

“Firstly, can an environmentally friendly way be found to by-pass J9 for those who do not need to access that junction; and secondly, how can the capacity of the A46 and J9 be increased?”

Overriding Environmental Facts

Any new road is, by its nature, not environmentally-friendly, even if the new road is addressing a problem such as congestion and poor air quality. The road sector produces the highest level of greenhouse gas directly, through fossil energy used in construction of new roads and indirectly through the emissions coming from vehicles that subsequently use it, not to mention the non-exhaust emissions from tyres and brakes.

Also, increasing capacity to alleviate congestion has been shown to just result in more traffic ultimately (induced demand), at a time when it has been widely recognised that we need to reduce the number of vehicles on the road to stand any chance of meeting our zero carbon commitments.

Interventions along the A46

All that being said, current and planned new developments along the A46 will continue to pile pressure on the existing A46 for years to come. It should be recognised that this is with or without a new bypass, because separating local and through traffic is compromised by the significant volume of traffic (with rapid future growth once new residential & retail developments are added) that will still need to exit/enter J9. The newly completed J9 & A46 road capacity upgrade does provide a tactical solution, albeit at the expense of further slowing the flow of through traffic in both directions. Bypassing J9 for those who do not need to access the junction will only ever be part of the solution. Additional interventions along the A46 will become necessary regardless and could include:

- Reducing the number of traffic lights on the A46 by replacing them with roundabouts at Aston Cross, Fiddington junction, railway junction and Dobbies junction to aid traffic flow and reduce pollution caused by stop/start engines
- Reducing road speed limits to help prevent ‘bunching’ and aid traffic flow

As well as providing a solution and minimising impacts on the environment there is the important issue of cost. Before a route and investment of £500m+ is agreed for a new M5 junction and bypass, alternative solutions which are less environmentally unfriendly, cheaper and perhaps more effective should be considered.

Options to bypass J9 with no new junction

Possible proposals for bypassing J9 could be:

- Provide an alternative route for East-West traffic currently passing across J9. For example, develop a new local traffic route from the 'unfinished' junction at Morrison's, joining with the Northway Lane bridge over the M5, the proposed new bridge over the railway line and down to a new roundabout on the A46 between Aston Cross & Teddington Hands.
- Move a proportion of through traffic exiting and entering J9 to other junctions. This may be helped by the proposed expansion of J10 but, longer term, there could be a northern route

solution which shifts the strategic network focus from blindly following the A46 to utilising the relatively undeveloped/uncongested Eastern approach to J7 (or possibly J8 to also open up access to South Wales). We have tried to raise this suggestion previously with both Gloucestershire and Worcestershire County Councils without success.

Both of the above actions would decrease the number of vehicles actually heading for J9 and the congested stretch of the A46.

Any progress Gloucestershire County Council can make with interventions designed to encourage a switch from using vehicles to more sustainable forms of transport such as buses and trains, would also help ease congestion.

We're clearly not expert in road design but the focus to date on a costly new motorway junction and bypass is not the only or a silver bullet solution.