspectorate will decide whether the application meets the required standards to proceed to examination, and will determine whether our consultation has been adequate.

If, as a result of feedback from this supplementary public consultation, the proposals change to the extent that it is necessary to undertake further geographically targeted consultation, this would be undertaken in accordance with the principles and methods set out in this SoCC.

For more information, visit our scheme webpage, here:

<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a417-missing-link/> where you can also sign up for email alerts whenever the webpage is updated. If you have any queries about this scheme, please contact the project team directly by calling 0300 123 5000 or emailing a417missinglink@highwaysengland.co.uk.

Your data, your rights

Your data, your rights

On 25 May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) became law. The law requires Highways England to explain to you – consultees, stakeholders and customers – how your personal data will be used and stored.

Highways England adheres to the government's consultation principles, the Planning Act 2008 and the Highways Act 1980 as required, and may collect personal data to help shape development of highways schemes.

Personal data collected by the project team will be processed and retained by

Highways England and its appointed contractors until the scheme is complete. In some instances consultation responses may also be sent to the Planning Inspectorate.

Under the GDPR regulations you have the following rights:

- Right of access to the data (Subject Access Request)
- Right for the rectification of errors
- Right to erasure of personal data – this is not an absolute right under the legislation
- Right to restrict processing or to object to processing

■ Right to data portability

If, at any point, Highways England plans to process the personal data we hold for a purpose other than that for which it was originally collected, we will tell you what that other purpose is. We will do this prior to any further processing taking place and we will include any relevant additional information, including your right to object to that further processing.

You have the right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority, the Information Commissioners Office.



If you'd like more information about how we manage data, or a copy of our privacy notice, please contact: DataProtectionAdvice@highwaysengland.co.uk

Appendix A: Mailing area for postcard



Although the scheme's red line boundary has reduced slightly since our last consultation and as a result of the design changes, Highways England has retained the mailing area for consultation materials used during our 2019 public consultation. There will be a map of the revised red line boundary available at the consultation.

Appendix B: Website addresses where consultation documents can be accessed via

Deposit location	Website address
Cotswold District Council	https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/
Gloucestershire County Council	https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/
Tewkesbury Town Hall	https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/