

A426/A4071 Avon Mill and Hunters Lane Improvement Scheme – frequently asked questions (Updated 1 March 2024)

Section 1: About this public engagement

Why are you undertaking a public engagement?

Warwickshire County Council is undertaking public engagement on its proposals for the A426/A4071 Avon Mill and Hunters Lane Improvement Scheme in Rugby ahead of submitting a planning application to seek permission to build the scheme and a bid to Government for funding towards the cost of delivering it.

The public engagement provides an opportunity for the local community, businesses and other stakeholders to feedback and comment on the proposals.

Warwickshire County Council is inviting people to provide their feedback via the online survey at warwickshire.gov.uk/ask. Alternatively, feedback can be provided in writing via email to avonmill@warwickshire.gov.uk or by writing to Avon Mill Engagement, Customer Service Centre, Shire Hall, Market Place, Warwick CV34 4RL. The closing date for comments is 20 March 2024

Where can I find out more about the scheme proposals.

Information about the scheme is available online at warwickshire.gov.uk/ask where you will also find the engagement survey.

Two drop-in public information events are being held where you can find out more about the scheme proposals and speak to the project team. Visit us at:

- Thursday 22 February 2024, 16:00 to 19:00, The Benn Hall, Newbold Road, Rugby, CV21 2LN
- Saturday 24 February 2024, 10:00 to 16:00, Rugby Central Shopping Centre, Market Mall, Rugby, CV21 2JR

We are also holding an online presentation and question and answer session on Wednesday 21 February at 19:00. A link to the presentation will be available at warwickshire.gov.uk/ask.

What will happen with my feedback?

All feedback must be submitted in writing by completing the Response Form at warwickshire.gov.uk/ask or via email or post by 20 March 2024.

After this date, all the feedback received will be reviewed and used to refine the scheme plans and supporting information ahead of submitting a planning application for determination by Warwickshire County Council. The planning application will include a Statement of Community Engagement which will describe the public engagement process, the feedback received and how this has been used to inform the proposals.

Warwickshire County Council is not able to respond to comments and feedback on an individual basis but your feedback to the engagement is valued and will be considered as part of the development of the scheme.

There will be a further opportunity to comment on the scheme as part of the planning application process.

Section 2: Scheme development and delivery.

Why do we need this scheme?

We have identified a range of transport issues at the Avon Mill roundabout and Newbold Road / Hunters Lane junction which we think need to be addressed. These include:

- **Congestion:** Traffic queues are common and can cause lengthy delays and rat running.
- **Walking and cycling facilities:** There is limited provision for walking and cycling which contributes to a reliance on private cars.
- **Public transport:** There are limited bus services and congestion increases bus journey times and makes services less reliable which deters people from using them and increases reliance on private cars.
- **New housing and jobs:** Future planned housing and employment areas in Rugby are expected to make congestion worse.
- **Network resilience:** The A426 Newbold Road is one of few road crossings of the River Avon. Any closure of this bridge would cause significant congestion and environmental impacts as traffic diverts onto alternative routes.
- **Air quality:** Vehicle emissions from high volumes of slow-moving traffic impact on air quality in the area.

What benefits will the scheme deliver?

We expect the scheme to deliver the following benefits:

- Promote active travel opportunities by upgrading facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Support local climate emergency and Net-Zero targets by reducing vehicle emissions associated with congestion and slow moving traffic. Average travel distances are also expected to reduce as motorists would be less likely to divert away from Avon Mill onto longer routes to avoid congestion.
- Improved bus journey times and reliability by improving traffic flow.
- Support for housing delivery and economic growth by providing additional travel options and highway capacity to meet increased demand for travel.
- Improved network resilience meaning traffic will flow better when there are incidents or issues on the roads.
- Improved road safety. The new roundabout will make it easier and safer for motorists to turn into and out of Hunters Lane and Avon Mill Lane, and the improved traffic flow will reduce rat-running on surrounding streets and roads where there is greater risk of conflict between vehicles and vulnerable road users. The off-road cycle route between Leicester Road and Wood Street provides a safer alternative to cycling on the heavily trafficked A426 Newbold Road.

Is it necessary to build more roads? Shouldn't the focus be on sustainable travel options such as cycling and buses.

The scheme will provide new cycling infrastructure and improve bus journey times which will make these forms of transport more attractive. Whilst these modes can meet demand for many local journeys, they will not meet the high demand for longer trips made through the area. There is already significant congestion in this area, and even with improved sustainable travel options we would expect this to get worse in the future as more traffic is created by planned new housing and

employment areas around Rugby. The scheme will create additional capacity on the road network and provide better options for sustainable travel.

Won't this just result in more traffic and more people driving?

We expect more people will want to travel through this area in the future as new housing and employment is built around Rugby. Our traffic modelling suggests the scheme will attract more motorists to route through the Avon Mill roundabout in preference to alternative options because it is more direct and will provide shorter journey times. We also expect the scheme to support behavioural change and encourage more people to travel sustainably.

Won't this scheme simply move the congestion to another part of the road network, for example closer to the town centre or further north?

This question is based on a concern that because traffic will flow more efficiently through the Avon Mill roundabout area, it will be released more quickly to other parts of the surrounding network leading to longer queues in these locations. The latest traffic modelling evidence indicates that the scheme is unlikely to create any noticeable knock-on effects to the north or south of the scheme area when comparing traffic conditions in the future with and without the scheme. This is outlined in more detail in the Avon Mill / Hunters Lane Traffic Modelling Summary report.

How much will it cost and how will it be funded?

Our current estimate is that the scheme will cost approximately £24.3 million in total. This figure is being reviewed for inclusion in our forthcoming business case submission to Government. To date, the project has secured £2.76 million (£2.4 million from developer contributions, £0.26 million from the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Major Road Network (MRN) fund and £0.1 million from the County Council). We hope to secure the remaining funding from the MRN fund.

Does the cost of the scheme represent value for money?

We are working closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) to develop the business case for the scheme which will include an assessment carried out using the DfT's Value for Money Framework and Transport Analysis Guidance. This will demonstrate whether the expected costs of the proposal are justified by its expected benefits, taking account of both positive and negative impacts of the proposal on the economy, society, environment and public accounts. The outcome of this work will help decision makers decide whether the scheme should proceed and be awarded funding.

Is the scheme definitely going ahead?

Warwickshire County Council is progressing development of the scheme as part of its commitment to improving the local transport network, however delivery is not yet confirmed. The scheme cannot go ahead until it secures planning permission and the funding it needs. We expect to submit the planning application and next round of information to support the funding bid to Government during 2024.

When will construction start and how long will it take to build?

We are targeting a start date of Spring / Summer 2025, but this is subject to finalising the design and securing the required funding and permissions. We anticipate construction taking approximately 18 months.

Why doesn't the proposed scheme include a link road between the A426 Newbold Road and Technology Drive using Hunters Lane and Baker Street?

The County Council has considered the provision of a new through road between the A426 Newbold Road and Technology Drive, known as the Hunters Lane Link, but it does not form part of the Avon Mill / Hunters Lane Improvements Scheme.

A planning condition of the Edison Place development south of Technology Drive included a requirement to make provision for the Hunters Lane Link to help alleviate localised congestion and provide additional capacity to accommodate increasing volumes of traffic. The developer has built Baker Street in such a way that it could form the northern part of the Hunters Lane Link. It was proposed that the County Council would deliver a short section of new road to make the connection between the southern boundary of the new development / end of Baker Street with Hunters Lane because this land was outside of the control of the developer. The developer provided the County Council with a S106 contribution to help fund this work.

As of early 2023, the County Council has not progressed the link road for several reasons, and therefore, focus was directed to delivering the Avon Mill / Hunters Lane Improvements Scheme. The challenges identified were:

1. Principally, the S106 contribution was only a small percentage of our estimated cost for the link road, and thus further funding would be required.
2. Several parcels of land would be required. However, investigations indicated that the acquisitions would be complex, likely to require CPO, and potentially be cost prohibitive.
3. There are safety concerns associated with opening the road to through traffic and wider highway constraints that could limit the effectiveness of the link at resolving congestion.

The Hunters Lane Link has not been included within the Avon Mill / Hunters Lane Improvements Scheme for the following reasons:

1. Work to prepare the business case for the Avon Mill / Hunters Lane Improvements Scheme indicates the scheme will deliver the required traffic flow benefits without the need for the Hunters Lane Link. It is acknowledged that provision of the Hunters Lane Link would ease delays during the construction phase of the Avon Mill / Hunters Lane Improvements Scheme were it to be built first, but this in itself does not justify delivery.
2. When the application for Department for Transport funding was submitted, in the form of a 'Strategic Outline Business Case', the Hunters Lane Link Road was not included. Along with the challenges listed above, the link road is unlikely to secure funding from the Department for Transport due to the adverse impacts through traffic would have on the new community living at Edison Place

Section 3: Information about the scheme.

Where is the scheme located?

The scheme is located north of Rugby town centre on the main north-south transport route and includes the A426 Newbold Road River Avon crossing. It includes Avon Mill Roundabout which forms part of the Major Road Network (MRN), a national classification comprising the country's busiest and most economically important local authority A-roads. The MRN links M6 junction 1 with the A45 interchange at Dunsmore Heath via the A426 and A4071 which meet at Avon Mill roundabout.

What does the scheme provide?

The key elements of the proposed scheme are:

- The Avon Mill roundabout will be enlarged. This will include widening all approaches to three lanes and widening the exits onto the A426 and A4071 Newbold Road to two lanes as set out in the table below.
- The existing T-junction at Hunters Lane will be replaced with a roundabout and Avon Mill Lane will be realigned to connect onto this roundabout.
- The existing road and bridge over the River Avon will be retained and will carry two lanes of southbound traffic from the Avon Mill roundabout to the Hunters Lane roundabout.
- A new bridge and section of road will be built south of the current road to provide two lanes for traffic travelling north from the Hunters Lane roundabout to the Avon Mill roundabout, with a third lane provided at the approach to the Avon Mill roundabout.
- A new bridge north of the existing bridge to carry a footway / cycleway. This will replace the narrow footway which is bolted onto the existing road bridge. The bridge will form part of a new cycle route which will connect the existing route on the western side of the A426 Leicester Road and Wood Street.
- The existing pedestrian crossing over the A426 Leicester Road north of the Avon Mill roundabout will be upgraded to a toucan crossing and widened for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The footway / cycleway on the west side of the A426 Leicester Road will be restored to its original width and quality.
- A new left-in/left-out access junction will provide access to the drive-thru restaurant on the former Avon Mill Inn site and the adjacent residential properties.
- The bus stops on A426 Newbold Road will be relocated 100m south from their position close to Hunters Lane junction to between the railway bridge and Wood Street. A pedestrian refuge will be provided to support access to the bus stops.
- A Flood Compensation Zone will be created on land between the A426 Leicester Road and Fosterd Road, next to the Avon Mill Recreation Ground

What will the new bridges look like?

Road Bridge

The proposed design of the road bridge is a single-span bridge with weathering steel girders and a reinforced concrete deck.

- The single-span design avoids a central pier in the river, reducing environmental impact and impact on water flow. This also allows for a simpler and economical construction process.
- A slender deck minimises the visual impact on the surrounding landscape.

- The weathering steel girders are corrosion-resistant which eliminates the need for protective paint and regular painting, reducing maintenance costs and the bridge's carbon footprint over its lifetime.
- The reinforced concrete abutments on either side of the bridge will be clad in brick to reflect the existing Avon Mill three-span arch bridge.

Pedestrian / Cycle Bridge

The proposed design for the pedestrian / cycle bridge is a Vierendeel Truss with an arched top chord. Truss bridges are often chosen for strength and because they offer a lightweight and economical form of construction, particularly where the span is large.

- A single span structure will avoid the need for a central pier in the River Avon.
- The bridge will improve safety and experience by segregating pedestrians and cyclists from the traffic of the main road bridges and providing a wider footway than the current bridge.

How does the scheme help cyclists?

The scheme provides a new cycle route between Leicester Road and Wood Street which fills a key missing link in the local cycling network and will help people to cycle to locations including the town centre, railway station and Avon Valley School. Surveys show the majority of cyclists travelling between Avon Mill roundabout and Hunters Lane currently choose to ride on the narrow footway and analysis using Department for Transport forecasting tools indicates the scheme will more than double the number of cycling trips.

Could a segregated left turn lane be provided for north-eastbound traffic travelling between A4071 Newbold Road and A426 Leicester Road?

We have considered whether the A4071 Newbold Road to A426 Leicester Road (north-eastbound) movement could be accommodated by providing a segregated left turn lane to reduce residual queues. However, design standards state that a physical island must be provided if there is a signalised crossing which applies in this case as there is a Toucan crossing on the A426 Leicester Road.

Given the need to accommodate cyclists crossing the road and other vulnerable road users, this island would need to be up to 4m in width. This combined with other design requirements would require significant amounts of land to be acquired from the Fields in Trust and adjacent private sports ground. As the predicted queues and delays on this approach are relatively limited, it is considered that the benefits of providing a segregated left turn lane at this location would be far outweighed by the costs of provision. Therefore, it is not proposed to include this additional feature in the scheme design.

What will happen to the donkeys?

We will need to re-home the popular donkey sculptures located adjacent to the A426 Newbold Road because the paddock they are displayed in will be built on. We will safely store the sculptures during construction and propose to place them in an alternative location within the scheme, subject to feedback from the engagement so that passers-by can continue to enjoy seeing and interacting with them.

How long will construction take and how much disruption will it cause?

We expect the scheme to take about 18 months to construct and every effort will be made to minimise impacts on road users and nearby residents and businesses during this time. The way construction is managed to mitigate environmental impacts (including noise and dust) will be subject to planning conditions. To support the planning application we are preparing a Construction Management Plan which will set out how we expect to build the scheme and manage construction traffic. This is suggesting that a significant amount of the scheme including the road bridge can be built away from the existing road layout and without impacting on existing traffic flows, however there will be periods, particularly during later construction phases when temporary traffic lights and other traffic management will be necessary and will create delays.

How will the County Council acquire the land it needs for the scheme?

The project team is currently progressing negotiations with the owners and occupiers of the land identified as required for the scheme which lies outside the currently maintained public highway boundary. If these negotiations prove unsuccessful, it would be necessary to invoke Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers to secure the required land. In view of the lengthy timescales involved in the CPO process delaying scheme delivery, we are proceeding with the CPO process for as long as necessary while at the same time negotiating with the landowners to acquire land by voluntary agreement.

Section 4: Managing the environment.

What is the environmental impact of the scheme?

The scheme will impact on river, woodland and other sensitive habitats during construction and when complete. A series of ecological surveys and assessments including an Arboricultural Impact Assessment to understand the impact on trees, are being carried out and are feeding into the design process. Steps will be taken to protect habitats for various species during construction. The project will aim to deliver biodiversity net gain to improve the areas biodiversity compared to current conditions through landscaping, tree planting and other improvements.

The planning application will also include assessments of scheme effects on air quality and dust, noise and vibration, traffic and transportation, cultural heritage and archaeology and the presence of contaminated land including any mitigation measures which may be required.

Will the new bridge and area of hard surfacing increase the risk of local flooding?

We are carefully reviewing the flood risk associated with the new bridges and other changes we are proposing. Flood risk and drainage assessments are being prepared to support the planning application and will be reviewed by the Environment Agency. We are expecting to provide flood compensation and our current proposals include providing this on the field next to the Avon Mill Recreation Ground which we would also landscape.

Has your assessment of the flood risk taken account of climate change?

Yes, our assessments meet the requirements set out by the Environment Agency for future year flood risk and take account of the impact of climate change.

How does the scheme integrate with Warwickshire County Council's Net Zero ambitions?

The scheme supports behaviour change by encouraging people to switch from travelling by private car to active travel or public transport reducing congestion and pollution. The scheme is also expected to shorten travel distances because motorists will be less likely to divert away from the most direct route to avoid delays. A Carbon Management Plan is also being developed for submission with our business case to Government to quantify whole-life carbon costs in accordance with latest Department for Transport guidance.