

A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements

Preferred route announcement



Our improvements will transform connections between Milton Keynes and Cambridge. Quicker, safer and more reliable journeys will bring communities together, create new job opportunities and support long term sustainable growth.

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Introduction

Investing in your roads

At Highways England, we believe in a connected country and our network enables these connections to 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 delivering £15 billion of investment on our network – the largest investment in a generation.

The A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme is a critical part of this investment; by reducing congestion in the area, the scheme will improve journeys between Milton Keynes and Cambridge, which is great news for the local and regional economy.

It will also complement the development of a new high quality link road between Milton Keynes and Oxford, transforming connections and supporting housing and job growth across the wider region.



In this booklet, we explain the preferred route for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme, the reasons for our decision and the results of the public consultation we held in spring 2017. We also give details of what will happen next.

We're improving journey times for the thousands of drivers that face long queues on the A1 and A421 at the Black Cat roundabout during rush hour.

Drivers experience regular delays at Eltisley junction on the A428 towards Cambridge.





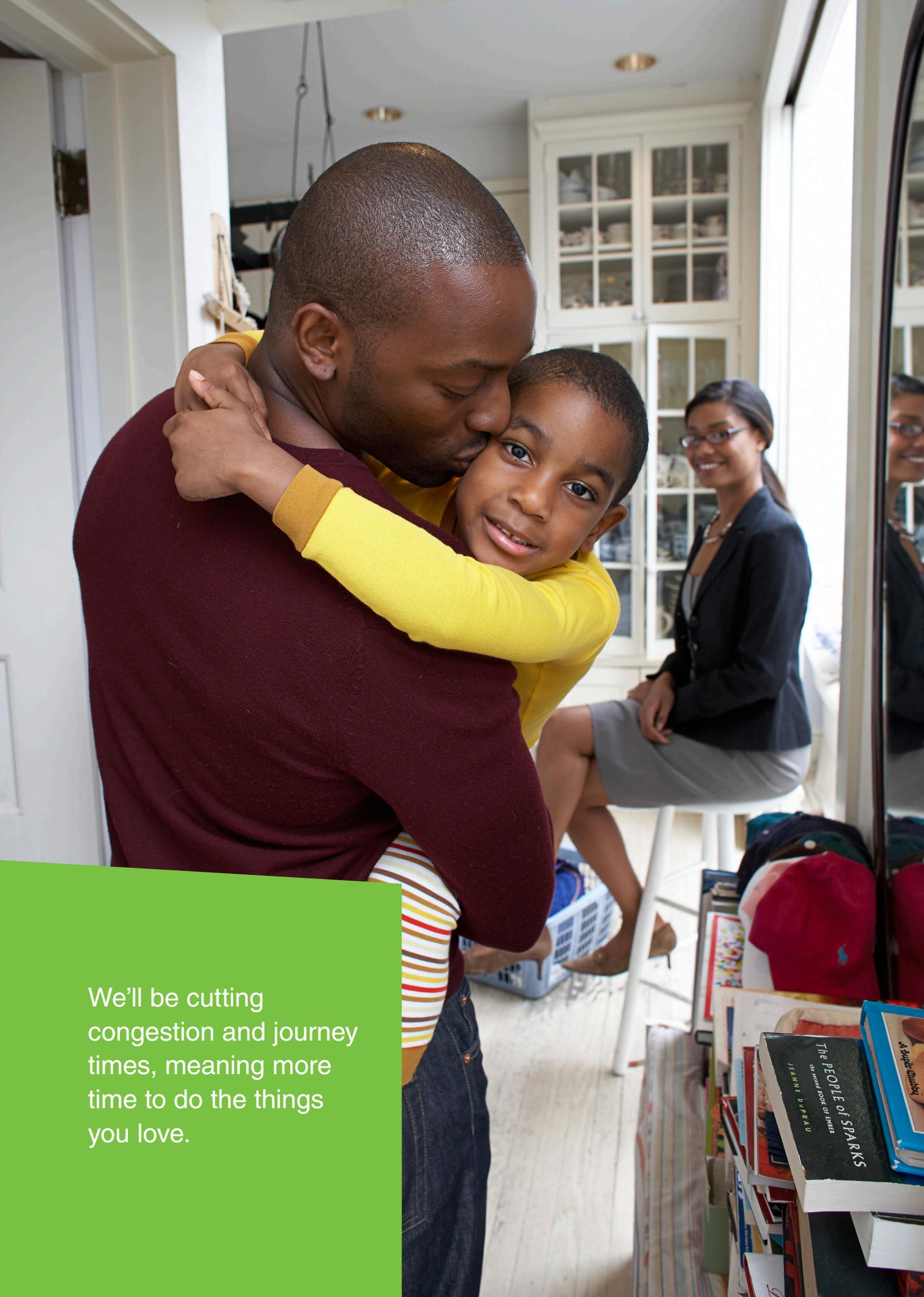
Why do we need this scheme?

The A428 between St Neots and Caxton Gibbet is the only stretch of single carriageway along the route between Milton Keynes and Cambridge.

Motorists experience regular delays and congestion in this and the surrounding area, particularly at the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet roundabouts. Journey times are often inconsistent and there are also a high number of incidents, especially at junctions along the route. With few available diversion routes, accidents can result in disruption over a wide area. Rat running on local roads through villages is also a problem as drivers seek alternative routes to avoid the heavily congested A428.

The A428 is an important route in an area of the country where there is the potential for considerable growth in housing and employment. It provides a vital link between the M1 and the M11, connecting the communities of Bedford, St Neots, Cambridge and Cambourne. With the new A14, it will form part of a key route to the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich.

This is a region where there is the potential for considerable growth in jobs and housing.



We'll be cutting congestion and journey times, meaning more time to do the things you love.

Benefits of the scheme

Provide a more free-flowing network

Free flowing junctions and increased capacity on the new dual carriageway will reduce congestion and will create a reliable route between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet junctions. We will cut journey times by more than a third at peak times.

Provide a safe and serviceable network

Tackling congestion helps Highways England provide, operate and maintain a network that is safe for our customers to use and for our people to maintain.

Enable economic growth

Improving connectivity in the region will enable growth in jobs and housing. The increase in road capacity will improve journey times and help to meet predicted demand in the future.

Delivering environmental improvements

The scheme as a whole will have a beneficial impact on noise and air quality for the surrounding area. We will maintain existing levels of biodiversity and leave a positive legacy for nearby communities by providing new landscape planting and wildlife areas.

Improve travel for horse riders, cyclists and walkers

We will improve the safety of horse riders, cyclists, walkers and those who use public transport by improving connections between communities.

Better resilience

We will improve the ability of the road network to cope with accidents and disruption.

We will achieve these benefits by increasing the overall capacity so traffic will flow more freely. The improvements will lead to better journey times and a more reliable network. This, in turn, will help to bring communities and businesses closer together, create job opportunities and support long-term sustainable growth.

The preferred route – Orange route and Black Cat junction Option C

We have chosen the Orange route and Black Cat junction Option C as our preferred route.

Our assessments show these options present the best value for money, have the least impact on the environment and provide the greatest economic return compared to the other options.

The Orange route and Option C are widely supported and were the most popular options at the public consultation in spring 2017.

The Orange route will mean better connections into St Neots town and train station.

Following our technical analysis and feedback from the consultation, we have developed the designs further.

We have adjusted the alignment to take into account issues such as landfill sites and power lines, to address the response from local communities and to accommodate possible future growth around St Neots.

These improvements will result in quicker, safer and more reliable journeys for thousands of drivers by adding over 10 miles of new dual carriageway between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet junctions.

Based on current analysis, we expect to cut the time of the average commute between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet junctions by over a third, saving drivers approximately 10 minutes at peak times.

The current estimated cost for the scheme ranges from £810 million to £1.4 billion.

The Orange route

While all options improved journey times, the Orange route also provides a new junction at Cambridge Road, giving greater access for more drivers travelling to and from St Neots, and providing better connections into the town and the train station.

In addition, improved junctions at Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet will make it safer and easier for drivers to join the new route.

The Orange route will also remove the largest number of vehicles from the existing A428 and local roads. There will be around 4,000 less vehicles on local roads at peak times. The new dual carriageway will reduce rat running on smaller local roads in surrounding villages.

It will also remove long distance traffic using these roads as a diversion route when accidents occur.

The existing A428 will become part of the local road network, serving local communities. With fewer cars travelling on this road, safety is expected to improve.

Black Cat junction Option C

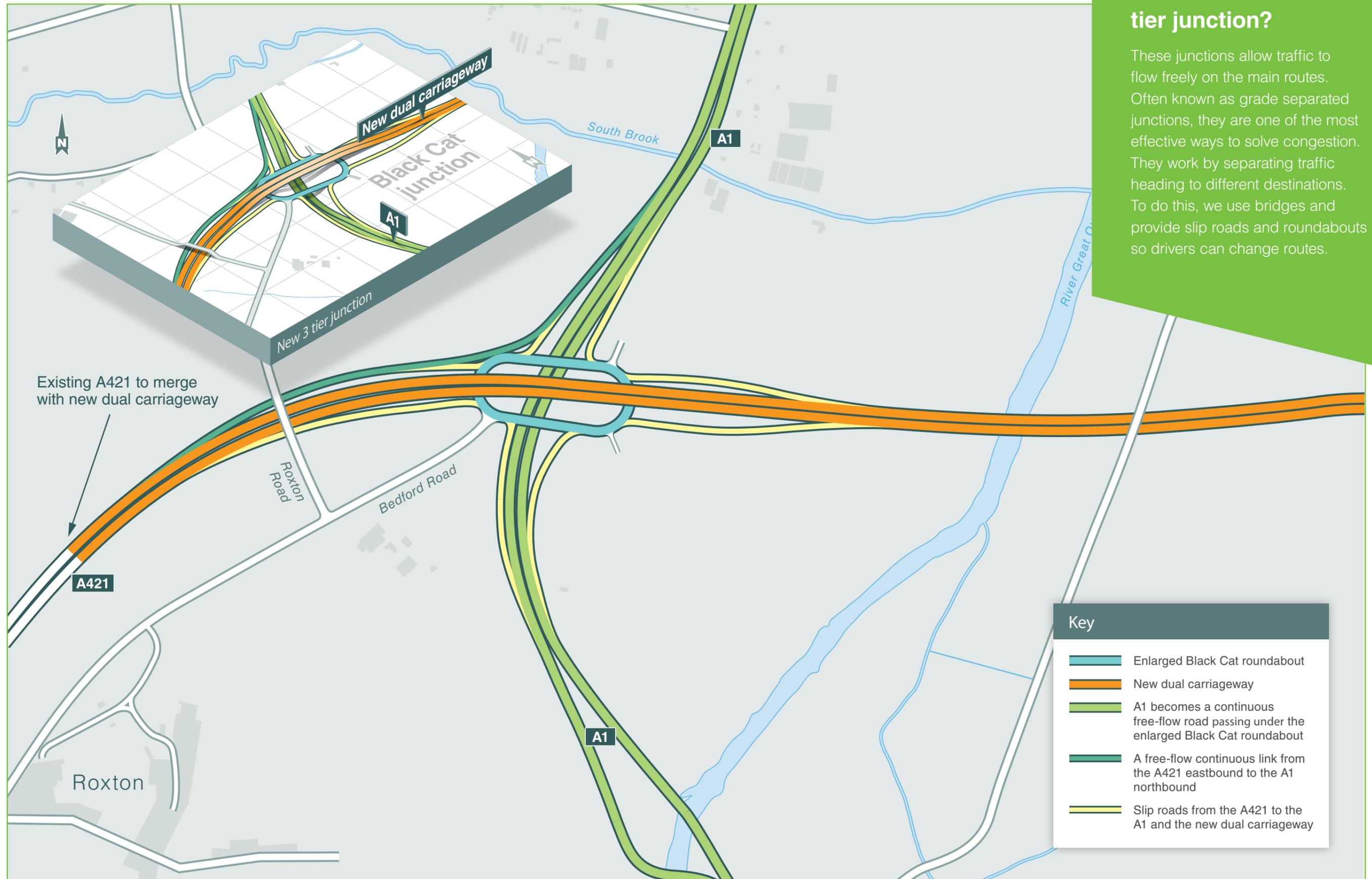
Black Cat junction Option C was the most popular option at consultation and performed best in traffic modelling simulations. It provides an “all ways movement” junction that caters for all directions.

In response to feedback from local communities, we have reduced the height and visual impact of the design by lowering the A1 under the Black Cat junction.

The preferred route at a glance:

- A new 10 mile dual carriageway between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet junctions.
- A three tier junction at Black Cat roundabout will allow traffic to flow freely on the A1 (under the junction) and the A421/ A428 (over the junction).
- New junctions at Cambridge Road and Caxton Gibbet will connect the new dual carriageway to the existing A428. This will increase the resilience of the road network to cope with unforeseen incidents.
- Better connections to St Neots.
- The existing A428 between St Neots and Caxton Gibbet will be retained for local traffic and public transport.
- Close alignment to the existing A428 will help reduce environmental impacts.
- New bridges crossing the dual carriageway at Roxton Road, Barford Road, the B1046 and Toseland Road.
- New bridges over the River Great Ouse and East Coast Main Line railway.
- Improvements to the A428/ B1040 Eltisley junction.
- Improved routes for cyclists, walkers and horse riders will maintain links with the existing public rights of way.
- Safer and alternative access for some side roads.

The preferred route: **Black Cat Option C**



What is a three tier junction?

These junctions allow traffic to flow freely on the main routes. Often known as grade separated junctions, they are one of the most effective ways to solve congestion. They work by separating traffic heading to different destinations. To do this, we use bridges and provide slip roads and roundabouts so drivers can change routes.

Public consultation and engagement to date



We held a public consultation between 6 March 2017 and 23 April 2017, which presented 3 route options to provide a new dual carriageway between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet roundabouts, and three options for improving the Black Cat roundabout.

During the consultation, we held a series of information events in the local area seeking the views of key stakeholders such as local authorities, parish councils, ward representatives, landowners, local residents and road users.

Since then, we have continued to engage with our customers and representatives of organisations including the Environment Agency.

A total of 2028 people attended the exhibitions and we received 4189 responses to the consultation.

The public response to our proposals was overwhelmingly positive. 89% of people either agreed or strongly agreed that we need to improve the journey between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet junctions to reduce congestion.

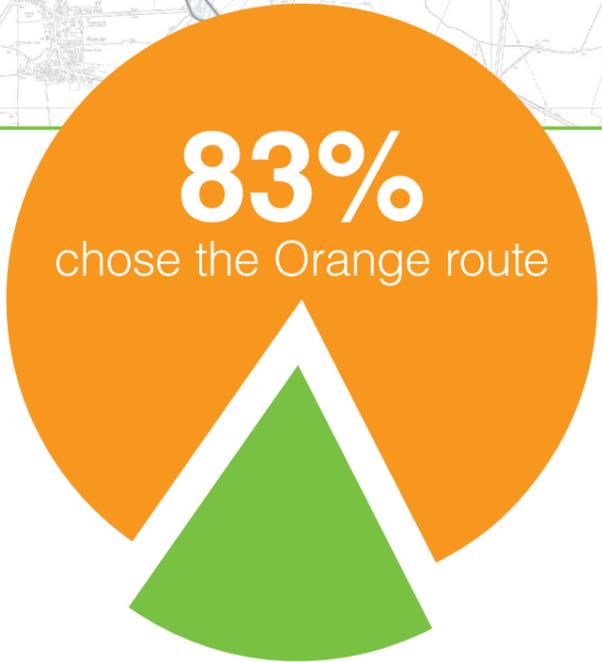
A total of **2028** people attended the exhibitions and we received **4189** responses to the consultation.



Thanks to everyone who took part.

Your views are important and help shape the scheme.

Response to the public consultation: route options



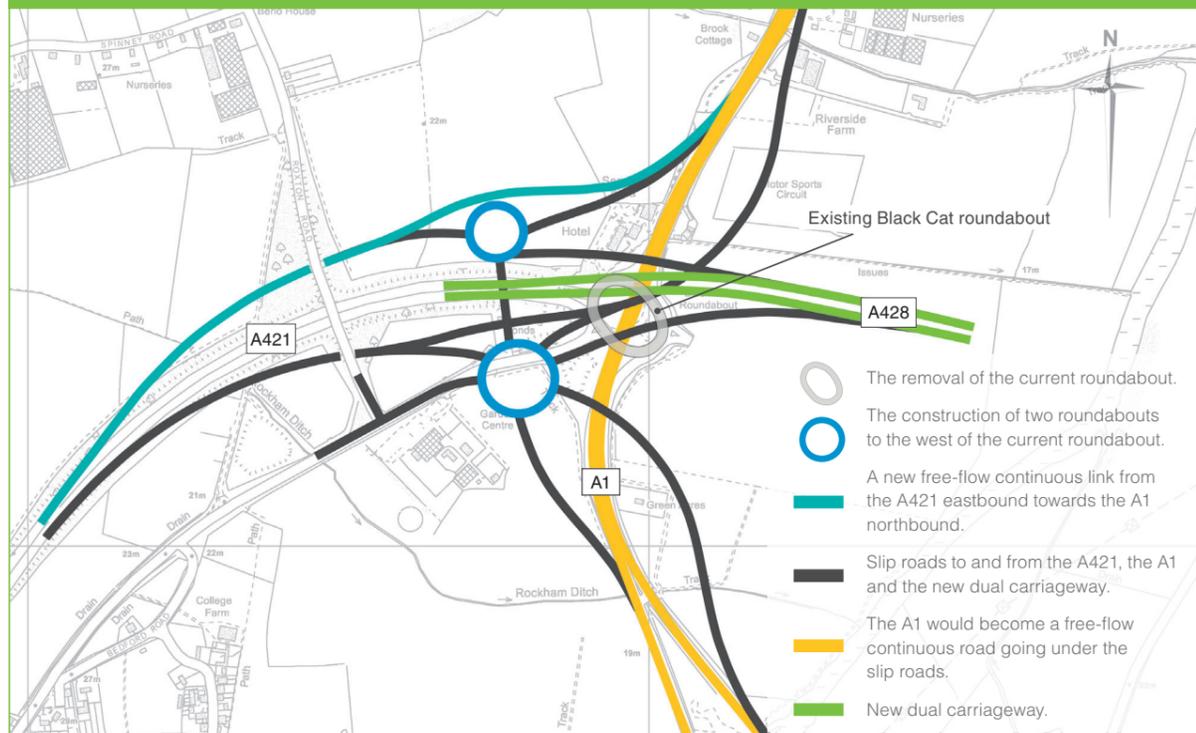
Public feedback on the Orange route

Here's some of the reasons why people preferred the Orange route:

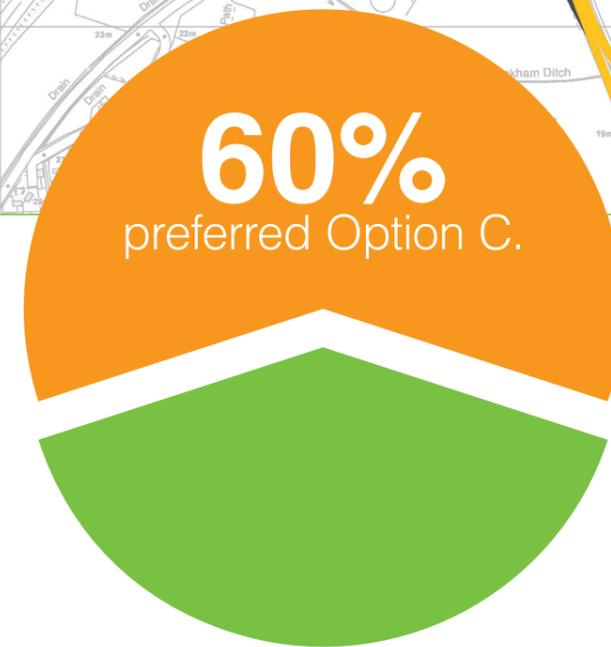
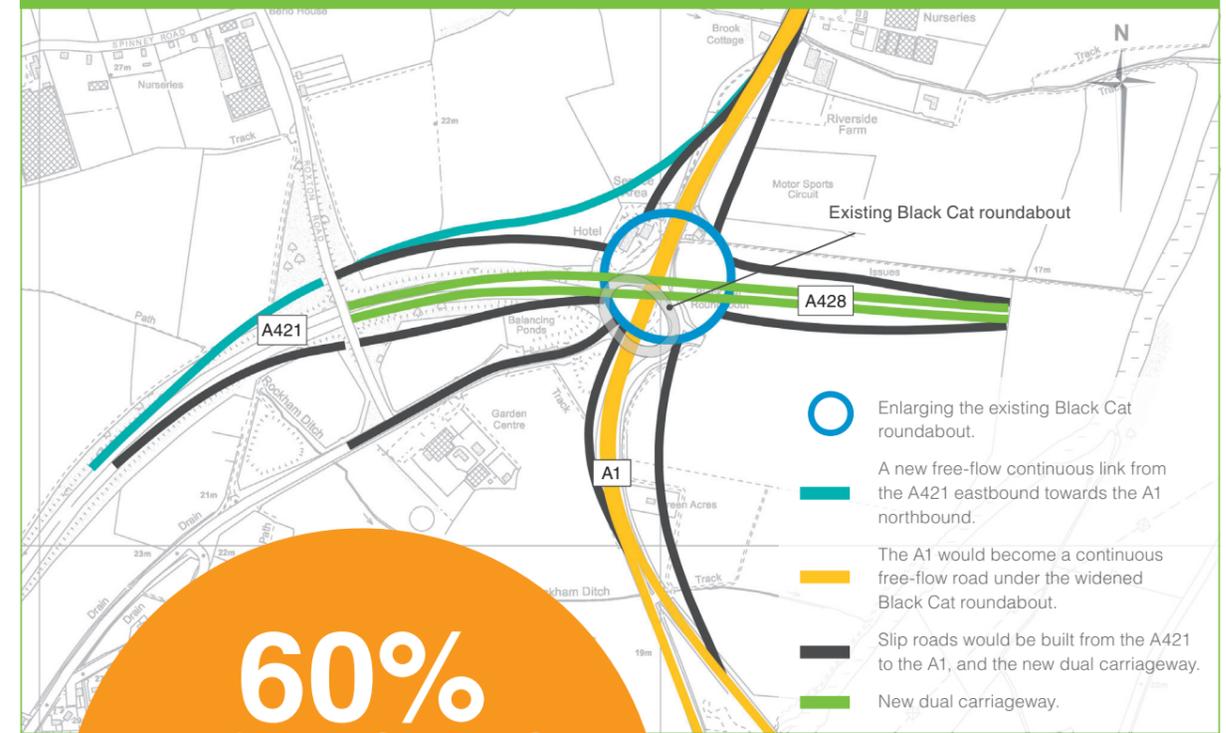
- The route alignment is close to existing road.
- It improves traffic and congestion.
- It has the least impact on the environment, wildlife, designated sites, visual impacts, heritage sites, agriculture and the local community out of the three options.
- The route provides additional connectivity to St Neots by Cambridge Road junction.
- It is seen as the most beneficial to the local economy out of the three options.

Response to the public consultation: Black Cat roundabout

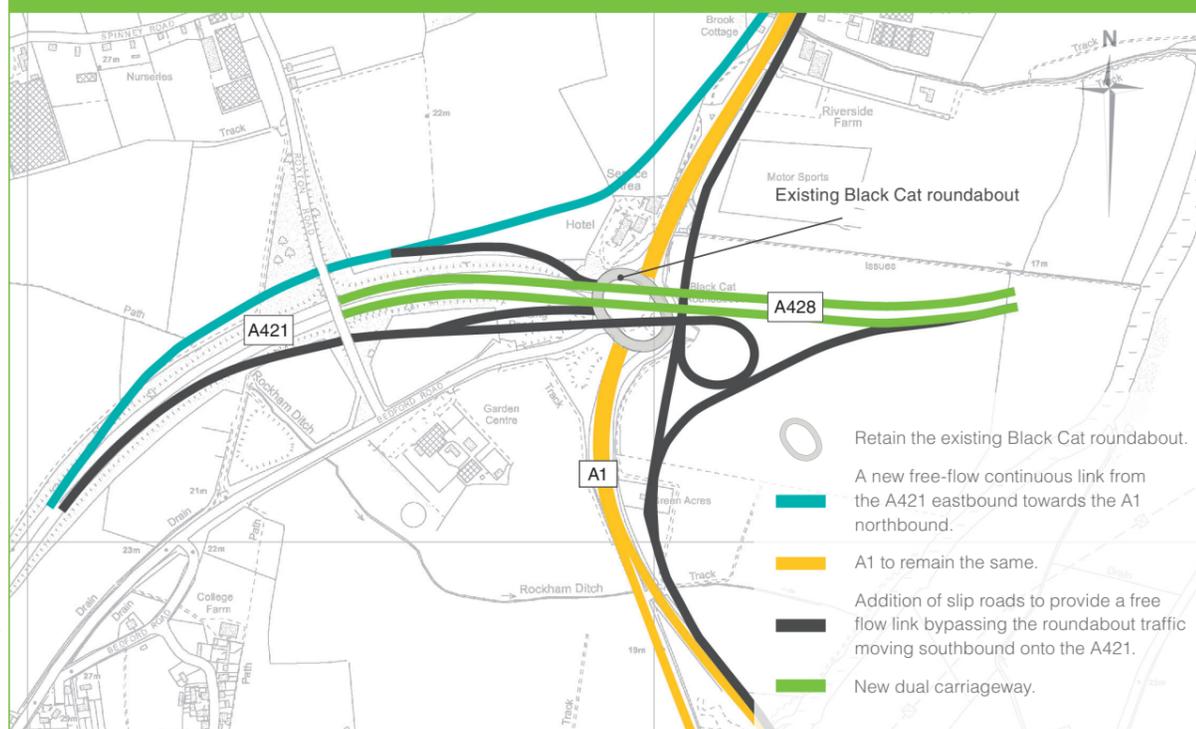
Options taken to consultation: Black Cat roundabout **Option A**



Options taken to consultation: Black Cat roundabout **Option C**



Options taken to consultation: Black Cat roundabout **Option B**



Public feedback on the Black Cat roundabout Option C

Here's some of the reasons why people preferred Option C:

- It creates free-flowing traffic at Black Cat roundabout.
- It improves traffic and congestion.
- It has the most capacity and flexibility to cope with any future increases in traffic or road use.
- It has the least impact on the local environment, surrounding area and land take.
- It is seen as the most practical option.

What happens next?

Now we have announced our preferred route, we will carry out further surveys and investigations to help us design the scheme in more detail. As part of this work, you may notice some activity in the area.

We plan to consult on the route and junction designs later in 2019, giving you a further opportunity to share your views.

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 is exploring funding contributions based on the increase in the value of development land that the scheme unlocks.

Throughout the process we will keep listening and talking to everyone with an interest in the scheme.

There will also be regular updates and information on our website.

Application for a Development Consent Order (DCO)

This scheme is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. This means that we are required to make an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to obtain permission to construct the scheme.

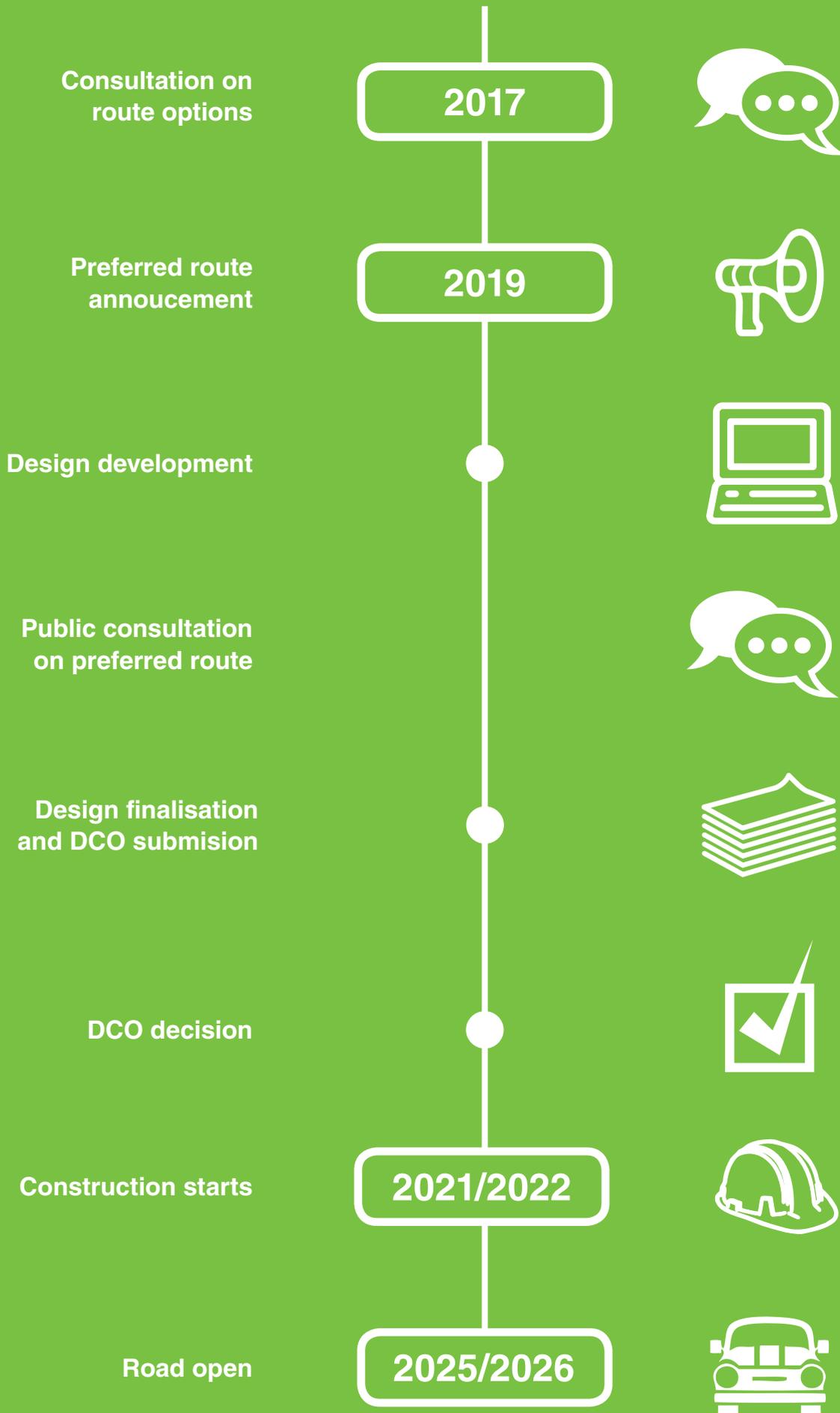
The timeline shows the different stages in this process. Following a further consultation on the detailed design this year, we will prepare an application for a Development Consent Order that will include an Environmental Statement.

The application will be made to the Planning Inspectorate, who will examine the application. The examination is likely to include 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 2020 and if approved, we expect to start construction in 2021/22.

Find out more

Find out more about the DCO process on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet timeline



Further information

For more information about the scheme, please visit our website, where you can also sign up for email alerts:

www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a428

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

- Consultation brochure (Spring 2017)
- A428 Options Assessment Report
- A428 Traffic Data Collection Report
- A428 Report on Public Consultation

Contact us

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In the East of England, we are delivering the largest investment in our roads in a generation. The result? Better and safer journeys for all. At the heart of these plans is the drive to support economic growth in the region and across the wider United Kingdom.

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