

A5 - M1 Link Dunstable Northern Bypass Preferred Route Announcement

Introduction

A Public Consultation on the proposal to construct a two-lane dual carriageway running east from the A5 north of Dunstable to join the M1 at a new Junction 11a south of Chalton was held between September and December 2005. This leaflet summarises the results of the Public Consultation and presents the "Preferred Route" announced by the Secretary of State for Transport.

Why improvements are needed

The A5-M1 Link aims to make journey times more reliable for long distance traffic, including heavy goods vehicles, transferring from the A5 and A505 routes through Dunstable onto the new road. It also aims to reduce traffic travelling to junctions 9, 11 and 12 from the local road network.

Choice of route

We presented both a Southern Route option of approximately 4.3km (2.7 miles) and a Northern Route option of approximately 4.6km (2.9 miles). Also presented were options for connections to the new road from the A5120 between Houghton Regis and Toddington, and from the B579 Luton Road and Sundon Road at the proposed M1 Junction 11a.

Public Consultation

The Public Consultation leaflet was distributed to approximately 5000 residential and business properties. A further 350 were deposited at local council offices, town councils and libraries. Details were also published on our website.

Public Consultation Exhibitions were held at:

Kingsland College on 9th September 2005

Toddington Village Hall on 10th September 2005

Dunstable Leisure Centre on 16th & 17th September 2005

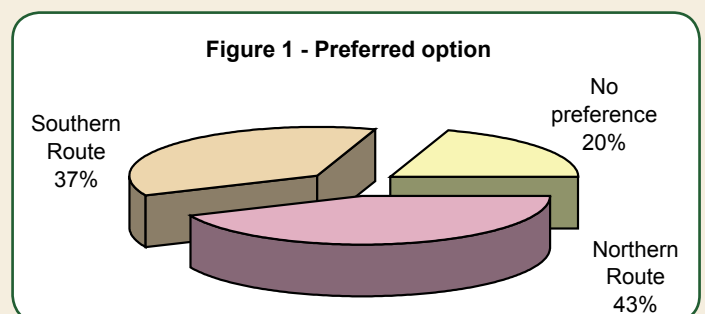
The official consultation period ended on 2nd December 2005.

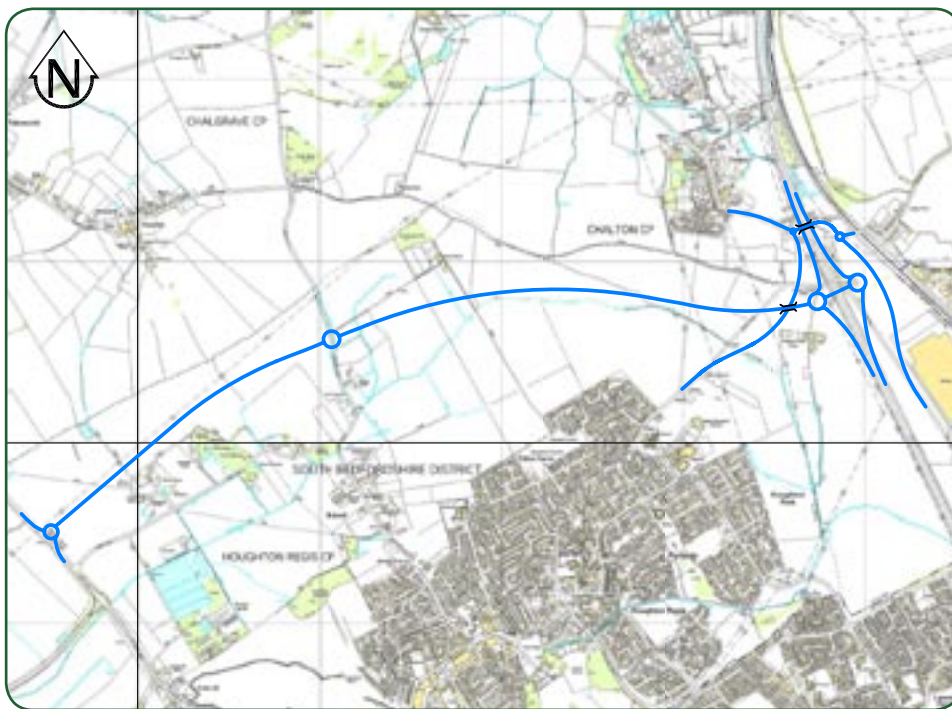
Responses to Public Consultation

There were 1259 visitors to the public exhibitions and 173 written comments made. Of the 958 completed questionnaires received, the majority (91%) expressed that the existing through traffic in Dunstable needs an alternative route. 43% preferred the Northern Route, while 37% opted for the Southern Route (see figure 1).

Comments from the General Public

The public recognised the need for the scheme and generally supported the proposals. A number of issues arose from the Public Consultation, traffic queues, congestion and unreliable journey times on the A5 at Dunstable. The public were also concerned about noise and air quality, impact on the Green Belt and local amenities, and traffic problems in the local area. The trunk road status of the A5 and potential housing development to the north of Houghton Regis were also raised.





Comments from local councils and other bodies

As part of the consultation, reports on the proposals were forwarded to local authorities, key stakeholders, local emergency services, parish councils and other user groups. Responses from the general public were positive, however a number of issues were raised which we will consider during the detailed design of the project.

Views of the Highways Agency

The views expressed at the Public Consultation showed local support for the A5-M1 Link. Having carefully considered the information collected, we recommend that the proposals indicated in this leaflet and at the Public Consultation are developed for construction (subject to statutory processes and funding). Due to the Regional Funding Allocation the scheme is now not expected to start construction work until 2013/14 with the road open to traffic in 2015/16.

Decision of the Secretary of State

The Secretary of State for Transport has considered the views of those who responded to the consultation and our recommendations. He agrees with the proposals shown and announces this as the Preferred Route.

The Preferred Route

We aim to take forward the Northern Route with an at grade roundabout junction at the A5120, but

with no connections to the local roads at Junction 11a. The Link Road will connect to the A5 just to the north of the existing A5/A505 roundabout junction. There will be no repositioning of the A505, which is a variation from that shown at the Public Consultation.

The Environment

We will create earth mounds and landscape the area to help mitigate the impacts of the scheme, and reduce traffic noise.

The Rights of Way network will be maintained, with several crossing points provided, although some diversions will be necessary.

What Happens Next?

The route shown in this leaflet is now designated the Preferred Route and is protected from development.

We have appointed Costain Carillion Joint Venture and their design agents Scott Wilson to take forward the Preferred Route and to prepare the draft Orders and Environmental Statement required under the Highways Act 1980.

There will be further opportunities for the public to comment on the scheme. If necessary a Public Inquiry will be held before an independent Inspector. The Secretary of State for Transport will consider the Inspector's Report together with any objections and representations made before making his decision on whether the scheme should proceed.

Further Information:

Copies of the plan showing the Preferred Route will be given to the local authorities for planning and development control purposes.

We have prepared two reports:

- Report on the Public Consultation, which summarises the responses to the Public Consultation
- Scheme Assessment Report, which explains the factors that determined the choice of route.

These reports can be seen during office hours until 18th May 2007 at the following locations:

South Bedfordshire District Council

The District Offices, High Street North

Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1LF

Bedfordshire County Council

Environmental Strategy, County Hall

Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP

Luton Borough Council

Town Hall, George Street

Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 2BQ

Dunstable Town Council

Grove House, 76 High Street North

Dunstable LU6 1NF

Houghton Regis Town Council

Council Offices, Peel Street

Houghton Regis LU5 5EY

Toddington Parish Council

Parish Office, Toddington Village Hall

Leighton Road, Toddington LU5 6AN

Copies of these reports have also been sent to Luton Central Library, Dunstable Library, Houghton Regis Library, Toddington Library and Chalton Post Office. They have been asked to make them available to local people on request. Copies can also be purchased from the Highways Agency at the address below (the charges cover the cost of printing and materials only):

Report on the Public Consultation £18.00

Scheme Assessment Report £20.00

Further copies of this leaflet can be obtained from:

A5-M1 Link (Dunstable Northern Bypass) Team

Highways Agency, 5 Broadway

Broad Street, Birmingham B15 1BL

Email:

A5-M1Link_DunstableNorthernBypass@highways.gsi.gov.uk

For real time traffic information:

08700 660 115

www.highways.gov.uk/trafficinfo

24 hours a day, 365 days a year

(Calls from BT landlines to 0870 numbers will cost no more than 8p per minute; mobile calls usually cost more)

For general Highways Agency information:

08457 50 40 30

email: ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk

24 hours a day, 365 days a year

(Calls from BT landlines to 0845 numbers will cost no more than 3p per minute; mobile calls usually cost more)

Safe driving at roadworks

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



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