

M54 to M6/M6 Toll Link Road

Preferred route announcement



Content

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Introduction	3
Why is the scheme needed?	4
Public consultation	4
The options taken to consultation	5
Response to public consultation 2017	6
The preferred route	7
Selection of the preferred route – how it was done	8
Rejected options	8
What happens next?	9
Development Consent Order (DCO) application	9
Further information	10



Introduction

At Highways England we believe in a connected country and our 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 dependable, durable and, most importantly, safe. That's why we're delivering £15 billion of investment on our network – the largest in a generation.

The M54 to M6/M6 Toll Link Road scheme is a critical part of this investment and will improve journeys from the M54 to the M6 north or M6 Toll, which is great news for the local and regional economy.

Following our consultation held in 2017, we carefully considered all feedback to select the best possible option to take forward as our preferred route. This process has been detailed and time consuming, but has been necessary to ensure we make the correct decision.

In this brochure we explain the preferred route for the M54 to M6/M6 Toll Link Road scheme, how we carried out public consultation and how we have assessed the options. We also give details of what will happen next.

Why is the scheme needed?

There is no direct motorway link from the M54 to the M6 north or M6 Toll. This means high volumes of both long-distance and local traffic use the local roads to travel this route.

The current route from the M54 to the M6/M6 Toll is the A460, which passes through the villages of Featherstone and Shareshill. The A460 suffers significant congestion and high accident rates due to large traffic volumes. Journey times are almost doubled during peak hours, and there are also air quality issues in the villages and along the route.

The A460 currently carries about 26,500 vehicles each day with heavy goods vehicles making up about 10% of this figure. The proposed link road could remove between 21,900 and 22,300 vehicles a day creating a safer and less congested environment for local road users.

An alternative route is the A449/A5, but this route is also congested and suffers from journey time delays.

The proposed benefits of improving the link between the M54 and the M6/M6 Toll:

- relieve traffic congestion on the A460, A449 and A5, providing more reliable journey times and improving the environment for the local residents
- support local economic growth for Telford, Shrewsbury, Wolverhampton, Cannock and Tamworth by improving traffic flow and enhanced east-west and north-south routes
- keep the right traffic on the right roads by separating local traffic from long-distance and commuter traffic
- enhance local facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders

Public consultation

We held a public consultation in 2015 to seek views on 3 options. This allowed us to gain a better understanding of the views and expectations of local people, businesses, local authorities, communities and road users.

After receiving feedback, we identified the need to carry out further technical work on the environmental impacts and traffic benefits of these options. Following this further work, we developed 3 modified options.

As these new options had different impacts to the ones we previously presented, we held another 4-week consultation from 15 September to 13 October 2017, with 3 modified options. We wanted to inform all those affected by or interested in the scheme and give them the opportunity to provide their views on these options.

To support this we:

- arranged 3 public exhibitions in Featherstone, Shareshill and Essington, to give customers the chance to meet the project team, ask any questions and provide feedback on the options
- held an additional 2 public exhibitions following requests in Cheslyn Hay and Wedges Mills
- attended a number of meetings with stakeholders to discuss the options we were presenting
- sent letters about the consultation events to local residents, businesses, landowners, key organisations and local community groups
- displayed posters advertising the consultation at key locations
- produced a consultation brochure and questionnaire, which were available online and at designated public information points

The options taken to consultation 2017

We held a 4-week consultation from 15 September to 13 October 2017, with the following 3 modified options:



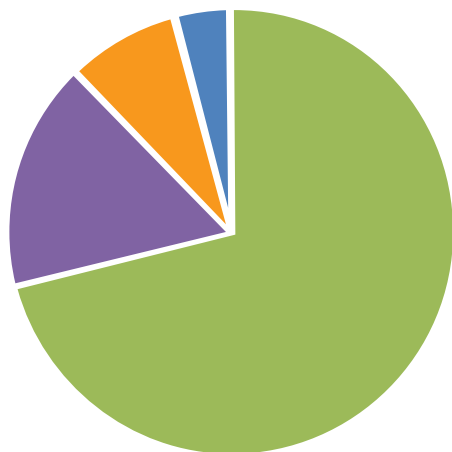
KEY		KEY	
	Option B West		Public rights of way (Footpath)
	Option C West		Public rights of way (Bridleway)
	Option C East		
	Listed buildings		

Response to public consultation 2017

Over 300 people attended the exhibitions and we received almost 500 responses in the form of returned questionnaires or comments by letter or email from members of the public.

The feedback we received from the public consultation is shown in the following results:

Which option preferred?



Option B West Option C West Option C East No preference

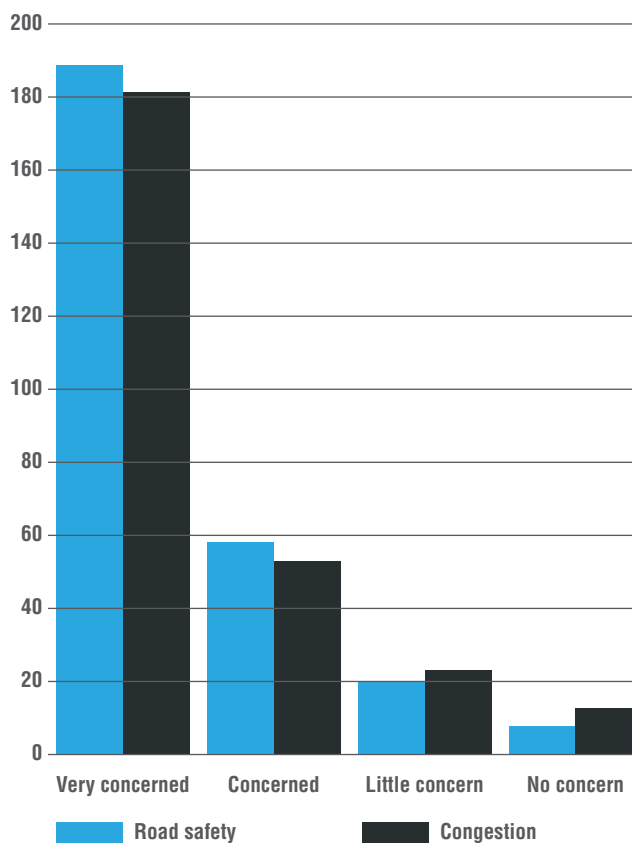
Option B West was the preferred option with over 71% of support. Option C West was second with almost 17%, with Option C East third with 8%.

Your feedback also raised the following key issues:

- need for a convenient and direct route
- need to minimise disruption during construction
- need to reduce congestion on A460
- need to protect landscape views
- need to minimise impact to local businesses, landowners and residents
- need to protect ancient woodland

- need to reduce and minimise pollution to local area
- need to protect local communities, groups and land users

A number of respondents were either very concerned or concerned about road safety and congestion on the A460. This is shown below.



The preferred route

Our preferred route is based on **Option B West**, with some minor amendments.

As part of the scheme, we'll no longer include a direct link from the M6 to the M6 Toll. The free-flow connection to the M6Toll was subject to other contributions. However, the level of contributions available was not enough to meet the cost of the free-flow link. We have amended the connection to provide the improved value for money solution we are presenting today. The route presented today does not rule out providing a free-flow connection at some point in the future.

We carefully considered a number of factors when selecting this option, such as safety, meeting the scheme's objectives and value for money.

We have selected this option as it:

- provides the highest benefit to the local economy
- will provide the best journey time of the options
- is preferred by the majority of the respondents to the public consultation

- protects ancient woodland
- provides the best value for money

The preferred route includes:

- a 2 lane dual carriageway link road between M54 junction 1 and M6 junction 11
- an improved junction arrangement at M54 junction 1 and M6 junction 11

We're continuing to develop the details of how the new link road will connect to M54 junction 1 and M6 junction 11.

We will continue to work with local authorities, businesses and land owners to further understand concerns and opportunities that will inform the junction designs. We will present these at the statutory consultation in 2019.



Selection of the preferred route – how it was done

Each option was assessed to determine their performance with regards to:

- how much it would cost to build and the value for money this would offer the tax payer
- how it would fit in with the current landscape and environment
- how it would impact on existing public utilities (e.g. gas and electricity infrastructure)
- how it would impact on cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders
- its impact on drainage and flooding
- its environmental impact
- ground conditions (ie geotechnics)
- how many, and what type of structures it would need such as, the number of bridges and retaining walls needed and the complexity of their design
- its compliance with technical standards
- how it would be built and how the construction would be phased, for example how would we build the new road and junctions, while keeping the traffic moving throughout

These assessments, combined with stakeholder, land owners and public engagement have enabled us to determine which option performs the best.

Rejected options

We carried out an exercise following the public consultation, to compare the three options and to select a preferred route. This exercise considered the feedback from the public consultation, safety impacts, design considerations, cost and benefit analysis, traffic and environmental assessments.

The outcome of this process indicated that Option B West was preferred overall, with the following options rejected:

Option C East

This option provides fewer benefits than Option B West in terms of journey times, safety and congestion. It was the least preferred option in the public consultation and it has significant impact on the environment, going through ancient woodland. Option C East offers the lowest value for money. We will not be progressing this design any further.

Option C West

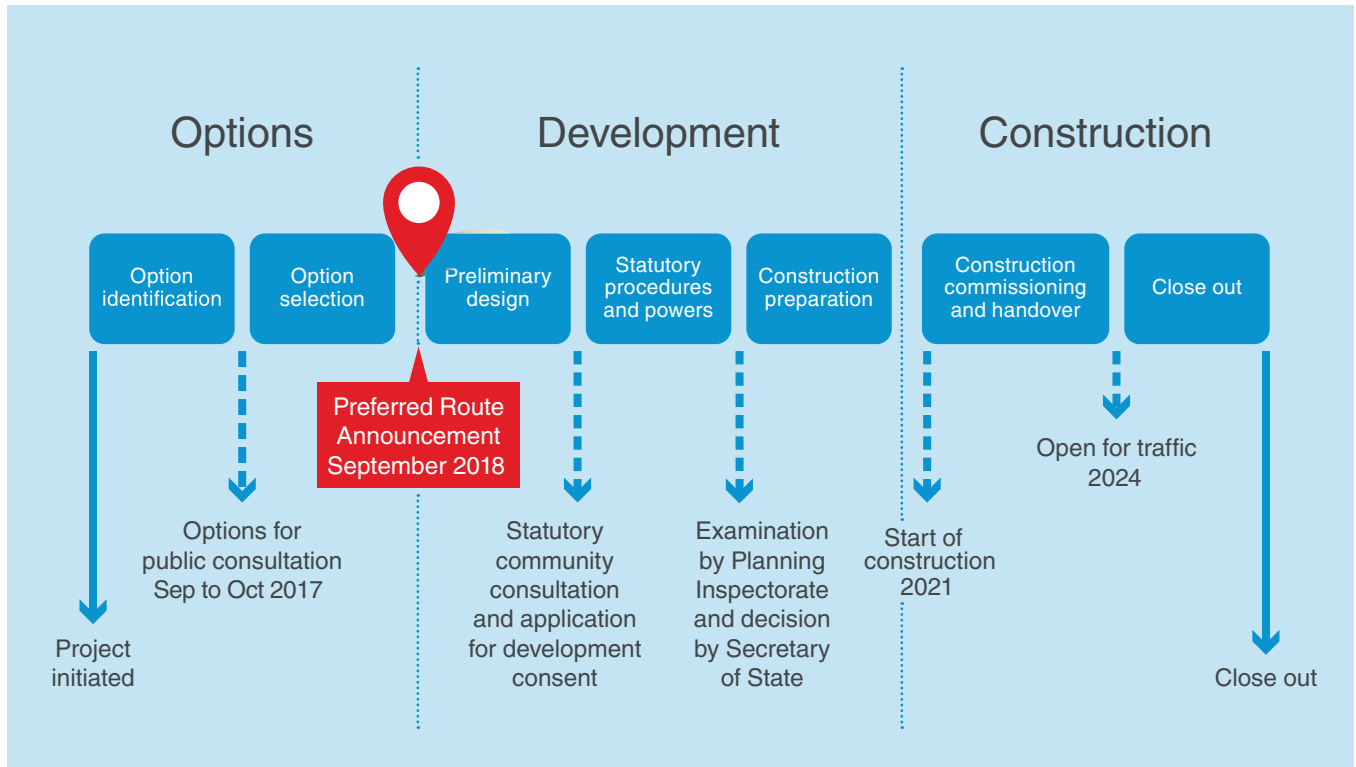
Although this option provides similar benefits to Option B West in terms of journey times, safety and congestion, the public consultation analysis showed it was not well supported. Objection was shown by a large number of directly affected landowners, businesses and social amenities, including a number of diverse farms and local stables. We will not be progressing this design any further.

What happens next?

We will now do some further work to look more closely at the local area, completing our surveys and investigations to help us design the scheme in greater detail. There will be a statutory consultation in 2019, when we will ask you for your views on this more detailed design, before we

submit our application for a Development Consent Order in 2020.

We will work with the local authorities to shape this consultation to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have their say.



Development Consent Order (DCO) application

This scheme is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Planning Act 2008. This means we are required to make an application for a Development Consent Order so we can obtain permission to construct the scheme. We will apply to the Planning Inspectorate who will examine the application in public hearings and then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport who will decide on whether or not the project will go ahead.

Find out more about the Development Consent Order process on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk>

Further information

For more information, please visit our website where you can also sign up for email alerts whenever the web page is updated:

www.highwaysengland.co.uk/M54-M6-M6Toll

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

- Report on Public Consultation
- Scheme Assessment Report

These documents, will also be available to view for a period of 12 weeks at the following locations:

- **Staffordshire County Council Offices**
1 Staffordshire Place, ST16 2DH.
- **South Staffordshire District Council Offices**
Wolverhampton Rd, Codsall, WV8 1PX.
- **Featherstone and Hilton Community Centre**
Baneberry Drive, Wolverhampton, WV10 7TR.
- **Cheslyn Hay Library**
Village Hall, Pinfold Lane, Walsall WS6 7HP.

Alternatively, if you require a free CD version of these documents or a further copy of this brochure, you can contact the M54 to M6/M6 Toll Project Team as follows:

In writing:

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By phone:

0300 123 5000



If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.

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