

## **M42 Junction 6 Improvement Scheme**

### **Response from Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council to the Public Consultation.**

The Parish Council has been represented at several public consultations, had a number of other meetings with representative organisations and with senior Highways England staff and their consultants, all of which have been helpful to the debate.

We welcome the initiative to find a long term solution to the current problem of regular congestion at Junction 6, which will be exacerbated by planned developments at UK Central, Birmingham Airport, NEC and HS2 Interchange. Residents of local communities at Catherine-de-Barnes, Bickenhill and Hampton-in-Arden are very concerned about the impact of these developments on the semi-rural location and ambience of the villages, local infrastructure, the rural Arden landscape and noise and pollution. It is accepted that all of the options presented will have a serious impact and that each will have different and detrimental effects on each community, which will result in no one community being fully in agreement with whichever option is chosen. For this reason the Council has tried to be fully objective in its comments and preferred option and would emphasise that we regard the preference as ‘the least worst’ option available.

For some time we have been reassured by our local MP, Dame Caroline Spelman, that she regards the A45 as the defensible boundary for the Meriden Gap Green Belt. That gap is now seriously threatened by HS2 developments, the Arden Cross plan on land west of the A452 and with the Junction 6 proposals. Each new development will have a major impact on farmland and an SSI in the Blythe valley. Whatever the outcome we would hope to see a guarantee of significant and special efforts to minimise land take, mitigate visual impact by landscaping, tree and shrub planting and a careful restoration of local habitat for flora and fauna. Given the close proximity of motorway roads and crossing points, careful engineering to ensure the preservation of pedestrian and cycling routes and wildlife corridors, and to mitigate the impact on local roads and commuters will be required.

Although we regard **Option 1** as the ‘*least worst*’ option the Council does have reservations about all of the selected options for the following reasons:

**Option 1:** is the longest route and has excessive land take through the Green Belt and will be visible from Solihull Road throughout its length east of Catherine de Barnes. It will no doubt carry traffic noise to both Catherine de Barnes and to Bickenhill villages. We recognise the mitigating effect of a cutting throughout its length, but have concerns about the complexity of the Clock Junction and note that local traffic on Catherine-de-Barnes Lane will apparently merge with fast motorway traffic approaching the junction. The impact on Bickenhill village will be significant.

**Option 2:** is a more complex solution involving connections to local roads at Bickenhill. It will have a direct and harmful effect on the Green Belt creating a two-motorway corridor across fields north of Solihull Road and Shadowbrook Lane and a more direct effect on the village of Bickenhill.

**Option 3:** Is the shortest of the routes, and has the benefit of leaving the land between Solihull Road and Shadowbrook Lane unaffected. However, there is great concern that whilst Bickenhill village is still severely impacted the south-bound flyover across the M42 will bring it close to, and visible from, Old Station Road with consequent additional traffic noise and light pollution for residents already badly affected by M42 and A45 corridor noise. The impact of such a large concrete structure on the landscape will be considerable.

***For these reasons the Councils preference is Option 1.***

The Council takes this opportunity to comment on the current Motorway Service Area application at Catherine-de Barnes the site of which is within the parish. The Council is strongly against the proposal and has submitted its opposition as part of the local planning procedure because of the impact on the nearby Conservation Area, the size and scale of the development on the Meriden Gap Green Belt, the Secretary of State's dismissal of the applicant's appeal in 2009 and the inappropriate inclusion of a 100 bed hotel and conference centre within the development. The Council is also concerned that Option 1 and 2, if adopted, could provide access to an MSA in the area.

The Parish Council seeks reassurance that the options for improvements to Junction 6 will be determined without prejudice and will have no bearing on any future MSA determination.

*Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council  
25<sup>th</sup> January 2017*