

A14 Haughley New Street to Stowmarket Improvement - Preferred Route

Background

The A14 Trunk Road is a route of national strategic importance, which connects the east coast ports of Felixstowe and Harwich with the Midlands and the North.

The majority of the A14 is of a satisfactory modern standard, one of the few exceptions being the length between Haughley New Street and Stowmarket.

The Highways Agency proposes to improve this stretch by straightening the road and providing a new two-level junction.

The most important reasons for improving the road are:

(i) The present daily traffic on this section of road is 38,000 vehicles per day, with up to 20% of these being heavy goods vehicles. Traffic is expected to grow substantially resulting in an increase in congestion, driver stress and accident rate.

(ii) The recorded accident rate along this stretch of road is substantially higher than the national average.

(iii) The alignment and junctions along this section of the A14 do not comply with current standards, especially at Haughley Bends. This has led to an increasing number of accidents over recent years.

Public Consultation

The official public consultation period was from the 28 January 2003 to 12 May 2003, with an exhibition held on the 14 and 15 February 2003.

The leaflet and questionnaire were delivered to approximately 4500 residential properties within the immediate vicinity of the scheme on the 28 January 2003. The leaflet was delivered to areas that were likely to be affected by the proposals, i.e. those in close proximity to the scheme.

Copies of the leaflet and questionnaire were also deposited at local council offices, shops and libraries.

Scheme Proposals

The Highways Agency has carried out a study into options for improving this section of the A14. The objective of the scheme is to upgrade the standard of approximately 4km of the existing road to improve safety and reduce accidents. Safety for all road users will be improved by re-building the road, and closing private vehicular accesses to the A14. All gaps in the central reserve would also be closed. Local access to the A14 would be via a new two-level junction.

Options presented at Public Consultation

The two options promoted by the Highways Agency (HA) at the Public Consultation stage were the Red (on line) Scheme and the Blue (off line) Scheme.

These were the only two, of the five options considered at this stage with positive economic benefits.

The Red Scheme involved the realignment of the eastbound and westbound carriageways using the approximate line of the existing westbound carriageway of the A14 to achieve a design speed of 70 mph both horizontally and vertically, and closure of all the existing at-grade accesses. A full access junction was proposed just to the north of Fishponds Way. The on-off limited access junction at Stowmarket would be maintained.

The Blue Scheme proposed the realignment of the eastbound and westbound carriageways south of the existing A14 to dual carriageway standard and closure of all the existing at-grade accesses. A full access junction would be provided just to the north of Fishponds Way. The on-off limited access junction at Stowmarket would be maintained.

Responses

A total of 600 questionnaires, letters and e-mails were received from members of the public and also from Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Stowmarket Town Council, Haughley Parish Council, Great Finborough Parish Council, English Nature, English Heritage, the Environment Agency, the Countryside Agency, local councillors and other organisations.

The returned questionnaires represented approximately 15% of those delivered.

The total attendance at the Public Exhibition over the two days was in excess of 700.

Responses from the Public

Responses received indicated a close split between the two options with 36.2% in favour of the Red route and 36.4% in favour of the Blue route. The most requested improvements to proposals set out in the questionnaire were a junction closer to Stowmarket (32%) and a local link road between Haughley and Stowmarket, with cycle lane and pedestrian facilities (10%).

Comments from other bodies included the following:

Suffolk County Council - supported the principal of the scheme but preferred the junction closer to Stowmarket. The Council's Cycling Officer pressed for provision to be made for cyclists in the scheme proposals.

Mid Suffolk District Council - preferred the junction to be located nearer to Stowmarket.

District Councillor for Onehouse, Harleston & Great Finborough - preferred the junction closer to Stowmarket.

Haughley Parish Council – preferred a southern off-line route with the junction near Stowmarket.

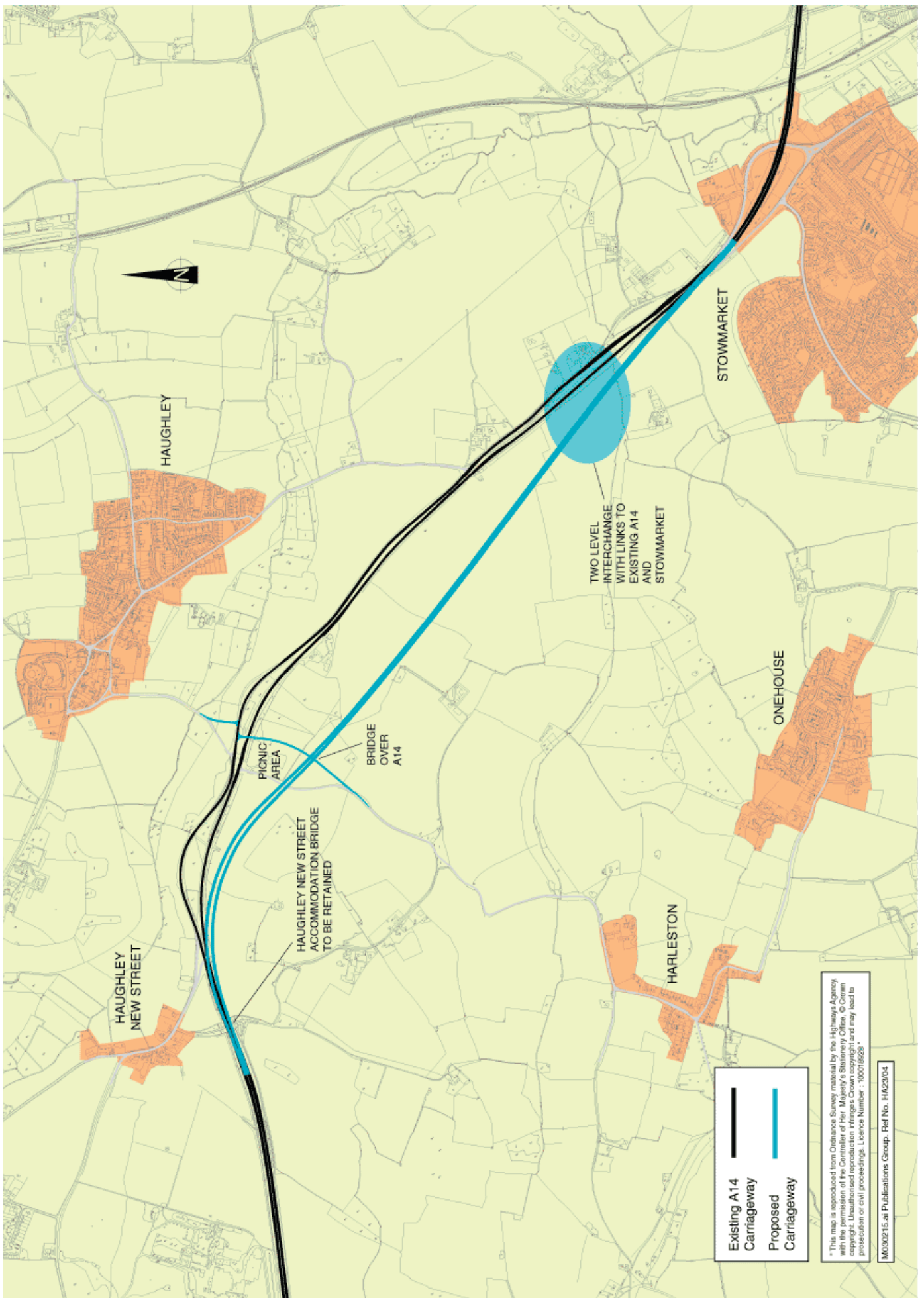
Great Finborough Parish Council – would like a junction closer to Stowmarket.

Stowmarket Town Council – preferred an online route with a junction nearer Stowmarket

English Heritage – had no preference, but require a field evaluation after route selection.

Environment Agency – had no preference provided that EA guidelines are followed.

English Nature – preferred the red route but did not object to either.



Special considerations

Suffolk County Council and Mid Suffolk District Council have been working closely with the Highways Agency to obtain a proposal which satisfies the whole community.

The HA has taken into account the strength of feeling from all parties on the issue of the junction location. Further traffic surveys have been carried out and modifications made to the designs in order to optimise the economics of the online and offline proposals with a junction nearer Stowmarket. Of these two options the offline scheme (shown blue) has considerably better economics than the online.

Decision of the Secretary of State

The Secretary of State for Transport has considered the views expressed and noted the high level of support for an option with a junction nearer to Stowmarket. He agrees that the option shown on the plan overleaf should be the Preferred Route for the A14 Haughley New Street to Stowmarket Improvement.

What happens next?

The option described above will be designated as the "Preferred Route" for the A14 Haughley New Street to Stowmarket Improvement and will be protected from development. The route will be developed further before the publication of draft Statutory Orders, under the Highways Act 1980 and the Land Compensation Act 1973, and an Environmental Statement will be prepared.

At that stage there will be further opportunity for people to comment or object. A Public Inquiry before an independent Inspector could follow, depending on the nature and weight of any objections.

All elements of the scheme will be reviewed as the proposals are developed in more detail. Copies of a scheme plan will be issued to Local Planning Authorities for planning purposes.

Got a question or comment?

08457 50 40 30*
(Highways Agency Information Line)

email: ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk

24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Live traffic information

08700 660 115*
www.highways.gov.uk

24 hours a day, 365 days a year

*Calls from BT landlines to 0845 numbers will cost no more than 4p per minute and to 0870 numbers no more than 8p per minute, mobile calls usually cost more.

Safe driving at roadworks



During 2005, five workers were killed and 12 seriously injured in the course of their work on Highways Agency roads. This was the worst year since 1999.

For the safety of all road users and roadworkers, drivers approaching roadworks are advised to:

- Keep within the speed limit – it is there for your safety.
- Get into the correct lane in good time – don't keep switching.
- Concentrate on the road ahead, not the roadworks.
- Be alert for works' traffic leaving or entering roadworks.
- Keep a safe distance – there could be queues in front.
- Observe all signs – they are there to help you.

Remember that tiredness can kill. Take regular breaks from driving.

For wider motoring advice visit DirectGov

www.direct.gov.uk/topics/motoringandtransport

Directgov
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THINK

Switch off before
you drive off