

CABINET

22 SEPTEMBER 2022

MAJOR ROAD NETWORK SCHEME UPDATE

Relevant Cabinet Member

Councillor Marc Bayliss

Relevant Chief Officer

Strategic Director of Economy and Infrastructure

Local Member(s)

Councillor Marc Bayliss

Councillor Dan Boatright

Councillor Elizabeth Eyre

Councillor Laura Gretton

Councillor Marcus Hart

Councillor Bill Hopkins

Councillor Karen May

Councillor Tony Miller

Councillor Tony Muir

Councillor Linda Robinson

Councillor Shirley Webb

Recommendation

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills recommends that Cabinet:**
 - a) Notes the overall concepts of both the North West Worcestershire Corridor (NWWC) Scheme and the A44 / A4538 scheme and progress made to date;**
 - b) Approves the further development and submission of the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) of the NWWC Scheme to Midlands Connect in Winter 2022 / 23;**
 - c) Approves the further development of the SOC for the A44 /A4538 and for this to be shared with Midlands Connect;**
 - d) Supports the continued progress of business cases for both schemes towards Outline Business Case stage, including identifying the timetable for stakeholder engagement, planning permission, land acquisition and funding mechanism for the schemes;**
 - e) Supports continued engagement with Midlands Connect and the Department for Transport to secure their ongoing support for the schemes and exploring any funding opportunities for the development of the business cases; and**

- f) Approves the use of up to £0.360 million from the Strategic Infrastructure Fund revenue reserve in order to deliver the Outline Business Cases for these schemes

Why is this important?

2. These routes form part of the major road network in the county, linking the major settlements with the strategic road network including the M5 and the A46. Development is proposed in adopted and emerging local plans which will increase the use of these routes. The proposals in the strategic outline case are being developed to assist in mitigating this impact. Funding for the NWWC strategic outline case has been secured from Midlands Connect in recognition of the importance of the corridor.

Background

3. Worcestershire County Council (WCC) are developing strategic outline cases (SOC) for two major road network schemes within the county. These are the North West Worcestershire Corridor (NWWC) and the A44 / A4538 (Worcester to Evesham).
4. The NWWC corridor covers three roads, the A491, A450 and A456 in a broad corridor from M5 junction 4 at Wildmoor, Bromsgrove through Hagley, Blakedown and Kidderminster, including Mustow Green.
5. The A44 / A4538 route in south Worcestershire is a 24 km route from the A38/A4538 junction at Martin Hussingtree, continuing along the A4538 Pershore Lane, through the M5 junction 6 connecting with the A44/A4538/A422 junction. The route continues along the A44 through Pershore, connecting to the A46(T) in Evesham
6. Both of these routes form part of the major road network (MRN) in the county, the primary A road network which performs a strategic function in connecting the major settlements to the motorways and trunk roads. There are congestion and journey time reliability issues along the corridors. The corridors are also expected to experience an increase in traffic from the development proposed in the Wyre Forest Local Plan (adopted April 2022) and the emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan review (SWDPr).
7. In November 2020, Worcestershire County Council (WCC) submitted expressions of interest to Midlands Connect (MC) for both the NWWC and A44/ A4538 corridors to fund the initial development of the strategic outline case to develop proposals for the improvement of these corridors.
8. Following submission of the expression of interest, WCC was awarded development funding from the Midlands Connect 'Preparation Fund' in January 2021 for the NWWC. The funding is being used to support the development of a SOC for the Scheme, to be submitted by Winter 2022/23. This funding (£50k) covered approximately half of the cost of the SOC; the balance being funded from revenue resources.

9. Funding was not awarded to the A44/ A4538 corridor, primarily because each local transport authority can only have one project funded through the Midlands Connect Preparation Fund at any time. However, because of the emerging SWDPr, which focusses growth in the A44 corridor, work has continued on options for this corridor to prevent it becoming a barrier to the proposed growth and to identify mitigation required. Midlands Connect remain supportive of the scheme and are being kept informed of progress. £100k of revenue funding was utilised in 2021/22 to fund this SOC.

10. The NWWC scheme improvements have a strong policy context and will help to deliver the aims and ambitions of national government through Department for Transport investment strategy, regional policy including Midlands Connect and is a policy commitment in Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4).

11. The A44/ A4538 proposals also accord with the national growth agenda for housing delivery and the provision of infrastructure to support such growth. The scheme is not referenced in LTP4 as the SWDP review commenced post the adoption of LTP4.

12. Both proposals are also supported by the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP).

13. The NWWC is also supported by the Wyre Forest District Plan adopted in 2022.

14. Both schemes also include significant improvements for cyclists and pedestrians including junction improvements, connectivity, localised cycle route widening and additional crossing points.

15. The SOC for the NWWC is currently being prepared in two stages. Stage 1 assessment has been developed using outputs from local and network junction models. This will be followed by Stage 2 assessment, based on Worcestershire County Council's county wide strategic transport model, in autumn 2022.

16. The SOC for the A44/ A4538 is currently in development, with the options appraisal being undertaken, along with early stakeholder engagement. Next steps will be to further develop the options, undertake strategic transport modelling, develop the planning and funding strategies.

17. During 2023 work will commence on the development of Outline Business Cases (OBC) for both schemes for which funding is being requested as part of this report.

Additional work which will be required to support the OBC includes:

- Planning Strategy (if not within Permitted Development);
- Funding Strategy; and
- Land acquisition strategy.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

18. The total cost of the completion of the SOC for the NWWC was £0.100m, of this £0.050m was funded via the Midlands Connect funding and £0.050m was from base revenue funding in 2021/22 financial year. There will be negligible additional spend required to complete the SOC in 2022/23.

19. To keep within prescribed timelines work needs to commence in parallel on the Outline Business Case (OBC) for NWWC. The cost to prepare the OBC is estimated at £0.180m and will be spent during both the current financial year (approx. one third) and the remainder in 2023/24. This report requests the development of the OBC to be funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve.

20. Work will continue with Midlands Connect to attempt to secure further funding for the OBC and if successful will reduce the funding required from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve.

21. The total cost to deliver the NWWC scheme is currently estimated at circa £50m for which there is currently no identified funding. However, the estimated cost will be further refined as the scheme develops through the ongoing business case development. The strategy will include a review of opportunities for developer contributions and other potential sources of funding.

22. The SOC for the A44/ A4538 has been developed by WCC from base revenue funding in 2021/22 at a cost of £0.100m, in parallel with the development of the emerging SWDPr. There will be negligible additional spend required to complete the SOC in 2022/23.

23. To keep within prescribed timelines work needs to commence on the OBC for the A44/ A4538. The cost to prepare the business case is estimated at £0.180m and will be spent during both the current financial year (approx. one third) and the remainder in 2023/24. This report also requests the OBC to be funded from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve.

24. A detailed funding strategy for the A44/ A4538 will be developed as part of the proposals for the route, including an assessment of the developer contributions, external funding requirements from government and to inform the timescale for delivery.

Timescales

25. A high-level Programme of Works for both schemes includes:

- Submission of SOC for consideration by Midlands Connect/DfT under MRN process – Winter 2022/23; (NWWC only)
- OBC development – Winter 2023/24; - For which this report requests funding.
- Funding strategy – Winter 2023/24
- Planning strategy – Winter 2023/24
- Land acquisition strategy – Winter 2023/24

Risk Implications

26. Key risks that have been identified at this stage relating to the whole process and their potential mitigation measures are as follows:

- Environmental mitigation requirements: - Included within scheme design from an early stage including ecological assessment

- Funding: to deliver both schemes approval and confirmation of funding, including from government and developer contributions is required prior to commencement
- Inflation Costs: Should funding to deliver the schemes be secured, there could be scheme cost inflation uncertainty leading to higher than expected out-turn costs resulting in inadequate budget available, which would be mitigated by continuing to monitor costs and ensuring ongoing engagement. Due to nature of scheme, individual packages could be removed from programme to ensure budget is not exceeded.
- Key stakeholder/project sponsor/political decisions affect programme delivery (e.g., amendments to scheme scope): Keep all stakeholders updated through regular project briefings, highlighting any potential risks to programme and scope
- Scheme costs greater than estimated due to unforeseen issues such as drainage, topographical surveys utilities: some risk allowance built into SOBC costs to account for unknown cost increases.

Joint Equality, Public Health, Data Protection and Sustainability Impact Assessments

27. Following the completion of the Joint Impact Assessment (JIA) for both schemes (Appendix E and F), it has been determined that Data Protection, Equality and Public Health and Environmental Sustainability requires full impact assessments. However, in order to correctly assess these impacts, it is advised that the same are assessed at the completion of Outline Business Case and then finalised after submission of Full Business Case (FBC).

Supporting Information

- Appendix A – NWWC Scheme map
- Appendix B – NWWC Locations for Consideration Highway Intervention schemes
- Appendix C – A44/A4538 scheme map
- Appendix D – A44/A4538 Locations for Consideration Highway Intervention schemes
- Appendix E – NWWC JIA
- Appendix F- A44/A4538 JIA

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Strategic Director for Economy and Infrastructure) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.