

# **BRIEFING NOTE**

**TO: Business, Employment & Local Economy Scrutiny & Performance Panel**

**DATE: 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2015**

**RE: M6 Junction 10 Major Highways Improvement Scheme**

## **Purpose**

To provide an update to the Panel on the proposals for a major highways improvement scheme at M6 Junction 10, including an upgrade of the Wolverhampton Road/ Bloxwich Lane junction. The scheme is a joint initiative between Walsall Council and the Highways Agency, and has been included in the Black Country Growth Deal and the Roads Investment Strategy.

## **Overview of the Proposed Improvements**

Five options were appraised as part of the initial options development: -

- Bridge reconstruction – three different scenarios were appraised to provide increased capacity, but only one met with approval from the Highways Agency.
- Flyover (grade-separated) – this was considered as part of the option assessment work, but was ruled out for engineering reasons.
- ‘Hamburger’ arrangement (at-grade) – again this was considered as part of the option assessment work, but was ruled out as it did not produce the required transport benefits.

The full scope of the preferred option is shown on the enclosed plans. Broadly these improvements comprise the following: -

- Demolition of the existing two-lane aging bridges and replacement with new four-lane bridges
- Associated enlargement of the circulatory carriageway
- Widening of the M6 motorway slip roads
- Widening of a short section of the westbound Black Country Route (A454)
- Improvement of the Wolverhampton Road (A454) and Bloxwich Lane junction
- Enhancement and modernisation of traffic signals at the circulatory carriageway and adjacent junction

## **Funding Package**

The two principal funding sources are the Black Country Growth Deal, which was announced in July 2014, and the national Roads Investment Strategy (RIS), which was announced in December 2014. Walsall Council has supported initial scheme development costs through the Local Transport Plan Transport Capital Programme.

This funding commitment allows the improvements to proceed, subject to all the usual preconditions of drawing down such money for a major transport project. Preconditions include: production of a valid business case that demonstrates the scheme is good value-for-money; acquisition of statutory powers; procurement of a contractor; and an agreed (contracted) price.

### **Scheme Development**

For the last two and a half years Walsall's Strategic Transportation Team has been undertaking the work required to help satisfy some of the above preconditions. Initially, this involved identifying the problems at the junction and assessing possible solutions. This included tasks such as traffic data collection and analysis; traffic modelling; and preliminary scheme design. Once the Council had progressed the proposals to a stage where there was sufficient information to present to outside parties, the Council began liaising with the Highways Agency and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership regarding the need for a major improvement and possible funding options.

During the next two to three years the Council and the Highways Agency will work in partnership to satisfy all preconditions. In that time work will be undertaken to test and refine the design of the improvements; consult local stakeholders; to appraise the final design; and to acquire statutory powers for the construction of that design. Much of this will be taken forward by Walsall Council. Alongside this, the Council and the Highways Agency will enter into formalised project governance arrangements. Finally, the Highways Agency will take forward the civil and structural engineering (detailed) design and will procure and appoint the construction contractor, ultimately managing the construction of the improvements on behalf of the project partners.

### **Construction Period**

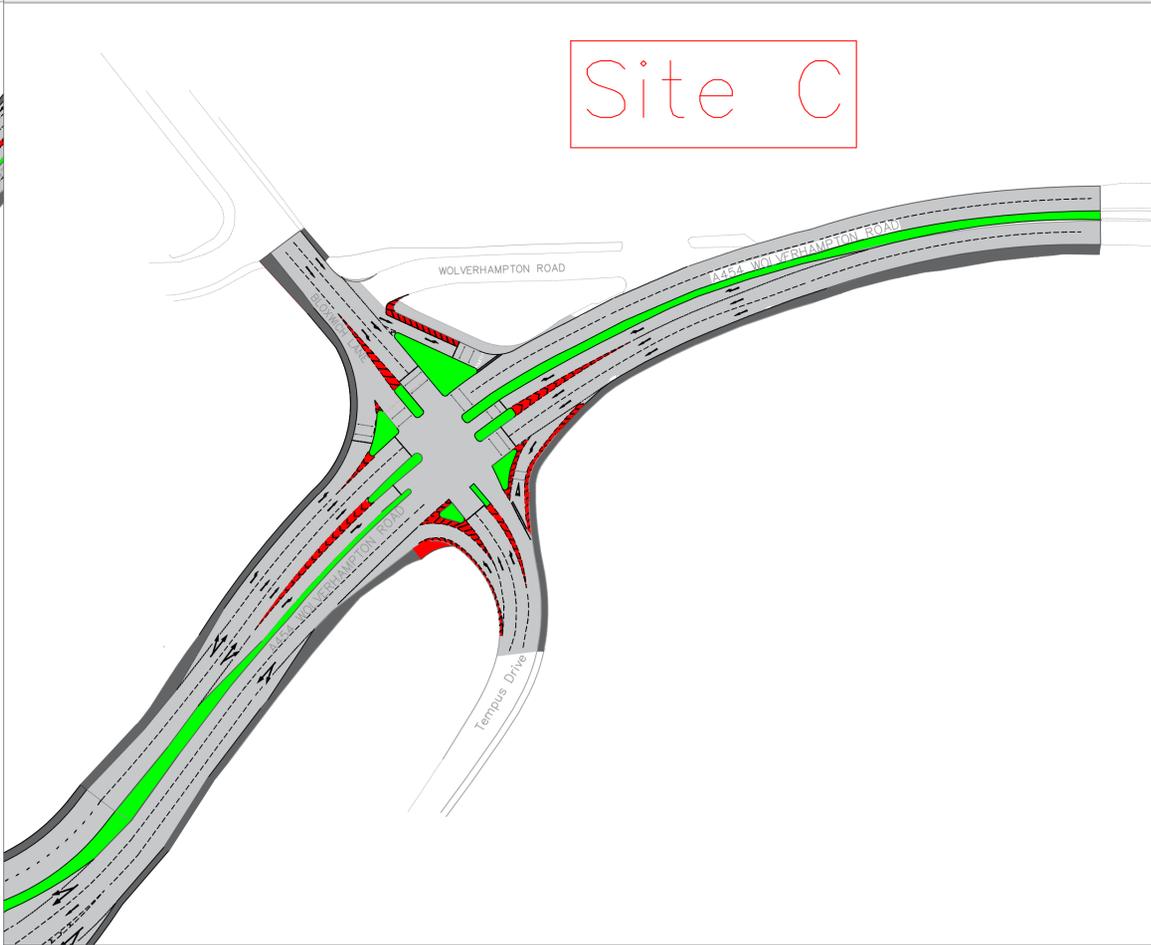
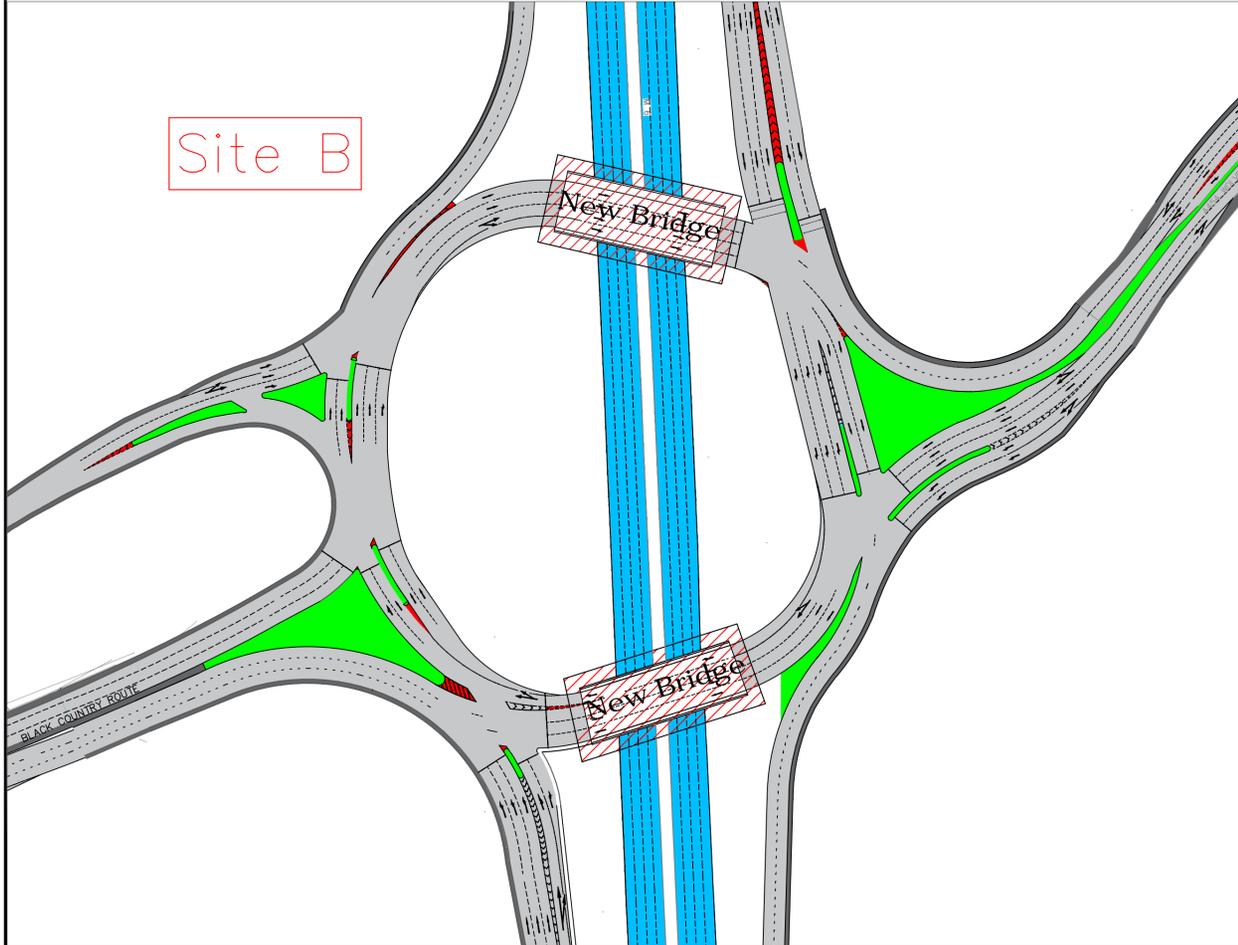
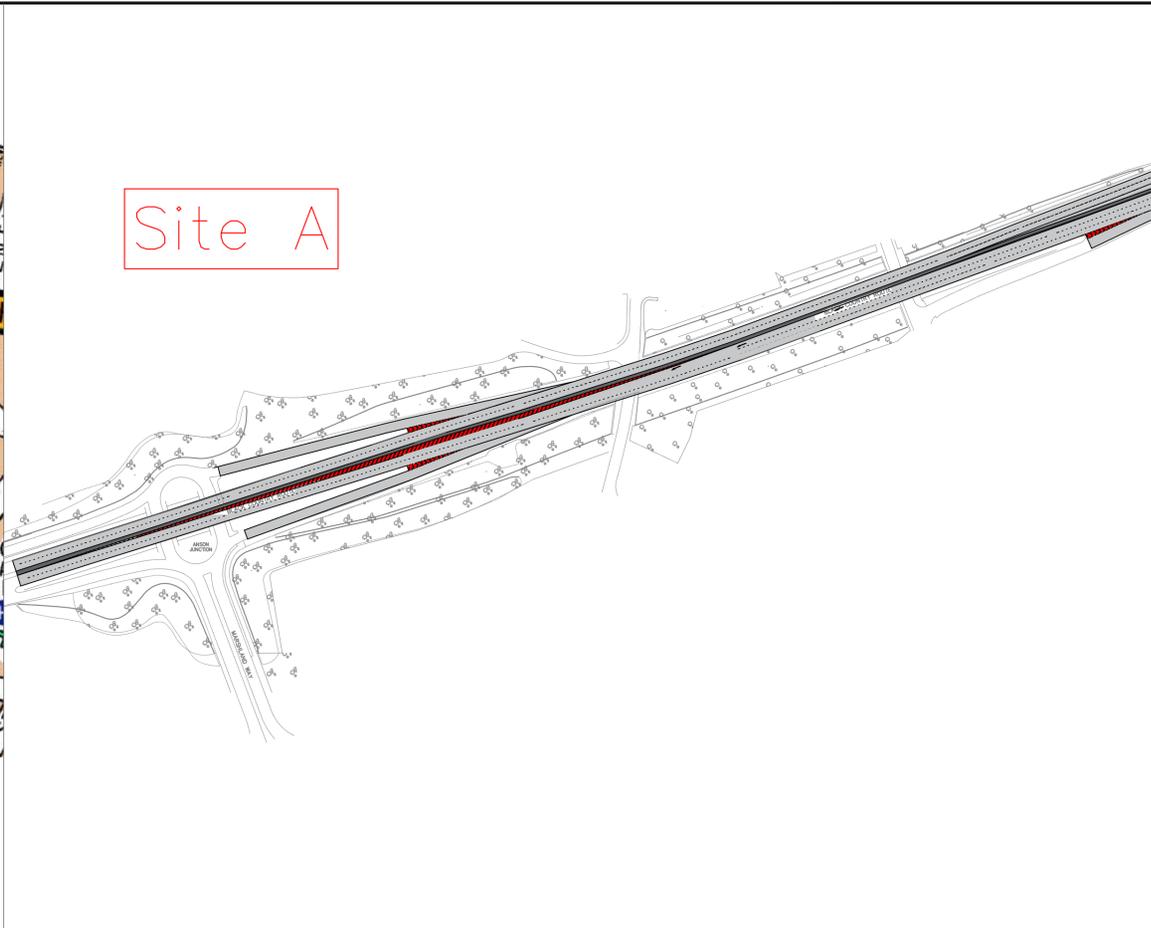
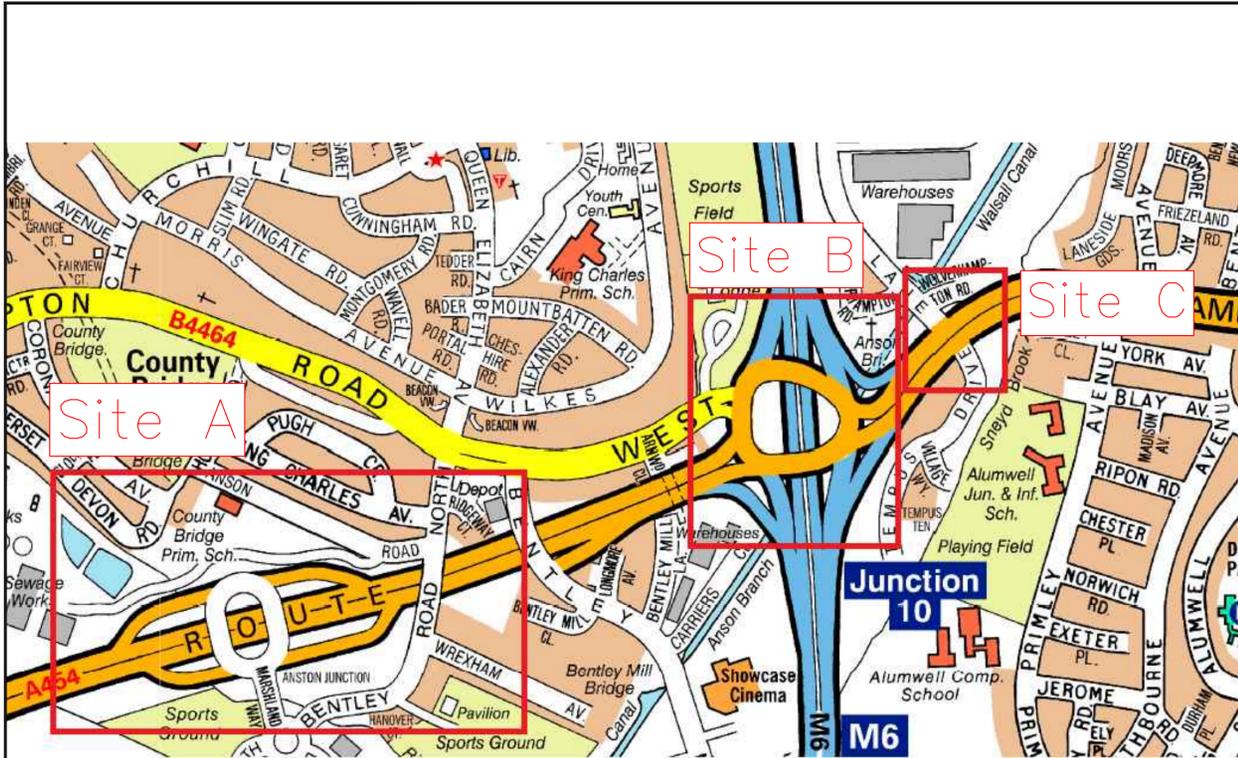
The construction phase is anticipated to start during the financial year 2017-18, although timescales may be subject to change. Traffic management arrangements have not yet been finalised and will not be finalised until much closer to construction, but both Walsall Council and the Highways Agency will work together closely to minimise disruption to Walsall residents, businesses and visitors during the construction period. The construction duration is likely to take up to two years.

### **Recommendations (if required)**

Note the contents of the report, especially the programme milestones and the need for public consultation to be undertaken as part of planned scheme development work.

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<h3>Notes.</h3>	
Site A – A454 Black Country Route.	
– Merges at the Anson Junction 450m from Junction 10.	
Site B – M6 Junction 10.	
– Two new four lane bridges	
– Mova signal operation.	
Site C – Bloxwich Lane.	
– Dedicated right turn lanes introduced.	
– Junction widening at Tempus Drive.	
– Mova signal operation.	
– Improved pedestrian facilities.	
Project: M6 JUNCTION 10	
Title:	
Design: Richard Banner	CAD: Matt Pain
Chk'd: Steven Edwards	App'd: Matt Crowton
Date: December 2014	Scale: NOT TO SCALE
<b>Walsall Council</b>	
No. N/A	Rev: A

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