

# **Warwick District Council Local Plan Examination**

**Matter 7c: Proposed housing site allocations, safeguarded land and direction for growth  
(Edge of Coventry)**

**Written Statement by Warwickshire County Council  
A46 Link Road**

**November 2016**



## 1. Purpose of the Statement

The purpose of this statement is to provide the Local Plan Inspector and those attending the Examination in relation to Matter 7c with details of the proposed A46 Link Road. It is not designed to form a rebuttal to any individual representations which have been made in response to the questions posed by the Inspector on Matter 7c.

## 2. Context

Warwickshire County Council, in conjunction with Coventry City Council and Warwick District Council, is exploring ambitious proposals to ensure that the sub-region and its economy continues to benefit from a high quality transport network which supports access to jobs, improved business to business connectivity and sustainable housing and employment growth. Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council is joining with its Coventry and Warwickshire partners to explore these proposals.

Coventry and Warwickshire has the fastest growing economy within the West Midlands. Infrastructure investment is needed in key corridors such as the A45 and A46 to provide the conditions for businesses to continue to invest in the area. An efficient transport network with sufficient capacity and resilience is key to maintaining and supporting future growth.

The current major investment at Tollbar End near Coventry on the A45/A46 along with committed improvements at Binley (A46/A428) and Stanks near Warwick (A46/A425/A4177) demonstrate the importance of this corridor to the sub-regional economy. There is also an aspiration over time to see the A46 become an 'Expressway' between the M6/M69, M40 and M5.

In response to the need for sustained investment in the corridor Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council and Warwick District Council are promoting, and discussing with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, a three-stage scheme known as the A46 Link Road. This has in principle support from a number of stakeholders including the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Highways England, the University of Warwick, Stoneleigh Park and the West Midlands Combined Authority.

## 3. The Scheme

The A46 Link Road proposal consists of three phases:

**Phase 1** of the Link Road will see a major improvement implemented at the Stoneleigh junction on the A46 between Coventry and Kenilworth to form a gyratory layout with two bridge roundabout. This will involve installing a new bridge to the east of the existing junction and realigning Stoneleigh Road and Dalehouse Lane. These revised arrangements will help address existing congestion and safety issues at the junction whilst also improving access to the University of Warwick and Stoneleigh Park. As noted earlier, the scheme will also bring benefits to local communities during the construction of HS2.

Phase 1 of the scheme is currently in the process of being designed, with planned delivery by mid-2019 ahead of the anticipated peak of HS2 construction activity in the Kenilworth and Stoneleigh area around 2019/20. A planning application is due to be submitted for Phase 1 in 2017/18, with public consultation to follow later that year. The majority of the funding required for Phase 1 is due to come through Growth Deal monies which were originally secured to fund a major improvement at the A45/Kenilworth Road junction. The County Council and Coventry City Council are in discussion with DfT to formally agree the reallocation of this funding to deliver the improvements at the A46 Stoneleigh junction. This process is expected to conclude early in 2017. Any balance of funding which is required for the scheme is expected to be met from S106/CIL monies or locally held capital funds. A contribution from HS2 Ltd may also be sought.

**Appendix A** shows the emerging design for Phase 1 of the Link Road. This should be treated as work in progress at this stage.

**Phase 2** would deliver a step-change in accessibility to the University of Warwick and the surrounding Business Parks and other employment areas through the provision of a new road linking the A46 at Stoneleigh with Westwood Heath via the A429 Kenilworth Road. This infrastructure will support the University of Warwick's emerging revised masterplan along with any longer term housing and employment proposals for the area (including the land identified under Policy DSNEW2 – Site S1 (South of Coventry) within the Local Plan). It will also help reduce the inappropriate use of minor roads within the area (e.g. Crackley Lane) for traffic wishing to access the University and its environs. Discussions are progressing well to secure funding from national/regional transport funds and contributions from other stakeholders. This includes a bid to the Department for Transport which has been made for development funding to progress Phase 2 of the scheme, an announcement on which is due to be made in November 2016 as part of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

Phase 2 is at an earlier stage of development than Phase 1, with no firm date for its implementation. Work undertaken to date has focussed on initial optioneering, modelling and feasibility design. The current aspiration is to see Phase 2 delivered around 2022/23. This will be dependent on funding, land acquisition and other statutory processes.

**Phase 3** This phase would fall in Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's area, with a link from Phase 2 of the scheme towards either the A45 or A452. This element of the project is currently at an early exploratory stage. The aim of Phase 3 will be to enhance connectivity between the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region and the economic opportunities afforded by UK Central in Solihull. It would necessarily be dependent on successful delivery of Phases 1 and 2. Like Phase 2, there is no firm date for the implementation of Phase 3, but the aspiration at present is to see this come forward around 2026 or soon after.

Funding for this element of the project could come from a number of sources, including WMCA Devolution Deal monies, Highways England/Road Investment Strategy and whatever funding mechanisms are put in place to help deliver the Midlands Connect Strategy.

#### **4. Strategic Case**

The strategic case for the A46 Link Road project aims to address seven key imperatives:

##### *(i) Improved access to the University of Warwick and Stoneleigh Park*

There is an emerging need to improve local and strategic connectivity from the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region to the University of Warwick and the key employment sites in its vicinity, in order to support the substantial committed and planned growth of this area over the next 10-15 years. Current access is constrained by the need to travel through already congested networks and residential areas within south west Coventry and parts of Warwickshire. A number of important research facilities such as the National Automotive Innovation Centre (NAIC) are located at the University which have strong links to the priority sectors identified within the Coventry and Warwickshire Strategic Economic Plan. The success of the recent South West Coventry Local Pinch Point scheme improvements, particularly at the junction of A429 Kenilworth Road/C32 Stoneleigh Road have put increasing pressure on the A46 at Stoneleigh, which further supports the need to progress Phase 1 of the project in conjunction with the development proposals contained within the Local Plan.

The improvements to the A46 Stoneleigh junction will also support the ongoing delivery of the Stoneleigh Park masterplan through a substantial improvement in access to/from the strategic road network.

##### *(ii) Delivering wider A46 Corridor Growth*

Major employment growth is either committed or planned more widely along the A46 corridor, including Fen End, Whitley South, Coventry Airport, Ryton and Ansty. There are also a number of significant housing developments proposed within the Warwick District Local Plan around Kenilworth and parts of south west Coventry, which based on the evidence provided within the County Council's Strategic Transport Assessment will require Phase 1 of the Link Road to be delivered within the Plan period.

The A46 provides the glue which links these various areas together both locally and more widely across the sub-region, providing key business to business connectivity for companies such as Jaguar Land Rover and its supply chain. Within this context, it is vital that key junctions such as Stoneleigh are fit for purpose.

##### *(iii) A45 Corridor Congestion Reduction and Growth*

Coventry City Council has recently delivered a comprehensive package of Local Pinch Point capacity improvements at key junctions along and in the vicinity of the A45 corridor. In the case of the A45/A429 Kenilworth Road junction, the Pinch Point improvements were originally only envisaged to provide short term relief, with grade separation of the junction expected to be necessary in the future in order to provide continuing long term congestion and growth benefits to this area of the city and wider sub-region.

The proposed A46 Link Road will reduce the need for any further major improvements to A45/A429 Kenilworth Road for the foreseeable future, as Phases 1 and 2 of the A46 Link Road are expected to deliver similar or greater benefits in terms of congestion reduction and growth to the A45 corridor. This will allow sustainable growth to come forward in future Local Plans in both the city and adjoining area of Warwick District.

*(iv) Improved access to HS2 and UK Central*

Delivery of the A46 Link Road will provide an opportunity to significantly improve east-west connectivity to/from the Coventry and Warwickshire area, by enabling growth sites improved access to the A46 and the wider strategic road network. Good links with the substantial economic opportunities which will arise from the opening of the HS2 interchange in 2026 and the wider UK Central proposals are vital if the sub-regional economy is to maximise the benefits from these developments. Good connections to Birmingham Airport and the National Exhibition Centre along with other key existing employment sites such as Jaguar Land Rover's plant in Solihull are also important given the interactions these have with similar business activities which take place within Coventry and Warwickshire at Whitley, Gaydon and Fen End.

*(v) Delivering the A46 'Expressway'*

The Expressway concept promoted through the Government's 'Road Investment Strategy 2015/16 – 2019/20' (RIS1)<sup>1</sup> for certain sections of the trunk road network envisages a motorway standard experience for users, with dual carriageway provision and grade-separated junctions.

Major capital investment in the A46 has taken place over the last 10 years, including improvements at M40 Junction 15 (Longbridge) and A45/A46 Tollbar End/Stivichall. Further works are committed in RIS1 at A46/A428 Binley and A46/B4082 Walsgrave, and at A46/A425/A4177 Stanks as a result of Growth Deal monies and other local funding. These improvements will all contribute towards the delivery of the A46 as an Expressway between the M6/M69, M40 and M5. The proposed improvements to the A46/C32 Stoneleigh junction (Phase 1 of the A46 Link Road) are consistent with the Expressway concept. As such, Highways England is supportive and engaged in this element of the overall scheme.

*(vi) Maintaining Network Performance during HS2 Construction*

Phase 1 of the A46 Link Road will provide resilience and flexibility to this part of the network during the construction of HS2, thereby helping to maintain the performance of the local and sub-regional economy. Assurances with HS2 Ltd have been secured by the County Council through the Hybrid Bill process to ensure that Phase 1 of the project can progress in parallel with HS2 construction activity in this area.

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Transport 'Road Investment Strategy for the 2015-16 – 2019/20 Road Period' (March 2015) [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/408514/ris-for-2015-16-road-period-web-version.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/408514/ris-for-2015-16-road-period-web-version.pdf)

*(vii) Delivering Strategic Resilience to the Midlands Motorway Hub*

There is an emerging recognition of the need to look at the medium/long term interventions which will be required to support the strategic resilience of the Midlands Motorway Hub (M5/M6/M42). The recent Midlands Connect 'Picking up the Pace'<sup>2</sup> report and emerging Midlands Connect Strategy refers to the role which a substantially improved A5 and A46 could play in achieving this. Delivery of Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the A46 Link Road will provide a significant new east-west route which could potentially help complement and provide resilience to the M40, M42 and M6 within the Coventry/Warwickshire/Solihull area.

## **5. Governance**

It is vital for a project of this scale and nature to be underpinned by clear governance to oversee the development and delivery of the scheme and make key decisions in a timely fashion.

With this in mind, a Strategic Programme Board for the A46 Link Road project has been established with officer representation at a senior level from Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council and Warwick District Council. Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council is also attending these meetings with a watching brief. A Senior Member Board is in the process of being set up in line with the wider governance arrangements for the project.

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<sup>2</sup> Midlands Connect 'Picking up the Pace' Report (July 2016)  
[https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/media/1070/mc\\_picking-up-the-pace\\_report\\_110716\\_final.pdf](https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/media/1070/mc_picking-up-the-pace_report_110716_final.pdf)

# Appendix A – A46 Link Road Phase 1 (Stoneleigh)

