

National Highways Consultation - August 2023

Route Strategies Initial Overview Report - South Midlands

We were recently contacted by Teddington & Alstone Parish Council (TAPC) to advise that they had been invited to provide feedback to the latest review of the strategic road network route by National Highways (NH). The overview report for the South Midlands has included our local stretch of the A46 (from J9 M5 up to Evesham) as one of their priority areas for further investigation - this never seems to go away!

Feedback will be used to finalise Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3) priorities for 2025-2030.

We have given feedback to NH previously, most recently in November 2021. With the agreement of TAPC, we have made the following latest submission on behalf of TAPC:

Context:

There has already been considerable focus and investigation of “Area of Interest A”. This was previously highlighted by Midlands Connect as one of their eight priorities for a 70 mile A46/M69 strategic corridor which led to the formation of the ‘A46 Partnership Group’ in 2017. Since this time, there have been numerous different investigations, initially led by Midlands Connect and more recently Western Gateway & Gloucestershire County Council (GCC). National Highways themselves have also investigated this route a number of times.

Since 2020, GCC have looked at a circa 4 mile section of the A46 as it runs eastwards from Junction 9 of the M5 in Gloucestershire to the Worcestershire County border. After spending millions of pounds on further investigations, the already two times delayed public consultation was cancelled for the third time in May 2023.

For over five years Teddington and Alstone Parish Council, through a residents working group, carried out extensive lobbying with regard to bypass proposals and provided detailed feedback on the many expected adverse impacts which will arise for the villages of Teddington, Alstone & Oxenton, local businesses and existing road users. These relate to the injudicious use of the A435 as part of a new bypass, something National Highways have consistently promoted as seen from reports obtained under a Freedom of Information request.

Summary feedback:

- We have repeatedly challenged the assumption that the existing path of the A46 is an appropriate strategic route. We consider there is a credible alternative option in a route which passes from the A46 to the north of Evesham to the M5. For example; from Alcester to Junction 7 or Evesham to Junction 8. Both of these alternatives would provide a more direct link to South Wales through more proximate access to the M50 while still providing an alternative route away from the busy M5/M40/M42 box. In addition, a more northerly route has advantages by avoiding the costly build of a new motorway junction on the M5, a second Evesham bypass and also does not have to cope with a congested and dangerous* 7 mile section of the A46 single carriageway south of Evesham. To our knowledge, alternative routes have never been fully considered.

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If National Highways are to now take a fresh look at routes, alternative options should be within scope.

- Given the considerable costs and effort already expended by a variety of organisations, together with the feedback received from statutory and other consultees, we would expect the scope for further investigations of the A46 to re-use and build on this work where relevant.
- It appears route proposals for a new bypass of the A46 at Ashchurch were finalised in May based on the detailed questions raised by Laurence Robertson MP in a debate he initiated at Westminster Hall criticising aspects of the submitted business case. Therefore, any further analysis should review whether all credible route options had been adequately investigated and had addressed pre-consultation feedback.
- A longtime criticism of the A46 bypass project is that it wholly ignored any options to alleviate congestion on the existing road. The absence of traffic management actions and uncoordinated housing development have contributed significantly to current congestion and actions here are necessary with or without a complimentary bypass.

** NH have recently reduced the speed limit to 40mph near Hinton on the Green to reduce the risk of serious accidents. This was supported by Harriet Baldwin MP.*

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