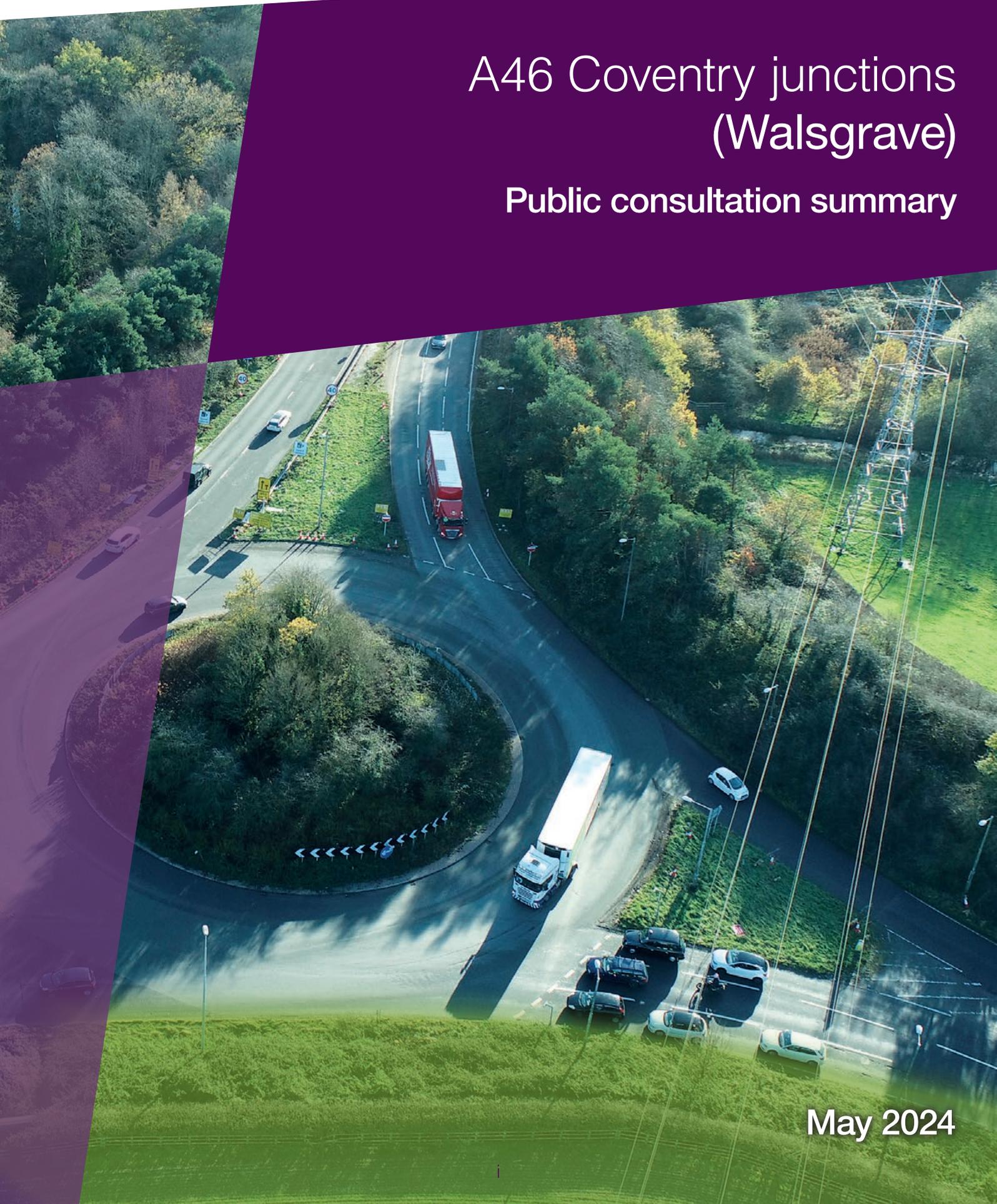


A46 Coventry junctions (Walsgrave)

Public consultation summary



May 2024

About this document

In this document we explain how the statutory consultation was carried out, summarise your feedback and the key themes identified.

We also give details of what will happen next as we begin work on our Development Consent Order (DCO) application. We're still considering feedback and refining our plans, with more information to follow later in a more comprehensive Consultation Report that will be part of our DCO application.

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The scheme

At National Highways we believe in a connected country and our 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 delivering £15 billion of investment on our network – the largest investment in a generation.

The Coventry junctions (Walsgrave) scheme is part of National Highways' commitment to improve the A46 'Trans-Midlands Trade Corridor' between the M5 and the Humber Ports.

The A46 has historically experienced safety issues, and the section south of Coventry was in the top 45% for total casualties and in the top 250 collision locations in England. The Coventry junctions scheme involves the upgrade of two junctions (Binley and Walsgrave) to provide relief from traffic congestion and to improve journey times by increasing the capacity on the A46 between the M6 and the M40. This will benefit both the strategic and local traffic needs and support future growth forecasts from Coventry City Council. Following the completion of work at Binley junction in 2023, Walsgrave junction is the last remaining roundabout on the A46 east of Coventry and north of Tollbar End junction, and as such it is a pinch point for traffic.

Objectives

The following is a summary of the scheme objectives:

Reduce congestion

Improve the operation and efficiency of the existing transport network associated with Walsgrave junction to increase capacity.

Safety and maintenance

Maintain the A46 to a safe and serviceable condition with maintenance being considered during design.

Growth

Support and facilitate economic growth, generating employment and residential development opportunities.

Environment

Reduce negative impacts on the wider environment whilst seeking environmental enhancement.

Customer

Reduce negative impacts on users, local communities and the environment whilst balancing the need of individuals and businesses that use and rely upon the A46.

What we consulted on

After announcing a preferred route for the scheme in June 2022, we spent time developing the design and carrying out a number of surveys including ground investigation and ecology assessments. We held a statutory consultation between October and December 2023 to seek feedback on our proposed design, which includes:

- Realigning the existing A46 dual carriageway through the existing junction, for a length of approximately 880m with a 50mph speed limit
- Realigning the B4082 with a 40mph speed limit, running parallel to the A46 for approximately 910m and connecting into a proposed new junction
- A new dumbbell junction that would consist of two roundabouts connected via a new bridge over the A46

We also consulted on our preliminary environmental information, which explained all of the work we've done up to that point to assess the potential effects of our plans on the environment. Our consultation brochure presented early indications about how traffic would be impacted and our early plans for construction. The proposed scheme layout that was presented in the consultation brochure is shown in Figure 1.

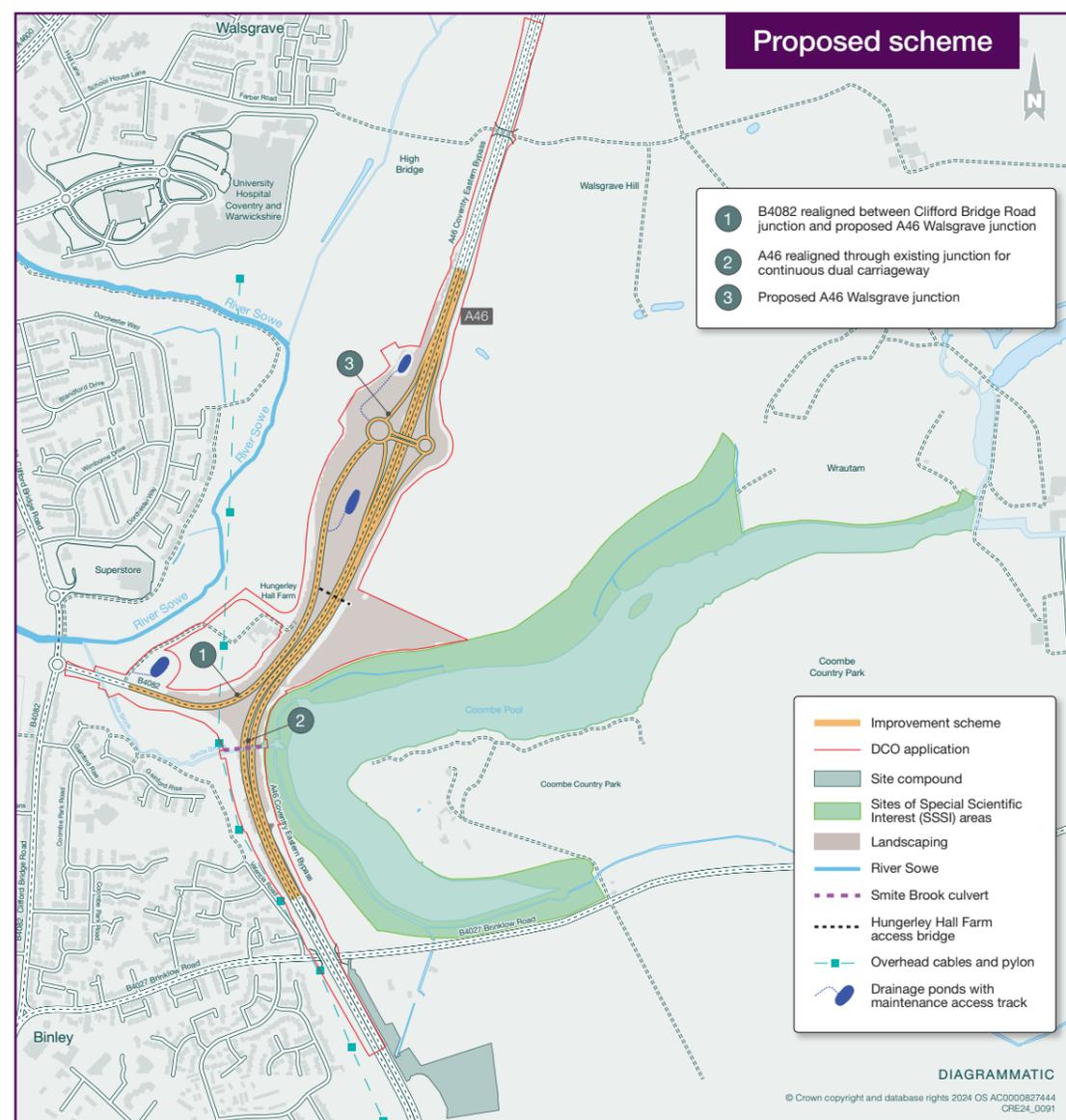


Figure 1 – Proposed scheme layout

Statutory consultation

During a statutory consultation we ask for views on a proposed development and give a set timescale to respond. People can express their views and we gather the feedback to help us decide if, and where we need to make refinements to the scheme.

The statutory consultation for the Walsgrave junction proposals ran for six weeks from 25 October to 6 December 2023. We extended the consultation period to 22 December 2023 for consultees who were identified as potential Category 3 consultees – these are people who may be able to make a claim for compensation due to the potential impacts from construction or operation of the scheme. As these consultees were identified late, we wrote to them explaining that they had now been identified as Category 3 consultees and extended the consultation to give them the same length of time to respond as other consultees. We also accepted any responses received from other consultees until the 22 December.

Consultation materials were available on our website <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/A46Coventry>, as well as at six deposit locations in the vicinity of the scheme. Information packs were also sent to landowners, some local residents and organisations. The materials available included:

- Public consultation brochure
- Response form
- Mapbook containing General Arrangement Plans, Land Use Plans, Plan and Profile drawings and a Cross Section of the scheme
- Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)
- Non-technical summary of the PEIR
- Scheme fly-through video
- Section 47 and Section 48 notices
- Property information leaflets
- Development Consent Order leaflet
- Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)

The consultation was advertised in the local press, by displaying posters at local amenities and through postcards delivered to houses and businesses nearby.

During the consultation period we held three public information events for local residents, businesses and stakeholders where we provided more information about the proposals. We also held three pop-up events in areas of high footfall, to raise awareness of the scheme and encourage people to participate in the consultation. These were open to everyone and advertised in our materials, and the location and times were published on our scheme website.

Members of the project team including technical specialists were available at the events to explain the scheme and answer any questions.

What is a Development Consent Order?

A Development Consent Order (DCO) is a type of planning permission to build and maintain developments categorised as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP).

For those who were unable to attend our in-person events we held an online webinar, where members of the project team presented the proposals followed by time for questions and answers. Overall, our events were attended by approximately 560 people.

Responses to the consultation were accepted through a number of channels:

- Using the online questionnaire on our scheme webpage at <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/A46Coventry>
- At public consultation events by completing a paper copy of the questionnaire
- By sending a completed response form or letter using the freepost address:
Freepost A46 WALSGRAVE SCHEME
- By emailing the dedicated scheme email address: A46CoventryJcns@nationalhighways.co.uk

Overview of consultation findings

Initial findings from the statutory consultation are presented in this section. More detailed information including our responses to points raised, and how the consultation has shaped the design will be set out in our Consultation Report. This will be submitted as part of our DCO application.

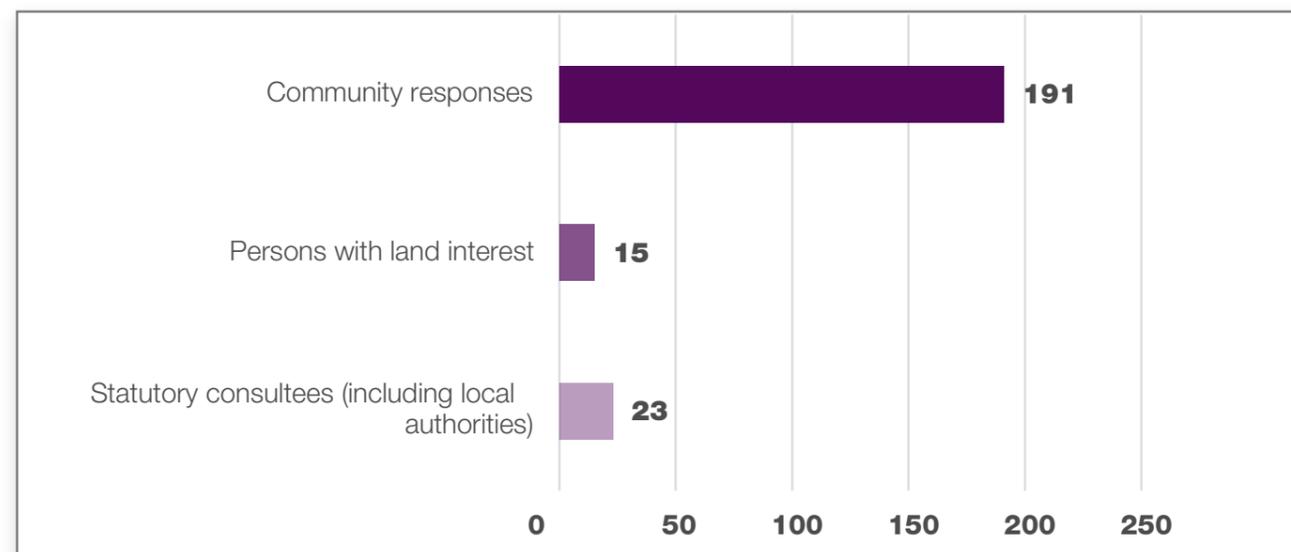
In total **229 responses** were received from a range of stakeholders. Respondents included:

- Statutory bodies
- Local authorities and a parish council
- Landowners
- Businesses
- Local residents

How people responded

- 82 online
- 55 email
- 92 hard copies

Who responded to the consultation

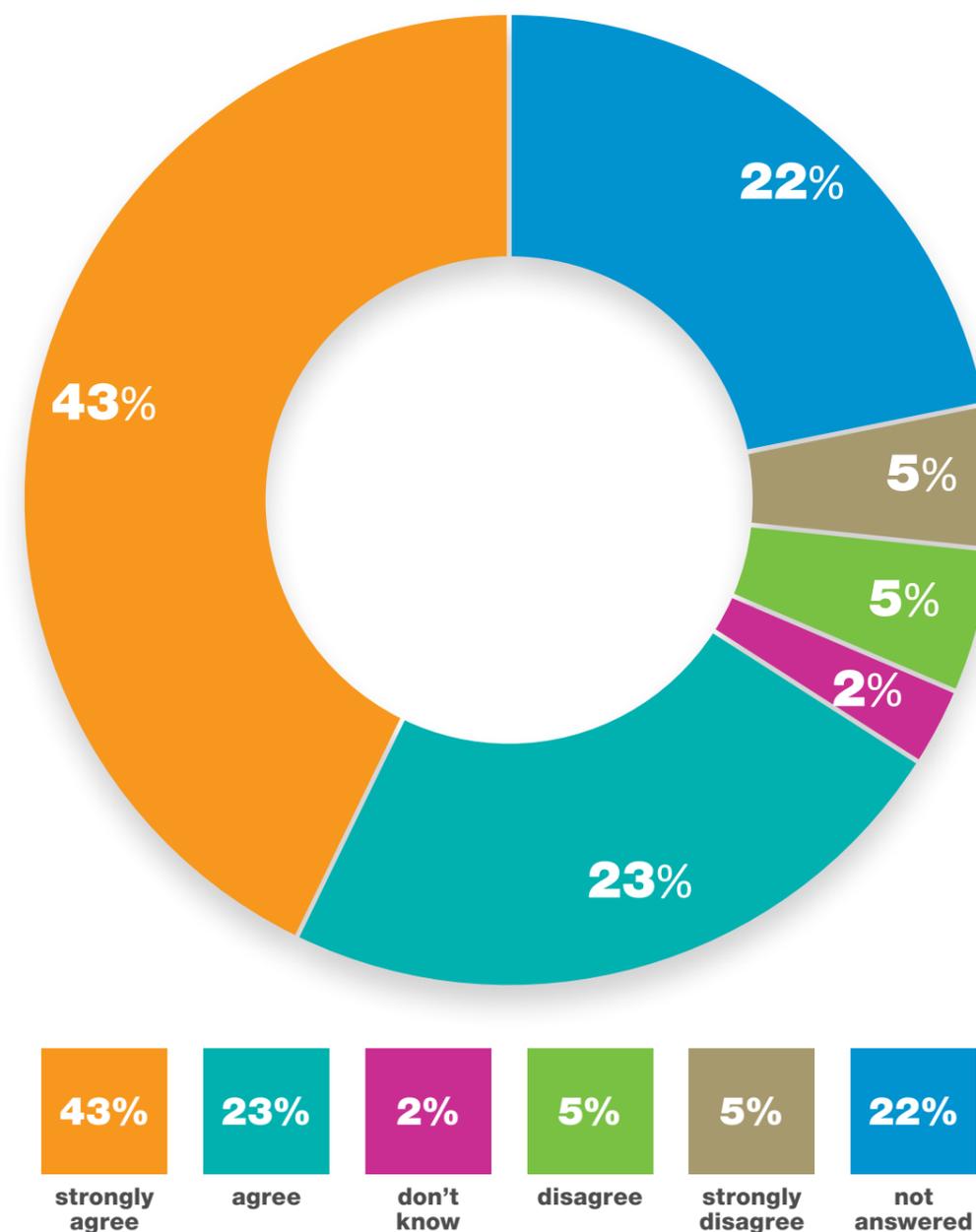


On the following pages we've summarised the results from some of the responses to our consultation questionnaire where people were asked on what scale they agreed or disagreed with different elements of our proposals. Our Consultation Report will include the results from all questions asked.

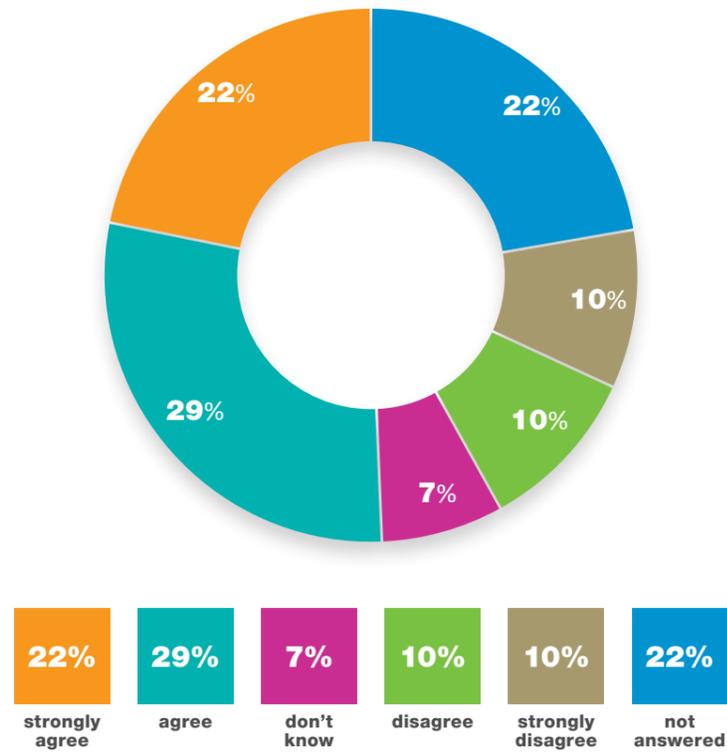
Section 1: The need for the scheme and its design

For information about the need for the scheme and its design, visit pages 4 and 8 of our consultation brochure available on our website <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/A46Coventry>

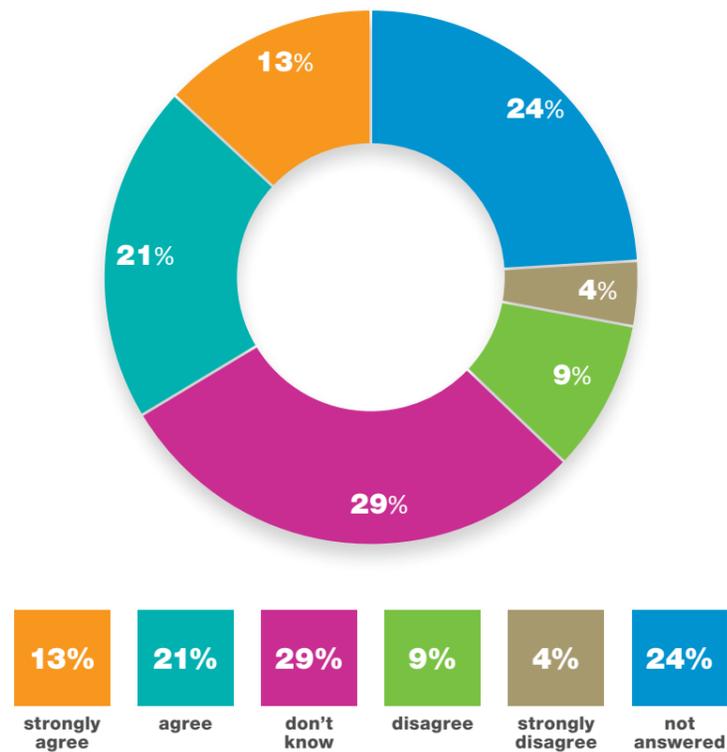
To what extent do you agree that the A46 Coventry junctions (Walsgrave) scheme is needed?



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed route and junction arrangement for the scheme?



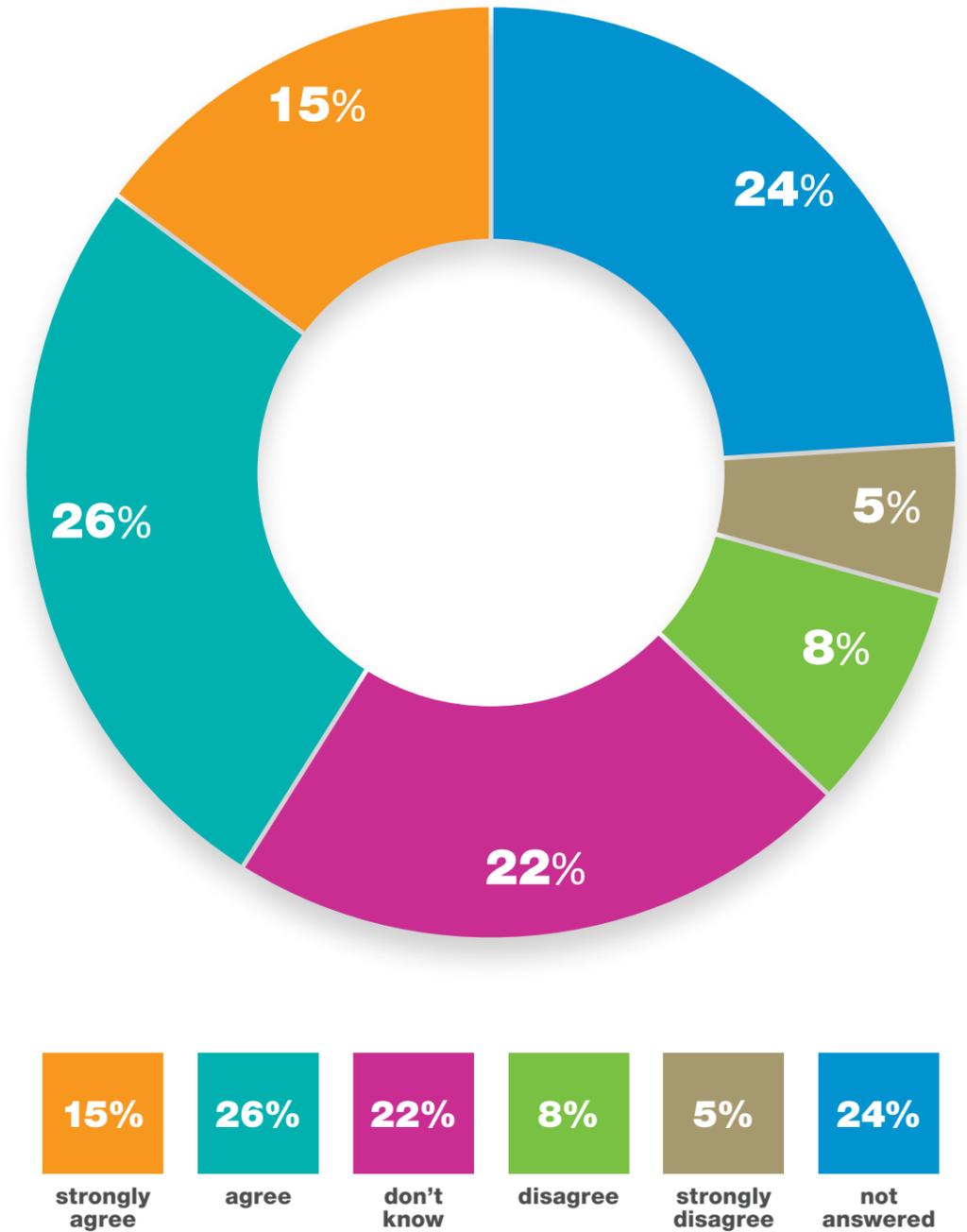
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed changes to routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders?



Section 2: The environmental and health impacts of the scheme

For information about the environmental and health impacts of the scheme, visit page 13 of our consultation brochure available on <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/A46Coventry>. Our Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) and a Non-Technical Summary (PEIR NTS) are also available on this website.

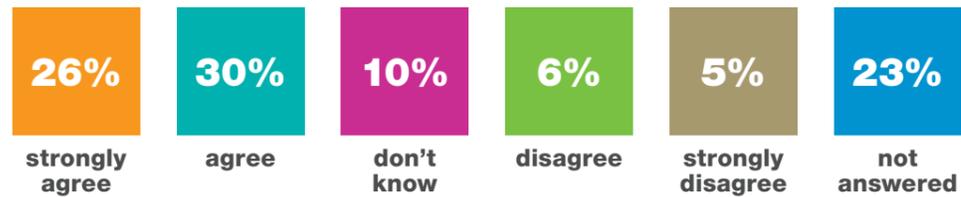
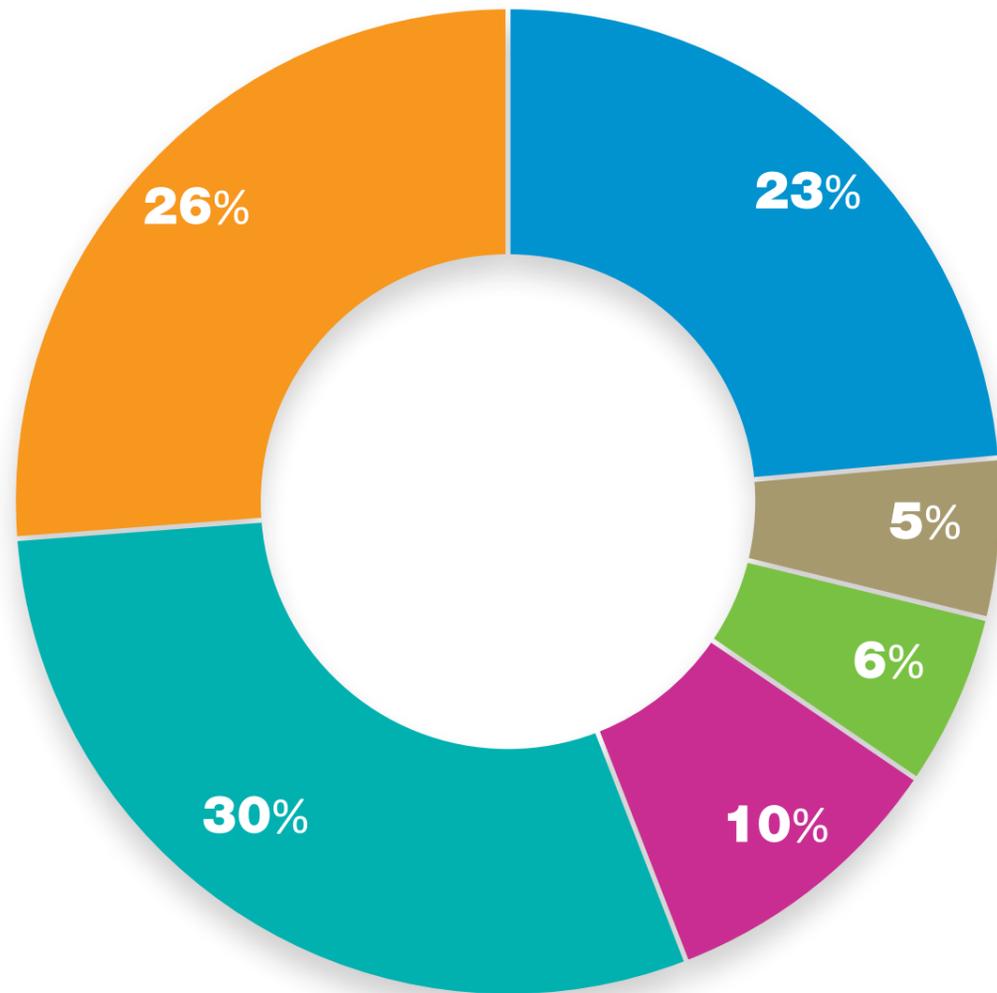
To what extent do you agree or disagree with our approach to assessing the environmental impacts of the scheme?



Section 3: Traffic impacts of the scheme

For information about the predicted traffic impacts of the scheme, visit page 20 of our consultation brochure available on our website <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/A46Coventry>

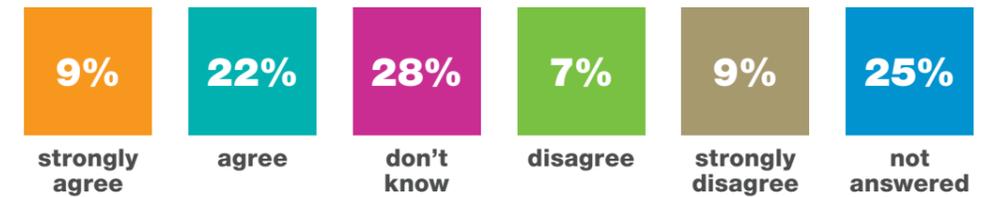
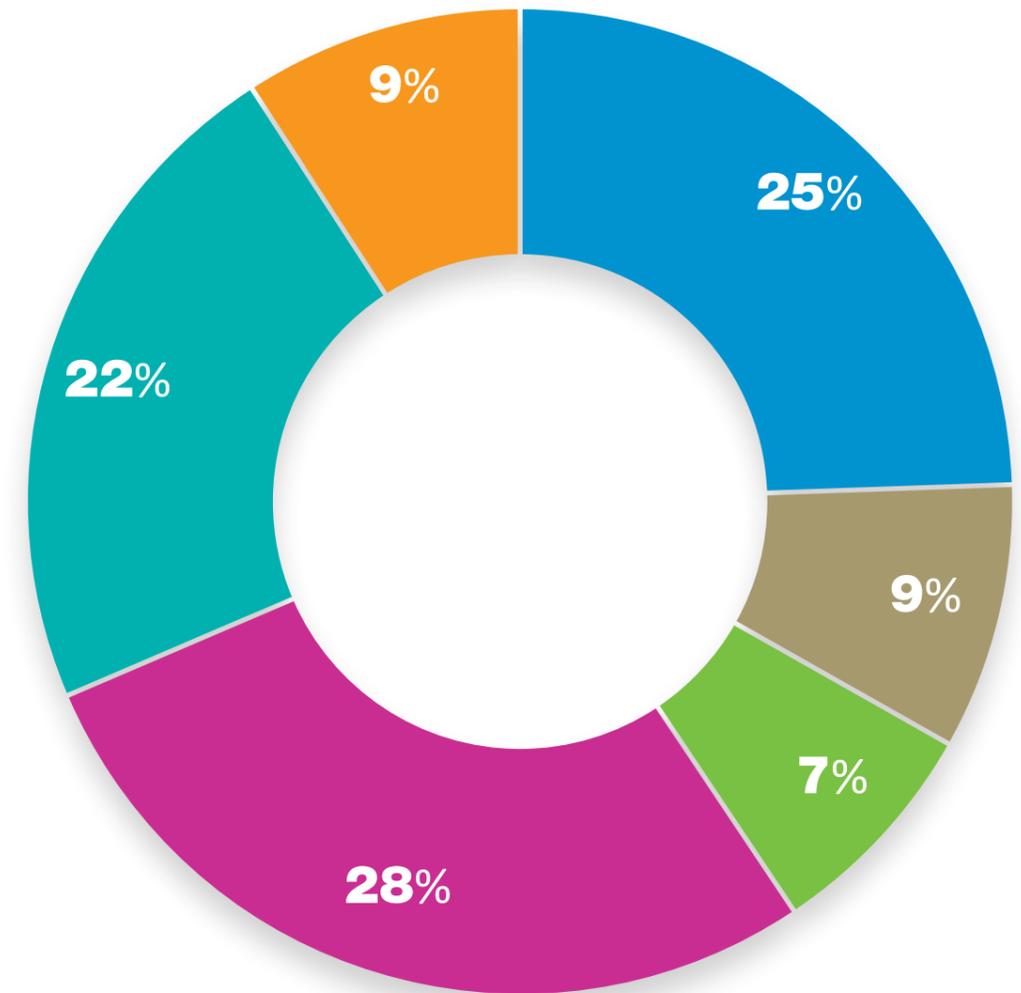
To what extent do you support or oppose the reported traffic benefits of the scheme?



Section 4: What you can expect during construction

For information about our plans for construction, visit page 24 of our consultation brochure available on our website <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/A46Coventry>

To what extent do you agree or disagree that our proposals will minimise the impacts of construction?



Suggestions and issues raised

Your responses about existing conditions

- Concern was expressed from some consultees about the current levels of congestion not just at the Walsgrave junction, but on all roads leading to and from the junction.
- There were safety concerns, in particular when attempting to join the A46 from the B4082.

“It’s a struggle to get onto the A46 at times, because the flow is so heavy at the roundabout, you don’t get a chance to go!”

“At peak times the traffic queueing for the current junction backs up almost to the Toll Bar island, causing long tailbacks.”

Our response

The proposed junction arrangement will improve congestion because removing the existing Walsgrave roundabout will take away the need for vehicles from the B4082 to wait for an opportunity to enter a roundabout that is currently used by fast-moving A46 traffic, bringing them onto that road via safer slip roads.

Your responses about our design

- There were some requests for a hospital link road to be provided at the same time as the junction upgrade.
- There was support for the free flow of traffic through the proposed junction arrangement.

“I think it will work well for all directions of travel. And if an entrance/exit is provided for the hospital that will be a great benefit.”

“Earlier improvements to Binley Woods junction and Tollbar have significantly improved traffic flow, and this improvement now seems the natural next step.”

Our response

The potential for a hospital link road has been included in Coventry City Council’s Local Plan (2017) as part of the Walsgrave Hill Farm site allocation. This sets out that land at this site would be used to deliver housing and a blue light access from the A46.

The plans for the land, to the west of our scheme, are at a very early stage and the location of a link road would be decided once the layout of that development is agreed. This is why we’re working closely with the developer to ensure that our design accommodates a future access point for a dedicated blue light access route into University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire.

As set out in our objectives we’re committed to delivering a scheme which supports economic growth and development opportunities in the local area.

Your responses about the environment

- There were some requests and suggestions to ensure the protection of Coombe Pool and the Coombe Abbey Country Park.
- We received some comments with concerns over the potential for the new junction to increase flood risks, including to surrounding residential areas.

“I think you may have underestimated the flood risk from Smite Brook. It gets within 4 metres of Gainford Rise and Royston Close properties.”

“Looks like a comprehensive assessment and well presented.”

Our response

We’ve designed our scheme to ensure that we minimise our impacts on the designated heritage and environmental sites of Coombe Pool and Coombe Abbey Country Park.

We’re currently working on our assessments of flood risks, these will feed into an Environmental Statement and Non-Technical Summary which will be submitted with our DCO.

These documents will explain what the assessments have shown and what mitigation, if any, has been proposed. The design presented at statutory consultation already included drainage features to store water before discharging to the River Sowe and Smite Brook.

Your responses about construction

- We received some concerns about the potential for delays to journeys during construction owing to lane or road closures.
- There were some concerns about increased congestion on residential roads close to the junction, including HGVs and other construction vehicles.

“Further work will mean that more vehicles will avoid the A46 and use Hinckley Road and Clifford Bridge Road which is already congested.”

“All works will provide some disruption, but it appears that all reasonable efforts will be taken to minimise the disruption caused.”

Our response

We know any kind of construction activity can have an effect on people living in the local area, but we’re committed to minimising any delays to journeys during construction. We’ll continue our engagement with stakeholders such as local authorities as we develop our construction plans and draft our initial Environmental Management Plan. More information on any diversion routes and expected HGV journeys will be included in the first iteration of the Traffic Management Plan which will form part of our DCO application.

Your responses about provision for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders (WCH)

- Some responses called for proposed or potential routes for WCH to be better connected to existing routes or likely destinations.
- We received some comments that expressed doubt over the level of demand for new routes and facilities for cyclists.

“Too many cycle routes being created for non-existent cyclists. They are not used.”

“The change proposed at the junction with Clifford Bridge roundabout would be a very positive safety measure.”

Our response

We’re in the process of reviewing the feedback on our strategy for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders and will confirm any changes later.



Conclusion

The consultation feedback revealed that 66% agreed or strongly agreed that the Walsgrave junction scheme is needed, and 51% agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed route and junction arrangement.

We’re committed to working through all of the concerns raised as part of our ongoing development of the scheme, making changes where needed, and explaining our decisions in a comprehensive DCO application. We’ll continue to work with statutory environmental bodies, local authorities and anyone impacted by the scheme to develop our environmental assessments and address topics such as our scheme’s contribution to carbon reduction, and construction mitigation. This work will all feed into our Environmental Statement that will be submitted with our DCO application.

Next steps

We’ll continue to engage with anyone impacted by the scheme as well as stakeholders including the Environment Agency and key local authorities.

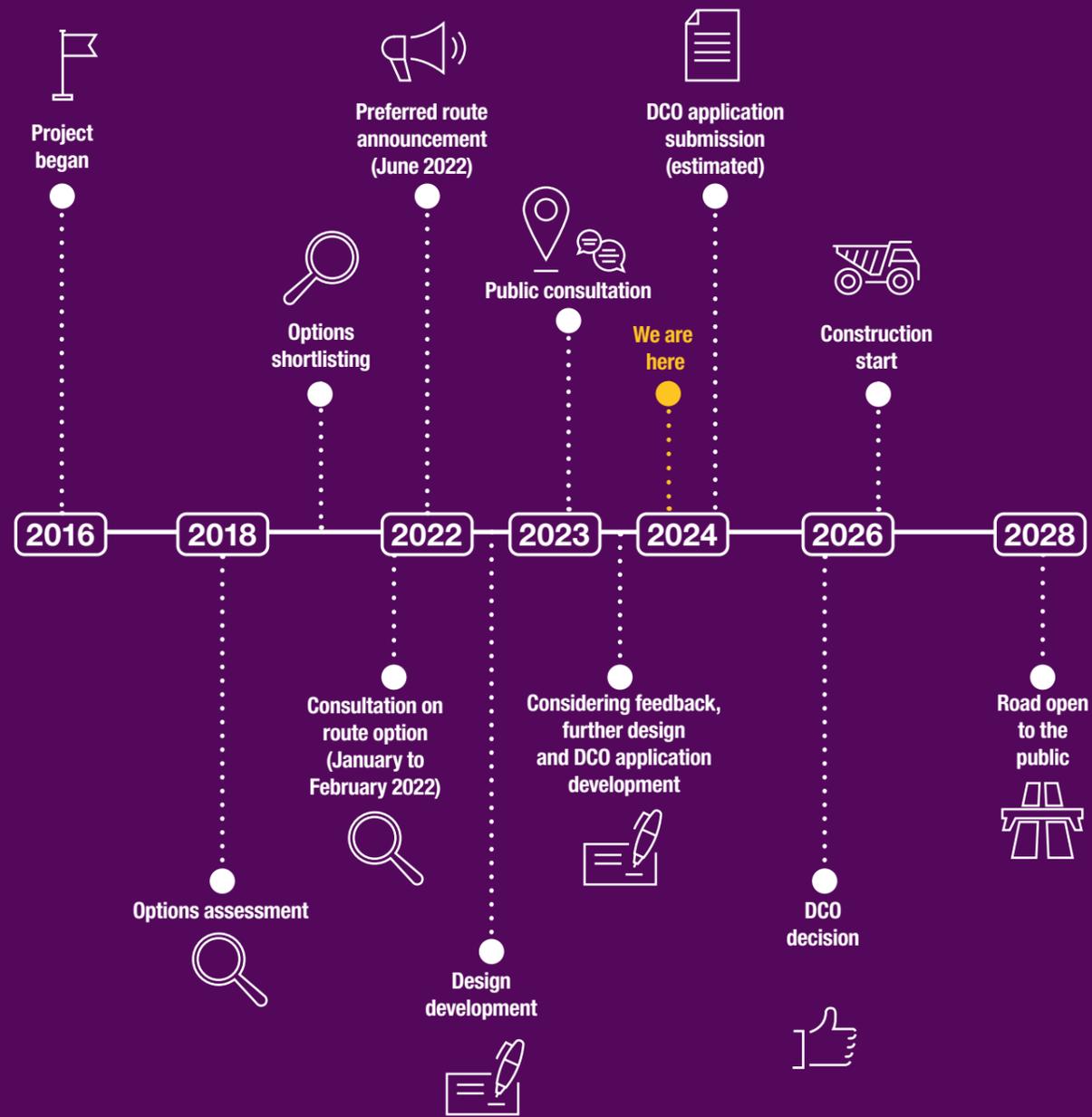
We’re currently producing a Consultation Report summarising all the responses and describing how our proposals have been informed and influenced by them. This will form part of our DCO application and will be available to the public if our application is accepted by the Planning Inspectorate.

Although the Secretary of State for Transport will decide whether to give permission for the scheme, Coventry City Council, Rugby Borough Council and Warwickshire County Council have an important role to play in the development of our DCO application and the examination process. We’ve already been talking to them about our proposals and will continue to engage before, during and after we submit our DCO, which we’re aiming to do in autumn 2024.

After we submit our DCO application, the Planning Inspectorate will decide whether it should be considered in detail as part of a formal examination, which would provide further opportunities for interested parties to share their views. The Secretary of State for Transport will make the final decision on whether permission to build the scheme is granted. If successful, we would expect construction to start in late 2026. The project timeline is shown on page 14.



Project timeline



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