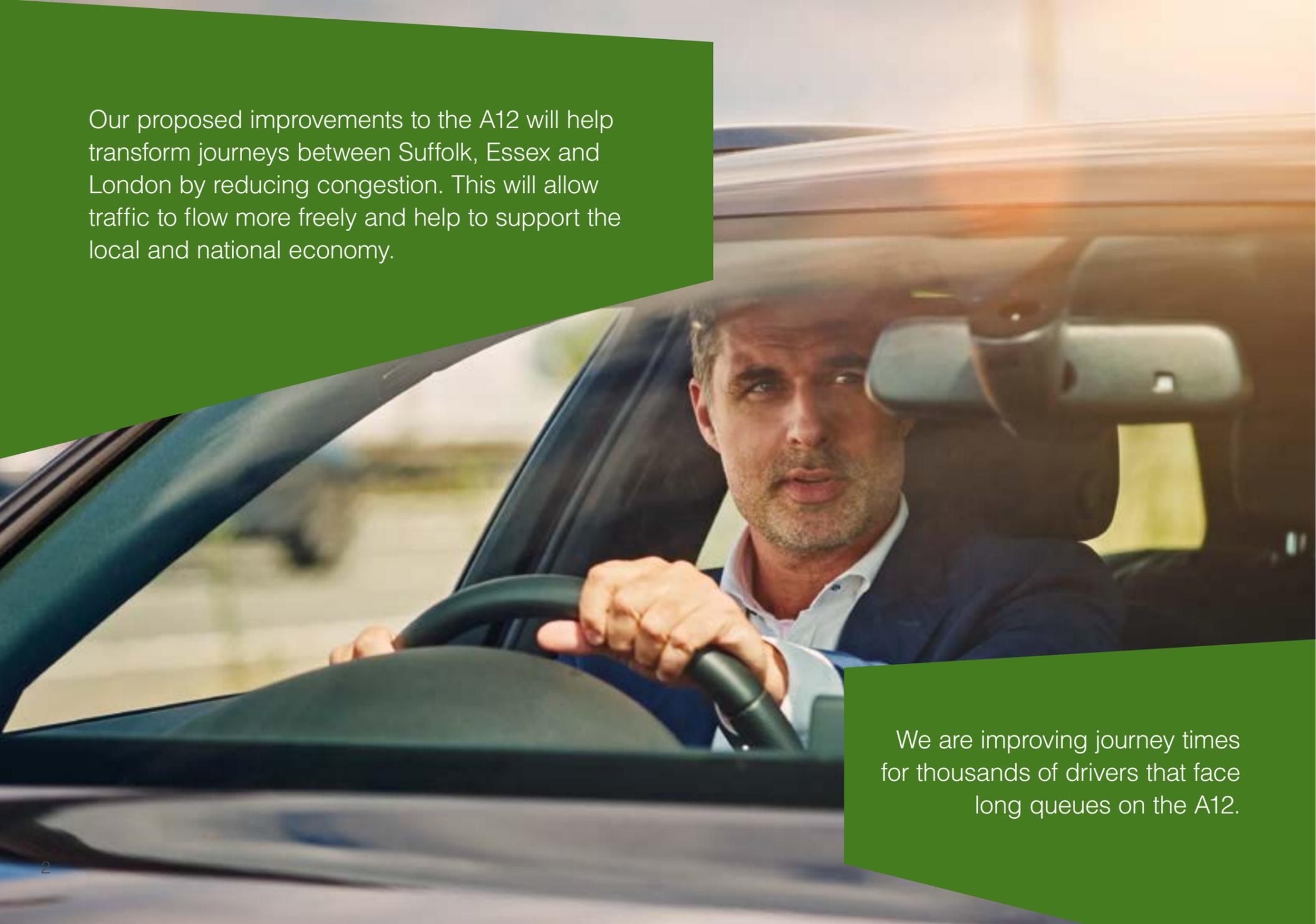


A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening
junctions 23 to 25
Preferred route announcement





Our proposed improvements to the A12 will help transform journeys between Suffolk, Essex and London by reducing congestion. This will allow traffic to flow more freely and help to support the local and national economy.

We are improving journey times for thousands of drivers that face long queues on the A12.

Contents

4	Investing in your roads
5	Why widen the A12?
5	Benefits of the A12 widening
7	Background
8	The preferred route
12	Public consultation and engagement to date
13	Response to the public consultation
14	Rejected routes
21	What happens next?
22	Application for a Development Consent Order
23	Further information

Investing in your roads

At Highways England, we believe in a connected country and our strategic road network makes these connections happen. We strive to improve our major roads and motorways, engineering the future to keep people moving today and moving better tomorrow. We want to make sure all our major roads are more dependable, durable and, most importantly, safe. That's why we're making a multi-billion-pound investment in our road network – the largest in a generation.

The A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening is a critical part of this investment, as this road plays an important role at a strategic, regional and local level.

The A12 is part of the Highways England strategic road network. It carries national and international traffic, providing connections between London and the M25 to the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich. These are key economic links between the UK and the global supply chain. Our planned improvements to the A12 are great news, not only for the national, but also for the regional and local economy. The improvements will help support the distribution of goods and services, link major regional commercial centres along the route, and provide better access to holiday destinations within the region. For commuters and residents travelling along the route between Chelmsford, Witham, Marks Tey and Colchester, the improvements will result in reduced congestion, more reliable journey times, and a road that consistently meets modern design standards.



In this leaflet we explain the preferred route for the A12 between junctions 23 (Kelvedon south) and 25 (Marks Tey interchange), the reasons for our decision, and the outcomes of the public consultations we held in January 2017 and October 2019. We also give you information about what will happen next.

To create a single proposal and planning application for the entire section of the A12 between junctions 19 and 25 (Marks Tey interchange), we are bringing together our preferred route for junctions 23 to 25 (Chelmsford) with our preferred route for junctions 19 to 23 (previously announced in October 2019).

Why widen the A12?

The A12 is an important economic link in Essex and across the east of England. It provides the main south west/north east route through Essex and Suffolk, connecting Ipswich to London and to the M25.

The section between Chelmsford and Colchester (junction 19 Boreham interchange to junction 25 Marks Tey interchange) carries high volumes of traffic, with up to 90,000 vehicles every day. Heavy goods vehicles are between 9% and 12% of the traffic on this section due to its important freight connection, especially to Felixstowe and Harwich ports. This section of the A12 is also an important commuter route between Chelmsford and Colchester. The resulting congestion leads to delays and means that, during the morning commute, a driver's average speed is particularly slow in both directions for an A-road.

We want to:

- improve safety for drivers, especially at the junctions and slip roads through better design
- reduce traffic congestion by increasing the capacity of the road, making journey times more reliable
- take long-distance traffic off the local roads and put it back onto the A12 where it belongs, so that local roads aren't used as 'rat runs', affecting local villages and their communities
- ensure that the road can cope with the predicted increase in traffic from more jobs and homes in the area
- make improvements for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and public transport users, to give them better connections and safer, more enjoyable journeys

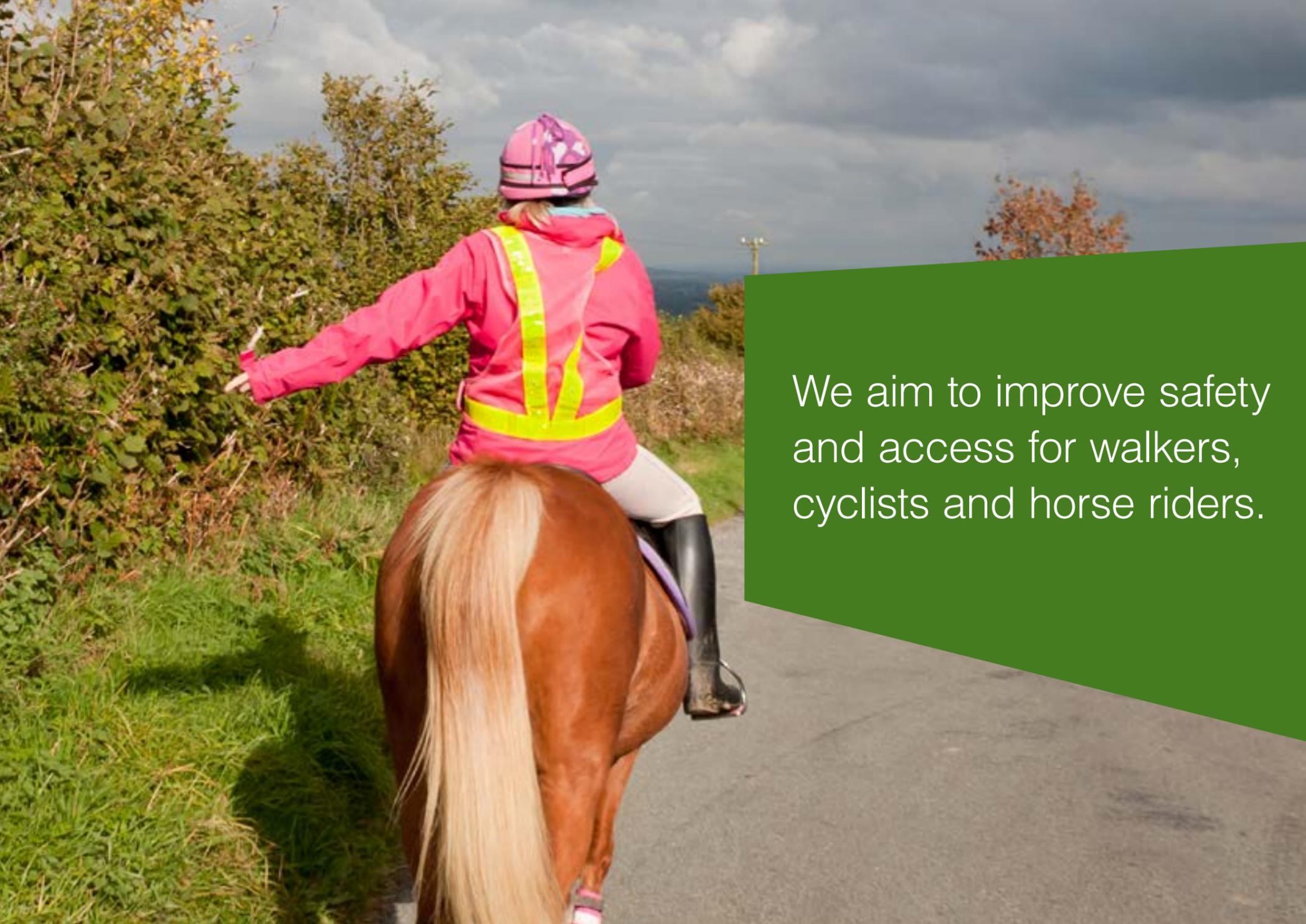


Overall, our proposed A12 widening will increase the average speeds on the road. This means that someone travelling along the A12 daily at peak times can expect to save over an hour of travel time each week.

Benefits of the A12 widening

On completion:

- the route will be safer and journey times more reliable, and there will be less disruption caused by collisions
- many local roads will benefit from lighter traffic. Instead, traffic will be on the A12 where it belongs
- there will be safer routes between communities for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, and improved safety and access for public transport users
- the route will support economic growth by bringing people and businesses closer together and by creating job opportunities
- the route will support long-term sustainable growth through reliable and improved journey times



We aim to improve safety and access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

Background

In 2017, we held a public consultation on our plans to widen the A12 from junction 19 at Chelmsford to junction 25 at the interchange with the A120. We presented four routes and had 907 responses. Following this, the local authorities of Colchester, Braintree and Tendring put forward a joint Local Plan, including the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community. This affected the route options presented in 2017, specifically the sections between junctions 23 and 25.

Consequently, in 2019, we considered alternative routes between junctions 23 and 25 that took account of the area for the proposed garden community. However, in May 2020, the Planning Inspector made his recommendation that the proposed garden community should be removed from the joint Local Plan.

We stated in our 2019 consultation that, if the proposed garden community did not go ahead, our preferred route would be based on our 2017 consultation. Therefore, the preferred route we are announcing today is based on our 2017 consultation. It has been selected based on several factors, including environmental impact, journey times, complexity of build, affordability, feedback from the public and of course the recent advice given by the Planning Inspector on the joint Local Plan.

The preferred route

Following our preferred route announcement (PRA) for junctions 19 to 23 in October 2019, we are pleased to announce our preferred route between junctions 23 to 25.

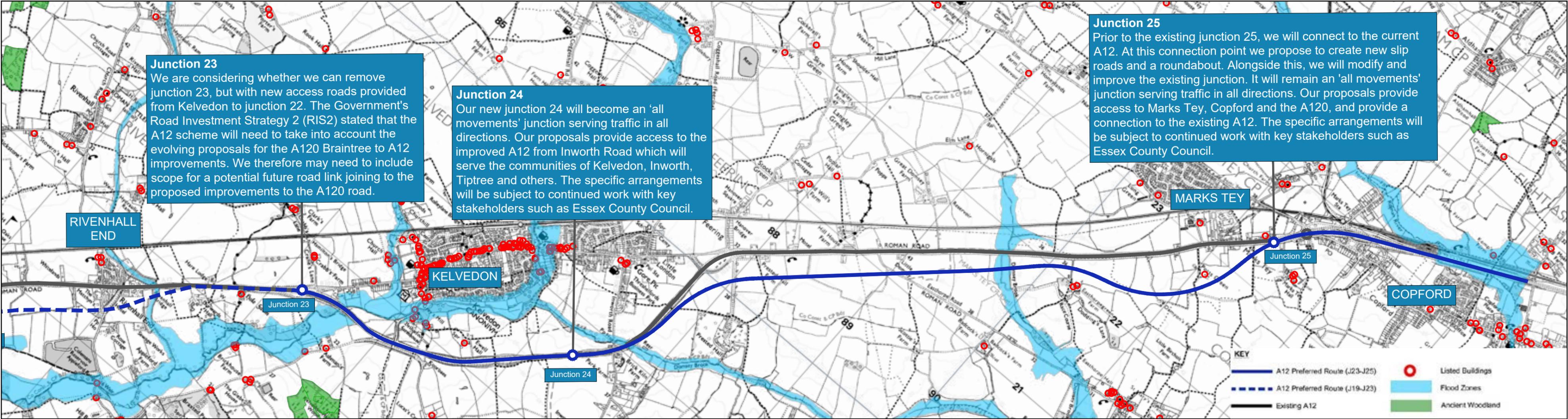
Our plan includes widening the existing A12 between junctions 23 and 24, and the construction of a bypass between junctions 24 and 25 which was supported by 58%* of people. The preferred route for junctions 23 to 25 is as follows:

- As stated in the PRA brochure for junctions 19 to 23, we are considering whether we can remove junction 23, but with new access roads provided from Kelvedon to junction 22. The Government's Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) stated that the A12 scheme will need to take into account the evolving proposals for the proposed A120 Braintree to A12 improvements. We therefore may need to include scope for a potential future road link joining to the proposed improvements to the A120 road.
- At junction 23, the road will re-join the current A12 alignment and widen to three lanes in each direction all the way to the new junction 24.
- A new junction 24, south of the location shown in 2017 will be constructed with a connection to Inworth Road. It will become an 'all movements' junction serving traffic in all directions.
- At junction 24, the road will leave the existing A12 and create a three-lane bypass to the south, running in parallel with the existing A12, before re-joining at junction 25.
- The existing A12 road will be detrunked and retained for use by local traffic.

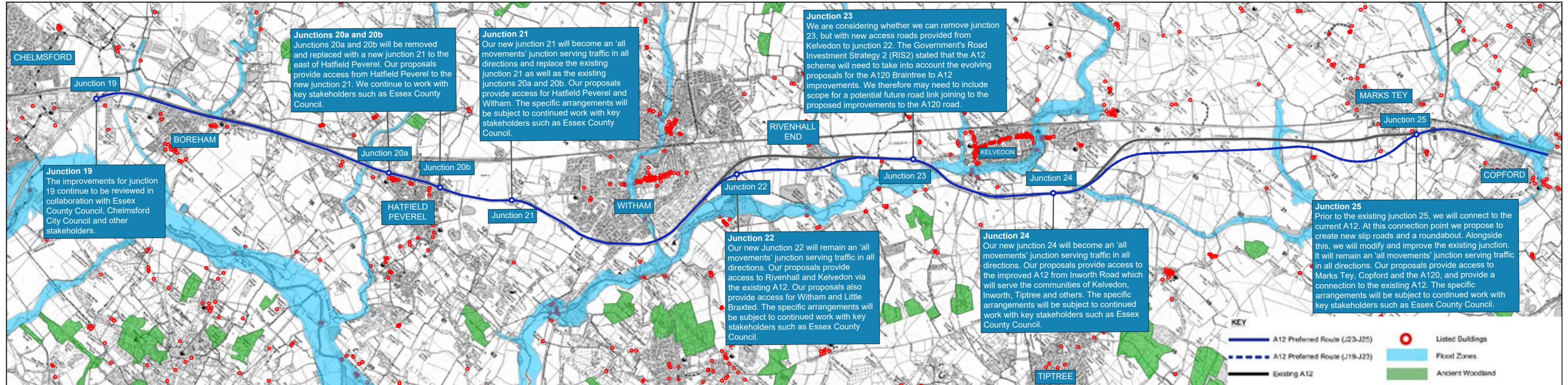
With today's announcement, we now have a preferred route for the whole scheme, from junctions 19 to 25. This is route 2 from our 2017 consultation.

*of those who expressed a preference for an option in 2017.

Our preferred route – A12 junctions 23 to 25



Bringing the scheme together: Our preferred A12 route from junctions 19 to 25



Public consultation and engagement to date

2017 consultation - junctions 19 to 25

Between January and March 2017, we held a public consultation that presented four routes to widen the A12 from Chelmsford to where it joins the A120 (junctions 19 to 25).

During the consultation, we held seven public exhibitions in the local area where stakeholders and members of the public were able to speak to our technical experts. We gained valuable feedback that has helped us identify our preferred route. A total of 1,853 people visited our exhibitions and we received 907 responses to that consultation. The public response to our proposals was positive, with 757 responses supporting one of our four routes.

Preferred Route Announcement - junctions 19 to 23

On Monday 21 October 2019, we announced our preferred route for junctions 19 to 23. This route was based on our 2017 consultation route 2. The preferred route for junctions 19 to 23 was well received, particularly the bypass at Rivenhall. We have spent time engaging with Essex County Council, local planning authorities and parish councils to discuss concerns around the removal of junctions 20a and 20b and access arrangements for the new junction 21.

You can read more about the preferred route for junctions 19 to 23 at www.highwaysengland.co.uk/A12

Consultation – junctions 23 to 25

On 21 October 2019, we launched a six-week consultation that showed alternative routes between junctions 23 and 25. These further routes took account of the area for the proposed garden community.

A total of 822 responses were received. The majority of respondents commented that they strongly opposed all routes on the basis that they were against the proposed garden community, or that they preferred the routes presented in 2017. All comments from this consultation were independently analysed and can be found in the Report on Public Consultation.

Since then, in May 2020, the Planning Inspector made his recommendation that the proposed garden community should be removed from the joint Local Plan.

Preferred route – junctions 23 to 25

As a result of the Planning Inspector’s recommendation, we were able to rule out the 2019 consultation routes that considered the proposed garden community. Today’s announcement is therefore based on the 2017 consultation routes.

In 2017, 757 people supported one of the four routes. Both routes 2 and 4 provided a bypass between junctions 24 and 25 and were supported by 439 people (58%). *of those who expressed a preference for an option in 2017 (as on PRA 23 to 25 page)

Responses to the public consultation in 2017 about the preferred route

“Option 2 provides the greater benefit to the area, with less emissions, more capacity, and less disruption to the road users whilst the bypasses are being built, allowing existing traffic to continue unaffected for most of the time.”

“Building offline bypasses will minimize disruption during building, and also provide existing residents and businesses with road connectivity afterwards.”

“I support Option 2 on the basis that the radius of the Kelvedon/Feering bends would be eased, which would reduce the risk of accidents and remove the need for average speed cameras.”

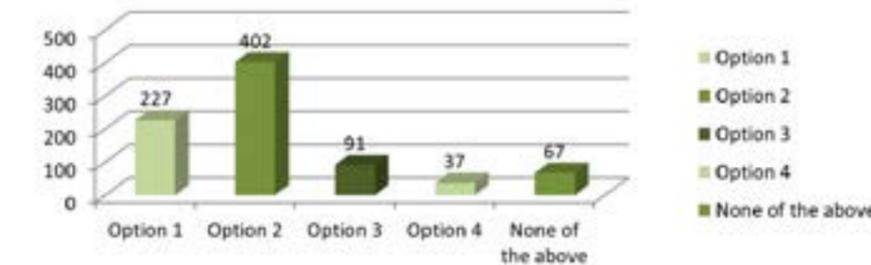
“Eliminates dangerous slip roads and junctions, straightens curves in road and moves the A12 away from major villages.”

“I believe for the long-term future of the road, this option should be preferred. Mainly it would reduce congestion whilst construction is ongoing.”

“Option 2 will improve congestion on all the main bottlenecks.”

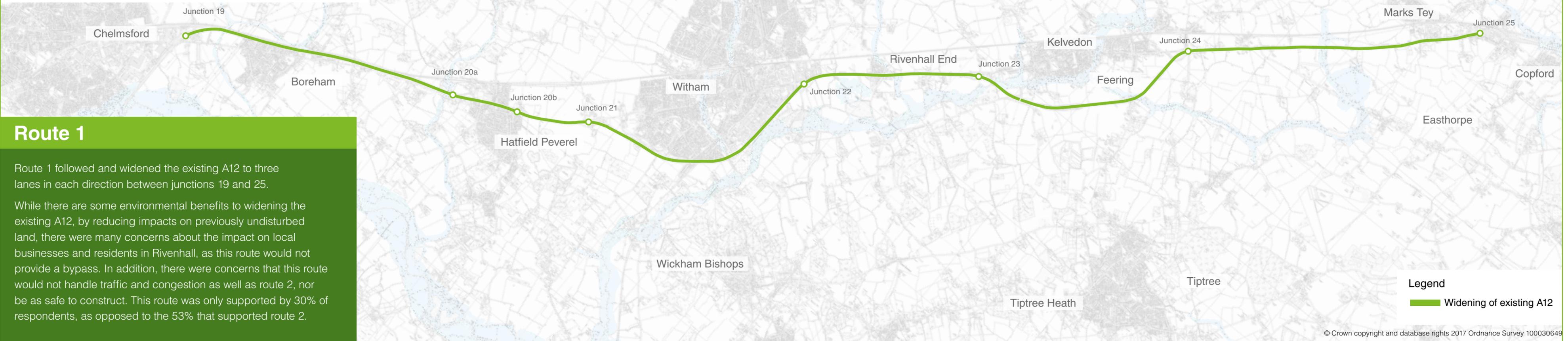
“Would allow the old road to provide property access, a corridor for pedestrians, cyclists, agricultural traffic, local and elderly drivers and a relief road during maintenance or accidents on the new A12.”

Option Preference

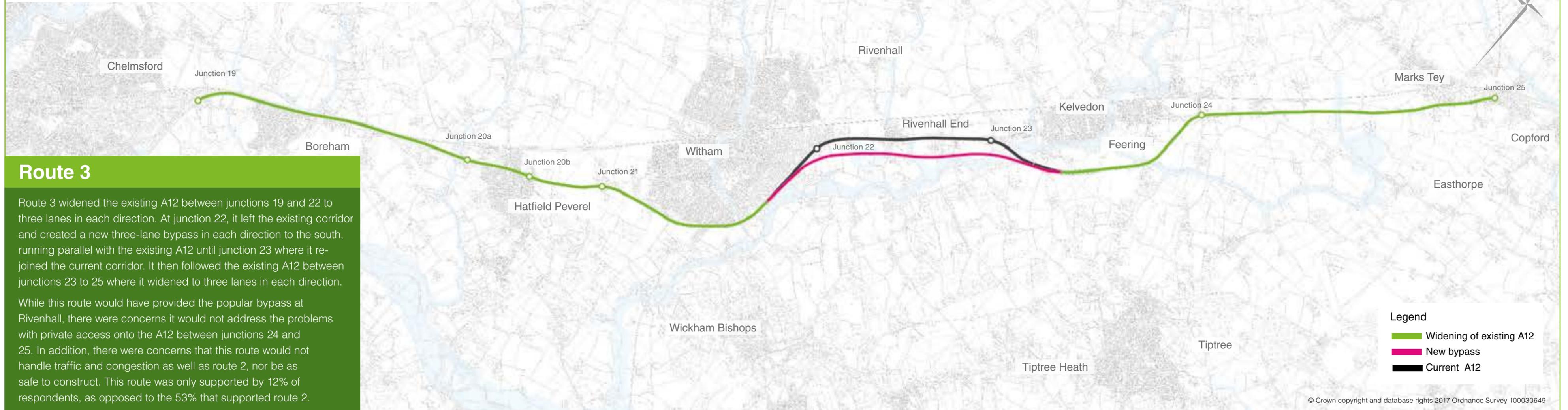


Rejected routes from the 2017 and 2019 consultations

Rejected 2017 consultation routes



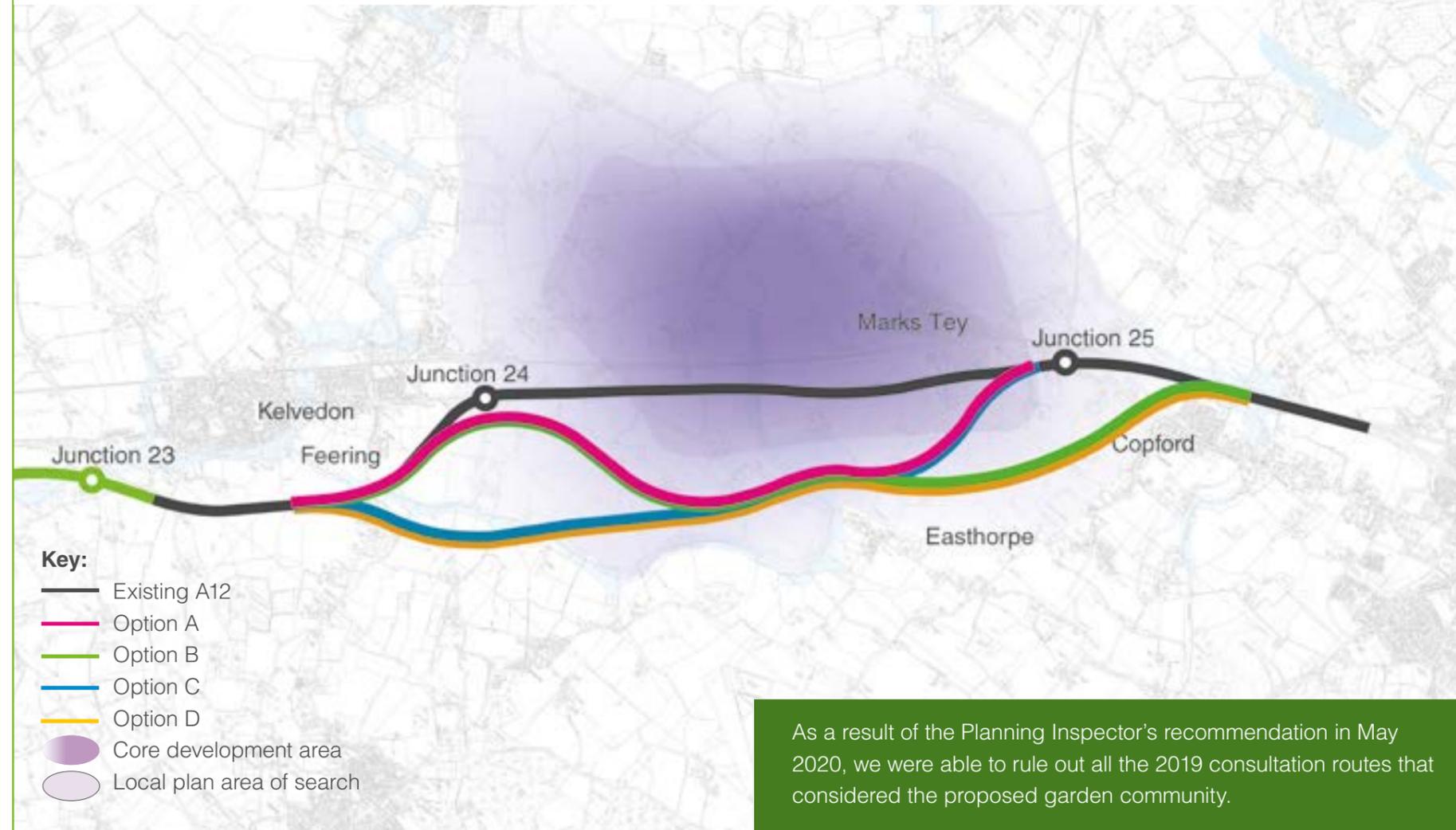
Rejected 2017 consultation routes



Rejected 2017 consultation routes



Rejected 2019 consultation routes A, B, C and D



What happens next?

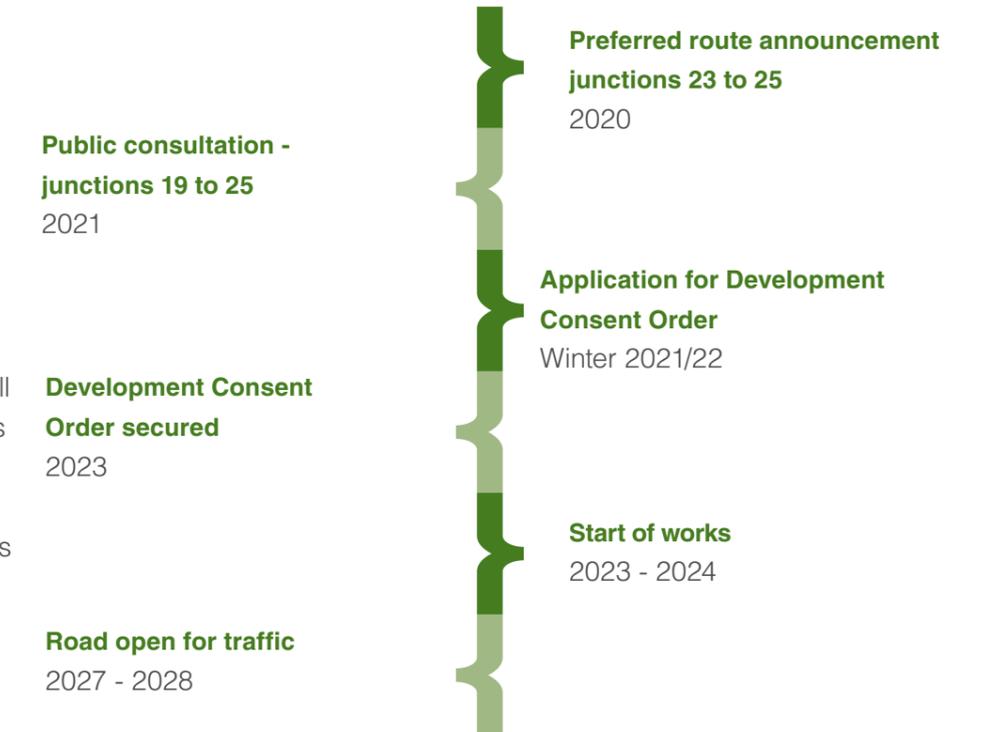
Now we have announced our preferred route between junctions 19 and 25, we will continue to develop our proposed improvements in more detail and carry out further surveys and investigations.

We will post updates about the project on our website at www.highwaysengland.co.uk/A12

In the meantime, we will continue to engage with our stakeholders, affected landowners and the local community to help us refine the designs before inviting the public to submit further feedback.

In line with other transformative infrastructure projects, the government will be seeking to ensure that the benefits unlocked by the A12 improvements are felt by local communities and are captured appropriately. This includes funding contributions and developer contributions in some cases. We will continue to work with local authorities and key stakeholders to discuss thirty party funding contributions.

Timeline



Application for a Development Consent Order (DCO)

This scheme is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. This means that we are required to make an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to obtain permission to construct the scheme.

The application will be made to the Planning Inspectorate, who will examine the application. The examination is likely to involve public hearings. Following the examination, the Examining Authority will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will decide whether the project will go ahead. We intend to submit our application in winter 2021/22 and if approved, we expect to start construction in 2023/24.

Find out more about the DCO process on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>



Further information

www.highwaysengland.co.uk/A12

The following documents are also available to read and download from the project web pages:

- Consultation brochure (spring 2017)
- Consultation brochure – junctions 23 to 25 (October 2019)
- Preferred Route Announcement – junctions 19 to 23 (October 2019)
- A12 Options Assessment Report
- A12 Traffic Data Collection Report
- A12 Report on Public Consultation
- The proposed area of development boundary
- Scheme Assessment Report

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