



## **PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE**

### **INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

#### **TOPIC – M3 JUNCTION 9 CONSULTATION**

#### **PROCEDURAL INFORMATION**

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Legal Services Manager, the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director: Resources are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

#### **Contact Officers:**

**Case Officer:** Sara Davies 01962 848241 sdavies@winchester.gov.uk

**Democratic Services Officer:** Nancy Graham, 01962 848 235, ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

#### **SUMMARY**

Junction 9 of the M3 is located at the top of Easton Lane, Winchester and is a key interchange for the M3, A34, A33 and A272, which interlinks South Hampshire with the wider regions. According to Highways England, approximately 110,000 vehicles use that junction every day. Due to the high volumes of traffic, queues are regular occurrences on the M3 slip road and the A272 Spitfire Link.

Due to projected future growth in the use of the ports at Southampton and Portsmouth, it is predicted that the use of heavy goods vehicles using the M3 will greatly increase.

Highways England is proposing a free flowing interchange between the M3 and the A34 in both directions, using a 'dumbbell' layout, consisting of two small roundabouts either side of the M3. This will also include an improved non-motorised user's route through the junction, completing the gap in the National Cycle Network Route 23.

Their scheme objectives are:

1. Support economic growth by unlocking development capacity for jobs, business and housing creation

2. Improve safety as a result of a reduction in delays and queue lengths
3. Reduce congestion and increase journey time reliability
4. Improve the environment by reducing adverse noise, improving air quality and no net loss to biodiversity.
5. Improve facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

There have been many alternative options to improve the junction and its layout, started by Hampshire County Council undertaking scoping exercises. Highways England then undertook detailed environmental assessments and traffic modelling in order to shortlist the options.

There were four options that have been assessed by Highways England. Option 14 is their proposed improvements for Junction 9 can be viewed online:

<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/m3-junction-9-improvements/>

Option 11, 16 and 18 were rejected options. Option 14 allowed free flow links to the A34 and M3 in all directions, with the A34 southbound passing under the M3 at 70mph. However, this option had significant environmental effects including negative effects on the River Itchen and had a low value for money outcome.

Option 16 A and B respectively had only one direction of the M3 and A34 being free flowing and would be introduced in stages. The option met the key objectives, but a phased delivery would have large impacts for construction and impacts on users and residents. It was considered an inefficient method of delivery.

Option 18 did not fully comply with the scheme objectives and did not provide free flow conditions from the A34 to the M3 in any direction.

There is concern regarding the merging of the M3, A34 and A33 over such a short distance. The City Council will ask Highways England to investigate these concerns further to ensure all vehicular movements can take place, and the likelihood of incidents be reduced.

Highways England will produce a document detailing the feedback they have received from this consultation in the middle of 2018 and in doing so will confirm the preferred route.

In early to mid-2019, Highways England will submit a planning application followed by a Development Consent Order application to the Planning Inspectorate seeking the necessary approvals to construct and operate the junction improvements based on the assumption that the scheme will be regarded as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. There will then be a statutory public consultation on the design of a preferred route in the middle of next year, with the Planning Inspectorate evaluating the scheme and application in 2019 also. Highways England anticipates that the Planning Inspectorate will give a recommendation to the Government in 2020 and they then decide whether to give consent for the scheme. If consent is granted, construction should start in 2021, with a view to be fully opened to traffic in 2023. More details regarding the development process can be found in the consultation brochure along with information relating to the assessed environmental benefits and impacts of the works.

**DECISION**

That the proposed response to the consultation questionnaire, as attached to this Notice, be agreed for submission to Highways England.

**REASON FOR THE DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

N/A

**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

None.

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE DECISION**

N/A

**FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE**

Following Councillor comments, the City Council has asked Highways England to consider upgrading the path from Kings Worthy to allow for cyclists as well as pedestrians and has also specified a minimum width of 4 metres be used for the cycle path.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED**

N/A

**DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

N/A

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision: 16.02.18

Councillor Jan Warwick – Portfolio Holder for Environment

**APPENDICES:** Highways England Consultation response

## Highways England Consultation Response

Questions 1 to 12 and 20 to 23 relate to responses aimed at individuals and are not considered to be relevant to the City Council's response.

13. How concerned are you about the following issues currently relating to the M3 junction 9?

Traffic congestion

- Very concerned  
 Slightly concerned  
 Not concerned  
 Not applicable
- 

Reliability of journey times

- Very concerned  
 Slightly concerned  
 Not concerned  
 Not applicable
- 

Road safety

- Very concerned  
 Slightly concerned  
 Not concerned  
 Not applicable
- 

The effects of the M3 junction 9 traffic on the environment

- Very concerned  
 Slightly concerned  
 Not concerned  
 Not applicable
- 

Displacement of traffic onto local roads to avoid the M3 junction 9

- Very concerned  
 Slightly concerned  
 Not concerned  
 Not applicable

14. How strongly do you agree or disagree that improvements to M3 junction 9 are needed?

- Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree  
 Don't know

15. After looking at information and drawings describing our proposal (Option 14) please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree that our proposal will meet the following objectives? (consultation brochure page 7)

Reduce congestion along M3 and A34 approaching the junction by providing direct access from one to the other

- Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know
- 

Provide a safer junction as there will be less queuing traffic

- Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know
- 

Better facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians with a new cycle/pathway link

- Agree
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Don't know
- 

Improve access to/from Winchester (for example by reducing congestion on the A272 and/or Easton Lane)

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

16. Do you have any concerns about our proposal (Option 14), with respect to the following? (consultation brochure pages 7, 10-12)

Capacity to accommodate future growth in traffic

- Very concerned
  - Slightly concerned
  - No concern
  - Don't know
- 

Impact on congestion / journey time once built

- Very concerned
  - Slightly concerned
  - No concern
  - Don't know
- 

Impact on road safety once built

- Very concerned
  - Slightly concerned
  - No concern
  - Don't know
- 

Disruption during construction

- Very concerned
  - Slightly concerned
  - No concern
  - Don't know
- 

Impact on noise, air or light pollution

- Very concerned
  - Slightly concerned
  - No concern
  - Don't know
- 

Impact on residential properties / land

- Very concerned
  - Slightly concerned
  - No concern
  - Don't know
-

Connections to other parts of the region

- Very concerned
  - Slightly concerned
  - No concern
  - Don't know
- 

Land take from South Downs National Park

- Very concerned
  - Slightly concerned
  - No concern
  - Don't know
- 

Impact on wildlife (plants/animals)

- Very concerned
  - Slightly concerned
  - No concern
  - Don't know
- 

Impact on nearby heritage sites

- Very concerned
- Slightly concerned
- No concern
- Don't know

**17. Overall to what extent do you support or oppose the proposal (Option 14)?**

- Strongly support
- Support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Don't know

Please write in your reasons below

The City Council strongly supports the scheme that improves free flow conditions around the Junction 9 roundabout. Not only will it improve free flow traffic conditions for those using the trunk roads, it should improve local traffic routes by removing those long distance vehicles. Presently, there are concerns about the north and southbound connections with the slip ways between the M3, A34 and A33 which all take place over a very short distance. Notably the speed limit will be reduced in this area, however more assessments and evidence is needed that these slip roads will merge well together, and the potential for incidents are removed. We hope that Highways England will investigate these concerns.

We would agree that option 14 is more preferable to option 11 due to the increased land take from the South Downs National Park and the considerable environmental impacts that option 11 has.

The City Council are delighted that the National Cycle Network Route 23 will finally be complete throughout the City. The Council would like Highways England to consult with those Non-Motorised User groups to ensure that the path is acceptable for all that want to use it. We would like to see a path appropriate for all user types that is built to more than the minimum standards. The City Council would prefer that the cycleway width standard of 4 metres to be used in order to accommodate and minimise conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

The City Council would also like Highways England to investigate and take forward the proposal of a shared use path, rather than just a pedestrian path, to improve cycling and walking routes from Winnall to Kings Worthy and north Winchester. The existing path is already used by cyclists despite its current state and lack of crossing facility. A surfaced cycle path would also create opportunities for better cycle and walking routes to the National Park.

**18. Having looked at the rejected options, please indicate the extent to which you understand why these have not been taken forward?  
(consultation brochure page 5)**

Option 11

- Fully understand  
 Partially understand  
 Do not understand
- 

Option 16

- Fully understand  
 Partially understand  
 Do not understand
- 

Option 18

- Fully understand  
 Partially understand  
 Do not understand

What further information would assist?

N/A



19. Do you have any further comments or observations that you think we should consider?

Yes

No

Please provide them below

It is recognised that planning a major road scheme such as this requires significant time to complete to a high standard, it should be noted that the traffic delays, uncertainty and congestion caused by the existing road layout are affecting the local economy now, and they will continue to be affected until the day the new layout is operational. As a result, if there are ways for Winchester City Council or other partners to help speed up the process and achieve the desired outcome in a shorter time frame, we would be happy to discuss this with you.

With regards to future growth and capacity, we note that Highways England have used 2036 as the year of assessment for the traffic analysis but we should emphasise the projected future growth of the ports at Southampton and Portsmouth and potential increase of the use of heavy goods vehicles using the M3, combined with a potential increase in vehicles using the area due to its more free flowing connections.

With regards to the impact upon landscape and ecology, Highways England's assessment of these impacts is still evolving and therefore it is not possible to be confident about the impact the scheme will have. However, initial information provided to WCC officers suggests that in relation to the landscape and ecology of the Winchester District it should be possible to overcome any issues with appropriate mitigation techniques (rebuilding any lost habitats; translocation of species; careful design of planting to reduce the visual impact of the scheme, including the impact of signage, lighting and acoustic barriers).

The Council is also concerned about air quality particularly given that the centre of town is a designated Air Quality Management Area because of exceedances of the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide. The Council adopted an Action Plan during 2017 which is intended to deal with the issue of nitrogen dioxide exceedances by 2020. Consequently the Council would want to see evidence to show how the proposed junction works would impact on air quality with an expectation that the scheme would deliver improvements. Any solution which missed the opportunity to improve air quality or risked exacerbating existing issues or creating additional problems would be a concern for the Council.

With regards to the impact upon nearby heritage sites, consideration should also be given to impacts on heritage sites (whether currently known or unknown) present within the proposed site boundaries. Highways England's assessment of these impacts is still evolving and therefore it is not possible to be confident about the impact the scheme will have. However the nature of heritage sites known to have been impacted during the construction of the existing interchange and initial information provided to WCC officers suggests that in relation to the heritage of the Winchester District it should be possible to overcome any issues with appropriate mitigation techniques (programme of archaeological investigation and recording, with provision for public dissemination of any results). The results of a geophysical survey (understood to be currently underway) and an expected subsequent archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) should confirm this position.

The current stakeholder engagement usefully includes an event in the Winnall area of Winchester, in addition to the city centre. Residents and businesses should be kept fully informed, not only via direct contact with those who have registered an interest with Highways England, but via community and interest groups. For example, Hampshire Chamber of Commerce are actively involved in communicating news about the scheme to its members. Winchester City Council has a developing relationship with businesses in the Winnall area of the city, and communication links with businesses across the District. We would therefore be very willing to be a conduit for further news to be disseminated in the local area.