

Midlands Connect A46 (Stage 2) Study - FAQs

1. Who is Midlands Connect?

Midlands Connect is the Sub-national Transport Body (STB) for the Midlands.

Midlands Connect researches, develops and recommends long-term strategic transport projects which will provide the biggest possible economic, social and environmental benefits for the Midlands and the rest of the UK.

The fundamental aim of the Midlands Connect Strategy is to transform regional and UK gateways, bringing the Midlands closer together and accelerating schemes that will improve east-west connectivity.

Stretching from the Welsh border to the Lincolnshire coast, the Midlands Connect partnership is made up of 22 local authorities, nine Local Enterprise Partnerships, two international airports and eight chambers of commerce. The partnership also includes the Department for Transport, Network Rail, Highways England and HS2 Ltd.

2. What work has been done by Midlands Connect on the A46 Corridor so far and what was its purpose?

The A46 Corridor across the Midlands is identified as an investment priority in the Midlands Connect Strategy. Midlands Connect have undertaken work in two stages:

Stage 1 – Published November 2018:

- Makes the overall case for investment in the corridor as a whole (i.e. across the West and East Midlands).
- Identifies priority areas for early investment – including the Leicester area.

Stage 2 – Published November 2020:

- Looks at broad options for each priority area – For the Leicester area this looked at whether it is appropriate to invest in the existing corridor (i.e. M1 Junction 21 to Junction 21a, Leicester Western Bypass and Hobby Horse Roundabout), compared to a new strategic route around the South and East of Leicester.
- Identifies a programme for investment in the whole corridor the over next 10 to 15 years.

The primary purpose of the work is to identify investments to address current and predicted future traffic issues along the corridor, taking into account (in overall terms) growth plans, including the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan. Its purpose is not to assess nor express any conclusions on growth plans nor the specific nature of the infrastructure required to support growth.



3. What are the key findings of the Midlands Connect A46 work?

Midlands Connect has recommended a series of improvements on sections of the A46 corridor running through the Midlands. In the Leicester and Leicestershire section the focus in the short to medium term is on significantly upgrading the existing A46 corridor to address existing problems and enable planned growth. The indicative preferred timeframe is between 2020 and 2030 for delivery of improvements, although actual delivery will be dependent on development of scheme designs and the availability of funding.

On this basis the work shows a road to 'Expressway' standard is not needed around the South and East of Leicester to serve people making long distance trips (i.e. people travelling past Leicester on the A46, from the Southwest to the Northeast of England for example), but confirms a lower standard of road is still required to support new housing and economic development.

It is important to note that these key findings only hold true if development is delivered in accordance with the distribution of housing across the area (spatial distribution) as set out in the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan. It would be incorrect to assume the same conclusions would be reached based on any alternate spatial distributions or growth scenarios.

4. What does the Midlands Connect A46 (Stage 2) Study mean for the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan?

We do not need to abandon the Strategic Growth Plan and start again. The work of Midlands Connect does not recommend or support a departure from the distribution of growth set out in the Strategic Growth Plan - it was not the purpose of the study to consider this. Midlands Connect's approach and findings support the distribution of growth envisaged in the Strategic Growth Plan.

Midlands Connect highlight that new road infrastructure is needed south and east of Leicester to support growth, but confirms a road to 'Expressway' standard is not required for people making long distance trips past Leicester. Further work is therefore recommended to better understand what infrastructure and sustainable transport interventions may be needed to support planned growth and mitigate any adverse impacts on existing urban areas and their associated transport networks. This work will be carried out by the Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities in collaboration with Midlands Connect.

5. What are the next steps?

The Midlands Connect work primarily focuses on identifying new road improvements needed to ensure the A46 works for people making long distance trips past Leicester. The Leicester & Leicestershire Authorities will seek to work in collaboration with Midlands Connect and Highways England to bring forward improvements to the existing A46 corridor at the earliest opportunity.



The Midlands Connect work does not look at specific improvements needed to support the new development we have to provide long-term. It recommends further work is carried out by the Leicester & Leicestershire Authorities to look at this in collaboration with Midlands Connect.

The fact that Midlands Connect have confirmed their preferred strategy is to upgrade the existing A46 is helpful. It means we don't have to plan for a road to Expressway standard for people making long distance trips past Leicester. Local residents have raised concerns about the impact an Expressway could have around the south and east of Leicester, and we now have the opportunity to look for a solution that works better for Leicester & Leicestershire.

The two Local Transport Authorities have prepared a Strategic Transport Priorities document setting out a joint framework to support Leicester & Leicestershire's long-term growth needs. The outcomes of the Midlands Connect Study have no material effect on its contents. A Strategic Transport Assessment will be carried out over the next 12-18 months which will further develop our understanding of the infrastructure and sustainable transport measures required to deliver long term growth whilst supporting air quality and low carbon objectives.

6. Will the Strategic Growth Plan be updated?

No, not at present. The A46 (Stage 2) Study does not support the redistribution of growth away from what is proposed in the Strategic Growth Plan, simply that a road to Expressway Standard is not needed for long distance trips.

7. Does the Midlands Connect A46 (Stage 2) Study impact the number of new homes needed?

No. Government set the targets for the overall number of homes we have to provide, and the A46 (Stage 2) Study does not support the redistribution of housing away from what is proposed in the Strategic Growth Plan.

In Leicester & Leicestershire we've still got to provide 140,000 new homes over the next 30 years. This is a huge challenge and one there are no easy answers to. We will need a significant package of sustainable transport measures and new infrastructure to support this level of growth, whilst meeting essential air quality and carbon reduction targets.