

A46 Link Road Consultation Response

In putting together this response I have read the documents published online, attended the two web meetings that have been held and submitted several questions to the team via email, not all of which have been answered at the current time. Whilst it can be seen that there are some localised benefits, I believe that the wider local area will be worse off, and therefore I am writing to **object to Options 2 and 3 and all other sub-options in the Consultation proposal in its current form**. The reasons for this are many and varied and are briefly summarised, in no particular order, in the following points.

- **Traffic Modelling and Traffic Flows**

The report that has been made available online is not easy to read and understand but does appear to include some errors and omissions. Conclusions drawn on the A46 Link Road web page are misleading and, in some cases, wrong.

The main stated aim of the Link Road is to improve traffic flow through the 'A46 Corridor'. This corridor covers a large part of the south and west of Coventry, and is mainly on the opposite side of the A46 to the Link Road. It can therefore be implied that the intention of the Link Road is to draw traffic away from major roads such as the A45 onto the local roads in Tile Hill, Eastern Green, Westwood Heath and Burton Green. These roads are not suited for additional vehicle movements at peak time, and even less suited to HGV traffic. Some junction improvements have been proposed as mitigation to aid traffic flow, but I believe that the reality of the traffic flows do not bear out the underlying assumptions made in the model. For instance, the junction of Cromwell Lane and Charter Avenue is totally blocked when an HGV or bus wants to make a turn, as the junction is narrow, and these vehicles need both lanes whilst turning. As there are at least six timetabled bus movements through this junction per hour throughout the day, it can be seen that this is a significant restriction on the traffic flow.





The photos included here show the junction of Cromwell Lane and Charter Avenue during lockdown and at the middle of the day, so they are not at peak periods. They show the problems that HGV and bus traffic has at this junction throughout the day.

The area currently has planning for additional housing along Cromwell Lane (approved) and Westwood Heath Lane (outline permission), and HS2 build traffic, not to mention the major developments currently being assessed for Kings Hill and Eastern Green. All of these will add to the traffic in the area, though some of these are claimed to be included in the traffic model.

The traffic flows outlined in the model report cannot be defined as to direction of flow in the AM and PM peaks (A46 Link Road team, response to direct question), which makes analysis of the conclusions impossible. In addition a major traffic flow that has not been detailed is that which enters along Duggins Lane. The additional traffic flows do not appear to include any of the traffic which will be drawn towards the Link Road as a better way to traverse the area, and no assessments have been made of this. This will cause additional 'rat running' along the minor roads across the study area, and hence increase 'rat running'. A decrease in 'rat running' was one of the stated aims of the study. All of this should be addressed before the consultation period is concluded.

In December 2020 Solihull Borough Council formalised the Draft Local Plan and it includes significant housing on the Coventry side of Balsall Common, plus a new bypass. All of which could significantly add to the traffic flows through the area.

Discussions with the University of Warwick (UoW) and investigation of some of the documents used as a basis for traffic flow modelling, including at the time the Hybrid Plan was issued, show that the UoW have always assumed that the traffic flow from a link road would go to Kirby Corner roundabout and not into the campus as is shown on the A46 Link Road documents. The traffic flow assessments also assumed a Phase 3 link road which took the traffic on towards the A45. Both of these assumptions now seem to have been changed, which brings into question the traffic flow studies carried out by UoW and which underpin the Hybrid Masterplan agreements.

- **Air Quality**

Additional vehicle traffic will lead to worsening air quality, which both Coventry City Council and Warwick County Council have as key targets to reduce, especially so in

the case of Coventry who currently do not meet the targets. Currently there are no plans to mitigate the increase in emissions, nor has this been covered in any of the documents put forward online.

- **Employment Growth**

One of the key reasons put forward for the Link Road is to allow the area to benefit from employment growth. The significant employer is the UoW and the Link Road could cater for traffic from the A46 without extending it beyond the access to the university. Westwood Business Park is seeing a reduction in employment opportunities, and several of the building plots have been used to provide student accommodation. All employment growth in the A46 Corridor appears to be on the opposite side of the A46 itself and is not served by the proposed Link Road.

- **ONS Examination**

The Office for National Statistics have been queried on the forecast population figures that underpin much of the new housing and other development that is currently being considered for the Coventry area. There has been doubt cast on the figures as they appear to exaggerate the growth by a significant amount, and the examination will report on the findings in due course. However, all indicators for the first 10 years of the forecast show normal growth and not the excessive growth forecast that is currently being used for planning new developments, including the Link Road.

- **2021 National Census**

During the early part of 2021 there is to be a National Census which will be used to form policy and planning decisions for the future to come. Given the questions that have been raised regarding the accuracy of the current level of information on population growth, it would seem that the Census is an ideal way to validate what has happened since the original data was developed ten years ago, and to form the basis for future plans including this Link Road.

- **Phase 3**

When the original proposals were put forward for a Link Road there was a Phase 3 that was an intrinsic part of the development. This would take the traffic onwards from Westwood Heath and on to the A45. Phase 3 is now stated to be not under active consideration, and will only be re-considered 'if it is actually necessary'. Therefore, all the traffic will be diverted off the A46 and onto local roads which are not suitable for more volume. Phase 3 would need to be part of the whole development if this Link Road is to be introduced in any substantive form.

- **UoW Masterplan**

The University of Warwick Masterplan, quoted in the online documents, is currently under review, and the university does not have a valid Masterplan at this time, other than the Hybrid Plan. The Hybrid Plan does not cover the need for additional access

from a Link Road, and is restricted to specific projects within the current University boundary. One of the reasons that the new Masterplan is delayed is the significant affect that post-COVID work patterns may well have on the on-campus presence, and the change in individual work patterns.

The quoted themes of the new Masterplan include 'sustainability' and improvements to carbon emissions to meet the carbon neutral target by 2050. The Link Road will detract from these aims.

- **CCC Local Plan**

Coventry City Council are currently reviewing the Local Plan for release of a new plan in the near future. This should be a key document in the planning process for the Link Road.

- **Post COVID**

The whole world has been through significant change since the COVID 19 pandemic struck. The ways of working and leisure activities have altered in a way that no-one would have predicted twelve months ago. It would appear that at least some of these changes are now permanent and the Business Case for the Link Road should reflect these changes.

- **Destruction of Green Belt land**

Green Belt land by its very nature is finite and fragile. Once it is gone it has been lost forever. The Business Case should show beyond doubt that the Link Road is needed and viable before it is started and Green Belt is destroyed.

- **Haste**

The consultation appears to be being carried out in haste and at a time that makes it difficult for a meaningful dialogue with key stakeholders. There are many key inputs to the process which are currently being reviewed or updated, including such actions as UoW Masterplan, CCC Local Plan, Solihull Borough Council Local Plan, and ONS examination. These and others should be allowed to be completed before making further decisions regarding the A46 Link Road, to give 'joined up thinking' on the needs and expectations of any new road in the area.

In conclusion, now is the time to take a step back and allow the background reviews and planning to be completed before making further progress on the A46 Link Road and to take the time to make it a truly strategic road with plans to link into the A45. Currently the Link Road is part of a very muddled whole, with very little benefit. Delay any further decision making for twelve months and we will make better decisions, backed by more accurate predictions of what we want and how the world is changing. Past history has shown us that new roads do not remove congestion, as the useage of such roads expands to fill the available capacity within a short time.

Should it be of benefit, I am more than willing to advise the traffic modelling team on the area, as local knowledge seems to be a missing part of the study.

Ian Harrop

9th February 2021