

Sent via email:

Richard Leonard
Head of Network Development
Highways England
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham
B1 1RN

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Dear Stakeholder

Oxford – Cambridge Arc connectivity: road study

When the Government cancelled the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway because it would not be cost effective, it committed to work with England's Economic Heartland (EEH) as the Sub-national Transport Body and Highways England on the need for more targeted road interventions in the area. Highways England have been commissioned to undertake a study that is intended to meet that commitment. This letter sets out the approach we are taking with the study, including how you will have an opportunity to shape it.

There is already a good understanding of the current performance and concerns with the road network in the area, and its role in providing connectivity alongside other transport modes. Key to this is EEH's Transport Strategy for the Heartland published in February 2021, which is an evidence-based strategy agreed by regional partners as the basis for developing the region's transport strategy over the next 30 years. Alongside that, Highways England's work on the cancelled Oxford to Cambridge Expressway project also produced a significant detailed evidence base on the performance of the road network in the area.

Building on this work, the study will look to confirm agreed evidence-led priorities for road investment in the area that could improve network performance where necessary and support growth set out in local plans. In doing so, it will also take into account the Department for Transport's commitment to decarbonise transport¹ and how such aims are being taken forward in the area. Importantly, the study will develop early work to understand possible costs and benefits of potential interventions. This study is a valuable step forward in making the case for future investment in the area, subject to funds being available and further agreement. The study reflects the government's work with partners to ensure that the right infrastructure is provided for those who live and work in the area.

¹ The Department for Transport's Transport Decarbonisation Plan is available here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002285/decarbonising-transport-a-better-greener-britain.pdf

The study is being progressed through the following phased approach:

Scoping study: this work is being undertaken. It will define a range of factors such as the geographical focus, objectives, methodology, and how to most effectively engage with stakeholders during the course of the study. Investing time in considering these factors early is key in ensuring the correct focus of the study and its timely success in driving forward new investment in the region. It is building on pre-study work to comprehensively analyse Highways England's evidence base from its previous work in the area.

Main study: running from August 2021 to spring 2022 the main study will be undertaken working closely with stakeholders, including local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships. We expect engagement workshops with stakeholders will commence during the autumn.

Highways England, along with the Department for Transport and EEH look forward to working with you during the course of the project. We will be in touch to arrange stakeholder workshops in the autumn. If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Leonard', written in a cursive style.

Richard Leonard
Head of Network Strategy and Development, Highways England