

OXFORD TO CAMBRIDGE EXPRESSWAY STUDY

TERMS OF REFERENCE

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Study Aim

1. The Road Investment Strategy Investment Plan published in December 2014 describes the purpose of this study as follows:

“...examine the case for creating an Expressway to connect the towns and cities of the ‘Brain Belt’ together. It will also look at other enhancements on existing roads along the route, including the A34 around Oxford.”

2. The strategic aim of the **Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Study** is to consider options for improving connectivity between the towns and cities in the ‘Brain Belt’. It will identify and provide an initial appraisal of the improvements to the road network which can support the growth in this area. For the better options, this will include preparation of strategic outline business cases which can be considered in developing future Road Investment Strategies.
3. Some of the fastest growing towns in England are located in a belt to the north of London, and improved infrastructure can support the growth of these towns, bringing wider economic benefits to the UK as a whole. However transport connections between cities such as Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford are notably poor and create an artificial barrier between hubs of knowledge-based growth. With better links between Oxford and Cambridge the synergies between these cities would be stronger. In turn, improved connections for the communities alongside this corridor could further to drive growth in other towns alongside this route, such as Bicester.
4. In total, the South East Midlands LEP alone is predicting almost 100,000 new houses and the creation of 135,000 jobs in its area. The other LEPs along this route are also predicting growth in both jobs (Oxford: 7,000, Thames Valley Berks: 15,000, Greater Cambridgeshire: 32,000) and homes (Oxford: 16,000, Thames Valley Berks: 29,000, Greater Cambridgeshire: 35,000).
5. Such developments are likely to increase pressure on the SRN in this area.
6. Much of an Expressway throughout this area could be created through improving the existing road network. However, there is a gap in the SRN between the M1 at Milton Keynes and the M40 near Oxford: traffic travelling the 30 miles between the two cities by dual carriageway has to take a 60 mile route. Filling this gap should be the main focus of this study.
7. The current dual carriageway route travels along the A43 and a large proportion of the junctions are not grade separated. The shortest route along major A roads requires drivers to journey along a 16 mile single carriageway, the A421, which incorporates only non-graded junctions.

8. On the western side of the study area, delays and slow speeds are currently experienced at a number of points, such as on the M40 at junctions 9 and 10, approaching the A421 on the A43 North of Bicester and approaching the M4 on the A34 South of Oxford. There are plans to make technology improvements to the A34 between the M4 and the M40 and make improvements to the Oxford junctions on the A34 planned in the current Road Period.
9. On the eastern side of the study area, the RIS investment plan commits to widening the A428 from Caxton Gibbet west of Cambridge to the Black Cat Roundabout at the junction of the A1, which will create an Expressway from Cambridge to Milton Keynes. However, there are a number of junctions and roads along the route between Milton Keynes and Cambridge, which experience capacity issues. The junction between the A1 and A421 at the Black Cat roundabout experiences severe and frequent congestion and the A428 between the A1 and A1198 in Cambridgeshire is reliably and heavily congested during peak periods. Improvements to the A428, the A34 and the A14 have also been planned for the current Road period.
10. The study area has three of the Top 75 collision locations at M40 J9 (No 21), M1 J13 (No 52) and Black Cat Roundabout (No 69). There are also AQMAs along the A421 around Bedford and the A34 along the Southern by-pass in Oxford (also a Noise Important Area).

Study Objectives

11. The objectives of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Strategic Study are to:
 - assess and form a preliminary strategic case for improving the transport network in the region based on the strategic and economic benefits;
 - define the transport objectives that this ongoing study should seek to identify options for;
 - identify a long-list of options which could meet the transport objectives, and undertake a high level assessment of the potential VfM, benefits and impacts of the different options using the Early Assessment Sifting Tool (EAST);
 - short-list the better options to be carried forward;
 - prepare a Strategic Outline Business Case for the better option(s) for consideration in the development of future RIS.
12. The study should:
 - Consider:
 - Previous studies on the transport network in and around the study area, including the relevant route strategies.
 - Local transport and spatial strategies.
 - Take account of:
 - Planned growth in the Brain Belt and the surrounding areas
 - Committed road schemes, including but not limited to, A428, A34, A14
 - Already planned improvements to non-road transport in this area, such as the East-West Rail Link.

GEOGRAPHIC AND MODAL SCOPE

Geographic Scope

13. The geographic scope of the study considers the effects of improved connectivity between Oxford and Cambridge, with particular consideration being given to a route which also benefits Bicester, Milton Keynes and the areas South of Oxford along the A34 north of the M4. A map of the proposed approximate geographical scope of the study is included at Figure 1 on the following page.

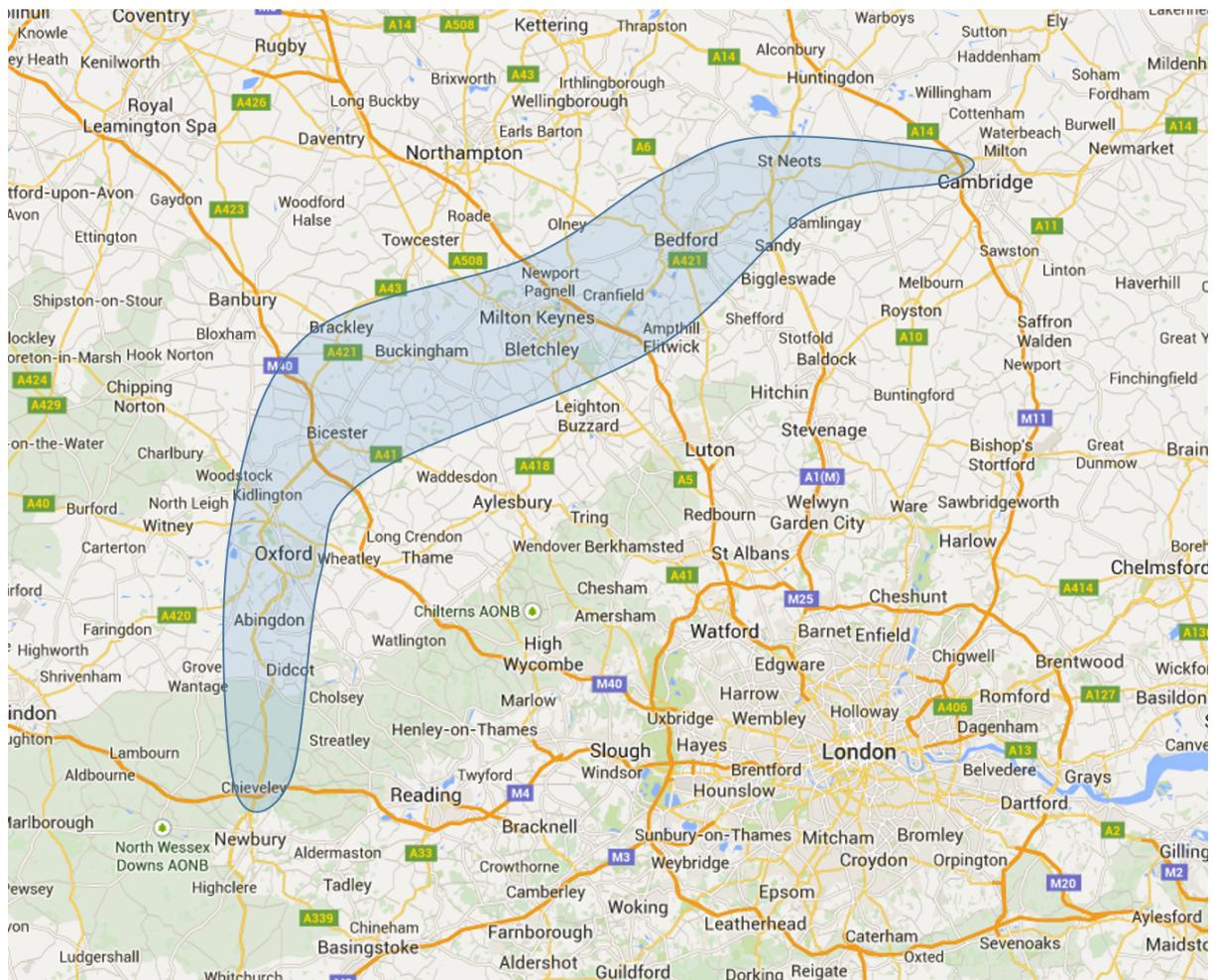
Modal Scope

14. The study is primarily aimed at exploring the case for improvements to the road network in the study area, but this should be in the context of proposed projects in other modes, e.g. the East-West Rail Link.

15. Road improvements are not limited to enhancements of the existing strategic road network. Improvements to local roads or the consideration of building new roads are not excluded from the scope of this study.

16. This study will consider options for improving connectivity in the study area through other modal options for comparison with road improvements. Where there is the potential for other modal options to perform better in meeting transport objectives, the fit with local, regional, national strategies, or key viability and acceptability criteria they should be taken forward.

Figure 1



STUDY OUTPUTS AND TIMINGS

Study Stages

17. The study will be completed in three stages which are set out below. The study will be reviewed at the end of stages one and two to confirm the value of proceeding further and review the scope of the subsequent phases of work.

Task 1: Review of existing evidence and confirm the strategic case for improved connectivity on the A1

18. Review previous study work, other relevant data, and current investment plans to understand current and anticipated future performance and constraints of the transport infrastructure (taking account of committed future improvements), and prepare a preliminary strategic case for considering further investment in and around the Brain Belt.

19. This review should consider the approach set out in Steps 1 to 3 of DfT's 2014 publication Transport Analysis Guidance: The Transport Appraisal Process. Further guidance on preparation of a Strategic Case can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85930/dft-transport-business-case.pdf
20. The review will summarise the evidence and information obtained to reach a preliminary view on the strategic and macro-economic benefits for improving the transport corridor between the towns and cities of the Brain Belt. This will involve referencing wider economic evidence including the regional economy, labour markets and the current business environment in the region and its sub-regions, community and social factors, and the impacts of the seaports and airports on transport and trade.
21. Existing transport and traffic models will be identified and reviewed in the context of this study and any gaps in modelling information will be reported.

Task 2: Review of existing evidence and confirm the strategic case for improved connectivity on the A1

22. This task should define the transport objectives that will solve the problem identified and identify a long-list of options which could meet the transport objectives.
23. The identification of a long-list of possible improvements should build upon work done in previous studies and identifying any additional options worthy of further consideration. It is assumed that between eight and ten options will be identified at this stage although the Consultant will advise Highways England if it believes that a greater or lesser number of options should be long-listed.

Task 3a: Initial sifting of options

24. This task involves a high level assessment of the different options to discard any options that will not meet the transport objectives nor fit with local, regional, national strategies, or would be highly unlikely to pass key viability and acceptability criteria
25. Based on the assessment above, the project will identify a short-list of potential options to be carried forward to Task 3b for further development and assessment.

Task 3b: Work to assess the affordability, value for money and deliverability of short-listed potential options

26. The purpose of this task is to document the appraisal of the short-list of better performing potential options to strategic outline business case level.

27. The appraisal transport benefits using the WebTAG methodology and wider economic benefits using an approach consistent with the approach outlined in Transport Investment and Economic Performance Report and the Department for Transport's response together with Understanding and Valuing the Impacts of Transport Investments in addition to the assessment methods required by Highways England's Project Controls Framework (PCF) system.

Deliverables and Milestones

28. The following key milestones will be established for the study. These milestones will be kept under review as the study progresses, and are subject to amendment as and when required.

Deliverables and Milestone	Completion Date
Task 1: Review of existing evidence and confirm the strategic case for improved connectivity on the A1	December 2015
Task 2: Review of existing evidence and confirm the strategic case for improved connectivity on the A1	February 2016
Task 3a: Initial sifting of options	May 2016
Task 3b: Work to assess the affordability, value for money and deliverability of short-listed potential options	November 2016.

GOVERNANCE OF THE STUDY

29. Proposed governance arrangements for all six studies are summarised below.

Sponsor – Department for Transport

30. The sponsor will chair the Programme Boards and Project Boards, with appropriate delegated authority for making decisions on behalf of the study to enable decisions to be made by either **Programme Board** or the **Project Boards**.

31. These representatives will also be responsible for ensuring that the outputs at each stage meet Sponsor / Client requirements.

Senior Responsible Owner

32. The workstream lead for the study will be Paul Hersey, Senior Policy Lead at the Department for Transport.

33. The workstream lead will:

- Chair the Project Board;
- Deal with issues as they arise requiring their advice, decision-making and communication with senior stakeholders;
- Ensure that stakeholders agree on the definition of outputs to be delivered, and the definition of their delivery;
- Provide high-level scrutiny of risk, taking responsibility for risk and issue mitigation and management if required.

Study Programme Boards

34. Overall direction for this and the other five Strategic Studies will be provided by one of two Programme Boards. One programme board will consider the studies covered by the Transport of the North area (the Northern Trans-Pennine, the Trans-Pennine Tunnel and the M60 North West Quadrant studies) whilst governance of the remaining studies (M25 South West Quadrant, the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway and the A1 East of England studies) will be provided by a separate board. This arrangement will ensure that membership of the programme board does not contain representatives with no authority for all of the relevant study areas. In practice, these boards will meet sequentially and share a large amount of resources.

35. The role of the Programme Boards will be to:

- Provide strategic direction for the programme of studies and monitor key milestones;
- Monitor/validate progress against plan and review significant risks and issues;
- Decide on the frequency and level of detail to be reported to Ministers;
- Provide advice to project managers regarding issues that arise as part of the individual studies;
- Review and approve the study outputs; and
- Take account of analytical assurance provided by the Future Roads Analytical Group.

36. Both Programme Boards will be led by the Sponsor; DfT will be represented by a Director supported by the study workstream lead.

37. The other members of both Programme Boards will include:

- RIS Futures Deputy Director
- RIS Client Deputy Director
- Highways England Strategy and Planning
- RIS Futures analytical working group.
- Strategic Communications
- Study workstream lead

38. The Northern Studies Programme Board will also include a representative(s) from Transport for the North.
39. The Study Sponsor will agree the content of recommendations to Ministers arising from this study.

Study Project Board

40. The *Project Board* will provide strategic oversight to the study and will confirm that the terms of reference for the study are being addressed in the delivery of the *Services*. It will be chaired by the Paul Hersey, and will include other representatives from, the Department for Transport and Highways England. The Consultant's project manager and project director will attend the Project Board.

Stakeholder Reference Group

41. Given the broad range of stakeholder interests in the studies, each study has developed a stakeholder engagement strategy to support the delivery of the each of the project stages. As part of this engagement strategy a 'reference group' will be established. The group will meet regularly as the study progresses.
42. The main role of the reference group will be to ensure stakeholders' views are captured and considered during the study process, particularly at key points in the study's work and at times of the development of key outputs.
43. The establishment of the reference group will allow stakeholder organisations to be aware and feed into the work of the study and allow representation from other organisations.
44. The membership of the reference group will be confirmed at the end of stage 1 of the study, and is likely to include LEPs, local authorities (including planning authorities), environmental NGOs, other transport operators and infrastructure providers, and business interest groups. The membership of this group will be kept under review as the study progresses to ensure that it continues to capture stakeholder views throughout the study process.

Figure 2

