Title of report: New Road Strategy for Hereford

Meeting: **Cabinet**

Meeting date: **Thursday 28 March 2024**

Cabinet member: **Philip Price, Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure**

Report by: **Corporate Director, Economy and Environment,**

Report author: **Head of Transport and Access Services,**

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

The report seeks Cabinet's agreement to the revised priorities within the Hereford Transport Strategy and to agree to draw down investment in new road infrastructure to improve network resilience and support the growth and development of Herefordshire in accordance with the current Local Transport Plan and Core Strategy policy frameworks.

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet:

a) **Agrees to recommence progress within the existing policy frameworks of the Hereford Western Bypass linking the A49 north and south of the city. Consisting of the Southern Link Road as Phase 1 and the Western Bypass as Phase 2 to realise the county's strategic housing and employment land growth critical to the Herefordshire economy, as set out in the report;**
b) **Acknowledges the Strategic Outline Case report for the Eastern River Crossing and Link Road;**
c) **Agrees to draw down and spend £10.3m of approved capital funding for Phase 1 of the Hereford Western Bypass (HWB) and £760,000 of revenue funding for Phase 2 of the HWB as included in this report at para 102 to 107; and**
d) **Delegates authority to take all operational decisions during the development of the schemes to the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure and the Section 151 Officer**.

Alternative options

1. Continue with the Eastern River Crossing and Link Road. This is not recommended, while offering a possible option by providing a second river crossing and some city centre traffic reductions, does not have the same merits as the Hereford Western Bypass for a number of reasons, including the ability to detrunk the existing A49, levels of traffic reduction and the associated benefits, support for proposed housing and employment development sites. Further details are set out elsewhere in the report.

2. A do-nothing option is not considered a practical alternative to progressing a bypass of Hereford. This is not recommended. Traffic congestion and delays in the city have led to the designation of an Air Quality Management Area centred on the A49 corridor, makes everyday journeys for local people unreliable, and places local businesses at a competitive disadvantage. Lack of capacity on the current road network is limiting the development of key housing and employment sites around the city.

3. Options for transport initiatives to address traffic and transport issues in Hereford were last considered as part of the Hereford Transport Strategy Review produced in November 2020. The review considered several packages of road and non-road measures that were assessed against a set of objectives covering the climate emergency, the economy, the environment and society.

4. Packages including new road infrastructure were shown to provide the greatest congestion relief to the city and increased resilience through the provision of an additional road crossing of the River Wye. Packages that did not include new road infrastructure had limited impact on resilience.

Background

5. Hereford provides regionally important employment, retail, leisure, healthcare and learning opportunities used by those living and working in the city, as well as in the surrounding towns and villages. However, traffic congestion has long been recognised as a problem, leading to journey time unreliability with detrimental impacts on the economy, the environment and people's health. While neighbouring cities such as Shrewsbury, Worcester and Gloucester have enjoyed investment in new roads to address similar problems, plans for a bypass to the west of Hereford that form part of the current Local Transport Plan and Core Strategy have yet to be realised.

6. The A49 trunk road runs through the heart of the city and forms part of the Strategic Road Network between the Midlands and Gloucestershire to Wales. The road, managed by National Highways, crosses the River Wye to the south of the city centre via the Greyfriars Bridge. Being the only suitable bridge for heavy traffic for many miles, either east or west, raises significant resilience concerns for the network as a whole. The signposted diversion route in the event of the A49 being closed in the city centre is approximately 60km (38 miles) in length, following the A49, A4103, A417/A4172, A449, A40 and A49. Most local traffic in such cases will likely use local knowledge to follow minor and less suitable roads such as the B4399 and B4224, causing congestion problems in these locations. An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) due to NOx emissions from traffic is centred on the A49 corridor and has been in place since 2001, The AQMA extends from Holmer Road in the north to Belmont Road in the south, extending east along New Market/Blue School Street and west along Eign Street as far as Barton Yard.

7. National Highways identifies the A49 as an important link in its Route Strategy for the Midlands and Gloucestershire to Wales, and some of the greatest morning peak delays on the whole route from Gloucester to the Welsh border north of Oswestry occur in Hereford. The potential impact of delays and the ability to progress development opportunities in the city is seen as a key challenge. One of National Highways' key route objectives is to provide efficient, safe and reliable north-south connectivity for people and goods between and within settlements on the A49 corridor, particularly the economic centre of Hereford.

8. Congestion on the A49 and elsewhere in the city threatens further growth in Hereford that is vital for its future prosperity. Plans for a bypass to the west of Hereford had been in development for many years and two schemes – the South Wye Transport Package and the Hereford Transport Package – were part of the council's capital programme. The new roads at the heart of each package were known, as the Southern Link Road and the Western Bypass, and included a wider programme of transport measures for walking and cycling infrastructure improvements intended to realise the local benefits and opportunities from the resulting change in traffic patterns.

9. The two schemes formed, and still form, a critical part of existing Council policy being integral to the Council's current Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Core Strategy. A draft Local Plan is in preparation and will be subject to public consultation in the Spring.

10. Following the county elections in May 2019, a new administration was elected and paused any further work on the two schemes while a full review of options was developed. However, planning permission for the Southern Link Road scheme remains in place. A preferred route had been selected for the Western Bypass and work was in hand to progress the scheme towards an application for planning permission.

11. The resulting options report, the Hereford Transport Strategy Review (HTSR), was completed in November 2020. The report showed that meeting objectives to reduce congestion and improve resilience would be most successful through a package of measures that included a new road and river crossing, plus improvements to walking, cycling and public transport facilities. However, it was also acknowledged that there would be impacts in other areas such as environment and carbon emissions from constructing a new road.

12. At its meeting on 2 February 2021, Council made the decision to stop both the Southern Link Road and the Western Bypass and to progress plans for an Eastern River Crossing and Link Road (ERiC). At its meeting on 24 June 2021 Cabinet approved the allocation of a £400,000 budget for the development of ERiC, and at its 29 September 2022 meeting Cabinet approved the allocation of a further £1m revenue budget. The new road was to be complemented by a package of measures that included walking, cycling, public transport and demand management improvement. These latter initiatives were later brought together under the draft Hereford Masterplan.

The Need for Investment

13. The Herefordshire economy faces a number of significant long term challenges. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) report into regional inequality in 2021 identified Herefordshire as having the lowest levels of productivity based on gross value added (GVA) per hour of any county tier in England, and the second lowest in the UK. Average wages in the county are 16% below the national average.

14. The Herefordshire Economic Plan states “There are major challenges around the resilience and reliability of our transport system. Long journey times for road freight, with major bottlenecks around Hereford, can lead to increased costs for businesses and discourages investment. These infrastructure challenges make it harder for people, especially younger and older residents, to access training, work, leisure and services. They are a significant contributor to lower business productivity, competitiveness and growth”.

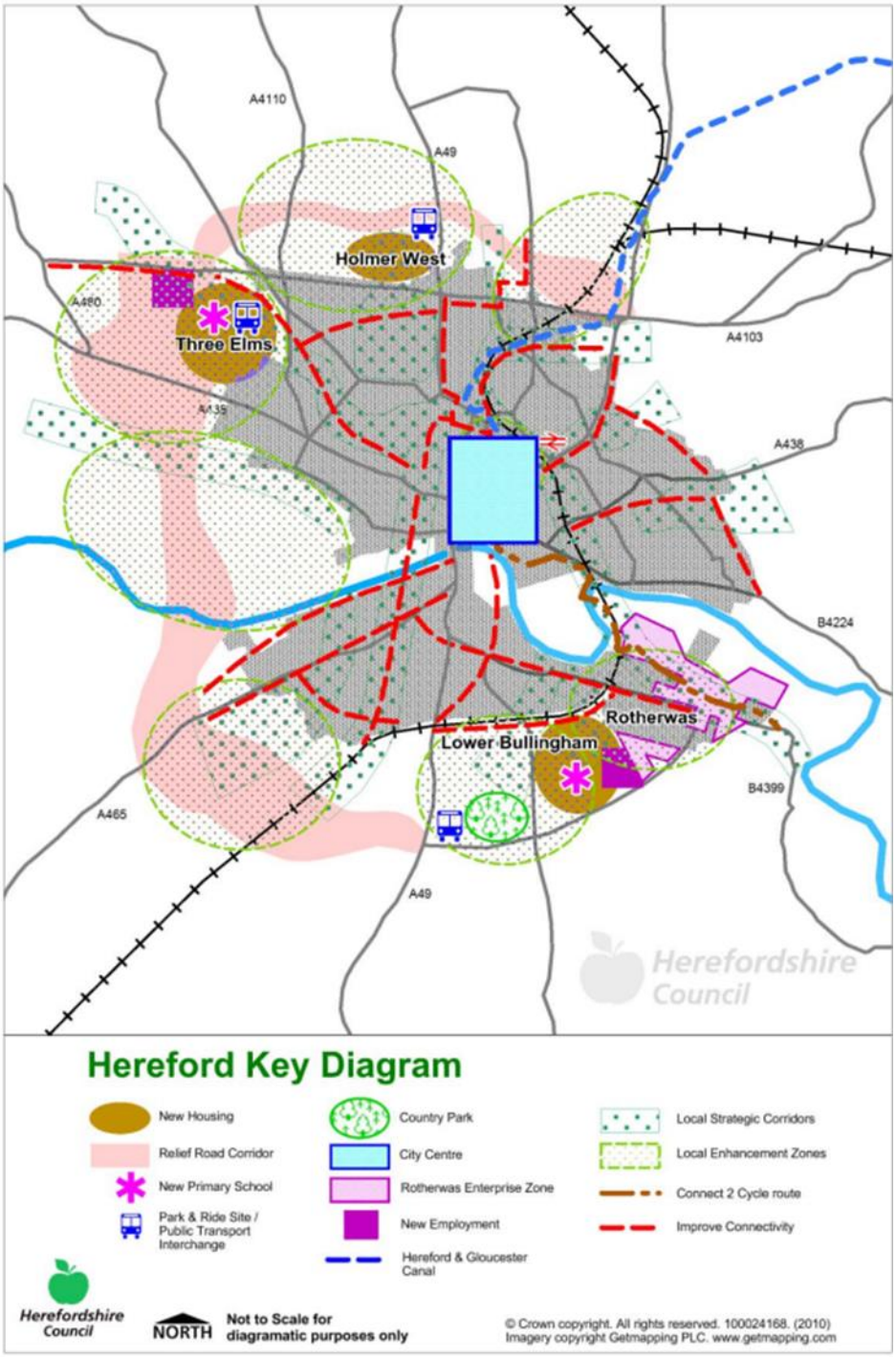
15. Wider regional areas, particularly in southern and mid Wales and Shropshire, are also severely affected due to the A49 being a major trunk route. As such the recently formed Marches Forward Partnership recognises a bypass of Hereford to tackle congestion and delay as a priority project benefitting Shropshire, Monmouthshire, and Powys as well as Herefordshire.

16. At a meeting on 13 March 2024 with the Minister for Roads and Local Transport it was agreed that the DfT and the Council should work closely together to discuss proposals in more detail and to determine a way forward to address the transport issues in the city and surrounding areas. A previous meeting with Midlands Engine and Midlands Connect on 12 January 2024 reflected on the problems with productivity across the West Midlands when compared with the national average, but noted the high potential for growth in Herefordshire. It was recognised that, to achieve that potential, there is a critical need for additional highway infrastructure to support new housing and employment land around the city.

17. The county also faces a housing crisis, in particular the availability of affordable local homes to retain and attract the workforce needed to grow the economy. The Local Plan Review has identified the need for an additional 16,100 homes across the county over the next 20 years.

18. While Greyfriars Bridge currently carries traffic levels that are below its theoretical capacity, delays and congestion are most likely to be caused by traffic at adjacent junctions, especially the A49/A456 signalised roundabout to the south of the bridge. As a result, significant additional development, particularly to the south of the city or on the Rotherwas Industrial Estate and Hereford Enterprise Zone, is restricted due to National Highways' limitations on increased traffic on the A49.

19. For example, of 60 hectares of identified employment land, only 7 hectares can currently be identified and allocated due to these capacity restrictions. Two existing Core Strategy allocation sites in Hereford have currently had development potential reduced due to wider highway capacity issues in the city. The Three Elms site has been restricted from 1000 homes and 10 hectares of employment land and a new primary school, to 350 homes only. Development at Lower Bullingham is similarly restricted to 450 new homes from a potential 1000 homes.



20. Overall, the full potential for growth would be restricted without a second river crossing and additional highway capacity. Improved infrastructure will also lead to greater inward investment, and improved productivity across the wider sub-region through addressing delays in supply chain, movement of labour and the delivery of goods and services.

21. The reduction in traffic as a result of a new road will make for a more pleasant environment, help to improve road safety and create the conditions for better facilities for walking, cycling and buses such as the proposals set out in the draft Hereford Masterplan. All of these benefits will help to improve the city centre and encourage the local and visitor economy.

22. The draft Hereford Masterplan was published in early 2023 to celebrate the city's character and provide a blueprint for making it an even better place to live, work and visit in the future. The aim is to make Hereford an even better city, a greener, healthier and safer place to live, work, study and visit – and crucially, an easier place to get around.

23. The Masterplan identifies the opportunities to create a more sustainable, attractive, vibrant and economically active Hereford, which more sensitively embraces its heritage. In seeking to expand the choice available to people on how to move around the city, the aim is to create a more active travel city with safer infrastructure for cycling, walking, and public transport.

24. Over time, the goal is to increase visitor numbers and footfall in the city centre through the re-allocation of road space to the most healthy and efficient modes of getting around. The plan is for a car-light, but not anti-car, city centre that is easy to navigate and access on foot, by bike and using quick and reliable buses. The proposals also include a strategy to reduce road danger at the school gates, enable liveable neighbourhoods and provide safer routes to school.

25. This vision cannot happen without a reduction in the number of vehicles on the key roads in the city, such as the A49 north-south and the A438 east-west. The scale of change needed in traffic flows can best be realised by providing new road infrastructure and a second river crossing, as shown in Appendices B and C. As an example, the Masterplan includes suggestions for the transformation of the Commercial Road into a flagship, tree-lined boulevard that will act as a 'green spine' at the heart of the regeneration of this historic neighbourhood.

26. Offering improved and more attractive choices to move around the city will reduce dependence on the car for short journeys and help to ensure that spare road capacity is not filled with additional journeys generated as a consequence of improved journey times. This "induced demand" is a phenomenon whereby "new" traffic appears on the network as a result of increased capacity, and evidence suggests that the effect is greatest where there are high levels of congestion and suppressed demand. Without measures to improve walking, cycling and the use of public transport there is a risk that some of the benefits such as improved journey times will be eroded as more vehicles use the network. Therefore, the new road and city centre improvements can be viewed as complementary to, and dependent upon, one another.

27. A number of Masterplan schemes are currently underway as part of a project supported by the Levelling Up Fund 2, including the new transport hub at the railway station, new cycle and walking routes and measures to improve safety around schools.

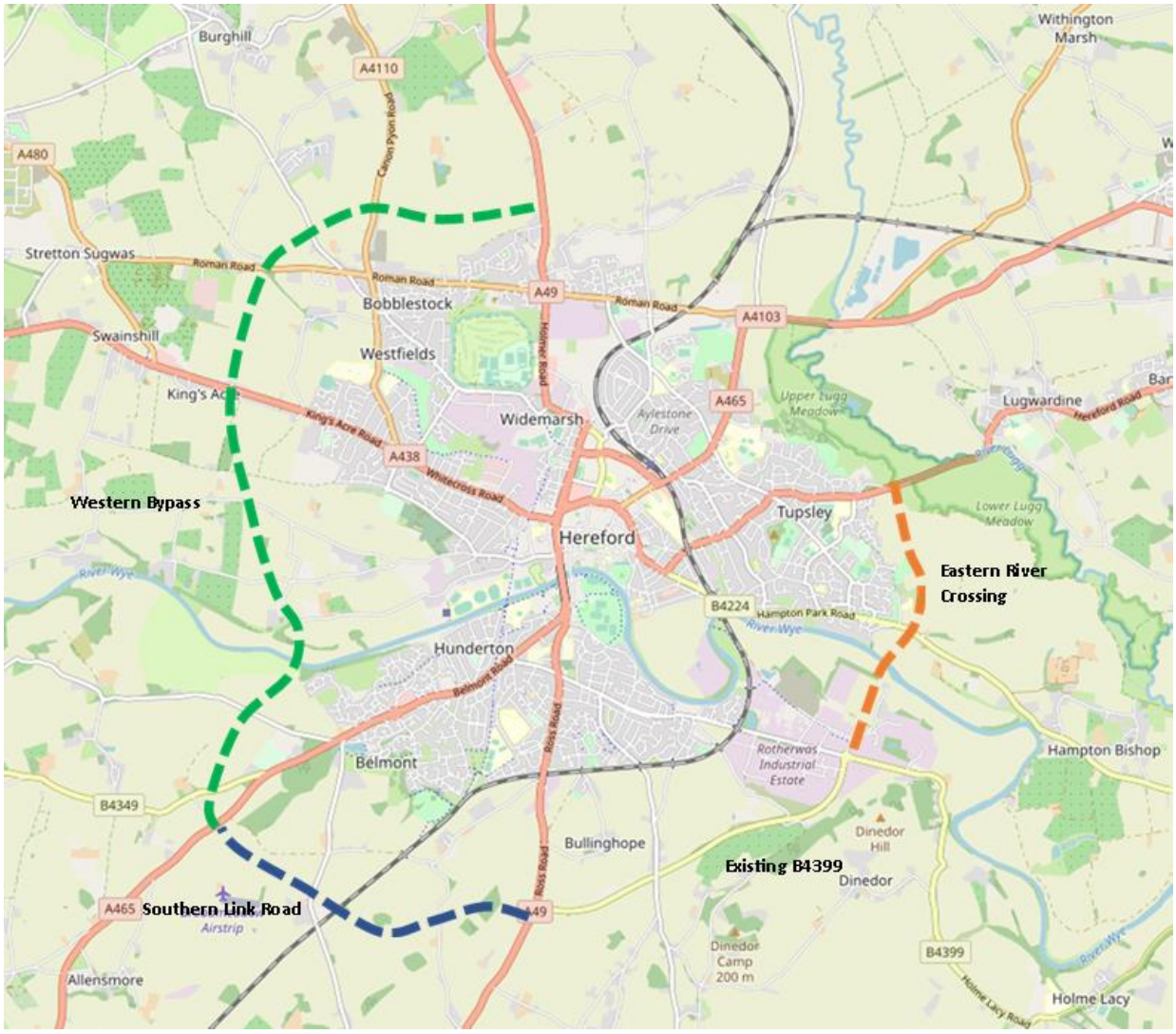
New Road Options

28. A new road scheme could be expected to deliver against a number of key objectives:

- **Economic benefits** – through improved productivity by reducing the costs to businesses caused by congestion and delay, establishing a more attractive location for inward investment, and by improving residents' access to training, work and services.
- **Improved network resilience** – by providing a second major road crossing of the River Wye to reduce reliance on Greyfriars Bridge.

- **Detrunk the existing A49** – by diverting the trunk road along the new road and allowing the Council to carry out local improvements for better connectivity across the city.
- **Traffic benefits** - by reducing traffic congestion and improving journey times within and through the city.
- **City centre improvements** – by delivering reductions in traffic and a better local environment and reducing the A49's congestion barrier to regeneration and growth across the city centre
- **Support for the draft Local Plan** – by providing the transport access and capacity to allow strategic land use plans to be realised.

29. The three road schemes considered as part of the Hereford Transport Strategy Review – Southern Link Road, Western Bypass and the Eastern River Crossing and Link Road – and their location relative to Hereford are shown on the figure below.

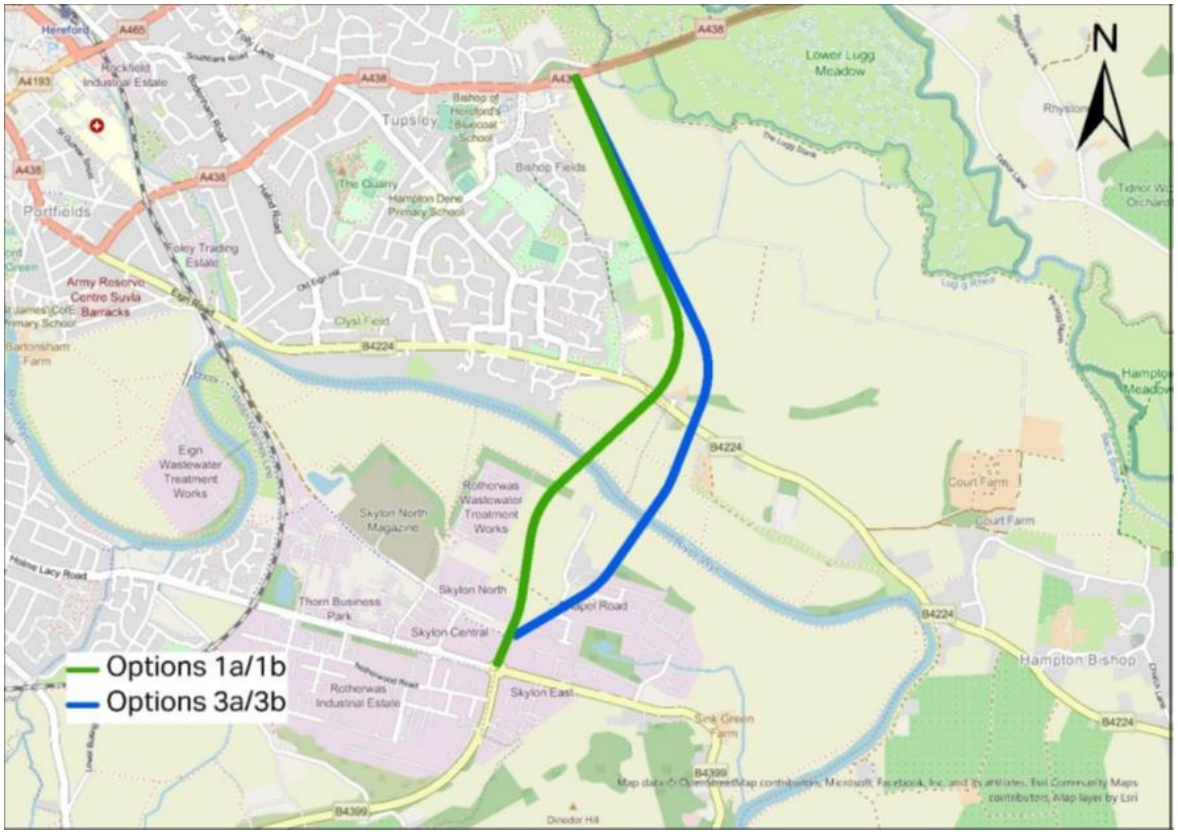


Eastern River Crossing and Link Road

30. The Eastern River Crossing and Link Road (ERiC) has since been developed by consultants AECOM to the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) in line with Department for Transport (DfT) guidance for developing business cases for major transport schemes.

The scheme would connect the B4399 near the Chapel Road roundabout and head north over the River Wye by means of a long bridge before linking with Hampton Park Road before continuing north to connect to the A438.

31. The SOC concludes that there are four best-performing options that are feasible and should be considered for further, more detailed investigation as part of an Outline Business Case (OBC). The options comprise two possible alignments, each as a single carriageway road and with either a 30mph or a 40mph speed limit option. The key difference between the two options is the route taken east or west to reduce impact on the setting of Rotherwas House Scheduled Monument, the Grade II* listed Rotherwas Chapel and the associated Grade II listed stable and barn. The resulting alignment of the more easterly Option 3 routes means the road would have to cross a much wider part of the River Wye floodplain.



I. Options 1a (30mph speed limit) and 1b (40mph) – these options would connect to the B4399 at the Chapel Road roundabout and route north over the River Wye by means of a viaduct before connecting with Hampton Park Road through an at-grade junction. They would then continue north before connecting to the A438.

II. Options 3a (30mph) and 3b (40mph) – these options would connect to the B4399 at Chapel Road and partly utilise the existing carriageway of Chapel Road. An additional junction would be required where the alignment deviates to the east of Chapel Road. The options would then route north over the River Wye by means of a viaduct structure, and connect with Hampton Park Road further to the east than Option 1. They would then continue north, sharing the same tie-in location at the A438.

32. The routes are approximately 2.7km (1.7 miles) long. Both options include walking and cycling infrastructure alongside the carriageway and in each case the 40mph speed limit means a slightly wider cross section and an increased cost.

33. At the time of the HTSR being prepared in 2020, the scheme costs were estimated at around £55m for prices current at that time. The options assessed in the SOC include changes to design standards since 2020, particularly around increased design levels for crossing the River Wye floodplain, which has resulted in a significantly longer bridge required than had previously been considered. At either 290m long for Options 1a and 1b or 485m long for Options 3a and 3b, these are the most significant and costly parts of the new road schemes.

34. Coupled with the long bridge lengths, the options also include provision of a footway and cycleway alongside the new road in order to provide improved access between residential areas in the east of the city and the Rotherwas Industrial Estate This increases the width of the route from a standard 9.3m to 15.8m for the 40mph options, pushing the cost estimates for the schemes at current Q4 2023 prices range to between £116m for Option 1b and £158m for Option 3b. Costs for these two options without the active travel measures and with a standard cross section only would be reduced to £84m for Option 1b and £109m for Option 3b. However, options without such facilities could score lower in terms of meeting one of the key objectives of "Growth; improve transport links between residential and employment areas to the east of Hereford" which may affect their inclusion on the shortlist of options for further consideration. Any major road scheme is expected to include active travel measures as part of an overall package, and alternative active travel measures would need to be investigated and included in the overall package costs.

35. Predictions for costs in the future, which involve estimating likely inflation over several years, require careful interpretation and a likely range of costs for a predicted start of construction is included at paragraphs 77-83. The SOC stage does not include a detailed calculation of benefit/cost ratios, but the impact of increased costs on the value for money of the scheme has been estimated to offer a medium or medium/low benefit/cost ratio.

36. Full details of the scheme can be found in the SOC report: (https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/download/2318/eastern-river-crossing-and-link-road---strategic-outline-case-report).

37. An assessment of the ERiC scheme against the objectives is summarised below.

Economic Benefits

38. The benefits of new road infrastructure occur in two ways: through reductions in levels of traffic at particular locations and, therefore, improvements in journey times; and improved access for new development opportunities. When considering economic benefits it is the reductions in congestion that result in fewer delays, better journey times and reliability that offer the main advantages. This route will not unlock any future housing and employment opportunities as it is in an area of high flood risk zone 3 and any direct economic benefits would be limited.

39. Journey times for a number of routes across the city are shown in Appendix C. The most significant reductions in journey times of over a minute for shorter lengths of route can be found on the A438 Blueschool Street and the A49 at Victoria Street and Ross Road. This is likely due to reductions in traffic flow of between 7% and 27% over Greyfriars Bridge, depending on time of day and direction of travel. For longer

journeys through the city, the cumulative benefits can be seen in journey time reductions for north-south trips on the A49 of almost 3 minutes and similar savings for trips heading north-eastwards using the A49 and A465. East-west trips using the A438 would be faster by just over 1 minute.

Improved Resilience

40. By providing a second road crossing of the River Wye, ERiC provides a long-term solution to improving the resilience of the highway network in and around Hereford. As well as creating additional capacity, a second bridge will allow for an alternative route for traffic in the event of accidents and other incidents, as well as providing suitable diversion routes while maintenance works are carried out. However, height restrictions on a number of bridges over roads to the east of the city centre would limit its effectiveness for tall vehicles in the event of a closure of the Greyfriars Bridge.

Detrunking the A49

41. For the A49 trunk road to follow a different route to the current alignment through the heart of the city a suitable alternative would need to be created that would be acceptable to National Highways. By finishing at the A438 between Hereford and Lugwardine, there are no suitable roads for traffic using ERiC to access the A49 north of the city. Options to provide a new link road between the A438 and A49 have not been pursued, particularly because of the environmental constraints associated with the Lugg Meadows area between the A438 and A4103.

42. It must be concluded that no suitable alternative route could be found for the trunk road with ERiC and the trunk road would remain along its current alignment through the centre of Hereford. Despite ERiC taking some traffic off a number of routes through the city centre and reducing congestion and improving traffic flows along the A49, the benefits of detrunking the current route would not be realised.

Traffic Benefits

43. Changes in traffic flow are shown in Appendix B. Within the city, the ERiC scheme has a positive impact on traffic numbers across the existing A49 Greyfriars Bridge and south along the A49 Ross Road. These changes in traffic flow help to explain the improvements in journey times highlighted above. The most significant reductions in traffic flow, however, occur outside the city on the B4399 around Holme Lacy and near Dormington, suggesting that the new road will result in a reduction of traffic using the A4224 and other local roads to reach the city from the east.

44. Traffic increases are greatest on roads that would connect to the ERiC. The most obvious is the increase of nearly fourfold the traffic on the B4399 Rotherwas Link, but significant increases of around 50% would be seen on the A438 at Lugwardine and of over 30% (depending on direction and time of day) on the A465 at Withington Marsh and the A4103 at Withington. All of these increases are as a result of traffic finding a more direct route using ERiC to be more attractive than existing routes. In addition, Holme Lacy Road will experience increases of up to 31% between ERiC and the A49.

City Centre Improvements

45. Removal of traffic from the city centre, especially along the key routes of Edgar Street, Blueschool Street and Commercial Road, will help to promote more walking, cycling and use of public transport to deliver the ambitions of the Hereford Masterplan. The

importance of the new transport hub as a focus of sustainable travel will be enhanced by improvements along Commercial Road to link to the city centre. Higher footfall in the centre and civic spaces will support local businesses and help to make them more resilient. Reducing the barrier from the congestion of the current A49 will also enhance regeneration opportunities in the city centre, including the growth corridor to the west of the city identified in the draft masterplan.

Support for the draft Local Plan and adopted Core Strategy

46. The draft Local Plan 2021-2041 seeks to promote the sustainable growth of the county and will start a period of public consultation on 25 March 2024.

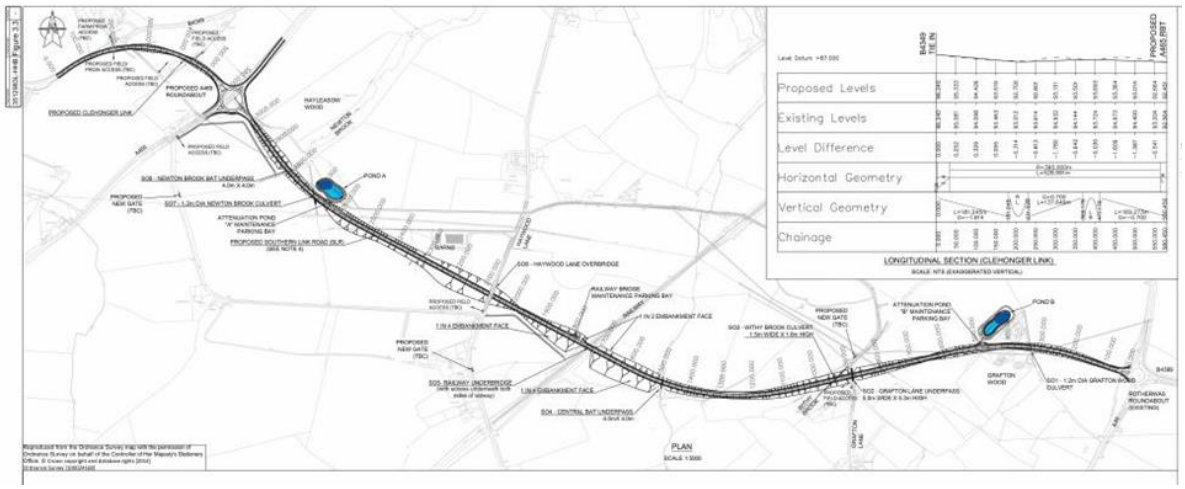
47. The Core Strategy 2011-2031 remains council policy and identifies four major residential development sites to the north, west and south of the city as well as the city centre. Major employment development is anticipated to the west and south of the city.

48. The location of the sites in the Core Strategy suggests that ERiC could help to support the development of provision in the centre and to the south of Hereford. However, substantial increases in traffic on the Rotherwas Link as a result of ERiC would require further analysis to understand the impact on any junctions to access sites to the north of the link road. Traffic changes to the west and the north of the city as a result of ERiC are marginal and would be unlikely to create sufficient capacity to support development sites in these parts of the city, and the likely need for new infrastructure to serve these sites further compounds these problems.

49. The extract from the Core Strategy document shown at paragraph 19 demonstrates the intention of the strategy to locate new development close to a proposed western bypass and highlights the difficulties of ERiC in having any positive impact on the development of housing and employment sites at Holmer West and Three Elms. As stated above, given the flooding risk the eastern route would not unlock any new strategic housing or employment land opportunities.

Southern Link Road (SLR)

50. The Southern Link Road is a new 3.6km (2.2 miles) single carriageway road that formed part of the South Wye Transport Package and was granted planning permission on 18 July 2016. The scheme had subsequently been sufficiently far advanced that tenders had been invited for its construction before progress on the scheme was stopped. Construction of a short 150m section of the scheme – referred to as Stage 1 – was completed between 1 and 18 July 2019 within the three-year time limit of the planning permission to start works. The application has therefore been lawfully implemented but will require a full discharge of conditions before works could progress.



51. The scheme was at an advanced stage of development at the time progress was stopped. AECOM consultants were commissioned in 2023 to review the status of the scheme and to advise on the work packages and timescales if work was to be restarted. The full AECOM report has been attached as Appendix A.

52. Highway design standards have not substantially changed since the scheme was designed and it is anticipated that a road designed to current standards should be able to be accommodated within the red line of the existing planning permission. However, more detailed checks are needed for areas such as drainage and balancing pond facilities necessary to mitigate flood risk that may be affected by capacity increases to meet new climate change criteria. Further analysis may also be required for the design of structures, and liaison with National Highways, Network Rail and the Environment Agency may also affect some of the detailed design.

53. While planning permission exists for the scheme, the review confirmed that a number of planning conditions had not been fully discharged at the time that the Stage1 works were completed. In addition, planning permission for temporary works such as haul roads and site compounds have since lapsed and will need to be resubmitted. Some areas of legislation and guidance have since been updated and new requirements introduced, and it is considered that the baseline environmental data will in many cases be out of date. It will therefore be necessary to review, refresh and renew the environmental assessment as part of the further development of the scheme.

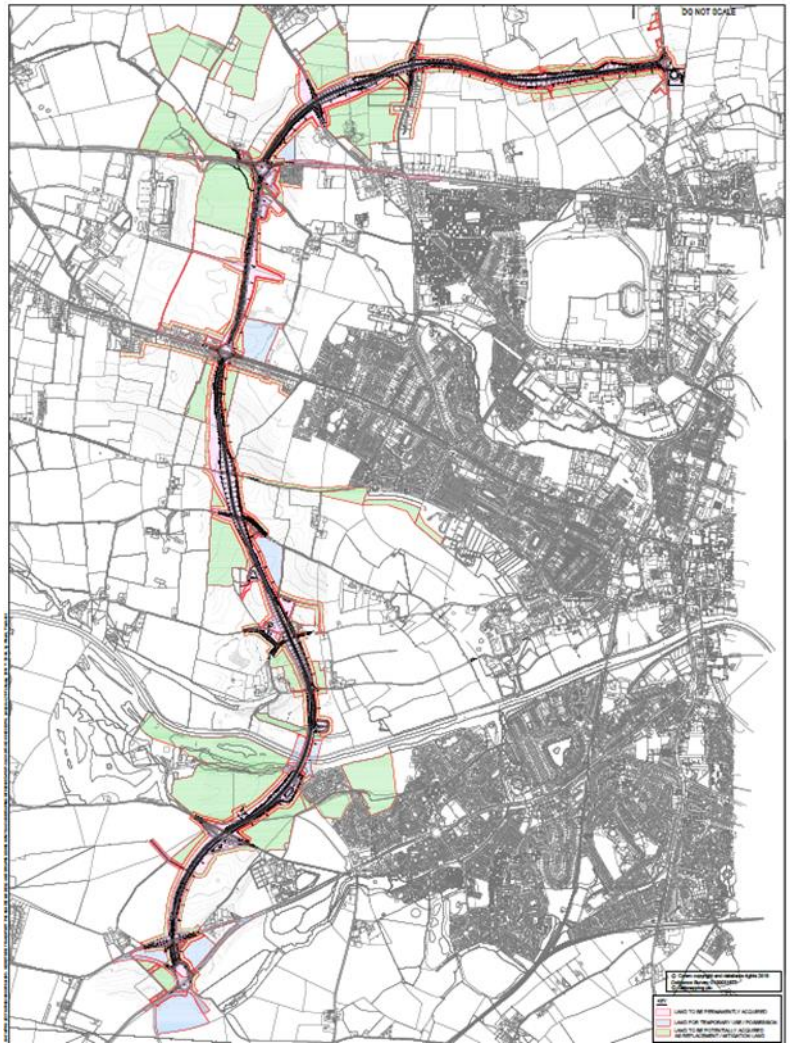
54. The latest timescale for starting construction shows an 18 month construction period and a start date between late 2026 and early 2027 and is dependent on many factors. The key variable is likely to concern land purchase, with options for acquiring land either through negotiation or using compulsory purchase powers and any public inquiry that may be necessary with the latter process. Most of the land previously purchased for the scheme was sold back to the previous owners and would need to be repurchased, although one plot remains in the Council's ownership.

55. The cost estimate has been reviewed to bring it up to date and is included at paragraphs 77-83.

Western Bypass

56. At its meeting on 27 July 2018, Cabinet approved the red route as the preferred route for further scheme development of the Western Bypass as part of the Hereford Transport Package. At the time that work on the scheme was stopped, preparations

were underway for the planning application to be brought within the Planning Act 2008 as a project of national significance.
Any land lying in the site of the new highway (being land under the Red Route) will be blighted land. The council may be required to pay compensation to those landowners affected. This will be based upon the unblighted price of the land in the open market. No account shall be taken of any depreciation of the value of relevant interest in the land attributable to the fact that that an indication has been given that the land is, or is likely to be, acquired by the Council for the Bypass project. In addition, any appreciation in value of the land due to the existence of the Bypass has to be disregarded in the valuation.
If residential properties are being acquired the claimant landowner may be entitled to home loss payments and, in the case of non-residential properties, basic loss and occupier's loss payments. Reasonable professional fees may also be claimed by the claimant landowner for the submission of the Blight Notice and negotiation of the compensation to be paid



57. Traffic levels from modelling suggested a WS2+1 standard of carriageway which would consist of alternating sections of two lanes in one direction and a single lane in the other, separated by a 1m wide strip. The sections of two-lane provision were generally on the approach to roundabouts.

58. The Western Bypass is approximately 8.1km (5.1 miles) in length and would connect to the SLR via a revised roundabout junction with the A465. From there it would head

roughly northwards to cross the River Wye. Roundabout junctions are planned with the A438 Kings Acre Road and the A4103 Roman Road before the road turns eastwards to a new roundabout on the A49 north of the city.

59. The cost estimate has been reviewed to bring it up to date and is included at paragraphs 77-83.

Hereford Western Bypass

60. Proposals for a full bypass to the west of the city has, for many years, comprised of both the Southern Link Road and the Western Bypass together. The two schemes will be referred to in this report as Phases 1 and 2 respectively of the Hereford Western Bypass (HWB), emphasising their interdependence. The HWB could therefore provide a new route for the A49 trunk road between the north and the south of the city.

Economic Benefits

61. The benefits of new road infrastructure manifest themselves in two ways: through reductions in levels of traffic at particular locations and, therefore, improvements in journey times; and improved access for new development opportunities. Fewer delays and greater reliability are of significant benefit to businesses, while residents would enjoy better access to work, training and essential services.

62. The evidence and analysis developed in support of the Local Plan has identified that the western route would unlock significant land for new strategic housing and employment growth along the corridor created to the west of the city. Including the long planned development at Three Elms, this could lead to an additional 2,000 homes and 60 hectares of employment land.

63. Journey times for a number of routes across the city are shown in Appendix C. The most significant reductions in journey times of up to almost 2 minutes for shorter lengths of route can be found on the A49 Victoria Street/438 Blueschool Street and the A49 at Ross Road and Edgar Street/Newtown Road/Holmer Road. This is likely due to reductions in traffic flow of between 19% and 39% over Greyfriars Bridge, depending on time of day and direction of travel and up to 39% on A49 Ross Road.

64. For longer journeys through the city, the cumulative benefits can be seen in journey time reductions for north-south trips on the A49 of almost 4 ½ minutes and nearly 4 minutes savings for trips heading north-eastwards using the A49 and A465. East-west trips using the A438 and passing through the city centre would be faster by close to 2 minutes.

Improved Resilience

65. By providing a second road crossing of the River Wye, HWB provides a long term solution to improving the resilience of the highway network in and around Hereford. As well as creating additional capacity, a second bridge will allow for an alternative route for traffic in the event of accidents and other incidents, as well as providing suitable diversion routes while maintenance works are carried out.

Detrunking the A49

66. The HWB connects the A49 in the north to the A49 in the south, providing a suitable alternative route for the trunk road, subject to the agreement of National Highways. Subject to National Highways' approval to the subsequent detrunking, the existing

road would become the responsibility of the council, allowing it to pursue improvements to pedestrian, cycling and public transport facilities and make junction alterations that would make the most of reduced traffic levels and help address some of the current severance caused by heavy traffic on the A49. The HWB would therefore provide a route for traffic that would otherwise pass through the city centre, either as part of longer north-south journeys along the A49 or for more local journeys by using the HWB to move between different parts of the city.

Traffic Benefits

67. Changes in traffic flow are shown in Appendix B. Within the city, the HWB scheme has a very positive impact on traffic numbers across the existing Greyfriars Bridge and along the whole of the A49 in the city, where reductions of up to 39% can be expected, depending on location and direction of travel. Reductions of more than 15% in traffic levels are also predicted on the B4224 Eign Road and more than 25% on Holme Lacy Road to the east and up to 25% on the A465 Belmont Road to the south west. These changes in traffic flow help to explain the improvements in journey times above

68. Further significant reductions further out from the city can be seen in a number of locations. To the east, traffic levels are expected to fall by up to 20% on the B4224 at Hampton Bishop and up to 29% at Sugwas Pool on the A438.

69. Traffic increases are greatest on roads that would connect to the HWB. The highest increase of 152% will occur on the B4399 Rotherwas Link Road caused by the rerouting of traffic from other routes onto the HWB. Other significant increases are seen at the A465 at Allensmore and the B4349 at Clehonger where changes of over 80% may be experienced, depending on time of day and direction of travel. As might be expected, increased flows of up to 33% may occur on the A49 immediately north of the new junction to the north of Hereford.

City Centre Improvements

70. Removal of traffic from the city centre, especially along the key routes of Edgar Street, Victoria Street and Ross Road, will help to reduce the severance between east and west parts of the city and allow for greater connectivity by a number of different modes such as walking and cycling.

71. Less traffic will help to create the conditions for more walking, cycling and use of public transport to deliver the ambitions of the Hereford Masterplan. Higher footfall in the centre and civic spaces will support local businesses and help to make them more resilient.

72. As identified above, reducing the footprint and traffic barrier of the A49 through the city centre will unlock significant regeneration opportunities in the city centre. In particular, the growth corridor to the west of the city centre as identified in the draft City Centre Masterplan.

Support for the draft Local Plan and adopted Core Strategy

73. The draft Local Plan 2021-2041 seeks to promote the sustainable growth of the county and will start a period of public consultation on 25 March 2024.

74. The Core Strategy 2011-2031 remains council policy and identifies four major residential development sites to the north, west and south of the city as well as the city centre. Major employment development is anticipated to the west and south of the city.

75. The location of the sites in the Core Strategy suggests that HWB would help to support the development of provision in the four key locations in the centre and to the north, west and south of Hereford. Significant increases in traffic on the Rotherwas Link as a result of HWB would require further analysis to understand the impact on any junctions to access sites to the north of the link road. Traffic changes to the west and the north of the city as a result of HWB should create sufficient capacity to support development sites in these parts of the city.

76. The extract from the Core Strategy document shown at paragraph 19 demonstrates the intention of the strategy to locate new development close to a proposed western bypass and highlights the positive contribution that HWB would have on the development of housing and employment sites at Holmer West and Three Elms.

Scheme Costs

77. The costs of the Eastern River Crossing and Link Road, the Southern Link Road and the Western Bypass have been calculated to the same period for Q4 2023 (ie the last quarter of the year 2023/24) to allow for comparison between the various options. Costs are very sensitive to the year of construction and any calculation for budget-setting purposes will need to estimate inflation between current day and the anticipated start of construction.

78. Q4 2023 costs estimates can be considered as a present-day cost, and the estimates for the schemes are, to the nearest £1m. For clarity only the ERiC options with a 40mph speed limit are set out here, as the reduction in cost for the 30mph options (1a and 3a) are relatively small:

- Eastern River Crossing and Link Road Option 1b - £116m
- Eastern River Crossing and Link Road Option 3b - £158m
- Southern Link Road - £31m
- Western Bypass - £201m

79. The Eastern River Crossing and Link Road scheme costs from the Strategic Outline Case represent a significant increase over estimates produced for the HTSR in 2020. Undoubtedly the impact of inflation in recent years will account for some of this difference, but the majority is likely due to two factors. The first is the much longer length of bridge required to span the River Wye flood plain due to an increase in design flood levels in this location. The second factor is the inclusion of an adjacent footway and cycleway alongside the road in order to improve connectivity. Removing this provision would result in a large reduction in the overall cost of the scheme, mostly due to the decreased width of the bridge. The impact on costs of removing this facility is set out in the summary table below.

80. Neither the Southern Link Road nor the Western Bypass was planned with similar adjacent facilities, but each was part of a wider package of measures that included active travel facilities to improve the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure. The cost of this is not included in the estimates in this report. All three schemes

would require additional investment as part of a package of complementary active travel measures such as those identified in the draft Hereford Masterplan.

81. Detrunking the A49 would mean the responsibility for maintaining the current road would transfer from National Highways to the Council and, conversely, National Highways would be responsible for the operation and future maintenance of the new road. Both National Highways and the Council would need to negotiate and agree a programme of works and an associated payment to the Council to bring the existing A49 up to a reasonable standard, recognising the reduced maintenance liabilities in the short- to medium-term of the new road.

82. The cost estimates for the individual schemes quoted above are current day costs at Q4 2023. Estimating for the cost at the time of construction requires the future rates of inflation to be calculated and can only be an approximation based on recent trends and forecasts. As such, cost estimates for construction have been produced as a range between -5% and +10% of the figure calculated using the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) construction data at the time of making the estimate.

83. Costs are rounded to the nearest £1m and are always rounded up. Costs for ERiC options 1b and 3b without active travel measures (ATM) are also included as (no ATM) options.

Scheme	**Q4 2023**	**Q1 2027**		**Q1 2031**	
		-5%	+10%	-5%	+10%
Southern Link Road	£31m	£31m	£35m		
Western Bypass	£201m			£240m	£278m
ERiC Option 1b	£116m			£139m	£161m
ERiC Option 1b (no ATM)	£84m			£101m	£117m
ERiC Option 3b	£158m			£189m	£218m
ERiC Option 3b (no ATM)	£109m			£137m	£151m

Each scheme would require further work as part of the development of business cases to identify the appropriate funding packages.

For the HWB Phase 1, Cabinet (and Council) has already committed £10.3m to fund the next stages of the scheme. Cost estimates in para 77-83 identify the scheme cost as being £31m at current prices and, based on a likely start in late 2026 or early 2027, a budget cost estimate at that time ranging between £31m and £35m. This would suggest up to an additional £24.7m would be required to meet all scheme costs, depending on inflation between now and the time of construction.

Discussions are taking place with Midlands Connect (as the sub-regional transport body) and the DfT over the sources and criteria of any additional funding. There are three most likely options:

I. The recently announced Local Transport Fund (LTF) has allocated £101.851m to Herefordshire Council for the seven year period 2025/26 to 2031/32. The LTF was announced on 26 February 2024 as part of the Government's Network North plan to invest the funds released from the cancellation of the northern leg of HS2, This is additional to existing funding that the council currently receives and can be invested in a broad range of projects that will provide: better connectivity within towns, suburbs and cities; better connectivity between towns and cities; and improve everyday local journeys for people. Early indications suggest that the Phase 1 would meet these criteria but this will be confirmed following the release of detailed guidance and further discussion with Midlands Connect and the DfT. The funding profile is

expected to be loaded towards the years 2027/28 to 2031/32 but the details of the levels of funding is yet to be announced.

II. Major Road Network MRN2 funding through the DfT, which is expected to be announced in Spring 2024. Typically, the current MRN is intended for contributions between £20m and £50m towards new road projects, but detailed guidance is not expected to be available until Spring 2024.

III. The £650m Midlands Road Fund as part of Network North's plans to support new roads in the region. Details of the criteria and eligibility are also expected in Spring 2024.

IV. The HWB Phase 2 funding will likely be sourced through the DfT's Large Local Majors (LLM) fund which is intended for contributions of more than £50m that are beyond the scope of MRN Funds. Work is in hand to set out the routes to progress and fund the project with Midlands Connect and to explore additional or alternative funding options and contributions. The development of the Outline Business Case for the scheme would be a requirement to firm up plans for a funding package.

Other Impacts

84. Any major road scheme is likely to have significant impact on the environment close to the new road and on local carbon emissions, especially from embodied carbon because of construction activities. This should be considered against the environmental benefits in the city centre resulting from reduced traffic levels and congestion.

85. The HTSR report compared packages of measures that include the road schemes and recognises the adverse environmental impacts of the packages that included the Western Bypass and the Eastern Link. Both HWB and ERiC can be expected to have significant impacts on landscape and visual effects, with the HWB likely to have a greater impact on built heritage. Both schemes would have adverse impacts on the River Wye and other watercourses, while the impact of ERiC on the designated features of the River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are likely to be significantly adverse due to the extensive area of flood plain to be crossed. However, the reduction in traffic levels in the city and on key routes will improve local air quality and noise and help to create the environment for measures aimed at improving the take up of walking and cycling for shorter journeys. A key task of the next stages of scheme development will be a full review of environmental survey data and a reassessment of scheme impacts and likely mitigation measures.

86. DfT have introduced Carbon Management Plans which will have to be prepared as part of any funding submission. Analysis in the HTSR reinforces the conclusion that packages including both the "Western Bypass" and the "Eastern Link" (as described in the HTSR report) are both anticipated to result in a high increase in embodied carbon, mainly because of construction of the new roads themselves. Further work on the schemes should improve the accuracy of calculating the carbon emissions associated with the construction, maintenance and operation of the new roads. In turn, such analysis provides an opportunity to select materials and construction methods that would reduce the carbon emissions from building the scheme. It should be recognised that the costs associated with specific carbon reduction actions are not incorporated in the scheme costs identified in this report and the costs and benefits would form part of the development for business cases.

Summary

87. Any new road will offer a mix of advantages and disadvantages depending on the criteria and location being considered. However, the HWB offers greater benefits and fewer drawbacks when assessed against the key objectives:

	Hereford Western Bypass		Eastern River Crossing and Link Road	
	Impact	**Description**	**Impact**	**Description**
Economic Benefits	**+2**	Evidence and analysis in support of the Local Plan has identified that the western route would unlock significant land or new strategic housing and employment growth along the corridor created to the west of the city. Improved connectivity will also help developments in the south of the city. Significant reductions in journey times for north-south and east-west routes in the city means fewer delays and greater reliability for businesses, while residents would enjoy better access to work, training and essential services	**+1**	The area to the north of Rotherwas is an area of high flood risk (zone 3) which could not support strategic housing growth or the creation of new employment land. Therefore this route could not unlock any new future housing and employment opportunities and the direct economic benefits would be limited in the long-term future. The route would support development in the south of the city and further employment land at Rotherwas. Reductions in journey times for northeast-south and east-west routes in the city means fewer delays and greater reliability for businesses, while residents would enjoy better access to work, training and essential services
Improved Resilience	**+2**	A second river crossing provides a significant improvement to the resilience of the network as an alternative route for traffic crossing the Wye. Traffic reductions and improvements to journey times are greater than with ERiC, resulting in greater capacity to cope with incidents.	**+1**	The resilience of the network is improved by the provision of a second river crossing offering an alternative route for traffic crossing the Wye. There are traffic reductions and improvements to journey times as a result of the scheme but these are significantly less than those predicted with HWB, resulting in less additional capacity to cope with incidents.
Detrunk the Existing A49	**+2**	The HWB connects the A49 in the north to the A49 in the south, thus providing a suitable alternative route for the trunk road, subject to the agreement of National Highways. Subject to National Highways' approval to the subsequent detrunking, the existing road would become the responsibility of the council	**0**	No suitable, alternative route for the trunk road with ERiC and the trunk road would remain along its current alignment through the centre of Hereford. Despite ERiC taking some traffic off a number of routes through the city centre and reducing congestion and improving traffic flows along the A49, the benefits of detrunking the current route would not be realised.
Traffic Impact	**+2**	Traffic reductions across the city and journey time improvements on the A49 north-south route and on key east-west routes are significant and higher than ERiC. This provides greater opportunity to develop measures that will encourage more walking, cycling and bus use in the city and help to reduce the severance caused by traffic along the A49 corridor. Traffic is increased on key routes to the north and south west that connect to the HWB.	**+1**	The scheme results in traffic reductions in the city centre and journey time improvements on the A49 north-south route and on key east-west routes, although not as great as those offered by the HWB. This provides opportunities to develop measures that will encourage more walking, cycling and bus use in the city and help to reduce severance along the central and southern parts of the A49 corridor. Traffic reductions are seen outside Hereford to the south east, but there are increases in traffic flows on key routes to the norther east of the city.
City Centre Improvements	**+2**	Significant reductions in the levels of traffic and severance caused by the A49 through the city centre will unlock major regeneration opportunities in the city centre, in particular the growth corridor to the west of the city centre as identified in the draft Hereford Masterplan. Less traffic will support the ambitions of the Masterplan while higher footfall in the centre and civic spaces will support local businesses.	**+1**	Reductions in the levels of traffic on the A49 are mostly in the centre and south of the city and will help to reduce severance caused by the A49 through the city centre. However, the impact on the northern stretch of the A49 may not have much impact on the growth corridor to the west of the city centre as identified in the draft Hereford Masterplan. Less traffic will support the ambitions of the Masterplan while higher footfall in the centre and civic spaces will support local businesses.
Support for Core Strategy	**+2**	The location of the sites in the Core Strategy close to the HWB highlights the positive contribution that the new road would have on the development of housing and employment sites at Holmer West and Three Elms, and a supportive role in the development of development of sites in the centre and to the south of Hereford.	**+1**	Of the sites shown in the Core Strategy, those in the centre and to the south of Hereford suggest that ERiC could help to support their development. Traffic changes to the west and the north of the city are marginal and would be unlikely to create sufficient capacity to support development sites in these parts of the city. The need for new infrastructure to serve these sites further compounds these problems. The flooding risks to the east of the city means the ERiC would not unlock any new strategic housing or employment land opportunities.
Current cost (Q4 2023)		**£232m**		**£116m to £158m £84m to £109m (no active travel)**
Estimated Completion		**Phase 1 – 2028 Phase 2 - 2033**		**2033**
Length or Route		**Phase 1 – 3.6km (2.3 miles) Phase 2 – 8.1km (5.1 miles)**		**2.7km (1.7 miles)**

Key:

+2	Strong positive impact
+1	Positive impact
0	Minimal or no impact

88. The benefits of the HWB over the ERiC are set out above. In recognising these benefits there are clear risks of not delivering the HWB:

I. Not providing the necessary infrastructure to maximise Hereford's potential will harm future prosperity and leave the city in a vulnerable position due to poor network resilience.

II. Delay in delivering the HWB will continue to limit the provision of housing and employment land, hampering successful implementation of the Local Plan and a sustainable growth corridor round the city.

III. Construction inflation will continue to drive up costs and run the risk of undermining any business case if the schemes are delayed unnecessarily.

IV. Not addressing traffic problems that cause congestion and affect air quality will continue to impact on the quality of life and health of local people.

Recommendations

89. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet:

I. Agrees to progress the Hereford Western Bypass linking the A49 north and south of the city consisting of the Southern Link Road within a capital budget of £10.3m as Phase 1 and the Western Bypass with a revenue budget of £760,000 as Phase 2, to realise the county's strategic housing and employment land growth critical to the Herefordshire economy.

II. Acknowledges the Strategic Outline Case report for the Eastern River Crossing and Link Road.

III. Approves the budget recommendations to commit £10.3m of capital funding for Phase 1 of the HWB and £760,000 of revenue funding for Phase 2 of the HWB as included in this report.

IV. Agrees to delegate the authority to take operational decisions during the development of the schemes to the Corporate Director for Economy and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure and the Section 151 Officer.

90. Progressing HWB Phases 1 and 2 will require several different work packages to be developed, including a full review of both schemes that make up the HWB to create detailed work programmes. This will include, but not be limited to, the following areas:

I. A design review to ensure design elements are to current standards and reflect best practice.

II. A refresh of transport modelling and economic appraisals based on up-to-date traffic data as included in the updated Herefordshire Strategic Transport Model.

III. A review of environmental surveys and standards to refresh the environmental assessments required to inform the further development of the schemes.

IV. Develop the next stages of business cases for the respective schemes, expected to be a Full Business Case for Phase 1 and the Outline Business Case for Phase 2. Both business cases will include an assessment of funding options and the establishment of a preferred funding package.

V. The recommencement of discussions with key stakeholders including, but not limited to, the Department for Transport, Midlands Connect, National Highways, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

91. To progress the work packages it is proposed to develop the governance procedures, management structures and the necessary technical expertise and experience to take the scheme forward. All procurement requirements will follow the Council procedure rules and/or current legislation relevant at the time of tender. The packages will, as a minimum, comprise the elements:

I. The project governance necessary to establish the procedures and policies to determine how the project is managed and overseen.

II. A project management team to ensure progress of the projects, comprising the necessary expertise to represent the Council's interests including technical, planning, financial, procurement and legal contributions.

III. External consultancy support to provide the technical skills, knowledge and resources to progress the schemes.

Community impact

92. At its 9 February 2024 Budget meeting, the Council committed £10.3m of funds to progressing the Southern Link Road. The proposals in this report will advance the scheme as Phase 1 of the HWB.

93. The County Plan for 2020/24 has set priorities to receive and consider the Strategic Outline Business Case for the Eastern River Crossing and Link Road, and to consider alternative investment strategies to support the Community, Environment and Economy ambitions outlined in the Plan.

94. The County Plan 2020/24 sets out the ambition to achieve a thriving and prosperous economy that will provide sustainable, well-paid and rewarding job opportunities. The Council will strive for a vibrant local economy that improves quality of life for everyone and also generates the economic growth that will bring prosperity. In support of this ambition, the plan sets an aim to maintain our highway network and plan for the necessary transport infrastructure.

Environmental Impact

95. Traffic levels and congestion in the city are high and an Air Quality Management Area has been designated since 2001 centred on the A49 through the city centre. The AQMA is in place because of the resulting pollution in the form of NO_x. Measures to reduce traffic levels and congestion will help to address air quality concerns.

96. It is recognised that there will be a significant environmental impact from new roads and each scheme will require an Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Statement. The process of scheme development will identify the possible impacts that the scheme could have and design mitigation measures intended to avoid or minimise any such impact.

97. Any scheme will be required to deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 10% so that the construction of the road will result in more or better quality natural habitat than before. Assessments of greenhouse gas emissions from the construction, maintenance and operation of the new roads will form part of scheme development to reduce the impact of the road on emissions.

Equality duty

98. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

99. A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

100. Development of the schemes will include an equality impact assessment to inform and influence their design and implementation.

101. When consulting with the public and/or stakeholders, the Council will ensure that it meets its Public Sector Equality Duty by following its comprehensive internal guidance.

Resource implications

102. Council agreed on 8 December 2023 and again on 9 February 2024 budget meeting to commit £10.3m of funds to progressing the Southern Link Road. This budget will be used to fund the preparation of the scheme, now referred to as the HWB Phase 1, and will include land purchase, consultancy fees and other preparation costs and will contribute towards the costs of construction and supervision. However, additional sources of funding will be required to cover the overall cost – currently expected to be in the order of £35m – and part of the scheme development work will be to put together the business case and funding package.

103. Not all this ambitious HWB programme can be paid from capital sources and revenue funding will be needed for progressing the next stages of Phase 2, the section of HWB also known as the Western Bypass. The Council already has an approved revenue budget of £1.4m for the development of ERiC; at its meeting on 24 June 2021 Cabinet approved the allocation of a £400,000 budget for the scheme, and at its 29 September 2022 meeting Cabinet approved the allocation of a further £1m revenue budget. This included funding for the Strategic Outline Case and a contribution towards a new Herefordshire traffic model. It is expected that around £860,000 will remain of that budget.

104. Given the priority to develop the HWB it is therefore recommended that the £860,000 is vired away from ERiC towards the following projects:

I. £760,000 allocated towards progressing the HWB Phase 2 (previously referred to as the western bypass). It is acknowledged that further revenue funding will be necessary to progress the project through to the planning application and business case stages to the point where capital funds can be used.. Most of this funding will be used for consultancy fees and staff costs associated with this work.

II. £50,000 contribution towards the Council's new Local Transport Plan (LTP) which is currently being developed and is expected to be completed in the summer of 2024. The LTP will set out the strategic transport proposals for the county for perhaps the next 15 years or more and will therefore need to demonstrate the strategic business case for the costs and benefits of the HWB as well as a package of transport measures that will complement the. It is therefore recommended that £50,000 of funds is allocated to the existing £240,000 LTP budget to cover this additional work, which will include traffic and carbon emissions modelling. The current LTP budget mostly comprises a DfT capacity grant of almost £179,000 with the balance from funding allocated by Cabinet for updating the LTP at its meeting on 24 June 2021. Expenditure to date is around £130,000.

III. £50,000 to complete a review of the Strategic Outline Case for the proposed Golden Valley Parkway railway station (also known as Pontrilas station).

105. Estimated costs and funding sources are:

	2023/24	**2024/25**	**2025/26**	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**Total**
	£'000	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**	**£'000**
Capital cost of project						
SLR (HWB Phase 1)						
SLR – land purchase		500	1,500	1,000		3,000
SLR – consultancy fees		900	700	200	200	2,000
SLR – staff/PMO costs		350	300	300	300	1,250
SLR - contingency		1,050	1,000	1,000	1,000	4,050
TOTAL		2,800	3,500	2,500	1,500	10,300
Capital Funding sources						
Capital Receipts		2,800	2,200			5,000
Corporate Funded Borrowing			1,300	2,500	1,500	5,300
TOTAL		2,800	3,500	2,500	1,500	10,300
Revenue budget implications						
Western Bypass (HWB Phase 2)		150	300	310		760
LTP development		50				50
Pontrilas station SOC		50				50
TOTAL		250	300	310		860
Revenue Funding sources						
Earmarked Reserves		250	300	310		860
TOTAL		250	300	310		860

106. As detailed work packages are developed as described elsewhere in this report and as consultancy resources are engaged, these budgets and profiles will be refined and reported as set out in the governance procedures as appropriate.

107. Progressing these projects at the various stages of development will require a significant input of time and expertise from Council officers. This will require dedicated time to be allocated from officers' workloads but also to be sufficiently flexible to adjust to periods of high demand and intensive working. A detailed proposal for project governance, a management team and consultancy support will be prepared and an allowance has been made in the overall works package costs.

Legal implications

108. The Council is the Local Highway Authority for the purposes of the relevant legislation.

109. Sections 239, 240, 246, 250 and 260 of the Highways Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 (to secure the acquisition of the land) grant a highway authority statutory powers to acquire land for the construction and improvement of a highway, to acquire land which is required for (or for use in connection with) the construction of the highway, to acquire land to mitigate the adverse effects of the highway and to create new rights over land. A confirmed CPO will need to be registered as a local land charge. (n.b. Compulsory purchase is a complicated, heavily involved and potentially costly process and it is recommended that specific legal guidance is sought prior to commencement of this process and/or when required).

110. The Highways Act 1980 sets out the duties and rights of the Local Highway Authority in respect of highways maintenance. In particular, Section 24(2) of that Act grants the Local Highway Authority the power to construct a new public highway. Further, sections 36 and 41 of dictate that most public highways, explicitly including those constructed by the highway authority, are maintainable at public expense

111. Under section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, it is the duty of the Local Highway Authority to manage the road network within its administrative area with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and objectives, the following objectives:

a. securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network; and
b. facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority

Section 16(2) provides that action which the Local Highway Authority may take in performing that duty includes, in particular, any action which they consider will contribute to securing:

c. the more efficient use of their road network; or

d. the avoidance, elimination or reduction of road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority;

112. As identified at paragraph 97 above, in accordance with the provisions of the Environment Act 2021, any scheme brought forward will be required to demonstrate a 10% biodiversity net gain (this can be either via onsite or offsite provision and, essentially means that the development must include provision for a quantifiable improvement in local biodiversity). It is set out within that legislation that biodiversity net gain must be included as a condition of any planning permission granted so this is inevitable.

113. The Council's Local Transport Plan 2016-2031 identifies, at Policy HN1, the construction of new roads as a means of addressing specific areas within the County's highway network where recurring congestion is a problem. The Council's Core Strategy, within its vision for social progress within Herefordshire identifies that congestion management and public transport improvements will be achieved through a balanced package of transport measures including the provision of a relief road, park and choose facilities and bus priority schemes.

114. The recommendations are; 1) practically deliverable (from a legal perspective), 2) consistent with the relevant Council policies, namely the LTP and Core Strategy, and 3) consistent with the Hereford Transport Strategy Review 2020

Risk management

115. The following risks and mitigation proposals to scheme delivery have been identified.

Risk	**Mitigation**
Cost increases due to inflation and other pressures exceed the available budget.	Review costs on a regular basis, include contingency within budgets to allow for unexpected increases, value-engineer designs to achieve cost reductions, maintain and review a cost risk register.
Challenges in putting together a robust funding package.	Prepare a funding options assessment and develop business cases for discussion with Midlands Connect and DfT, emphasising the regional and national importance of the scheme. Explore other opportunities for additional contributions such as developer funding. Ensure that a package of complementary measures such as active travel and public transport measures are developed as part of the business case to maximise funding opportunities.
Challenges to evidence base and conclusions derived from the data.	Prepare business cases in line with DFT guidance using current guidance and criteria, carried out by expert consultants and managed by an experienced council management team. Consider the option for a

	peer review at critical points of scheme development.
Sufficient staff resources to successfully project manage the schemes.	Develop an appropriate project governance structure and allocate roles, responsibilities and funds to attract and retain the right mix of skills and experience in the client management team.
Availability of consultancy resources to fully support the schemes and make timely progress.	Undertake a thorough procurement exercise to commission suitable consultancy support, recognising the appropriate balance between cost and quality.
Delays to starting the next stages of scheme development lead to problems meeting any programme constraints or funding opportunities.	Ensure a prompt start to the assembly of a client project management team and the appointment of consultancy support.
Demonstration of wider policy and strategy support for the HWB.	Ensure that emerging policies and strategies such as the new Local Transport Plan (to be presented to Council in Summer 2024) and the draft Local Plan incorporate the HWB and are able to demonstrate the benefits of the scheme. Ensure that a package of complementary measures such as active travel and public transport measures are developed as part of the business case to maximise the opportunities and benefits of the scheme.
As a result of detrunking the A49, costs associated with future maintenance of the current trunk road, including the Greyfriars Bridge, place pressures on the Council's budgets.	Ensure that negotiations with National Highways result in agreement of accurate asset condition and future liabilities in order to determine an appropriate programme of works and associated payment to the Council to bring the existing A49 up to a reasonable standard. Future maintenance will be covered by traditional LTP Maintenance Block allocation and potential bids to DfT for exceptional maintenance items on non-trunk road assets.
Properties close to the line of the schemes may be affected by blight.	Early identification of properties at risk and establishment of appropriate contingencies within scheme budgets. See para 56 for mitigation

Consultees

116. Progress of the schemes will involve extensive consultation with a number of stakeholders and the public and will depend on the current stage of development of the individual schemes. A consultation plan for the LTP will be coordinated with plans for consultation for the emerging Local Plan.

117. Comments from the Political Group Consultation meetings on 14th March are attached as Appendix D.

Appendices

Appendix A - Southern Link Road – Planning Application and Next Steps AECOM Report

Appendix B – Traffic Flows Summary

Appendix C – Journey Time Summary

Appendix D – Political Group Consultation Meeting Summary

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 20/03/2024
Finance	Andrew Lovegrove	Date 20/03/2024
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 20/03/2024
Communications Equality Duty	Luenne Featherstone Harriet Yellin	Date 20/03/2024 Date 20/03/2024
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 20/03/2024
Risk	Lindsay Lord	Date 20/03/2024

Approved by	Ross Cook	Date 20/03/2024

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

ADEPT	Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport
AECOM	AECOM consultancy firm
BEP	Big Economic Plan
CPO	Compulsory Purchase Order
DfT	Department for Transport
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment

ERiC	Eastern River Crossing and Link Road
ES	Environmental Statement
HEZ	Hereford Enterprise Zone
HTSR	Hereford Transport Strategy Review
HWB	Hereford Western Bypass
LLM	Large Local Majors
LTP	Local Transport Plan
MRN	Major Road Network
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SLR	Southern Link Road
SOC	Strategic Outline Case
WSP	WSP consultancy firm