

M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange improvement scheme

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Introduction

Since closing the statutory public consultation in March, the project team have been focused on reviewing all your feedback and developing the scheme design. We wanted to take this opportunity to update you on the progress we have made and what the next steps will be. In this first issue of what I intend to be a regular newsletter (every 8 weeks or so), there are updates on the consultation analysis, design progress and other challenges the project team has been tackling.

I hope you find this informative and look forward to meeting with you in the coming months as we bring the preliminary design stage to a close, ahead of submitting our Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

Consultation feedback

We received 2,000 responses to the statutory public consultation – that's over double the number from the non-statutory consultation in 2017 – and your comments have been extremely helpful in refining many aspects of the scheme design.

It has taken us a number of months to work through this often, very detailed, feedback. With so many people and organisations interested in the scheme there are a wide range of opinions and issues and we will be providing written feedback explaining how we have been able to incorporate suggested changes.



••• *The A3 at junction 10 on a quiet Sunday morning*

Current activity

During the spring and early summer, we have been undertaking preliminary design. This is the first phase of the design process where the design team generate drawings based on information gathered from both stakeholders and on-site surveying. A key part of this work has been taking consultation comments and, as far as possible, incorporating them in the designs.

Smart motorway scheme M25 junctions 10-16

As you may recall, back in November 2017 the scheme scope was extended to include part of the M25 junctions 10-16 smart motorway programme (widening the M25 from 3 to 4 lanes through junction 10, known as through junction running). This enables the two projects to be built at the same time, reducing the impact of road works for our customers. As a result, we have had to incorporate this extra work during the preliminary design stage. The rest of the smart motorway scheme is still being developed but as part of a separate project.

Technical challenges

Progress has been made identifying the technical challenges we face across the project and in most cases, finding an appropriate solution. For example, one of the largest gas mains in the south-east of England runs parallel to the A3 along almost the full length of our works. We need to divert and re-lay 4.2km of this pipework to allow the road to be widened and incorporate adjacent structures like bridges, retaining walls and gantry foundations.

One issue still to be fully resolved is that of information signage systems. Our current designs allow for gantries on the A3 and M25 fitted with advanced motorway indicators and variable message signs. These are sophisticated units, being able to provide individual lane control, having multi-colour displays and optical feedback for legal enforcement. A drawback is that, just as with the internet at home, an adequate fibre optic cable bandwidth is required and currently that is not available at junction 10. There are several possible solutions being considered and we are currently evaluating their feasibility.

Timeline

Highways England's major projects are governed by our Project Control Framework, which is split into 8 stages. The graphic below outlines these and shows where we are with this project.



Environmental update

We have had ongoing engagement with the statutory environmental bodies, and this has enabled full and frank discussion of issues including potential impacts on Bolder Mere, the loss of ancient woodland, mitigation and compensation land arrangements, impacts on registered parks and gardens and heritage features as well as how we might reduce noise impacts.

The team is busy conducting further site surveys including bat, dormouse, reptile and bird surveys over the summer months. Ground investigation surveys are programmed to start in the autumn.

We are bringing all this work together to draft the Environmental Statement, which will set out our assessment of the likely environmental effects of the scheme, a description of the measures envisaged to avoid, reduce or remedy significant adverse environmental effects, an outline of the main alternatives we have considered.

Programme: Next steps

To give us sufficient time to fully analyse, and where possible, incorporate all of the suggestions made at the statutory public consultation and complete stage 3 of the programme, we have delayed our proposed DCO submission from Autumn 2018 to early 2019. This is a complex and challenging scheme with many stakeholders and affected land owners, therefore we must ensure that we have fully considered all feedback received and engaged with you in as much detail as possible.

Indeed, our key focus over the coming months will be to work with stakeholders to discuss the detail of the draft DCO, including any conditions (known as “requirements”) that might need to be stipulated and addressed before construction can proceed, should development consent be granted. We will also work together to better understand whether there are any outstanding differences that need to be addressed in the DCO examination process.



••• *Advanced motorway indicator*

The following stage 4 of our work will encompass the examination process, during which you will be able to make representations to the Planning Inspectorate, and then the Secretary of State for Transport will be required to make a decision on giving consent. We expect work on site to begin in late 2020.

Value for money and funding

As with any scheme of this scale, our projected costs are regularly scrutinised and we have been very careful to balance technical requirements against their impact on costs. Providing value for money is a key consideration as it is after all, your money we are spending.

There are however, opportunities to go above and beyond the core scheme requirements. We are very pleased to announce that this project has secured funding from Highways England's Designated Funds programme. This is to enhance some specific elements of the design. For more information about Highways England's Designated Funds programme, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/highways-england-designated-funds>. The key criteria for an application is that it must be used to provide additional benefit to a project or its environment, over and above the minimum necessary to undertake the core work.



••• *Example of a green bridge from the A556*

We have been successful in obtaining funds to undertake design to replace Cockrow Bridge (over the A3 close to Ockham Bites café) with a green bridge; providing safe access between Ockham and Wisley commons for pedestrians and wildlife. The photograph above is of a green bridge constructed by Highways England in 2017 over the A556 in Cheshire, and is the kind of structure that the new Cockrow Bridge is expected to look like.

It will still be necessary to apply for construction stage funding sometime during 2020, but we have been granted the maximum amount that was possible at this stage of the project.

Want to know more about the DCO process?

As described on the Planning Inspectorate website, “The Planning Act 2008 process was introduced to streamline the decision-making process for major infrastructure projects, making it fairer and faster for communities and applicants alike”. Further information about it can be found by accessing their website at:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

The process and documentation required is very prescriptive and the project team is being supported by Bircham Dyson Bell LLP to further advise us and assist us through document preparation and into the DCO examination period next year.

Several workshops have been held with their team and good progress has been made on a range of challenging issues.

Stakeholder engagement

Over the winter of 2017/18 the project team met with nearly 40 stakeholder organisations and land owners, these were extremely helpful as we prepared for the statutory consultation, and we were delighted to then meet so many of you at the public events.

Our focus since the end of March has been on developing the design of the scheme, incorporating your feedback. As we come to the end of that process, we can now begin to share more detailed information and we will be issuing letters to consultees, as well as arranging another round of stakeholder engagement meetings.

Scheme website

Just a reminder that the [dedicated scheme website](#) retains all the information published to date – from consultation materials to technical reports.

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 aims to provide regular updates on schemes and is sharing this newsletter with you for that purpose. If you should get in touch and provide any personal information, it will be processed and retained by Highways England and its appointed contractors until the scheme is complete.