

A326 North Waterside Improvements – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Design Related

Why doesn't the proposed dual carriageway extend further south towards Dibden and Hythe?

Providing a new dual carriageway on the southern section between Hounslow and the Applemore junction on the edge of Hythe was part of Option 3 that was presented during the previous public consultation on three scheme options, in summer 2021. A decision was made in November 2021 not proceed with Option 3 but to proceed with Option 2, which only had a dual carriageway on the northern section between the Michigan Way and Cocklydown Lane junctions.

The reasons for selecting this option are fully documented in the Decision Report that can be accessed [here](#). In summary, Option 2 was considered to provide the best balance between increasing traffic capacity on the A326 to reduce congestion and help encourage economic growth, whilst limiting the cost and environmental impact of the scheme and still offering the opportunity to improve pedestrian and cycle facilities. The environmental impact of the Option 3 design was considered to be too significant, particularly the number of trees that would need to be removed on both sides of the A326, and the substantially higher financial cost of the Option 3 scheme would mean that securing sufficient funding to deliver would be extremely challenging.

Why does the additional southbound lane only extend as far south as Staplewood Lane?

This additional lane was not part of the original option 2 design that was consulted on in summer 2021, but traffic modelling identified that providing an additional lane up to Staplewood Lane would offer journey time benefits for vehicles, due to a relatively high number of southbound vehicles on this section, some of which turn left at Staplewood Lane.

Providing the additional lane was investigated further during feasibility design for the preferred option and it was found that it could largely be accommodated within the existing highway boundary and as a result it now forms part of the proposed design. During the next stage of the design it will be looked at in more detail and there is the potential that the lane could either be: (a) kept as it is; (b) extended further south to Twiggs Lane (particularly if Twiggs Lane is chosen for a major junction upgrade); or (c) removed entirely if it is not considered to be offering enough benefits compared to the costs (both financial and environmental) of providing the extra lane.

Why are you proposing to widen on the western side on the north section (west of Totton) rather than the east, as this results in land take from the National Park?

When considering which side to widen the road on we looked at a range of factors including the quality of the habitats on both sides of the road and the overall environmental impact from ecology, landscape, noise, and air quality perspectives. We also looked at engineering factors such as buildability (how easy it would be to construct) and impact on other infrastructure (such as other roads that might need moving, the location of railway assets, the location of sewage works).

Overall, whilst the land on the western side is designated as National Park, the amenity value of the land on the eastern side is much greater and retaining the vegetation on the eastern side has benefits for ecology in terms of retaining habitat connectivity and avoiding loss of irreplaceable ancient woodland; landscape in terms of retaining the tree screen between houses and the road; and air quality and noise – again in relation to the housing on the eastern side.

Widening on the western side also has no impact on Network Rail assets to the east, has no impact on the Sewage Works, has no impact on Bartley Park and would not require Ashurst Bridge Road to be realigned adjacent to Bartley Park.

How can you propose widening into the New Forest National Park, isn't this land protected?

None of the land adjacent to the A326 in the scheme study area is subject to the New Forest Acts, i.e. it is not Common Land with open access like much of the New Forest. This land starts approximately 2km to the south-west of the scheme study area, and at its closest point is about 750m away near to the junction with Main Road. So, whilst the land is designated as National Park it is predominantly privately held land (some of which is used for grazing) in the area where we are proposing widening between Fletchwood Road and Cocklydown Lane.

National Park land is protected by Government guidance on development in National Parks that states that 'Major Development' should only take place in exceptional circumstances. It will therefore be for the National Park Authority when it considers the Planning Application to determine whether there are compelling reasons for the scheme; whether the benefits of the scheme to the National Park outweigh the costs; and whether the proposed environmental mitigation / enhancement package is sufficient. Where new road capacity is deemed necessary, the emphasis in the guidance is on assessing the impact on the overall environmental value and providing wider compensation and enhancement measures.

This scheme aims to enhance biodiversity and the landscape through the provision of environmental measures, including those required for a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain.

See *UK Government Circular 'English National Parks and the Broads', March 2010.*

Why are the drainage ponds so big and located away from the road in places?

All the drainage ponds are indicative sizes and locations only and exact details will be confirmed during the next stage of design. Generally, they have been situated behind trees where required, so as to avoid the need to remove trees in order to create them. The size shown is roughly what is required to deal with the drainage from the new road, but there are also other ways that will be explored during the next stage of the design.

Why didn't you provide a bigger roundabout at Netley Marsh instead?

A bigger roundabout was considered, but this required more land and therefore had a greater impact on trees around the junction.

A signal junction allows us to also provide new controlled crossing facilities more effectively for people walking and cycling.

Why are you making the Monkton Lane Junction Left-in Left out only and how will people be able to access to/from the North?

Not having a junction will help traffic to flow better and providing access for right-turning vehicles would require a lot more land in order to make the junction safe by providing adequate protection for vehicles waiting to turn.

Access from the A326 south is available via the Fletchwood Road junction, then routing along the A336 and down Briarwood Road, while access to the North is available via routing along Briarwood Road, then using the A336 to get to the Ringwood Road junction.

Why do you have two options for the Staplewood Lane and Twiggs Lane junctions?

Due to the poor safety record of these junctions as well as the lack of suitable access from Marchwood onto the A326 we wanted to provide a choice of options at these junctions that investigated improving safety as well as providing a suitable access for traffic from Marchwood. There are also different constraints at each junction which mean that there is not an immediately obvious preferred option.

What will happen to traffic that can't join the A326 from Staplewood Lane on the New Forest (western) side?

The low volume of traffic could be catered for at the Twiggs Lane junction instead, with a relatively short detour required.

Why is your preference to provide a major junction upgrade at Twiggs Lane rather than Staplewood Lane?

There is no ancient woodland in the vicinity of the Twiggs Lane junction and there would also be less overall tree loss required. There is also an opportunity to provide benefits to Marchwood CofE Infants School through creating a new area between the road and the school and moving traffic away from the school frontage.

Improvements at Twiggs Lane also help enable cycle improvements on Hythe Road parallel to the A326 by creating better access into Marchwood via Twiggs Lane, which should reduce the traffic volumes along Hythe Road.

Why are there two schemes doing work at the same location – Marchwood Bypass Merge?

The Marchwood Bypass Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) scheme is coming from a different funding pot with different spend timescales and is due to be delivered this year as the funding has already been secured. The A326 North scheme is not yet committed as HCC have not yet secured the funding, which would not happen until after the next stage of the business case is submitted.

As HCC is working on both the TCF scheme and the A326 North scheme the two design teams are working together to avoid abortive work if/when the A326 North scheme comes to fruition at a later date.

Will the scheme consider the requirements of horse riders?

We have made initial contact with the British Horse Society (BHS) with regard to the needs of their members and others who ride or keep horses in the area. They stated that they did not anticipate much requirement for their members to cross the A326 for the majority of the study area for the improvement works, given the location of existing routes and places where horses are kept. Notwithstanding the above further engagement will be made with both the BHS and known local riding centres/livery yards during the next stage of the design.

Will there be any change to the streetlighting?

Extents of lighting are indicative only, as these will be fixed during the next stage of design.

Additional sections/interchanges on the highway may require lighting but this will be determined at the next design stage. It is normally standard practice to provide street lighting with signal-controlled junctions and therefore it is possible new lighting will be provided in these locations.

Investigations are under way to determine the presence of bat species, their roost locations and commuting and feeding corridors. The findings from these investigations may have an impact on the street lighting design approach, extents of lighting and equipment specification.

Will future development to the east of the A326 cause increased delay and less gaps at roundabouts for existing northbound traffic on the A326?

No, the scheme is being designed to allow for extra capacity on the road network that should alleviate any potential increase in journey delays. Some junctions are being replaced by signalised junctions that will be configured to minimise delay on all approaches. The traffic modelling that has been undertaken to inform the scheme design includes an allowance for future traffic growth associated with local development sites, both committed sites and potential sites.

What is being done to increase the safety for pedestrians and cyclists to use or cross the A326?

A total of four new traffic light-controlled crossings are being proposed that will provide safer and more convenient access across the A326 for both pedestrians and cyclists. The provision of new cycleways is being investigated between Marchwood and Dibden, with two options proposed as outlined in the engagement material.

How is the scheme promoting sustainable modes of transport to reduce private car use?

Whilst the scheme is primarily based upon improving journey times for motorised vehicles, a key objective is to improve accessibility for all modes of transport and the design process is mindful of the needs of pedestrian and cyclists – notably in providing access between residential areas to the east of the A326 and the New Forest to the west of the A326. Improvements for bus priority are also already being brought forward in the Waterside as part of three separate Transforming Cities Fund schemes, including a new bus gate on the A326 that leads to the Marchwood by-pass / Rushington roundabout, which will be incorporated into the proposals for the A326 North scheme.

What is being done for the existing accident black spot at the Twiggs Lane junction and the school children attending Marchwood C of E Infant School?

A new traffic light-controlled junction is proposed at this location that should help alleviate accidents caused by vehicles turning into or out of Twiggs Lane. A new area in front of the school would be provided that will create a much safer space for school children entering or exiting the school. The new junction would incorporate the existing traffic light crossing over the A326 to the south of Twiggs Lane.

Environment Related

How much tree loss will there be for the construction of the scheme? What about the trees that act as a barrier between traffic on the A326 and existing housing?

Trees will inevitably be lost as part of the scheme, although the design process has sought to minimise tree loss as much as possible. This was particularly the case for trees designated as ancient woodland or where trees act as a barrier between existing housing and the A326.

All trees removed as part of the works would be replaced by new trees with an uplift of 10% additional trees above existing levels in line with policy requirements.

The tree barrier between the A326 and existing housing in Totton is largely being retained as a result of the highway widening being proposed on the other (western) side of the road.

If you are providing more vehicle capacity won't this just mean more traffic, which will be even worse for the environment?

The scheme is currently at the end of feasibility design stage. Further work will include more detailed traffic modelling, as well as modelling of air and noise pollution to determine the impacts of the proposed scheme and what, if any, mitigation would be required.

Initial modelling for the proposed scheme suggests that the scheme will largely result in a redistribution of vehicles back onto the A326 that would already be on the network (some who would otherwise be using alternative parallel routes due to congestion on the A326), and not cause more people to drive who otherwise wouldn't have done so. This is in contrast to the full dualling option (dual carriageway down to the Applemore junction) that was consulted on previously, and the extra capacity associated with this option would potentially have induced more people to drive cars who otherwise wouldn't have done so.

Will the scheme increase air or noise pollution?

Both an air quality and noise and vibration assessment will be completed in due course that will assess the effects of the proposed scheme with respect to noise and air pollution; mitigation measures will be implemented if required by assessment findings. Work is currently underway collecting baseline noise data along the A326 to feed into the assessment process.

What effect will the scheme have on ecology and protected species?

A full suite of habitat surveys and protected species surveys is being undertaken along the proposed scheme corridor and within the ecological zone of influence of the proposed scheme. These surveys will provide the baseline information that will inform an ecological impact assessment. Where important ecological receptors are identified, the scheme will be designed where possible to avoid impacts in the first instance. If it is not possible to avoid impacts, the scheme will be designed to minimise these impacts. Throughout the design process the ecology team is working closely with other environmental disciplines and the design team to design out impacts where possible. A detailed mitigation and compensation package will be developed to ensure that any adverse effects are addressed to maintain favourable conservation status of affected species. In line with current policy, the scheme will provide a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain in habitats, which will be achieved through on-site and off-site habitat creation and enhancement.

How does the scheme justify tree and habitat loss during a biodiversity and climate crisis?

Whilst the scheme will impact on habitat loss and tree removal, the design has been influenced by minimising this impact, and this has led to a reduction in overall scheme area as well as the retention of a large amount of existing trees. This process will be ongoing through the next phases of the design and opportunity to retain trees and habitats will be a key objective.

How will the scheme impact the historic environment?

The scheme will not directly impact any designated or undesignated historic buildings. The design of the scheme will seek to protect or enhance the setting of nearby historic buildings.

An archaeological heritage statement will be produced in due course that will assess the potential for buried archaeological remains within the scheme boundary. The design will aim to limit impact on any potential archaeological remains and archaeological investigation will be undertaken where necessary.

Business Case Related

Isn't this a waste of taxpayers' money, particularly in the context of the Climate Emergency?

Government funding specifically for major transport projects is proposed to be used for this scheme. This funding cannot be used elsewhere. The scheme itself is not expected to generate lots of extra vehicle trips but would redistribute vehicle trips that would already be on the road network. It will help to improve access to the Waterside as the A326 is the only main road to/from the area and will help to enable complimentary schemes in areas adjacent to the road.

Whilst there is rightly a focus on reducing vehicle trips particularly for shorter and more local journeys, there will still be a need for both business and private vehicle trips to/from the wider area via the A326. Particularly in the context of some of the nationally significant infrastructure assets on the Waterside (both existing and planned), it is vital that the efficient operation of the A326 is maintained given it is the only major road link to/from the Waterside. Alternative and parallel roads that provide a north-south connection to the Waterside either run through the New Forest National Park or through Waterside communities and therefore it is important to improve the A326 to minimise the amount of traffic that might otherwise use these less suitable alternative routes, particularly in the context of future development and associated extra vehicle trips.

The emerging Hampshire Local Transport Plan 4 provides a policy lever for focusing investment in road infrastructure on a few selected routes such as the A326 that have a strategic importance and where there is the potential for these improvements to both address existing accessibility issues and help to encourage economic growth.

What is the Solent Freeport and what does it mean?

Freeports are areas designated by the government that will benefit from incentives to encourage economic activity. Freeports operate with both 'tax' and 'customs' sites. Tax sites offer occupiers business rates relief and other incentives to support capital investment, skills and employment. Business rates growth generated at the tax sites can be retained locally and reinvested in the area. Customs sites help enable the tariff-free movement of goods for both export and import through simplified customs procedures.

The outer boundary of the Solent Freeport reflects the well-recognised economic area of the Solent region, as well as including transport routes critical to the area's, and the country's, economic prosperity.

Why will the scheme reduce traffic on other routes?

By providing additional traffic capacity on the main road that connects most of the Waterside communities to the wider strategic road network, this will help to make sure that the A326 is the fastest route and therefore the most attractive for people to use. The A326 is already the most direct route, but currently when the A326 is congested vehicles divert onto other parallel roads such as those through the New Forest or Waterside communities, as these can sometimes be quicker, despite being less direct and having lower speed limits.

What about ABP and their plans for Dibden Bay, how do those fit in?

Associated British Ports have a land reserve in Dibden Bay. The traffic modelling completed so far takes account of potential traffic from this area but the scheme does not provide any access to this site. Any future plans for the ABP site would need to come from them and be subject to the normal planning process. Any access requirements associated with the site would need to be designed and paid for by the developer.

What is the Value for Money / Benefit/Cost Ratio of the Scheme?

Overall the Benefit / Cost ratio of the preferred option at Strategic Business Case stage was circa 2.3, which means the scheme is forecast to have 2.3 times more monetised benefits than costs. The current design has not yet been re-assessed, which will take place prior to the submission of the next stage of the business case, once a detailed scheme cost estimate has been produced. Ultimately whether the scheme offers value for money or not will be a matter for the DfT as majority funding body to take a view on, as well as any other funding bodies that contribute towards delivering the scheme.

How will the scheme be funded, will HCC taxpayers have to foot some of the bill?

No money from Hampshire County Council is currently identified as being used to fund the delivery of the scheme. Up to 85% of the scheme cost would be met by the Department for Transport if our business case is approved.

The remaining 15% of construction costs are still to be confirmed, but options include the Solent Freeport by way of retained business rates investment, and / or contributions from private sector partners.

Will the scheme be designed to take account of all planned future development?

Vehicles associated with future development on the Waterside, both committed and potential sites, have been factored into the traffic modelling and economic assessment work that is informing the scheme design and business case.

How will the scheme affect my journey time on the A326 – notably during the traffic peaks or bank / school holidays?

Journey times should be better than existing during the peak traffic times once the scheme has been completed. There may be slight delays at the new signalised junctions where these provide new signalised crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

Will the scheme provide any social benefits?

The scheme will provide greater access along the A326 corridor to the New Forest National Park. Improvements in access to the waterside will create additional investment and employment sites to help provide greater opportunities for the area.

There will also be social benefits to the more deprived areas in south Waterside resulting from better communication and access linkages in a peninsula type location, where the A326 is the primary link.

Engagement Process

Are the public's views really going to make any difference?

Yes, we need feedback from local people and people who use the road or cross the road on a regular basis. We are only halfway through the design process before submitting a Planning Application in about 12 months' time and the design will continue to evolve prior to that. Feedback from the consultation will be used to inform the next stage of design and development work, and so it's vital that we hear from as many people as possible to ensure all views can be taken into account.

Other Questions

Will there be increased congestion / delay on the road network during construction?

Detailed traffic management plans would need to be designed and agreed prior to any construction work taking place. These plans would need to minimise the impact upon the road network during the construction phase. The design of the scheme also considers the future construction of the scheme and where possible will allow for offline construction, so that there would be minimal disruption to the road network when constructing the offline elements.