

Suffolk County Council news release:

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County Council announces timescale to progress the Ipswich Northern Route project

Today the Leader of Suffolk County Council, Matthew Hicks has outlined the timescale for the next steps in producing the Strategic Outline Business Case which will examine and ultimately clarify the feasibility of an Ipswich northern route.

Discussions about an Ipswich northern route have been well documented over the years. This announcement confirms the county council's commitment to explore these formally with a public consultation which will inform the Strategic Outline Business Case to be put to government and published later in the year.

Today the council released for the first time its timescale for moving the project forward.

Timescale:

- The stage one study and report into possible highways options was completed in 2017
- The options assessment and development commissioned in May 2018 is currently being evaluated and prepared for shortlisting, prior to consultation.
- Public consultation on the route details, alignment options and junction options with the A14 and A12 - to begin in the Summer 2019
- Completion of the Strategic Outline Business Case to be shared with government, local MPs and the public - Autumn 2019.

The options assessment, that forms a key part of the Strategic Outline Business Case, is required to look at all other viable transport and traffic mitigation options. This will confirm whether the road alignments published in 2017 are indeed the best solution for the county. After carefully considering the assessment and developing these options further, the next stage is public consultation to begin in summer 2019.

The initial study, options assessment and the results of the public consultation inform the Strategic Outline Business Case, which will provide clarity on the feasibility of the project and

will determine whether the project can proceed to the next stage. That will be shared publicly for consideration in the Autumn of 2019.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

“A project of this scale can only proceed by ensuring all partners are fully committed to each stage. Today, all councils have agreed the next steps for the creation of the business case.

“The public consultation will start in Summer 2019 to allow everyone to have their say and help assess the feasibility of taking this project forward to government and then onto the next stage.

“This realistic timeline clearly shows the level of commitment from across Suffolk to take this to the next step, with a public consultation to allow the strategic outline business case to inform the decision-making process.

“I’m committed to keeping residents and businesses informed as we progress through the next steps.”

Suffolk County Council has been working with District and Borough Councils to develop the project and will continue to do so in the future.

Councillor Nick Gowrley, Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council, said:

“The traffic problems that are created when the Orwell Bridge is closed are well known. Something must be done, both for Suffolk and the UK which relies so heavily on the movement of goods through Felixstowe.

“I welcome the fact that the timetable that will be followed has been confirmed. Residents and businesses must have the opportunity to have their say and then certainty over what will happen, and when. They now have that.”

Councillor Ray Herring, Leader of Suffolk Coastal District Council, said:

“We welcome the publication of the timetable and the upcoming public consultation which will allow communities in east Suffolk to have their say on the possible routes. The Ipswich northern bypass will benefit many businesses in east Suffolk, particularly those along the A12 and those associated with the Port of Felixstowe. However, these benefits need to be balanced against the concerns of the communities that might be affected by any new route.”

Councillor David Ellesmere, Leader of Ipswich Borough Council, said:

“A Northern Bypass is a priority infrastructure project for Ipswich. This is a major and complex scheme which will require many partners to work together to bring it about. We all know this is a long-term project, so it is really important that we move forward as quickly as possible. I am pleased that we now have a timetable for the way forward which all the councils in Suffolk support.”

Councillor John Ward, Leader of Babergh District Council, said:

“Building an Ipswich northern route would represent a significant improvement to Suffolk’s road network, improving travel times, reducing congestion and benefiting our economy.

“There is still a long way to go before we know exactly what any final scheme will look like, but I welcome this timeline and plan for public consultation as confirmation of the steps ahead.”

Councillor Mark Bee, Leader of Waveney District Council, said:

“It is important that local people are able to have their say on the proposed Ipswich northern route and the possible routes it might take. We know that there is appetite for its construction, however we also understand that local communities which may be affected must be allowed to fully engage in the process and the publication of the timetable is the beginning of that process.”

Cllrs James Waters and John Griffiths, Leaders of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury respectively, said:

“One of the priorities of the new West Suffolk Council will be to further improve the prosperity of our area and supporting our businesses and communities. Helping people, goods and data move around our area is a part of this work. We welcome the news that Suffolk County Council is progressing the Ipswich northern route which will also benefit businesses and communities in West Suffolk. This is in addition to our lobbying, with partners, for upgrades to the A14 and rail links.”

For more information visit our website: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/transport-planning/consultations-and-studies/>

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Background to the project

Work first began in 2016 with a study which was funded in partnership with the Suffolk district and borough councils. It formed part of the county council's commitment to short, medium and long term plans to improve transport in the wider Ipswich area to address congestion and accommodate future planned growth in and around the town.

From this study a progress report was produced that identified highways options for consideration in the next stage of the Strategic Outline Business Case. This included:

- Single and dual carriageway roads
- Full relief road primarily to serve local traffic demand
- Partial relief roads to connect areas of potential development to the main road network
- Local distributor roads to spread traffic across the network.

Three initial route corridors were identified for a potential link between the A14 and the A12:

- An inner corridor from Claydon to Martlesham
- A middle corridor from Claydon to Woodbridge
- An outer corridor from Needham Market to Melton.

Following the results of the 2017 report, Suffolk County Council, working together with Ipswich Borough Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council, put together a bid to Suffolk Public Sector Leaders to progress the overall Strategic Outline Business Case. The next stage of this being the options assessment. A sum of £550,000 was agreed to create the business case and the council set about commissioning the options assessment from an external contractor in May 2018.

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