

A46 Corridor Study

Stage One

The case for improving one of the
UK's most important trade routes

November 2018



Midlands Connect
Powering the Midlands Engine

The A46 - one of the UK's most important trade routes

Spanning 155 miles from Gloucestershire to Lincolnshire, the Midlands section of this vital East-West corridor is home to 5.5 million people and almost 3 million workers. Its businesses earn £115 billion a year, that's 9% of the English economy.

Future proofing the A46 is locally, regionally, nationally and internationally important. As well as providing critical connections between communities, homes and jobs; acting as a ring road or bypass for cities like Coventry, Lincoln and Leicester; and helping businesses reach their supply chains and customers; the A46 also provides access to international gateways like Birmingham and East Midlands airports and seaports in Bristol and the Humber.

By bringing forward the A46's first truly holistic strategy, we can enhance and future-proof access to jobs and supply chains, while also providing a resilient alternative to the existing motorway network for business and freight traffic.

Despite its importance, the corridor is not performing as it could. Road-reliant businesses in the automotive, aerospace, advanced manufacturing, textiles and agriculture sectors based along the route are being held back by slow and unreliable journey times. The standard of the road varies along its length, from 70mph motorways and dual carriageways with grade-separated junctions, to narrow village high streets with pedestrian crossings. Even in the more developed sections, pinch points at major junctions result in frustrating levels of congestion.

Uncertainty is stifling investment, increasing business costs and limiting job opportunities. With government keen to stimulate housing development across the country, the network will soon be under more pressure than ever. The A46 is perfectly placed to facilitate the inclusive growth it is currently constraining.

Although steps are being made to upgrade parts of the route, this progress must be accelerated by using a corridor-wide, rather than fragmented approach, which risks simply shifting congestion down the road. Midlands Connect is working alongside businesses, Local Enterprise Partnerships and councils, as well as Highways England to create a 20-year improvement plan for the entire A46 corridor.

Boosting productivity with infrastructure improvement like this is central to the government's Industrial Strategy and will strengthen the economic might of the Midlands, as well as the country as a whole.

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Nigel Huddleston MP
(Mid Worcestershire)

Midlands Connect A46 Champion

“Upgrading the A46 isn't just a Midlands priority, it's a national priority and this initial report will help get it higher up on the national agenda. We will only be successful in promoting the case for this corridor by working together – cross-Midlands, cross-sector, and cross-party. This report clearly states why the A46 is so important and deserves national attention. We need to unleash housing development sites, solve road safety black spots and take heavy traffic out of places it doesn't belong. The next stage of the report being released next year will go into more detail about exactly where work should be focused, what it will entail and how it should be phased”

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155
miles in length



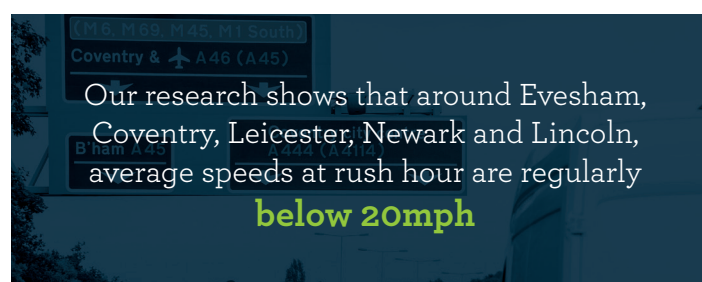
2.9million
jobs



5.5million
people



£115 billion
economic output –
9% of the English economy



A holistic solution

Some great work is already being done to address issues on the A46. Highways England has begun work on the road itself to alleviate a number of pinch points in Coventry and Warwickshire, while behind the scenes, the A46 Partnership – a coalition of Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships along a 70-mile stretch of the route between Gloucestershire and Leicestershire – is working together to address challenges including road safety, poor resilience and community severance.

To build on these efforts, now is the time to look at how specific bottlenecks affect the A46 as a whole. This allows us to put together a programme of strategic upgrades which help the entire corridor, rather than single junctions. Under the current national investment approach, it could take 40 years or more until the road is fit for purpose, meanwhile growth, business development and international trade will all be held back.

In the 15 years from 2015-2030 the economic output of the A46 corridor is forecast to increase by over a third to £153 billion. These forecasts include 400,000 new residents and 146,000 new jobs as the UK economy rebalances away from an over-heating south east corner. However, only a comprehensive, holistic solution to improving the corridor's primary artery, the A46, can support this growth.

Midlands Connect has outlined the strategic case for a co-ordinated package of improvements along the length of the A46. We have analysed the needs of businesses and local populations, as well as future growth aspirations, to understand how a more efficient expressway could support jobs growth, housing development and ultimately improve quality of life. If delivered in full, this programme of activity could establish the A46 as a globally-recognised economic corridor – capable of serving local, regional and long-distance users, while also boosting productivity and inward investment.

The 'economic prize'

Our initial forecasts suggest that over the next 60 years, corridor-wide improvement of the A46 could bring economic benefits of £7.1 billion through quicker journeys, reduced business costs and improved productivity. This is a conservative figure and, when economic growth from new jobs and housing is factored in, the overall benefits could be significantly higher.



£7.1 billion
in economic benefits

By looking all the way along the corridor we can:

- > Improve the movement of people and goods by reducing congestion and enhancing journey time reliability
- > Increase network resilience by providing a viable alternative to the surrounding motorway network, including the M1, M5-M6, and M42 'Birmingham Box'
- > Improve connectivity between the South West and the Midlands, supporting the corridor's manufacturing, logistics and agricultural sectors
- > Assist in unlocking and accelerating numerous strategic housing and employment sites
- > Overcome local challenges like road safety and community severance
- > Offer better, more reliable connectivity between economic centres, including Leicester/Coventry, Derby/Nottingham and Warwick/Leamington Spa to international gateways including East Midlands and Birmingham airports and the ports of Humberside and Bristol.

2015-2030 Corridor-wide growth forecast



146,000
additional jobs



400,000
increase in population



35% increase in economic output to £153 billion

A catalyst for business and industry

The A46 corridor is a hotbed of industry, home to a number of globally-significant sector clusters including battery technology in Warwickshire, Leamington's 'Silicon Spa', food production in Worcestershire and Lincolnshire and world-class manufacturing facilities across the region, including textiles in Leicester and automotive in Coventry.

These businesses are particularly reliant on having access to dependable road networks, as well as connectivity to international markets by air and sea. Over a quarter of all jobs and economic output in the corridor are in sectors dependent on the road network. Consequently, the huge variability in journey times and congestion on the A46 is having a significant negative impact on firms' productivity today, while limiting their ability to grow and attract skilled staff in the future.

Productivity

Addressing regional imbalances in productivity and economic output is a priority for national policymakers. Productivity in the A46 corridor is already above the Midlands' average, however, its potential is so much higher and it still lags well behind averages for areas further south.

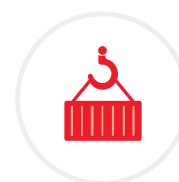
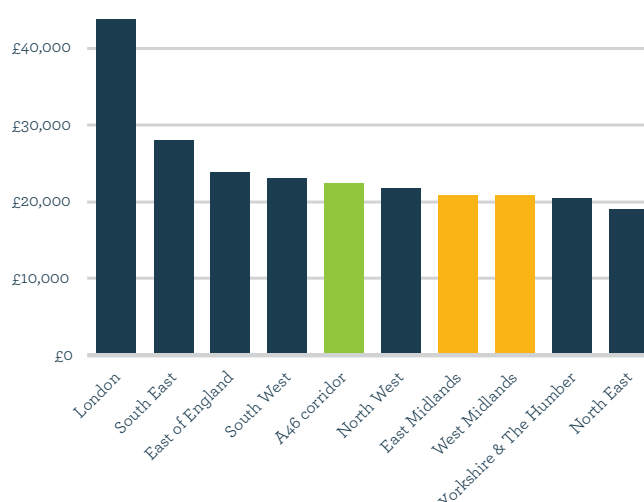
The corridor supports a number of 21st century sectors with high growth potential, such as advanced manufacturing and agri-tech. Combined with the route's ability to open up an underused trading channel between the North East and South West of England, it is clear to see the A46 has an important role to play in redressing regional imbalances and boosting prosperity.

Exports

22% of the goods and services produced by firms along the A46 are sold abroad. The UK average is 15%. For businesses trading internationally, building and maintaining profitable links to suppliers and markets is dependent on high-quality, low-cost, reliable and frictionless connections to export terminals. The A46 corridor passes close by East Midlands Airport, the UK's busiest for dedicated air freight; Birmingham Airport, with its newly extended runway for the world's biggest passenger aircraft; and is book-ended by major international ports in the Bristol Channel and the Humber – including Immingham and Grimsby, the largest port in the UK by tonnage moved.

However, the quality and perception of these international connections must be greatly improved if the economic potential of the A46 business community is to be realised. Congestion and poor network reliability are barriers to trade and deter businesses that rely on just-in-time production processes. Targeted investment within a wider long-term programme will increase business confidence; significantly reducing journey times by resolving key pinch points, particularly between the M5 and M40 and between the M1 and A1 corridors.

GVA/head by region (2015)



22%

of goods and services
are exported



47%

higher export rate
than UK average



16%

of GVA in
manufacturing,
20% in distribution

Improvements backed by business

In spring 2018 we spoke to businesses along the length of the A46. They reinforced the need for urgent improvement of the corridor, voicing frustrations about current road conditions and explaining how they impacted on future growth plans.

Working with Chambers of Commerce in Herefordshire & Worcestershire, Coventry & Warwickshire, the East Midlands and Lincolnshire, Midlands Connect surveyed hundreds of firms located within 10 miles of the A46 - to ask how road conditions, traffic levels and current investment plans were affecting their business.

The consensus was clear – **of the 250 businesses surveyed, 97% said an improved A46 would significantly boost their productivity.**

Managers told us improving the A46 would allow them to create new jobs. They also highlighted the longer-term economic risk to the area of doing nothing, with a significant proportion warning they would consider relocating their operations if conditions worsen.

- > 65% say the improvements would allow them to create new jobs;
- > 75% say the A46 impacts business performance due to unpredictable journey times, hindering their ability to respond to customer and supplier needs and restricting their ability to attract new customers;
- > 71% say traffic and/or road conditions have got worse in the last 5 years; only 20% said conditions had improved;
- > 19% have considered relocating because of traffic and/or road conditions, with a further 29% saying they'd consider it if conditions get any worse.



97%

said an improved A46 would boost their productivity



65%

said the improvements would allow them to create new jobs

The voice of business is clear: improving the A46 will have a positive impact on trading activity and the economy as a whole.

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Paul Butler, Managing Director, Rotec Engineering, Vale Park Evesham:

“We produce small parts for agricultural machinery, Formula One cars, aircraft and trains. The distribution network is extremely important to us; 90% of our business is all around the UK and Europe. However, in the last few years the A46 has become a nightmare. At 4pm on a Thursday or Friday, it's fully congested in both directions, which can add 30 minutes to journeys, and that can be a real issue. Improving the A46 would make a huge difference and could significantly impact on the growth of our business.”

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A safer place to live and work

In places the A46 is dangerous, noisy and cuts communities in half. Particularly where single carriageway sections meet “at-grade” junctions (e.g. roundabouts or traffic lights), the road effectively severs one part of a town from another, with pedestrians and cyclists having to endanger their safety in order to reach schools, shops and other local amenities.

There are a high number of traffic accident ‘blackspots’ along the A46. Often these are found where limited overtaking opportunities on single carriageway stretches result in reckless manoeuvres by frustrated drivers. Even without collisions, congestion significantly impacts wellbeing – queuing traffic creates more pollution than free-flowing vehicles. In addition to poor air quality, frequent congestion limits people’s ability to reliably access employment opportunities. Upgrading the A46 will widen access to jobs, improve road safety, encourage housing development, bring communities closer together and ultimately improve quality of life for everyone along the route.

Access to jobs

Urban networks function more effectively when vehicles and people can flow seamlessly between them. Improved connectivity widens businesses’ labour pools, increasing economic density, and reducing operating costs.

Suboptimal access to skilled labour is an issue across the A46 corridor. In rural Lincolnshire and Worcestershire, poor connectivity makes commuting difficult and attracting labour from other areas is challenging. In high growth locations around Warwick, Coventry, Leicester and Newark, the A46 is becoming increasingly important for everyday life. However, local, trade and commuter traffic is now competing around local centres and busy out of town business parks. As people strike a balance between housing needs and working patterns, A46 users will be commuting further to access jobs and leisure pursuits. The route must be improved to serve the evolving needs of both longer distance traffic and local journeys.

Housing

The UK “housing crisis” is well documented, with local authorities setting ambitious home building targets. The government’s Housing White Paper, ‘keys to unlocking development’ sets out the relationship between addressing the country’s housing shortage and investing in infrastructure. Without improvements to transport links, planned housing growth will either push the system to breaking point or prove impossible to implement.

Improving the A46 is essential in providing capacity for a growing population.

The Office for National Statistics predicts the population of the A46 corridor will grow by 600,000 (over 10%) between 2018 and 2041. This level of growth is above the English average, and higher than any other region outside of the south of England. Such an increase would require an additional 250,000 homes to be built over the next two decades, more than 10,000 every year.

Improving the A46 is essential in providing capacity for a growing population. New housing development is expected to be most intense in the central section of the A46 corridor. Warwick, Coventry, Rugby, Nuneaton and Leicester all have several large housing developments either being built or going through the various stages of planning. It is an issue at either end of the corridor too, with significant housing growth also planned in Evesham, Newark, Scunthorpe and around Lincoln.



Upgrading the A46 will widen access to jobs, improve road safety, encourage housing development, bring communities closer together and ultimately improve quality of life for everyone along the route.

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Sir Peter Soulsby, Leicester City Mayor and Chair of Transport for the East Midlands:

“The A46 is locally, regionally and nationally significant. Improvements to the road will serve a vital local purpose, freeing up land to develop badly needed housing. Businesses along the corridor are crying out for us to help them to move freely right along the A46; it’s essential to them and the nation that it becomes a reliable link across the centre of the country. We have at last got ourselves joined up. Now the government must help us join up the Midlands, and join us to the rest of the nation.”

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Next steps

Highways England and local councils are responsible for a number of improvement works already proposed for development on specific sections of the A46.

Improvement works scheduled for development	
Scheme	Status
Stanks Interchange improvements	Scheduled for delivery in 2018
Stoneleigh Junction improvements	Scheduled for delivery in 2019
Coventry Eastern Bypass package (Binley and Walsgrave)	Scheduled for delivery by 2025
A5 Dodswell – Longshoot widening	Scheduled for delivery by 2025
Lincoln Eastern Bypass	Delivered by Spring 2020

Although the upgrades detailed in the table above are welcome, the evidence gathered by Midlands Connect clearly highlights the merits of devising a corridor-wide improvement scheme for the A46. Accelerating works is essential to supporting business growth, encouraging inward investment and enabling housing development.

The next stage of our corridor study will evaluate the merits of potential improvement schemes across the length of the route, creating a sequential programme of activity that delivers maximum benefit and value for money. While we have identified a number of practical options for investigation, grouped by geographical location, this list is by no means exhaustive. Further interventions may be discovered in the next stage of development while the benefits of some schemes may not appear to outweigh the costs, in which case they will be dropped from consideration.

The next phase of our A46 corridor study will be released in 2019. This will go into more detail about exactly where work should be focused, what it will entail and how it should be phased. In undertaking this next stage of development, Midlands Connect expects to gain support from the DfT for allocating Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) funds to our A46 priorities. In the meantime, we will continue to work closely with Highways England and the relevant local highway authorities to deliver a corridor approach to upgrading the A46, which meets the needs of all users, speeds up journey times, makes trips more reliable and improves safety.

All of Midlands Connect's road programmes, including the A46, aim to future-proof our region's road network for the next century, making it fit to support new and emerging technology and innovation, including Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs), electric vehicles (EVs) and the associated physical and digital infrastructure.



If you're passionate about the Midlands and the future of our transport infrastructure, you have the power to support this project and make the Midlands the innovative and productive region Britain needs it to be. As we forge our new position in the world, now is the time to join the Midlands Connect journey and make our vision for economic growth, prosperity and social mobility a reality.

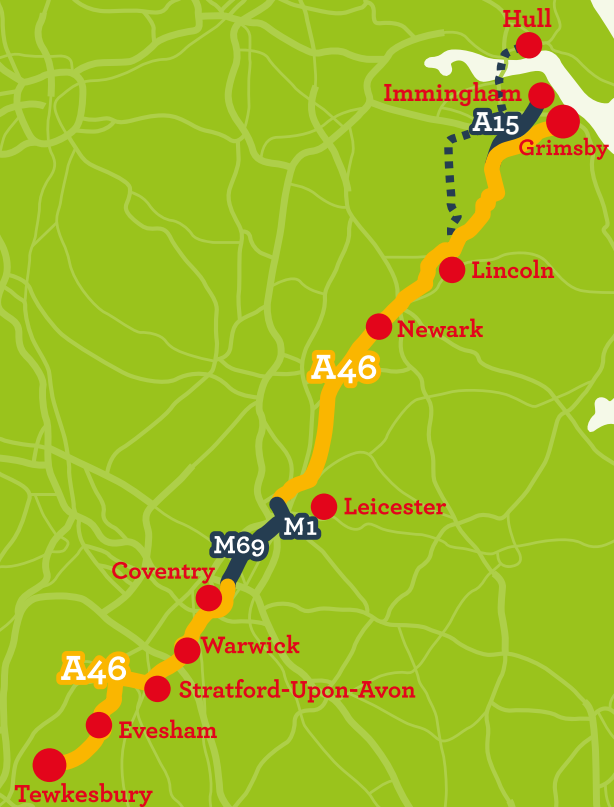
Sign up to our pledge list at www.midlandsconnect.uk

Engage with us on twitter @midsconnect

Further improvement schemes to be investigated in Stage Two



our final proposal could add £7.1bn to the UK economy



Gloucestershire and Worcestershire

- Possible interventions and options for bypass in Ashchurch, Beckford and Evesham

Leicestershire

- Potential for Leicester southern/eastern bypass
- M1 Smart Motorway
- Upgrading Leicester Western Bypass
- Improving Hobby Horse interchange at Syston.

Lincolnshire

- Potential for southern Lincoln bypass, connecting to the under construction eastern bypass
- Targeted improvements on the A15 north of Lincoln
- Junction improvements between the A1 and Lincoln to provide grade separation

Newark area

- Overcoming congestion hotspots to lock in benefits of previous upgrades
- Cement effective link between M1 and A1
- Support for acceleration of Newark Bypass proposal

Coventry and Warwickshire

- Evolution of scheme progress in the sections to the south and north of Coventry
- Alcester to Warwick Expressway
- Possible interventions in near Stratford-upon-Avon
- Junction improvements at Thickthorn, Stivichall and M6 J2

Midlands Connect Roads Programme



About Midlands Connect

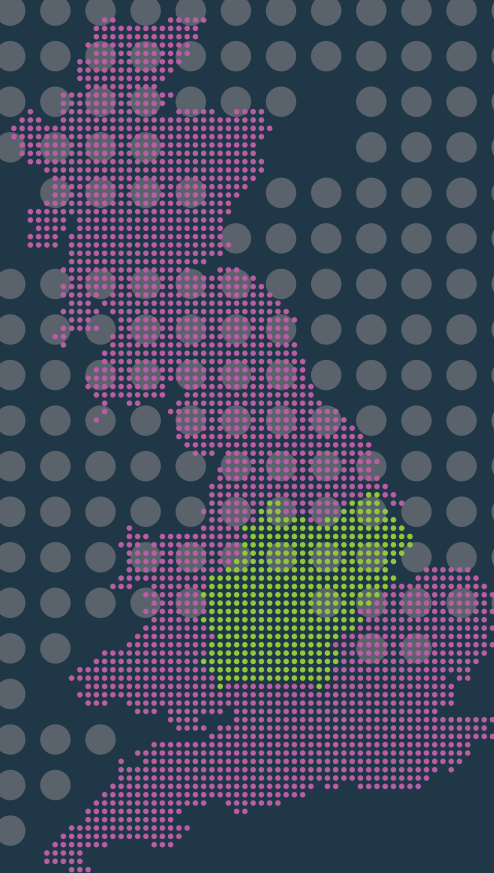
Midlands Connect explores, develops and recommends major transport projects which provide the biggest possible economic and social benefits for the Midlands and the rest of the UK. These initiatives will create more capacity for passengers and freight on the Midlands' roads and railways.

As the transport arm of the Midlands Engine, we work with local authorities, LEPs and Chambers of Commerce, as well as Highways England, Network Rail, HS2 and the Midlands' two international airports, to ensure national transport projects benefit the Midlands and Midlands projects benefit the nation.



Midlands Connect
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- Immingham
- Grimsby
- Chesterfield
- Lincoln
- Mansfield
- Skegness
- Matlock
- Newark-On-Trent
- Stoke-On-Trent
- Nottingham
- Derby
- Grantham
- Stafford
- Burton upon Trent
- Loughborough
- Shrewsbury
- Telford
- Lichfield
- Oakham
- Wolverhampton
- Walsall
- Tamworth
- Leicester
- Birmingham
- Nuneaton
- Ludlow
- Kidderminster
- Solihull
- Coventry
- Redditch
- Warwick
- Worcester
- Stratford-Upon-Avon
- Hereford
- Ross-On-Wye

**MIDLANDS
ENGINE**



Midlands Connect
Powering the Midlands Engine

Midlands Connect

16 Summer Lane, Birmingham, B19 3SD

MCAdmin@midlandsconnect.uk 
www.midlandsconnect.uk 
@MidsConnect 