

Our ref: CRS 746,108
Your ref:

Second Floor
Woodlands
Manton Lane
Bedford MK41 7LW

Direct Line:

Via email

16 December 2016

Dear

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS 2004 OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE EXPRESSWAY

Thank you for your email of 3 December requesting detailed route proposal plans for the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. I am writing to confirm that we have now completed our search for the information.

Detailed plans of the routes shown on page 39 of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Study Stage 3 Report have been produced to enable work described below to be carried out and they do show their location in relation to a considerable number of properties and land holdings.

We have, however, decided not to release these detailed plans in reliance of Regulation 12(4)(d) because the material produced forms part of our decision making process which is still in the course of completion. A copy of the Public Interest Test favouring non-disclosure is attached for information.

As the material forms part of our decision making process, we have also decided that we require the safe space in which to do this away from public scrutiny. We believe that to release the information now will mislead land and property owners into believing they will be adversely affected by proposals when this may not be the case. This may in turn divert project resources by responding to a disproportionate volume of enquiries that would require a response.

Highways England has been asked to carry out the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Strategic Study on behalf of the Department for Transport. The requirement for this study was set out in the first Road Investment Strategy (RIS), published in December 2014, which announced a programme of new strategic studies which explore options to address some of the large and complex challenges facing the strategic road network. The results of these high-level studies will inform the development of the next RIS, which will commence in April 2020.

The aim of the study is to consider whether there is a case for improving east-west connectivity between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge and to then consider the options for improving the road network which can support growth. For the better options, this will include the preparation of strategic outline business cases which can be considered in developing future Road Investment Strategies.

The work reported in the stage 3 report published on 28 November, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway-strategic-study-stage-3-report> outlines the high level case for a strategic link and will inform further work to develop options for intervention.

Based on work so far, we have identified three options with various sub-options for further development. These options are still at a very early stage of development and further work will be required to determine the best route possible in terms of wider economic benefits to the surrounding area.

The route options shown on page 39 of the stage 3 report have been generated solely to produce an indication of likely estimated costs, benefits and environmental effects of an alignment between the A34 and the M1, the output of which will be used to determine whether there is a case to further investigate an improved east-west connectivity. They have no other status.

If a suitable route(s) are identified, public consultation will take place in the normal way and affected interested parties will be invited to comment. It is currently too early to say when we might hold a public consultation however, we will publish any information on our website, <http://roads.highways.gov.uk/> as and when the information is available.

A copy of the Public Interest Test favouring non-disclosure is attached for information.

If you are unhappy with the way we have handled your request you may ask for an internal review. Our internal review process is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/highways-england/about/complaints-procedure>

If you require a print copy, please phone the Information Line on 0300 123 5000; or email info@highwaysengland.co.uk. You should contact me if you wish to complain.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote reference number 746,108 in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

Business Management Team Leader
Operations (East)
Email:

Request for detailed proposed route maps	
EIR Regulations 12(4)(d) Material in the course of completion, unfinished documents and incomplete data	
<i>Factors supporting disclosure</i>	<i>Factors supporting non-disclosure</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an important public interest in the work of Highways England being transparent and open to scrutiny to increase diligence and to protect the public purse; • There is a strong public interest in releasing information which shows the criteria used when assessing options to illustrate that the processes used were fair and appropriate. • There is a presumption in favour of release of information. • There is an interest by the public in how their property and land may be affected by future proposals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways England should be afforded the safe space to conclude their work to determine which route option(s) will be taken forward to public consultation. • Release of the information now could mislead the public into believing their land or property will be adversely affected causing unwarranted alarm, requiring a disproportionate effort to correct that view. • Highways England will take route option proposals to public consultation where detailed plans of those routes will be available. • At that time, it will be clearer what property and land is likely to be affected and Highways England will take steps to properly inform land and property owners.
<p>Overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the information is not on emissions; • Release of the information could mislead the public into believe land or property will be adversely affected; • Highways England will take route option proposals to public consultation; • The public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information 	
<p>Conclusion: there are compelling arguments which support withholding the information which outweigh those supporting release.</p> <p>Date of PIT: 14 December 2016</p>	