

A46 Member Partnership
Warwickshire County Council, 29/01/2020
Minutes of the Meeting

Attendees:

Cllr Mark Cargill (Vice Chair), Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Cllr Jeff Clarke, Warwickshire County Council
Cllr Heather Timms, Warwickshire County Council
Cllr Jill Simpson-Vince, Rugby Borough Council
Cllr Ken Pollock, Worcestershire County Council
Cllr Ozzy O'Shea, Leicestershire County Council
Cllr Amanda Nunn, Harborough District Council
Cllr David Bill MBE, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Philippa Young (PY), Warwickshire County Council
Adrian Hart (AH), Warwickshire County Council
Nicholas Dauncey (ND), Warwickshire County Council
Tristan Hall (TH), Warwickshire County Council
Amanda Lawson-Smith (ALS), Gloucestershire County Council
Annette Roberts (AR), Tewkesbury Borough Council
Shawn Riley (SR), Wychavon District Council
John Seddon (JS), Coventry City Council
Paul Harris (PH), Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Richard Timothy (RT), Highways England
Jeremy Williamson (JW), Cheltenham Borough Council
Mark Palfreyman (MP), Leicestershire County Council
Andy Baker (AB), Worcestershire County Council
Rob Thornhill (RT), Harborough District Council
Tess Nelson (TN), Harborough District Council
Kirstie Rea (KR), Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
Paul Harris (PH), Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Barry Bodin-Jones (BBJ), GFirst LEP
Luke Willetts (LW), Worcestershire LEP
Simon Statham (SS), Midlands Connect
Ian Baxter (IB), SLC Rail

Apologies:

Cllr Adrian Hardman (Chair), Wychavon District Council
Cllr Philip King, Harborough District Council
Cllr Sheila Scott, Blaby District Council
Cat Hartley, Blaby District Council
Dave Barber, Warwick District Council
Robert Weaver, Tewkesbury Borough Council
Mike Warner GFirst LEP
Cllr David Welsh, Coventry City Council
Cllr Vernon Smith Tewkesbury Borough Council

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Item 1 – Introductions and Apologies (Chair)

Cllr Cargill welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked Warwickshire County Council (WCC) for hosting it. Introductions and apologies were as recorded above.

Item 2 – Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising (Chair)

Page 3 - Cllr Bill noted that Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council is totally opposed to the proposed changes to M69 Junction 2 due to their impact on Hinckley and Burbage rather than having expressed 'concerns' as reported in the minutes.

The previous minutes will be corrected to reflect this point before being uploaded onto the A46 Partnership webpage. [**Action: AH/ALS**].

Matters Arising:

Item 2 - AH had written to Oadby and Wigston Borough Council which had accepted the invitation to join the A46 Partnership.

Item 3 – AH had provided ALS with the minutes from the October 2019 meeting for uploading onto the A46 Partnership webpage.

Item 5 – Midlands Connect local funding contributions towards the TMTC – actioned and to be covered on the agenda.

Item 6 – Highways England Update – Neil Hansen had provided a written update which AH circulated this morning and a further update will be provided today.

Item 7 – the development mapping has been actioned and is covered on the agenda.

Item 8 – A46 Action Plan/A46 Corridor Local Plan and SEP Update – actioned.

AH had arranged the presentations for today as discussed at the last meeting.

Item 3 - A46 Stoneleigh (Tristan Hall, Warwickshire County Council)

TH introduced himself as the Project Manager for the A46 Stoneleigh Junction Improvement scheme and gave a presentation which was circulated following the meeting.

Cllr Pollock commented that the projected scheme cost of £38m appeared to be very low. TH replied that WCC had confidence in the construction price as tender prices had been very similar to each other and there is also a reasonable allowance for risk. The cost estimate applies to the whole scheme.

Cllr Pollock referred to the cost of the A46 Binley Improvements which are projected to cost in the order of £50m. AH noted that the estimated scheme costs in the A46 Action Plan for Binley Improvements were £52.5m based on information from Highways England and that Binley is a much more significant scheme than the Stoneleigh Improvements (e.g. more retaining walls, longer slip roads etc.) so it is not necessarily a 'like for like' comparison.

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AH also referred to current volatility in the construction market which is also likely to be having an impact on tender prices.

Cllr Simpson-Vince asked whether HS2 construction will impact on the length of time the Stoneleigh Improvements will take to deliver.

TH replied that this was not expected and that information had been included in the contractors' brief on the likely route of HS2 construction traffic in the area during the works. WCC is working closely with HS2 Ltd and has agreed the traffic management plan. The 18-month construction programme takes into account possible HS2 construction activity in the area.

Cllr Cargill referred to recent experience whereby HS2 had put a stop on other construction once they had started their work and referred to two committed safety improvements on the Fosse Way which if delayed could impact on delivery of Gaydon/Lighthorne Heath (3,500 dwellings) in Stratford-on-Avon District.

TH replied that ideally HS2 Ltd would like WCC to have completed the Stoneleigh Improvements and moved off the site in advance of commencement of their works as the junction is due to accommodate a significant element of HS2 construction traffic. This is dependent on the HS2 construction programme timescales. WCC undertaking works at Stoneleigh in advance of HS2 would also remove the requirement for interim improvements to the A46 junction so there would be a significant cost saving.

SR asked for a breakdown of funding contributions from the various partners. TH outlined these as follows:

- £19.6 million – DfT
- £6.6 million – WMCA
- £10 million – WCC
- £2.1 million - S106

AH noted that the £19.6 million from DfT is Growth Deal Funding retained by DfT because it was such a significant amount. Essentially, the approvals process follows the requirements for a Large Local Major Scheme.

Item 4 - Rail Projects (Ian Baxter, SLC Rail)

IB introduced himself as Director of the North Cotswold Line Task Force (NCLTF). He is also Strategy Director at SLC Rail and was a formerly employed by Chiltern Railways for a number of years.

IB noted that he has been directly involved in delivery of several rail projects in Warwickshire (notably Warwick Parkway, Coleshill Parkway, Stratford-upon Avon

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Parkway and Kenilworth). He gave a presentation on the emerging proposals for the North Cotswold Line, service improvements between Coventry and Leicester/Nottingham, the upgrade of the Birmingham to Bristol Line and the interface of these projects with the Trans-Midlands Trade Corridor.

JW referred to the M5 in Gloucestershire with the railway line running alongside it but noted that only around 2% of the commuters on that corridor use rail. The M5 is under severe pressure from development across parts of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. Access to rail services and unreliability are suppressing demand which needs to be addressed if we are to encourage a shift from car to rail.

IB replied that part of this his team is completing the Gloucestershire Rail Investment Strategy which will highlight the GVA and jobs benefits of better rail connectivity across the County. He noted that Ashchurch for Tewkesbury and Tewkesbury Parkway are conceptually different. There is much debate in Gloucestershire over whether a broader parkway option is required.

IB highlighted that Warwick Parkway opened in 2000 with 350 spaces. By 2012 this had grown to 900 spaces. In contrast, Oxford Parkway opened in 2016 with 850 spaces and was full within a year due to its proximity to the A34 and a large urban population.

Cllr Cargill asked whether in general terms, people tended to be more opposed to road rather than rail schemes.

IB replied that there was generally less opposition to rail infrastructure, but more opposition towards changes to rail services. Rail projects other than HS2 are generally less likely to generate opposition.

Item 5 - Trans-Midlands Trade Corridor Plan (Simon Statham, Midlands Connect)

SS provided an update on the Trans Midlands Trade Corridor (TMTC) initiative. He referred back to Phase 1 of the Midlands Connect A46 Strategic Corridor Study which generated a compelling economic narrative for the corridor. This can lend weight when developing business cases for road and rail investment along the corridor.

Phase 2 of the study had considered the types of interventions required and their sequencing. More work had been required in the Leicester area to identify the appropriate scale and sequencing of interventions. This should be complete by the end of March.

The intention of Midlands Connect is to try and influence national spending across the pan-Midlands area based on an evidence-led approach. It had identified priority locations for investment along the corridor with its Midlands-wide partnership of

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LEPs and local authorities and had developed a strong economic case to justify why Government should invest in the Midlands.

SS explained that Midlands Connect had also tried to influence the RIS2 investment strategy for the A46, A5 and A50/A500 corridors. The RIS2 announcement has been delayed but is probably going to be made around the time of the Budget in March. The most likely schemes for delivery on the A46 during RIS2 will be the RIS1 commitments at Binley and Walsgrave along with improvements to the Newark Bypass.

SS is aware that Highways England has looked at the A46 at Ashchurch, Stratford-upon-Avon and the Hobby Horse junction near Leicester, but there are unlikely to be any further major schemes for the A46 in RIS2. If schemes in these areas are going to be delivered in RIS3 they will need to be developed in RIS2, but there is no certainty that this will happen.

SS remarked that the £25 billion funding pot for RIS2 has to be spread across the whole of the SRN and there are several nationally-significant projects (e.g. Oxford to Cambridge Expressway, Lower Thames Crossing and A303 Stonehenge), and noted that we therefore need a different approach.

The Trans Midlands Trade Corridor (TMTC) initiative is therefore seeking to talk to Government more broadly to identify what investment in the A46 corridor could deliver in terms of economic growth and productivity.

SS announced that a TMTC Steering Group covering the Tewkesbury to Hull section has been established comprising representatives from 2 Local Highway Authorities (Warwickshire and Lincolnshire County Councils), 7 District Councils (1 from each County), 2 LEPs, Highways England, Homes England, Cities and Local Growth Unit and DfT.

SS reported that the Steering Group is working to develop the initial TMTC concept into a stronger proposition and to highlight its potential advantages to local partners and Government. Civil Service colleagues had responded positively to this approach and offered helpful advice. We are now proposing to establish political governance through the A46 Partnership and possibly a similar group in the northern section covering Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and parts of Yorkshire.

An initial document had been produced for civil service colleagues and a summary document for MPs showing why investment should be targeted towards the TMTC and what partners could potentially deliver in return. A funding strategy to support the TMTC Productivity Growth Plan has been developed which will seek a 30% local contribution towards the overall funding ask of £3m (c. £800,000 from 40 organisations).

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If there is no positive announcement on the TMTC Productivity Growth Plan ask in March, we would target the Autumn 2020 Spending Review.

Cllr Cargill thanked SS for summarising the latest position on the TMTC and asked him for a view on whether other funding opportunities outside the RIS2 process were likely to be forthcoming.

SS responded that there was no guarantee more funding would be allocated. However, we would be in a strong position to tell Government that we have a plan outlining where investment should take place along the TMTC and what authorities could deliver in return in terms of promoting new homes and jobs to deliver economic growth and increase productivity.

SS added that Homes England is starting to consider a new round of Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF). There may also be further funding opportunities for 'levelling-up' the UK economy across parts of the Midlands and the North of England.

Cllr Cargill asked whether the TMTC initiative was considering whether 5G can be included. SS replied that he had met a 5G industry representative who indicated there was reticence among infrastructure providers to run it along the highway due to traffic management costs. Therefore local authorities should advise infrastructure providers when highway works are planned so that they can install ducting at the same time and then sell access. This idea can be formally included in the TMTC proposition.

SS reported that Midlands Connect is currently researching whether the TMTC can become an exemplar for rolling out electric charging for private cars and the logistics industry for HGVs. It is also considering an enhanced role for rail connectivity in the corridor.

AH referred to the need for local transport improvements over the 'last mile' to ensure good connectivity into town and city centres.

AB noted that Phase 2 of the A46 Strategic Corridor Study had been delayed and asked for clarification on when it would be completed. SS confirmed that the work was largely complete but that the study recommendations needed to be agreed with colleagues from Leicestershire County Council over the next few weeks.

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Item 6 - Garden Town/Garden Village Update

a. Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC)

AR provided an update on the Tewkesbury Garden Town proposal. The site was designated in March 2019 for just over 10,000 houses and 100 Ha employment land close to M5 Junction 9.

There is currently no planning allocation for the area in the Joint Core Strategy as this had been adopted prior to the Ashchurch Garden Town designation but this is under review.

Masterplanning work is currently focussing on key principles including the need to enable sustainable modes of transport and develop a carbon neutral community. TBC is engaging with Homes England about delivery and the anticipated housing trajectory.

The nearby land at Fiddington near south of the A46 has recently been granted planning permission at appeal for up to 850 houses, a community centre and primary school.

There is also a HIF funding allocation for a bridge over the railway line – the location and design proposals are currently being finalised. There are two public events in March 2020 in the Ashchurch/Northway area where this will be publicised. A planning application for the HIF scheme is expected in Spring 2020 with construction due to commence in 2021.

ALS explained that GCC had been working on a scheme to improve M5 Junction 9 for the last 5-6 years. The Garden Town announcement has increased the need for these improvements to come forward.

A Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for the junction improvements and an A46 bypass was recently submitted to DfT. There is currently no indication on when an announcement from DfT may be forthcoming on the SOBC.

A decision on whether to proceed with work on the Outline Business Case is under consideration but is required to keep on track with the delivery timescales for a Large Local Major Scheme. However, any work undertaken ahead of a DfT decision would be entirely at financial risk to GCC so it may be progressed in small work packages with no commitment to complete.

The OBC will take 18 months to complete and the target date for submission to DfT is September 2021. GCC is working with TBC, Homes England and Highways England on the project.

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b. Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC)

PH referred to Long Marston Airfield (LMA) traffic from which will interact with the A46 corridor – site preparation and decontamination works are due to commence for the initial 400 houses which already have planning permission. SDC is hoping to see the first houses built towards the end of 2020.

The planning application for the remaining 3,100 homes has been submitted which also includes employment, community facilities and open spaces. There is also a planning application for the South Western Relief Road (SWRR). Both applications are complex so are unlikely to be determined before Autumn 2020.

The remaining houses at LMA are dependent on provision of the SWRR which itself is dependent on an £85 million bid for HIF forward funding. An announcement is expected as part of the Budget statement in March.

LMA and other developments in the Core Strategy are expected to make a financial contribution towards improvements at Wildmoor, Bishopton and Marraway Roundabouts on the A46 near Stratford.

Planning permission has recently been granted for a business park to the west of the town near Wildmoor. The developers are providing segregated right turning facilities at the Billesley Crossroads on the A46 between Stratford and Alcester where there are existing congestion and queuing problems.

SDC is planning to undertake a Core Strategy review commencing in Summer 2020 and will engage with adjacent local authorities with a view to developing a more holistic approach to infrastructure provision. Large-scale strategic development may be better than dispersed development options in facilitating strategic infrastructure provision across local authority boundaries, although there would still be challenges.

c. Blaby District Council

AH had circulated a written update provided by colleagues from BDC regarding the Whetstone Pastures Garden Village proposal.

Item 7 - Highways England Update

RT understands there may be a further update on RIS2 in March 2020 although this could change.

Highways England continues to engage with HS2 Ltd on the proposed A46 Stoneleigh Junction Improvements and the nearby construction compound.

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RT noted that there is lobbying across various Highways England patch areas on where future studies should be progressed (small scale schemes and possible RIS3 major projects). RT is seeking to ensure such studies include the A46 (small scale schemes and developer mitigation schemes).

RT provided an update on the following RIS1 schemes:

- **M6 Junction 2-4 Smart Motorways** – works in progress, due for completion in March 2020.
- **M42 Junction 6** – proposed upgrade which will have major impacts on the surrounding area – groundworks due to start in March 2020 – aim for completion by March 2023.
- **A46 Binley** – early works due to start in March 2020 with main works following in Summer 2020 (2 year construction duration).
- **A46 Walsgrave** – currently at design stage with 3 options to undergo traffic modelling.
- **M40/M42 Interchange Smart Motorways** – due to start in March 2020 (enabling works) but may now be delayed until the wider review of Smart Motorways projects has been completed.
- **M42 Junction 3** – scheme complete.

AB asked for an update on **M5 Junction 6 (Worcester North)**. RT noted that there is no further update since the last meeting.

Cllr Bill referred to serious concerns about the A5 where there had been a series of fatalities on the section between Tamworth and Rugby. There is also no progress on the issue of the low railway bridge near Hinckley which is struck approximately once every two weeks by HGVs (highest in the UK).

He also stated that Highways England had not objected to a proposed McDonalds on the A5 near Hinckley which could potentially compromise the potential for future improvements.

AH replied that at the next meeting of the A5 Partnership on 14th February 2020 in Market Harborough there will be a presentation from Highways England on the issue of the recent fatalities and an assessment of the safety record of key junctions. He offered to feedback to Cllr Bill after the meeting as he would not be able to attend in person. **[Action: AH to update Cllr Bill after the A5 Partnership meeting]**

RT indicated that he would ask his colleagues in the East Midlands area to feed into the forthcoming A5 meeting on the issue of planning applications adjacent to the A5 **[Action: RT to request Highways England colleagues provide an update at the A5 Partnership meeting]**.

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Item 8 - Mapping of Housing and Employment Growth (Adrian Hart)

AH reported that a review of the mapping of housing and employment growth data across the Partnership area had been undertaken by the officer group. He referred to initial maps produced in 2018 which showed Local Plan sites of relevance to the A46 corridor.

AH noted that LCC had updated the maps using the latest annual housing data and had included new local plan sites as well as other proposals coming forward outside the planning process (e.g. Hinckley Strategic Railfreight Interchange).

AH displayed plans showing the housing and employment sites in outline and a more detailed picture of what it translates to in terms of significant housing numbers (c. 110,000 dwellings on total). The scale of this growth demonstrates why the work of the A46 Partnership is so critical. The data will be checked to make sure it has been correctly translated onto the plans.

AH asked Cllr Cargill to thank colleagues from LCC for producing the maps and noted that we have committed to update them on an annual basis.

Item 9 - A46 Action Plan/A46 Corridor Local Plan and SEP Update (Adrian Hart)

AH reported that the Action Plan has been updated as a live document to keep members informed of work that the local authorities and Highways England are undertaking across the A46 corridor.

AH noted that there is also a commitment from the seven local authorities across Coventry and Warwickshire to develop a joint single spatial strategy for the sub-region (statutory or non-statutory status to be determined). This would inform future local plan reviews.

Cllr Simpson-Vince noted that there had been a first workshop in November 2019 which had identified the need for joint working across the authorities on evidence preparation and strategic infrastructure planning. The next workshops are due to be held in March and June.

Item 10 - Lobbying and MP Engagement (Adrian Hart)

AH referred to development work being undertaken by Midlands Connect on the TMTIC initiative to engage with MPs along the corridor. It is hoped that 3-4 champions along the corridor can be identified.

Nigel Huddleston MP (North Worcestershire) and Lawrence Robertson MP (Tewkesbury) are involved. Nadhim Zahawi MP (Stratford-on-Avon) and Jeremy

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Wright MP (Kenilworth) had also expressed an interest. MP representation from other parts of the corridor will also be sought.

Item 11 - Media Issues (Chair)

None.

Item 12 - Future Items (Chair)

- a. **A46 Walsgrave** – AH suggested a presentation at either the next meeting or the following one.
- b. **Midlands Connect Strategy Refresh** – the strategy refresh is now underway so a future presentation would be arranged.
- c. **Very Light Rail** – this concept is being progressed by colleagues at Coventry City Council and could be a future presentation

AB requested a detailed review of RIS2 once it has been announced.

Cllr Cargill noted that now there is more certainty on Brexit this may have an impact on investment decisions, which in turn could affect the A46.

JW noted that we should be wary of possible shift away from investment and funding from the Midlands towards the North. AH replied that Midlands Connect is aware of this and the rebalancing away from the South East is being seen as towards the Midlands as well as the North. Ultimately the Midlands is the glue which links the South to the North.

Item 14 - AOB

Cllr Cargill asked for volunteers to host the remaining meetings in 2020/21. Proposed meeting dates in 2020/21 are 3rd June 2020, 7th October 2020 and 27th January 2021, (all 2-4pm).

Cllr Simpson Vince suggested that a meeting could be held in Rugby. JW suggested that if a future meeting was held in at Cheltenham, this would enable members to visit M5 Junction 9 at Ashchurch.

The meeting closed at 4.10pm.