

**Response to first Consultation on M5 J10 Improvements Scheme**

From Save the Countryside

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**Introduction**

Save the Countryside is a campaign group formed over 12 years ago, by residents from the parishes of Swindon Village, Uckington and Elmstone Hardwicke, in North West area of Cheltenham, situated both in Tewkesbury Constituency and in a CheltenhamBorough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Ward’s. Over these many years we have interacted with the consultation process for the Joint Core Strategy of Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and Gloucester.

 This has involved giving evidence both verbally and written to the JCS teams, in respect of the Strategic Allocation, known as North West Cheltenham, and subsequently to the Inspector’s Inquiry.

 We had many concerns about the potential affects on our communities with the adoption of the Strategic Allocation A5, especially covering environment issues, such as air quality, noise, odours, affects on health, and flooding. We have raised many concerns about the affect on the transport issues in this area of Cheltenham. The JCS was adopted in December 2017.

Cheltenham has so many serious transport issues which so far have not been addressed in any way. We believe that this scheme can address these issues. These issues were to be addressed via the adopted JCS in relation to the policies on Health and Environmental Quality, SD14,Transport, INF1,A4 North West Cheltenham, Strategic Allocation.

Our team welcome the objectives and the improvements that this scheme will bring, but we are concerned that from the detail provided, it will not actually meet all the stated objectives as listed in the consultation documents, specifically “to provide a more integrated transport network by enabling opportunities to switch to more sustainable transport modes”. The key concern areas are listed below.

1. At present there is no connectivity or any ring roads to travel across Cheltenham in either a north/ south direction or in an east/west direction.
2. There is severe congestion, and pinch points on the Strategic Networks through the town, especially along the A4109, which results in serious noise and air pollution. This has been monitored and recorded during the JCS process.
3. There have already been large new developments built at Bishops Cleeve, with two even bigger developments planned at North West Cheltenham, and West Cheltenham, approximately over 6000 new homes and employment and ancillary services on this side of Cheltenham, as well as new developments on the west side of Tewkesbury.
4. This has resulted in 'rat runs' along Old Gloucester Road, B4634, Withybridge Lane, Boddington Lane, Stoke Orchard Lane to Bishops Cleeve, and the A38 at Coombe Hill, Hyde Road, Kingsditch Trading Estate, Gallager Retail Park and through Swindon Village itself. These are all being used as 'Relief Roads' for local residents moving from their homes to their places of work.

**Comments on the Options Consultation, M5 Junction 10, Improvement scheme.**

We are concerned with the lack of community engagement for this consultation.
After checking with residents in the parishes we find that there was no advertising of the consultation, by either postal correspondence to each residence, and public advertisements especially on village notice boards, in the surrounds of the proposed schemes.

We hope that a more interactive consultation will occur at the next phase as had been arranged for the Highways England consultation (at the same time) for the A4117 Missing Link

We wish to share our comments in line with the Consultation scheme objectives listed below:

***a. To provide network capacity*
*b. To provide a transport network, with accessibility and safety***

**Western Relief Road**The proposed Western Link Road, does not provide a free-flowing network, as it only goes from a roundabout to another roundabout. This should include the dualling of the B4634.

This road encourages traffic to go towards West Cheltenham, but does not provide any connectivity with the large North-West Cheltenham Strategic Allocation, named Elms Park in the Planning application 16/02000/OUT for over 4500 homes and ancillary services, plus the additional new developments and associated traffic at Bishops Cleeve.

We would like to understand the project team’s rationale for establishing a new corridor through the green belt land for the proposed Western link road as opposed to upgrading the existing parallel road from Withybridge Lane.

**Upgrade of the Stoke Road / Main Road corridor**

It is vital that plans are put into place for the upgrade of the Stoke Road / Main Road corridor as a link from the M5 Junction 10 to Bishops Cleeve corridor via Swindon Parish.

The current corridor, via Swindon Parish, experiences significant and growing congestion during peak times due to several pinch points that include:

* Swindon Lane (railway level crossing)
* Swindon Road (a single lane bridge across the railway line)
* Hyde Lane (height restricted railway bridge).
* congestion from traffic visiting the popular retail parks in the area on the A4019, Wymans lane, Manor road used as the through route to Bishops Cleeve.

This was clearly identified as part of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Transport Strategy 2016,

With the increased level of traffic, the new scheme would generate from Bishops Cleeve and Northern Cheltenham we would expect this existing corridor to become much busier and even more heavily congested.

In the JCS Sustainability Appraisals 2011, it was stated that the two developments of North West, and West Cheltenham should not be brought forward until the Western Relief Road, linking Bishops Cleeve through to the west of Cheltenham was built. This was accompanied by costings of the road going over the main railway line.

In 2016 the JCS Transport Strategy, listed that there would be a new dual carriageway linking the A40 to the A4019, and a new link road from the A4019 to Hyde Lane, with an upgrade of the A435 Evesham Road, and the junctions on Hyde Lane

The Atkins transport mitigation survey JCS  EXAM DOC 84 10/07/15 summary report listed a strategy to minimise the transport impacts of the Strategic Allocation NW Cheltenham Site A 5.
This includes measures to restrict rat runs along the Stoke Road, minor road off A38, (Odessa Pub), Village Road, Old Gloucester Road and a 600 space Uckington P&R, access off the A4019

***c. To provide greater connectivity between the Strategic Road Network and the transport network***

The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Transport Strategy 2016, and the Elms Park outline planning application (16/02000/OUT) clearly stated that a 600 space Park and Ride located adjacent to Junction 10, was required to minimise the traffic impacts of the Elms Park development on the local area by encouraging sustainable transport and modal shift, for journey’s into / out of Cheltenham from Junction 10.

Without the Park and Ride, the proposed scheme will not be able to support the connectivity and future growth of West and North Cheltenham.

A Park and Ride must be included in the wider strategy for the area, and the proposed junction 10 scheme to help reduce traffic from the M5 to Cheltenham, West Cheltenham Cyberpark and Bishops Cleeve

***d. to provide a more integrated transport network buy enabling opportunities to switch to more sustainable transport modes -***

To ensure that this objective is met, the scheme should include:

1. **A Park and Ride close** to the junction, accessed from the hub, onto the land already designated as Safeguarded for Development.
2. **A continuous dedicated and segregated cycle path** from the West Cheltenham Cyber Park, along the new link road, to the proposed cycle path north of the A4019, allowing pedestrian and cyclist direct access between these two major developments.
3. **Continuation of the cycle path across Junction 10 to Coombs Hill** (defined in the JCS as a service village) providing access to:
	1. Tewkesbury (via the A38),
	2. Stoke Orchard and Bishops Cleeve via Stoke Road,
	3. Twigworth & Norton via the A38 (that include significant new housing developments).
4. **Road improvements to enable a safe cycling route along Stoke Road to Bishop Cleeve**.
5. **Retention / amendment of local footpaths and bridleways.**
The local area includes several bridleways and footpaths that cross the A4019 at various locations. These are very well frequented by local residents and walkers / horse riders from the wider community.

***e. Deliver a package of measures which is in keeping with the local environment and minimises any adverse environmental impacts*.**

The local area around the existing junction is already prone to normal and abnormal pluvial and fluvial flooding. The proposed Western Relief Road, and alterations to the A4019 across the flood plain will add to this potential flooding. So, we look forward to working collaboratively and having visibility of the work during the next stage of consultation

The area along the A4019 from Cheltenham, has been identified as an area of noise, and air pollution. Junction 10/Withybridge Gardens has been monitored for air quality by TBC Environment Department for many years, and their records are readily available,

**Proposed Option**

The three options are very similar in various ways with major impacts on the existing communities and residents especially in relation to the environment, air and noise quality and flooding issues, pedestrian and cyclist access. These will need to be addressed further when the scheme is selected.

It would suggest that Option 2A or 2B may be the best options.

It is clear that anyone whose home is in the vicinity to Junction 10, and the proposed improvements will be intolerable so we expect that the appropriate measures will be taken for those residents.

**SCHEME ELEMENT 2 Coombe Hill Junction**

As *Coombe Hill* has been designated a Service Village in the JCS, and there is already several small industrial developments in the locality, as well as a planning application for housing development at the traffic lights, it is unclear if the proposed alterations will be suitable to accommodate the extra traffic usage. Especially as those residents living in the new developments to the West of Tewkesbury will find it easier to travel along the A38, to access the Motorway at Junction 10.

The junction should incorporate pedestrian and cycle ways running along the whole of the A4019, to encourage sustainable means of transport, for the proposed new developments.

**SCHEME ELEMENT 3 A4019 Widening**

The whole of the A4109 should be dualled to allow for the free flowing of local traffic. This should both pedestrian and cycle ways for its length.

A new junction created at the Main Road / Stoke Road (Old Spot Pub) to allow for safe access onto the road, and also to the Boddington Road.

There must be consistent pedestrian footpaths and safe road crossings for pedestrians installed.

The A4019 has already been designated a black spot in the JCS Traffic Assessments, for Air and Noise quality. By dualling the road and increasing the traffic flow, this will unfortunately have an adverse affect on the residents so mitigation measures should be taken

Alterations to the road can be done to the south side where the Council already owns the fields rather than on the north side at Uckington with great impact on the lives of residents and their properties.