

Western Gateway Draft Strategic Transport Plan 2020-2025

Feedback from Teddington & Alstone A46 Advisory Group (TAAG)

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to feedback on your draft Strategic Transport Plan. Our main area of interest is in respect of the proposal 'Upgrade M5 J9 and alignment of the existing A46'. Further details of who we are and our aims in representing the views of our two village communities can be viewed on our website <https://taagroup.co.uk/>

1. Covid 19 Impacts

There are numerous references in the summary and through the individual sections recognising that the pandemic will have significant and as yet unknown implications that will need to be considered and reflected into plans as they progress. However, explicit recognition of this appears to be in stating that short term priorities will only cover the next 5 years and a need to be flexible. Within the detail, there appear to be only a few specific examples of changes being made in thinking such as a greater urban role for walking, cycling etc. In Short term scheme priorities (2020-2025) you list 10 priority road schemes on SRN, 11 priority road schemes on Major and Local road network and only 4 walking/cycling priority schemes (page 77).

Q. While implications are currently unknown, how do WG plan to allow flexibility to be reflected in short term priorities before and during implementation?

Q. How will the risk of potentially unnecessary or sub-optimal investment be managed?

Q. Will the scheduling of some priorities be delayed to allow for more certainty to emerge?

Q. What potential implications arising from the current pandemic are being considered in the development of the current M5 J9/A46 LLM outline business case due for submission next year?

2. Environmental Impacts

Western Gateway aim to lead the decarbonisation agenda with environmental benefits highlighted in the strategy, including a modal shift away from private car use.

Q. How are objectives around reducing future road travel being reflected in prioritising new route proposals and the type of roads required?

Q. Does a modal shift away from private car use mean the need to expand the A46 at Ashchurch to dual carriageway is negated?

Q. Why is only modal shift away from private car use being considered? Why not modal shift for business car users and freight too?

Q. Why are the Environmental priorities and outcomes (Table 4 page 27) all long-term, why have no short-term priorities and outcomes been included and can you define long term?

Western Gateway intends to lead the transport decarbonisation agenda (including offsetting) of strategic transport user emissions (Page 27).

Q. Why is Western Gateway considering the use of offsetting, what type of offsetting projects is it considering and in what circumstances would offsetting be used? Our concern is that environmentally damaging roads could be built in unsuitable locations but this is allowed due to offsetting promises being made.

3. References to M5 J9 and A46

Under the section Northern Transport Hub (Page 35) is a short term 2020-2025 priority 'Upgrade of M5 J9 and alignment of the existing A46 to deliver a major Garden Town at Ashchurch'.

In the Summary of Short Term Priorities (Page 66) to support the Western Growth Corridor is a priority 'Capacity improvements are required at M5 Junctions 9 & 10 to support growth in Gloucestershire and improve capacity related issues by managing the flow of traffic and avoiding the occurrence of mainline queuing'. The upgrade of the A46 to Expressway is shown as a medium to long term priority i.e. post 2025.

Then in the overall short term priorities (Page 76), only 'M5 J9 capacity improvements to support growth' is mentioned under SRN priorities, no mention is made of the A46.

Q. does an upgrade of a junction mean a reconfiguration of an existing junction or could it include adding a new junction or both?

Q. given these three different references to M5 J9, is the alignment of the A46 definitely included in short term priorities?

Q. Is the plan to realign the A46 as a single carriageway in the short term and then upgrade it in the medium to long term?

Q. Are WG aware of the Transport for Homes' recent study on Garden Towns* (including the one at Ashchurch) which concludes that the current designs will only result in more car-dependency and therefore increased private car travel? This conclusion was also reached in a report we commissioned from Gerald Kells Transport Policy and Campaigns Advisor**. How do you reconcile your plans to reduce private car travel based on the plans for Ashchurch Garden Town?

4. Traffic Volumes

Much of the evidence for the proposals identified in the strategy is based on traffic congestion and its impact on economic productivity.

Q. Have your forecasts for traffic levels, taken into account induced traffic as a result of new or expanded roads?

Q. How will the inevitable environmental impacts of induced traffic be mitigated?

* <https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/green-promises-broken-garden-villages-and-garden-towns-will-be-dominated-by-the-car/>

** http://taagroup.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ashchurch_taaq_report_oct_2019.pdf