

COUNTY COUNCIL - GARTREE NEWS **IS THERE AN A46 EXPRESSWAY OR NOT?**

Some time ago I wrote about the Strategic Growth Plan produced by representatives of all the Leicestershire & Leicester City councils to look into future projections for housing and employment to 2050. One of the possible options to help provide land for housing and employment was the suggestion of an A46 Expressway from Syston, then east of Leicester, south of Oadby & Wigston and joining the M1 at a new junction 20a.

So far all 7 district councils, the county Cabinet and the city Mayor have all voted to support the concept of growth, including Harborough District Council, but not the detail, such as an Expressway. That is the subject of further work being undertaken by Midlands Connect, who are the Transport arm of Midlands Engine, the Midlands equivalent of the Northern Powerhouse. The upgrade of the A46 from North Lincolnshire through to Gloucestershire is a project supported by Midlands Connect, who have two parts of this big project in their current work schedule to 2025 - A46 bypass at Newark, and some improvement work around Coventry. Phase 2 of an ongoing study on the A46 around Leicester is due to be published this summer. Phase 1 gave some traffic statistics but concentrated on the current A46 north of Leicester, so I'm expecting further work on the viability and possible routes for any alternative A46 route around Leicester.

If ever this gets the go ahead from local councils, it would be funded by central government, and then this A46 Expressway (so named because there would not be any obstacles, like roundabouts on the route) would connect with the M1 at the new junction near Willoughby Waterleys, and then continue on to link with the M69. I understand that this new M1 junction is very likely to be funded and created, and the motorway services, currently at Leicester Forest East would be closed, and new services provided at junction 20a. A major garden village with around 3,500 houses is being proposed by Blaby District Council near this new junction, so if that goes ahead, then the new junction will more likely be needed.

However, all of this does not necessarily mean the A46 Expressway will be built, as it would be extremely expensive, destroy many hectares of High Leicestershire countryside, and most definitely require upgrades to feeder roads like the A6 (e.g. Bypass Kibworth?). Instead, I and our MP, Neil O'Brien, who asked a question of the Minister of Transport on 2 May about progress on a bypass for the Kibworths, are pushing for the cheaper, easier alternative of upgrading the existing dual A46 north of Leicester i.e. three lanes, possibly with or without a hard shoulder. The A6 north to Loughborough is already dual carriageway and bypasses several villages e.g. Quorn, Rothley etc. There is sufficient land alongside the existing A46 for widening and for houses and employment.

As yet, as said above, no specific route has been proposed or agreed, just a rough line on the map. We know, if it ever gets the go ahead, it would need to start at Syston (Hobby Horse roundabout) but not any route detail. So decisions about whether it crosses the A47 between Thurnby and Houghton, or east of Houghton, and whether it crosses the A6 north or south of Great Glen, have not been decided yet. As stated above, we are expecting more detail in the phase 2 study, together with timescales, route etc.

I plan to include more about any A46 Expressway plans in a future Chronicle, as and when further details become public.

SPEED CUSHIONS COMING BACK!

Two sets of speed cushions were removed earlier this year from New Road and Fleckney Road, because at least one of each pair had become damaged. In order to do the job for which they were intended – i.e. slowing traffic, they are due to be replaced on 6 June to continue working to keep car speeds down to 30mph or lower.

THANKS & CONGRATULATIONS

My sincere thanks to retiring district councillors Chris Holyoak and Lynne Beesley-Reynolds for their help and advice while on HDC, and congratulations to Phil King, Robin Hollick and Simon Whelband, newly elected as district councillors for the Kibworths Ward.

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