

# M60 junction 18 Simister Island interchange

Preferred route announcement



January 2021

# 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 more dependable, durable and, most importantly, safe.

In the north-west, we are investing in ways to increase capacity and improve connections to make sure your journeys are as reliable as possible.

The M60 junction 18 Simister Island interchange scheme is a critical part of this investment, supporting economic growth by better connecting major cities across the north of England. The scheme is vital in reducing congestion for the future, reducing safety risks, improving journey time reliability for all road users and increasing connectivity between local areas.

## Why is the scheme needed?

Simister Island interchange between the M62, M60 and M66, is one of the busiest motorway junctions in the north-west, used by around 90,000 vehicles each day. The junction struggles with high volumes of traffic, far above what it was designed for, and as a result suffers from congestion and poor journey time reliability.

## Scheme objectives

The main objectives of the scheme are:

- To improve the journey experience for users of this section of network by:
  - reducing peak congestion and providing faster average speeds
  - reducing journey times
  - delivering more reliable journey times
- To provide an option which is safe for all road users
- To minimise the impact of our option on the surrounding environment including within Noise Important Areas and Air Quality Management Areas
- To facilitate future economic growth across the Greater Manchester area and support the proposals in the regional and local authorities' transport strategies and Local Plans



# Preferred route announcement (Northern Loop)

**We have chosen the Northern Loop option for improving junction 18 of the M60.**

The Northern Loop will deliver our objective of providing more capacity at Simister Island, as well as improving journey times and reliability. This means you'll experience less congested journeys through the junction, and fewer unexpected delays.

When selecting the preferred route, we considered several criteria, including the scheme objectives, safety, benefits, costs, environmental effects, construction and feedback from the public consultation we held during summer 2020.

While both options would meet the scheme objectives, the Northern Loop will provide greater capacity improvements and journey time savings for road users when compared to the Inner Links. These benefits will therefore be felt for longer into the future, as predicted traffic levels continue to grow.

The option we've selected was also widely supported during the public consultation, with over 67% of respondents preferring the Northern Loop.

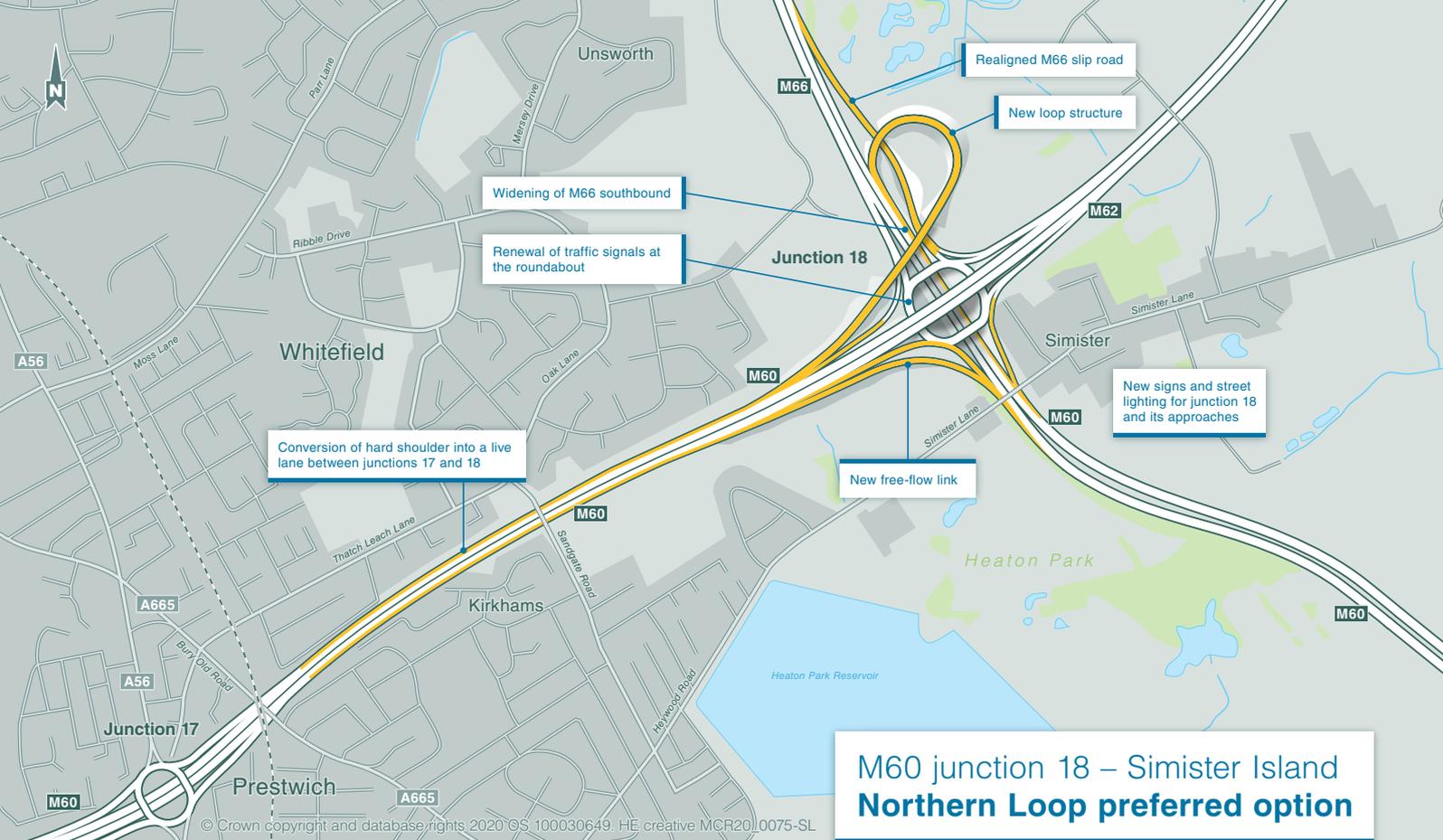
We do not expect to purchase any houses to build this option, although we will need to purchase some land, for example, to the north-east of the junction. This is required to build the new 'loop' structure. Most of the remaining construction is contained within the current highway boundary or immediately adjacent to it. This will help to minimise any further effects on the existing natural environment.

Safety is another of our main considerations for developing this scheme. It is our first imperative as an organisation, and for that reason we're constantly reviewing driver safety when designing projects. Concerns were raised by the public during consultation about the Inner Links option, with many drivers worrying they would not feel safe using that proposed road layout.

Two other common concerns were raised with us about safety during our consultation in 2020. The first concern was about the conversion of the hard shoulder into a traffic lane. The safety of using the hard shoulder as a traffic lane was comprehensively reviewed by the government in its evidence stocktake report, published in March 2020. The review found that in most ways, roads upgraded to use the hard shoulder are as safe as or safer than conventional motorways. The review also included 18 actions to make them even safer. We'll incorporate the recommendations from the stocktake in our designs wherever appropriate.

The second common concern raised was the potential for confusion as drivers approach and navigate the junction. We'll keep this feedback in mind as we continue to develop our design, making it as clear as possible to navigate the junction. We could achieve this using several different solutions which we're currently exploring. This includes painted lane markings, different coloured reflective road studs or enhanced direction signage.

Although more expensive than the Inner Links option, the longer-term benefits offered by the Northern Loop makes this option better value for money.



**M60 junction 18 – Simister Island Northern Loop preferred option**

## The Northern Loop design

The most prominent feature of this option involves creating a new loop structure providing a free-flow link from M60 eastbound to M60 southbound (clockwise), including a new bridge over the M66 and junction 18 slip roads. We will also realign the M66 motorway as it heads south under junction 18, and introduce another lane to accommodate the merging traffic from the loop.

We will also build a new two-lane free-flow road from the M60 northbound to the M60 westbound to replace the existing single-lane, and widen the M66 southbound to four lanes through junction 18. The Northern Loop will mean less traffic has to travel through and stop at the roundabout because of the new free flow links.

We'll also convert the hard shoulder into a permanent traffic lane between M60 junctions 17 and 18, providing 5 lanes in both directions; this will provide benefit to the project by improving traffic conditions along the M60, and allow traffic joining and leaving at junctions 17 and 18 to avoid changing lanes as often.

We'll also introduce improved signage and signalling including:

- new signs and street lighting at junction 18 and its approaches
- new gantries on the M66 southbound, and between M60 junctions 17 and 18

The Northern Loop provides us with multiple construction challenges. To address these, we will plan the construction of this project to minimise disruption on residents and road users as far as possible, taking into account periods of high usage, such as Bank Holidays, large public or sporting events and other nearby roadworks.

As we continue to develop and refine our design, we'll carry out further environmental assessments in order that we deliver a solution which is considerate of the surrounding area and is compliant with national environmental policy.

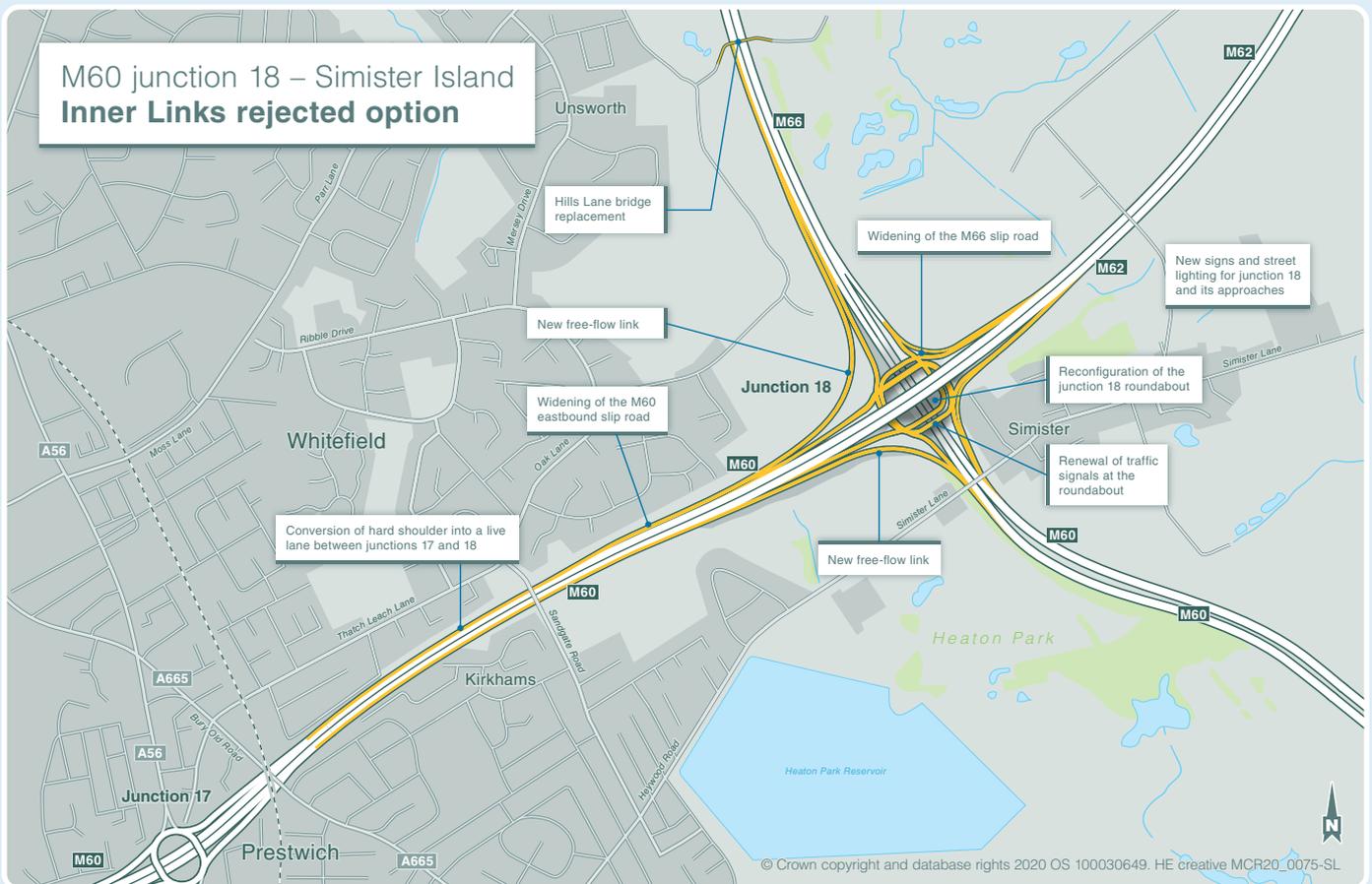
# Inner Links rejected option

Although, both options align with our objectives, we haven't chosen Inner Links to develop further because it doesn't offer the same amount of longer term benefits, capacity and journey time improvements that the Northern Loop provides.

The Inner Links was not well supported during the consultation, with only 24% of respondents supporting the option.

Due to the complex design, the Inner Links would also be more challenging to build, and would require more traffic management and road closures during construction.

We acknowledge concerns raised during consultation that introducing additional lanes and signals on the roundabout could make the junction more confusing for drivers to navigate, leading to an increased risk of accidents. As the Northern Loop option removes the need for additional lanes and signals going through the junction, we believe that this option will be less confusing for drivers.



## Responses from public consultation

We received 817 responses to the consultation, this includes responses from the Local Authorities, impacted land owners and local communities. We received responses from a number of Local Authorities, including Bury Council, Transport for Greater Manchester, Rochdale Borough Council, Salford Council, Rochdale Development Authority and Lancashire County Council. Each of these stakeholders expressed the need for improvements at Simister Island, with the majority favouring the Northern Loop option.

Pike Fold Golf Course, an impacted land owner, also expressed support for the Northern Loop option, and opposed the Inner Links.

We will continue to work with key stakeholders to refine the design of the improved junction.

Responses to the consultation showed a preference for Northern Loop over the Inner Links, with around three times as many respondents preferring the Northern Loop.

You can find more information about our consultation in the *Report on Public Consultation* which is available on our project webpage at [highwaysengland.co.uk/m60-j18-simister-island](https://highwaysengland.co.uk/m60-j18-simister-island)



## Further information

For more information on the scheme, please visit our project webpage at [highwaysengland.co.uk/m60-j18-simister-island](https://highwaysengland.co.uk/m60-j18-simister-island)

On the webpage you can also find all of our 2020 options consultation materials.

You can also sign up for email alerts, which will update you whenever the page is updated.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact us by phone or email:

**Phone:** **0300 123 5000** (Customer Contact Centre)

**Email:** [M60J18SimisterIslandInterchange@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:M60J18SimisterIslandInterchange@highwaysengland.co.uk)

## Next steps

During the next stage of the project, we'll carry out further surveys and assessments to allow us to develop the design of the preferred option.

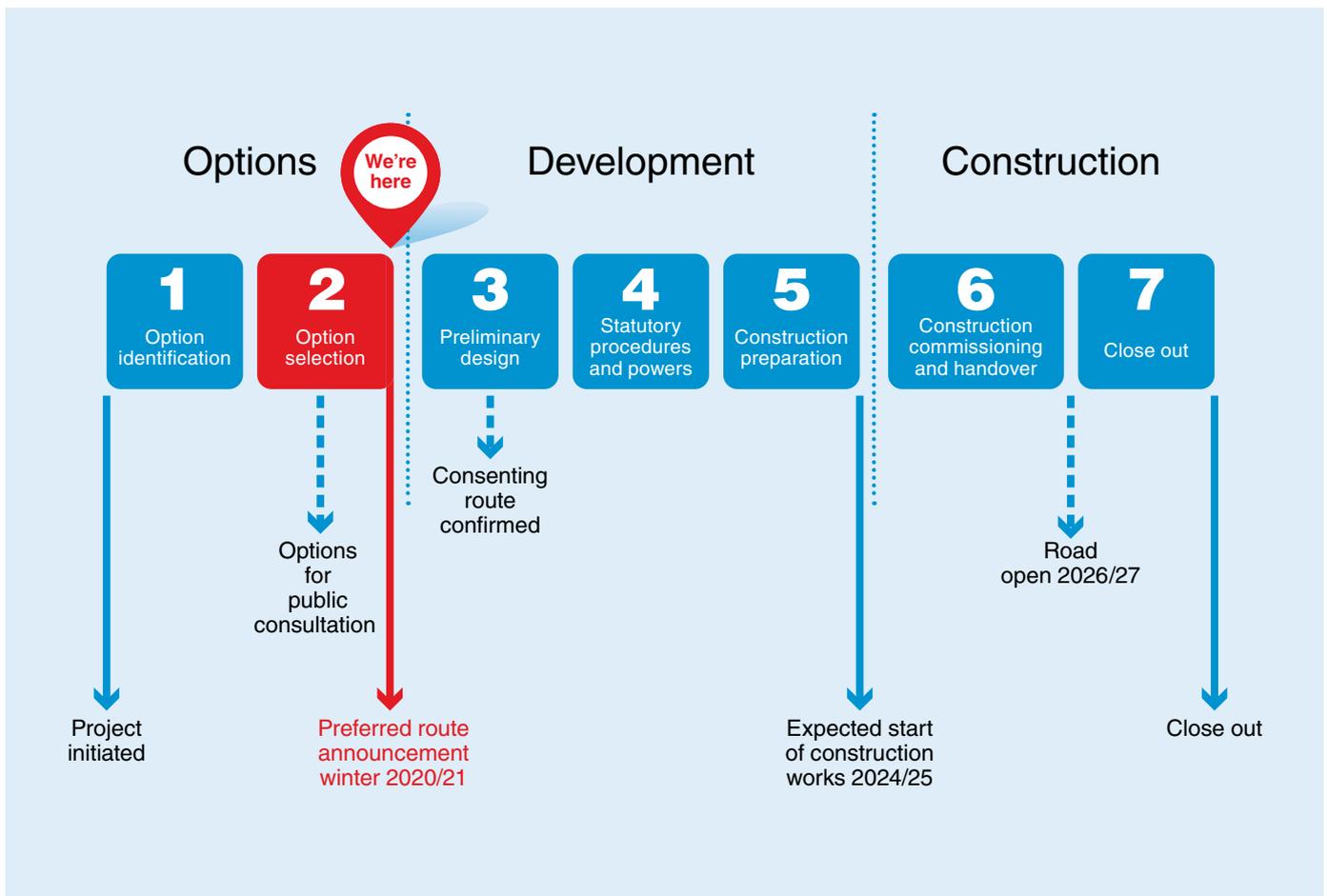
This scheme is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. As such we are required to make an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to obtain consent to construct it. The application will be made to the Planning Inspectorate who will examine the application in public hearings and then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will decide whether or not the project will go ahead. We plan to submit our application for a DCO by winter 2021/22, and a decision is expected in summer 2023.

We'll be holding a statutory consultation ahead of our DCO submission, to inform our application. This is where we'll want your feedback on a more detailed design of the junction.

We are committed to engaging with local communities and road users during the development and construction of this project. We'll provide regular updates as the scheme develops, as well as providing advanced warning of any periods of impact during construction.

We currently expect work to start on site no later than March 2025.

The timeline below shows what will happen at each stage of the scheme. We are currently at the end of Stage 2 – Option Selection, which concludes with this preferred route announcement.



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