



**A47 Wansford to Sutton**  
Preliminary Environmental Information Report  
Non-Technical Summary - PCF Stage 3  
September 2018



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## Introduction

Highways England proposes to upgrade the existing section of single carriageway between Wansford and Sutton to dual carriageway. The existing A47 from Wansford to Sutton experiences delays and high levels of congestion during peak hours.

Highways England aim to improve the traffic flow, reducing journey times on the route, increasing the route safety and resilience, and improve the environment. The Proposed Scheme will also help unlock economic growth in the east of England by improving journey time reliability, increasing safety and improving connectivity.

This proposal is a “Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project” (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008, which means that an application will need to be made for permission to build and operate the Proposed Scheme. The permission is called a Development Consent Order (DCO) and requires Highways England to make an application to the Secretary of State for development consent to build and operate the Proposed Scheme. Development consent is granted by the Secretary of State through a DCO which sets out the powers to construct and operate the scheme. Before an application for a DCO is submitted, the local community and other stakeholders must be formally consulted on the proposals, including a description of the Proposed Scheme, the likely significant environmental effects based on the preliminary environmental information available at the time, measures to avoid or reduce such effects and the

alternatives considered. This is to support consultees in developing an informed view of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Scheme.

A Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) has been prepared to describe the environmental setting and currently anticipated impacts of the Proposed Scheme on the environment. The PEIR has been developed for consultation and presents currently available information from the ongoing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This document provides a summary of the PEIR in non-technical language.

The information contained within the PEIR is not complete and the findings will be developed further in the Environmental Statement (ES) to reflect the progression of the design of the Proposed Scheme, informed by the feedback from the consultation, and the ongoing EIA processes. The ES, presenting the full results of the EIA, will be submitted with the application for the DCO.

## The Applicant

Highways England is the Applicant, and the Strategic Highways Company as defined in the Infrastructure Act 2015 and is charged with modernising and maintaining England’s strategic road network, as well as running the network and keeping traffic moving.

## The Proposed Scheme

The project is referred to as the 'Proposed Scheme'. The A47 trunk road provides for a variety of local, medium and long-distance trips between the A1 and the east coast. The A47 road connects the cities of Norwich and Peterborough, the towns of Wisbech, King's Lynn, Dereham, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft and a succession of villages in what is largely a rural area.

The A47 Wansford to Sutton section, comprising of a single carriageway, is located approximately 14km to the west of Peterborough.

The route currently experiences delays and high levels of congestion during peak hours. The situation is predicted to get worse with proposed growth in residential development.

It is therefore proposed to upgrade the existing 2.5km section of single carriageway between Wansford and Sutton to dual carriageway (see schematic plan above). The existing junctions along this section will also be improved.

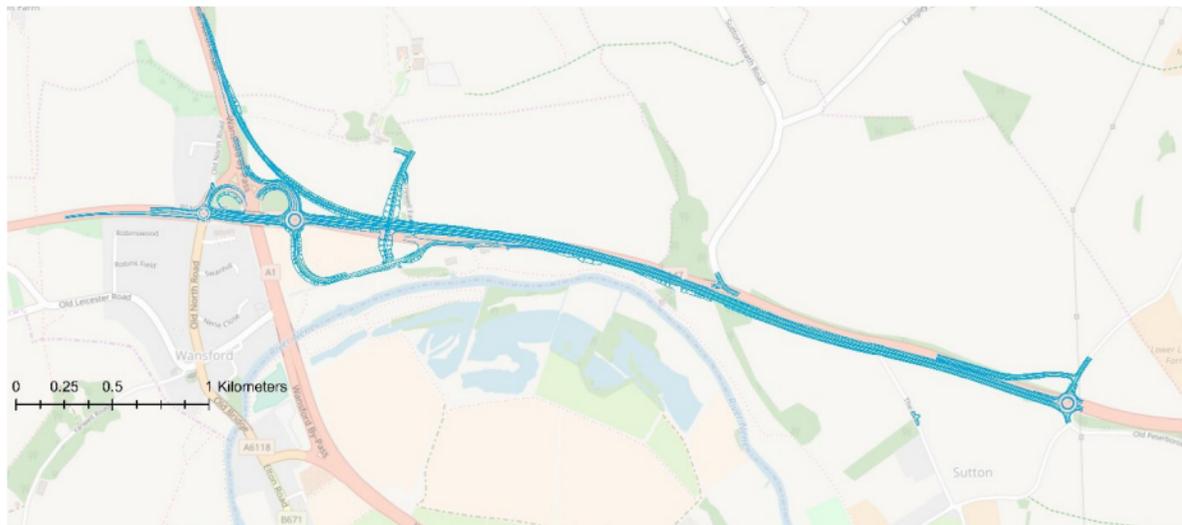


Figure 1-1: The Proposed Scheme



## Scheme Description

The Proposed Scheme would be approximately 1.6 miles, just under 2.5 kilometres, long and would comprise the construction of a new dual-carriageway between Wansford and Sutton with the following key features:

- The dual-carriageway shall run to the north of the existing A47 at the western end and then cross to the south of the existing road and join the Nene Way Roundabout at the eastern end of the Proposed Scheme.
- A new free-flow slip road shall be constructed connecting the existing A1 southbound carriageway to the new A47 eastbound carriageway.
- The existing diverge lane off the A1 southbound shall be retained as part of arrangements to accommodate movements to the A47 westbound via the existing Wansford east roundabout.
- The existing section of the A47 will be retained in places for local traffic and will be locally realigned to form a new priority junction with Upton Road. This will also provide a connection between Sutton Heath Road and the new A47.

Subject to successfully passing through the Development Consent Order process, the key timescales for the Proposed Scheme are as follows:

- start of construction work – autumn 2020
- estimated duration of construction – 18 months
- open for traffic – winter 2021 / 2022

## Alternatives

In seeking to resolve the transport problem, 10 potential options were developed and assessed to identify their performance against safety, environmental, engineering, transportation and economic criteria so that they could be compared to allow the most appropriate options to be taken forward. These options can be reviewed in the Scheme Assessment Report (SAR) at the following link;

<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a47-wansford-to-sutton-dualling/>

Three options were then selected for non-statutory public consultation and further assessment. Assessment was undertaken with regard to environmental impact and engineering suitability.

- **Option 1** was the online dualling of the existing A47 between Wansford and Sutton plus free flow link to A1 southbound.
- **Option 2** was part off-line to the north, part off-line to the south plus free flow link from A1 southbound.
- **Option 3** was off-line to the north plus free flow from the A1 southbound.

Having reviewed the feedback following the non-statutory consultation and the results of the further environmental, economic and technical assessment, it was identified that Option 2 solves the main traffic and safety problems along the route. Previous design and development also concluded that Option 2 would have significant advantages in terms of environmental impact when compared to Option 3 and would have less impact during construction when compared to Option 1. Option 2 was therefore identified as the preferred route.



However, key concerns raised during the non-statutory consultation have influenced an amendment to the original Option 2 proposal. The new dual-carriageway would be moved as close as possible to the southern edge of the existing A47 at the eastern end of the Proposed Scheme. This would:

- increase the distance from the new road to both the River Nene and the village of Sutton
- reduce the amount of land-take required
- allow for the easiest connection of existing side roads to the new A47
- allow for most of the existing A47 to remain in place for local traffic and walkers, cyclists and horse riders

This amendment is now included in the Proposed Scheme.



## Environmental Impact Assessment

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process that identifies the likely environmental effects (both adverse and beneficial) of a proposed development. Environmental effects are assessed through understanding of the potential impacts and the sensitivity of the receptors for a given scheme. It ensures that the importance of effects are properly considered and that the opportunity for reducing any adverse effects are taken into account as part of the design development process. The EIA is undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance and includes a spatial and temporal scope for its assessment.

Each environmental topic chapter of the Preliminary Environment Information Report (PEIR) describes the local environment and identifies any sensitive receptors such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, people living near the Proposed Scheme and local environment management areas such as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) or Noise Important Areas.

Further work will be undertaken in all of the following chapters to develop design interventions to limit or reduce impacts and promote opportunities for the environment wherever possible. Design development and associated mitigation will be reported in the ES as well as further detailing of baseline conditions and likely changes during both construction and operation for all identified receptors.



### Air Quality

There are currently no declared AQMAs, these are locations that are not expect to achieve the national air quality objectives, within the study area.

The Proposed Scheme has the potential for both positive and negative impacts on air quality around the A47 and surrounding roads as a result of changes in the road layout and changes in traffic flows. There is the potential for an increase in dust levels, due to construction activity however no additional mitigation measures during the construction phase other than best practice are likely to be required.

A review of existing air quality data, and the likely changes to the volume of traffic due to the Proposed Scheme suggests that there is the potential for both positive and negative air quality impacts dependent on location.

## Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage includes archaeology, historic buildings / structures and historic landscapes including parks and gardens.

The Proposed Scheme is situated immediately to the south of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery with later Roman enclosures. This is a Scheduled Monument which is a nationally important archaeological site which has protection against unauthorised change.

Roman settlements, several villas, a fort, and an ironworking site have been recorded in the area surrounding the Proposed Scheme. There are a small number of Saxon finds, but no settlement evidence.

The landscape appears to have remained rural with agricultural activities, with pockets of quarrying activity throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Geophysical surveying is a remote sensing technique which allows a reading of hidden archaeology, this has been undertaken to inform the assessment of the Proposed Scheme. This is used in combination with other survey techniques, such as trial trenching, which are excavations used to determine or confirm archaeological remains. The Geophysical surveys have revealed 5 areas of activity across the Proposed Scheme, probably dating to the prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods.



## Landscape

Major roads dominate the local environment, with the A47 running through the study area to the north of Sutton and Stibbington, whilst the A1 runs to the east of Wansford creating a physical boundary between the village and the remainder of the study area.

There is likely to be adverse visual impacts on occupiers of residential properties and recreational users of Public Rights of way during construction.

There is potential for an impact on landscape character and views to and from the road while new planting is becoming established. Impacts would also result from the loss of mature trees and hedge-rows in the landscape. These impacts will be reduced once the planting becomes more established. In areas of high sensitivity semi-mature trees may be planted.

## Biodiversity

There are valuable habitats and species which could be impacted by the Proposed Scheme. These include nationally designated sites such as the Sutton Heath and Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest and locally designated sites such as the Sutton Meadows County Wildlife Site.

The on-going ecological surveys will help identify protected species within the study area and suitable mitigation measures to reduce the impacts through sensitive design and construction methods.

An Ecological Clerk of Works, who will be a competent ecologist will supervise sensitive phases of construction during vegetation clearance. Habitats will be created to provide multiple benefits, to reduce impacts during construction and operation.

A number of early measures have been recommended to guide the design process and identify the required mitigation. These measures are not a comprehensive list at this stage and will be reviewed regularly. Any additional measures that are identified during the survey and design work will also be incorporated. The Proposed Scheme will eventually result in an increase in local biodiversity.

## Geology & Soils

There are no geologically sensitive areas of importance within the study area.

The land surrounding the Proposed Scheme is mostly agricultural and much of this is used for arable production. The quality of the agricultural land will be determined and reported in the ES.

The Construction Environmental Management Plan would include a Soil Management Plan that will mitigate the majority of impacts arising from construction.

Land taken as part of the Proposed Scheme would result in loss of agricultural land. However, any land taken temporarily for construction will be returned to farming where possible.

## Materials

The assessment for materials considers potential impacts from the Proposed Scheme from the use of material resources and generation of waste.

There are no current estimates on the quantity of materials required and waste generated for the construction of the Proposed Scheme. These shall be developed as the design is progressed and reported in the ES.

There is the potential for adverse impacts during construction, due to the anticipated use of materials and the generation of waste typical for a road infrastructure scheme of this size.



## Noise and vibration

There is the potential for noise and vibration impacts from the Proposed Scheme, both short-term temporary impacts associated with construction activities and long-term permanent impacts due to road traffic noise.

Sensitive receptors, such as houses and community facilities, close to the Proposed Scheme have been identified. Receptors that are close to the A1 and A47 are already exposed to relatively high noise due to road traffic.

There are likely to be noise impacts due to the construction of the Proposed Scheme on nearby sensitive receptors. This is particularly likely in Wansford, Sutton and on Sutton Heath Road.

Any change in road traffic noise due to the introduction of the new access and slip roads, changes in alignment, changes in traffic mix and speed, road surface and any barriers or bunds would be calculated and assessed in detail for the ES and mitigation measures would be introduced to avoid or reduce impacts where possible.



## People & communities – All Travellers

There is the potential for positive and negative impacts from the Proposed Scheme upon all travellers during construction and operation.

Journey length and time are predicted to temporarily increase for users of a number of walking, cycling and horse riding (WCHR) facilities during construction. Public use of WCHR facilities is also likely to be adversely impacted at the construction phase. The Proposed Scheme will provide new facilities for WCHRs.

Construction works could temporarily increase stress for drivers and cause disruption for local communities. This would be managed through the implementation of a traffic management plan. During operation, driver stress would likely be reduced by improved journey times and journey reliability.

Views from the road are likely to change from the existing levels during operation with the new carriageway constructed to the north and south of the existing A47. Impacts on views from the road during operation cannot be predicted at this stage.



## People and Communities – Social Impacts

There is the potential for positive and negative impacts from the Proposed Scheme upon people and communities during construction and operation.

Impacts are likely during the construction phase as result of land-take, restricted access to commercial properties, human health impacts associated with severance of WCHR routes and temporary employment generation. One residential property located to the east of the disused railway line would be demolished for the Proposed Scheme.

During the operational phase, there are likely to be impacts on development land (land covered in local authorities' planning designations) and the economy.

Any design development and potential mitigation will be reported in the ES as well as further detailing of baseline conditions and likely changes during both construction and operation for all identified receptors.

## Road Drainage and Water Environment

There is the potential for positive and negative impacts from the Proposed Scheme upon road drainage and the water environment during construction and operation.

During the construction and operational phases there is the potential for impacts on surface water and groundwater receptors these are streams, ponds and other water features within the study area.

Best practice during construction will ensure there will be no impacts on the Drinking Water Protection Area in the River Nene. During operation the drainage design will ensure there are no anticipated impacts on existing surface or ground water quality.

## Climate

The UK government has legally binding targets for reducing the carbon emissions by 80% by 2050, relative to a 1990 baseline. As part of the EIA, there is a requirement to assess the impacts of projects on climate and their vulnerability to climate change.

The Proposed Scheme is anticipated to generate an increase in carbon emissions during both construction and operation. Changes in climate have the potential to affect the Proposed Scheme assets and other environmental receptors during operation. This will be explained further as part of the assessment contained within the ES.

## Combined and Cumulative

The potential impacts from the Proposed Scheme upon individual residences or villages from changes in noise, air quality, visual intrusion, water quality, traffic, and land-take including the combinations of all or some of these together will be presented within the ES.

The impacts on receptors from other proposed local developments in conjunction with the impacts from the Proposed Scheme will also be assessed and presented within the ES.



## Consultation

This Non-Technical Summary has been prepared to help those potentially affected or interested in the Proposed Scheme to understand the environmental setting and anticipated impacts of the Proposed Scheme on the environment. This will allow these considerations to be considered in your responses to the consultation.

Your feedback from the consultation will inform our continuing development of the scheme. Once we have taken your feedback into consideration, we plan to submit our application for a Development Consent Order in Spring 2019. We will also prepare a report on the consultation, recording the feedback and our response, which will be published with our application.

In addition to this consultation process, we will continue to engage with anyone interested in, or impacted by, the Proposed Scheme.

To help us shape the final design in preparation of our submission to the Planning Inspectorate, it is important you are involved now and submit your response by **Monday 29 October 2018**.

