

4b

Submission to Cabinet
26th April 2022



From Max Hunt, Loughborough NW,
Labour Group Transport Spokesperson

Item 4: Major Road Network - Identification of the next priority corridor.

There are three main reasons to treat this with great caution. Firstly, LCC has had great difficulty in controlling costs of large road projects. Secondly, that the selection is made on limited desktop considerations, disregarding costs. And finally, as experience shows, we simply can't build our way out of congestion.

“Be careful what you wish for”

The offers made under RIS2 look enticing but, as the County Council knows to its cost, the Government's Road investment strategy does not cover its costs. Estimates must be made early, and costs escalate through the life of the project. Contributions from Local Planning Authorities can create deadlock, as we know, and developers' contributions appear to shrink while taxpayer contributions grow. The Cabinet will recall in June 2019 they were told two weeks before contractors were due the A512 site that a legal agreement on costs had still not been secured and more public funds had to be backfilled later.

Even Leicester City needs more than 20 points!

The selection process is too simple ending on a count of 20. With only one to be chosen, there are too many rejected on the slimmest of margins - as well as Kibworth at the bottom who made the strongest plea.

There are only two areas considered, and they are based on (a) speed and (b) proximity to journey attractors. There is no consideration of the **land available** or **compulsory purchases**, nor **ground conditions** nor other engineering aspects. There is absolutely no consideration of **carbon savings** or any **alternative routes**. Nor, crucially, was there consideration of **future traffic volumes**, highway **safety** and **air quality** once current capacity increases.

Under the circumstances, a decision based on such limited criteria at this stage could be described as reckless without much greater assurance that the selected project would not lead to greater costs on the taxpayer.

The dream of “the open road”

It is impossible to simply build your way out of peak hour congestion. This is because extra capacity is quickly filled by additional traffic and traffic migrating from other less attractive roads and into peak time. As soon as we see an empty road, we seem to want to fill it. Transport engineers know this, and it's called *induced travel* demand.

Every road we have widened or improved has either become congested or has created two further congested roads – one at each end. The belief in '*predict and provide*' has long since been blown, not least because it became unaffordable.

All our district Local Plans contain clear policies for low carbon sustainable growth with maximum access to public transport and active travel and should be held to that. However, the criteria used in this desktop exercise assume that Sustainable Urban Extensions and other large developments aren't sustainable at all if they depend almost exclusively on the private car.

Even though most businesses have travel plans, and this includes the major employers in the county, many of these are not enforced or reviewed over time. Meanwhile the County Council has no parking strategy, no answer to WPL, our bus services are in pieces, and, for that matter, there is no transport strategy for the freeport. In Leicestershire, active travel is an expression of hopelessness at best and, at worst, an invitation to join the increasing injury statistics for Vulnerable Road Users. Our Local Transport Plan is out of date.

I would urge Cabinet members to spend just a few minutes looking at slides produced for Worcestershire County Council on the question of traffic congestion before agreeing to bid for another underfunded major road upgrade.

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s20260/Item%206%20Congestion%20Presentation.pdf>

Thank you.