



Title of report: Hereford Western Bypass Phase One – Assessment Criteria

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday 30 April 2026
Cabinet member:	Councillor Price, Transport and Infrastructure;
Report by:	Delivery Director, Infrastructure
Report author:	Delivery Director, Infrastructure

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

To seek approval from Cabinet on the set of criteria from the Phase One Full Business Case which will be used to assist Cabinet in its assessment of the scheme; and to set out the scheme requirements which need to be in place before the start of construction. This will assist Cabinet in considering their decision to release funding, appoint the preferred contractor and begin construction of Phase One.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **Cabinet adopts the recommended assessment criteria from the Full Business Case that will be used to help evaluate the Phase One scheme; and**
- b) **Cabinet accepts the pre-construction requirements that are to be met.**

Alternative options

1. The cabinet could choose not to adopt a set of requirements and assessment criteria ahead of consideration of the Full Business Case. This would result in Cabinet considering the Full Business Case without an assessment of its delivery against criteria that Cabinet's considers are of sufficient importance and focus. The Full Business Case is a weighty document with complex traffic modelling and value for money data. Providing a list of some of the key criteria that should be considered in advance will allow for consultation with members and better prepare members for scrutinising the Full Business Case.

Key considerations

2. [The New Road Strategy for Hereford](#) was approved by Cabinet in March 2024. The strategy includes the Hereford Western Bypass which consists of two phases, the first phase being a link between the A49/B4399 junction and the A465 (formerly called the Southern Link Road) and the second phase being the continuation of the road to a junction with the A49 to the north of the City.
3. [The Local Transport Plan 5](#) was adopted by Council in November 2025. The plan highlights the importance of the bypass to the overall transport strategy and specifically references the development of the Phase One business case.
4. Phase One of the Hereford Western Bypass provides much need improved access to the Hereford Enterprise Zone from the South-West of the County and further afield into South Wales. The proposed route would remove significant numbers of vehicles from Belmont Road, Walnut Tree Avenue and Holme Lacy Road, and from some of the more rural roads that are currently used as a short cut between the two routes, which are not suited to the levels of traffic currently utilising them.
5. Phase One also anchors and facilitates the wider Hereford Western Bypass, which will bring significant benefits to the City, County and wider region, enabling ambitions for housing and employment growth to be realised.
6. Phase One has [planning consent](#) (Planning Number P151314/F) and is programmed to begin construction in December 2026.
7. At its meeting of 17 July 2025, Cabinet approved the '[Procurement Strategy for the Hereford Western Bypass -Phase 1](#)' which resulted in a competitive tender process being undertaken in late 2025. John Graham Limited was awarded the pre-construction services contract in March

to finalise the design, costs, planning conditions, ecology surveys, utility diversions and other work required before construction can begin. They were also appointed as the preferred construction contractor, although the final decision to award the construction contract will be made by Cabinet in July after consideration of the Full Business Case.

8. Before making the decision to move to the construction phase Cabinet is seeking final assurance that the scheme will deliver value for money and that all of the key pre-construction requirements are in place. A Full Business Case for Phase One is being produced and will be published in June 2026 ahead of Cabinet's decision.
9. The Full Business Case will be compliant with the government's Green Book and WebTAG standards used for assessing and comparing major transport infrastructure schemes. It is important that it meets these standards so that the scheme can be considered for government grant funding should it become available. It will set out key information about how the scheme aligns with national and local policies as well as provide a value for money assessment.
10. The council has allocated and authorised spend of £10.3m within its capital programme for the development of the scheme to construction, acquisition of land and associated costs. A further £35m of funding, to undertake the construction of the scheme has also been included within the Council's capital programme.
11. Cabinet will need to consider the outcomes from the Full Business Case ahead of making the decision to release the £35m construction budget and to award the construction contract. Following best practice and government guidance the case for Phase One will be presented to Cabinet under the government's Five Case Model themes for infrastructure business cases demonstrating alignment with the government's assessment methodology.
 - Strategic Case
 - Economic Case
 - Commercial Case
 - Financial Case
 - Management Case
12. Appendix A sets out a table with 37 specific criteria. Many of these are quantitative or qualitative assessment criteria which will provide information for Cabinet to consider in deciding if the scheme provides value for money and a good investment. Some of the criteria are requirements Cabinet needs to know are in place in order for them to have confidence in making the approval to move to the construction phase of the scheme.
13. These criteria were considered by Connected Communities Scrutiny on 15th April and a Political Group Consultation on 16th April.
14. Connected Communities Scrutiny challenged the original set of criteria with concerns that too many of them were pass/fail requirements and not assessment criteria that measured the value of delivering the scheme. The committee also wanted to see more granularity in the criteria so that more of the qualitative and quantitative data from the Full Business Case could be drawn out insuring that areas such as journey times, safety outcomes, carbon reduction, bidoversity, construction price affordability and social value impacts as well as the value for money were part of the assessment. The committee's recommendations (Appendix B) resulted in changes to the criteria expanding them from 21 to 37.
15. Similarly, comments received from members during the Political Group Consultation have helped inform the drafting of the criteria particularly drawing out the Green Book elements and using the governments Five Model guidance as the basis for grouping the criteria. The Independents for Herefordshire have supplied a written response (Appendix C).

16. The Full Business Case will be provided to Cabinet prior to the decision to proceed with the construction of Phase One. This will be supplemented with a report that assesses the business case against the specific assessment criteria and requirements. The recommendation to Cabinet will be informed by this review against the criteria.

Community impact

17. The proposal considers the criteria used to assess the decision to move to the construction stages of Phase One. Phase One will reduce traffic on Walnut Tree Avenue, Holme Lacy Road and on a section of the Belmont Road bringing improvements to these communities.
18. The proposals would directly impact those who own land along the route. This comprises of seven different landowners.
19. The Council Plan 2024 to 2028 notes that 'We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county; attracting inward investment, building business confidence, creating jobs, enabling housing development and provide the right infrastructure'. The 2026/27 Delivery plan has the objective to expand and maintain the transport infrastructure network in a sustainable way and improve connectivity across the county; and continue the construction of Phase One and the development of Phase Two of the Hereford Western Bypass
20. The Western bypass is outlined as being the cornerstone of the LTP 5 strategy'.

Environmental impact

21. The proposal has no direct environmental impact as it relates purely to how Cabinet will consider its future decision to release funding and award the construction contract for Phase One. Impacts upon the environment of the scheme itself and how these will be mitigated have been addressed as part of previous reports on the proposals and will continue to be addressed as part of discharge of planning conditions and a business case to draw down upon funding.
22. However, included in the criteria are specific environmental measures including having assurance that mitigation strategies are in place to deal with any protected species, that the scheme's carbon impact has been considered and that proportional biodiversity net gain measures are in planned or in place.

Equality duty

23. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
 - a. The scheme includes changes and rerouting of some of the public footpaths in the area. Public footpaths can often be utilised by people on low incomes and disabled people as a method of accessing education or employment. Therefore, any public footpaths retained within the ownership of the council will need to continue to be maintained to ensure accessibility to all users and any newly diverted/ created footpaths retained by the council or returned to the landowner will need to ensure that accessibility is improved or maintained within ongoing maintenance requirements. Any

enhanced maintenance of land returned to landowners will need to be considered within acquisition costs.

- b. At the planning stage none of the objections to the scheme were related to equality issues. The scheme has received planning consent and objections to the scheme have been taken into consideration as part of that process.
- c. The previous compulsory order process received several objections from members of the public not directly impacted by the proposals. Valid concerns raised at that time by landowners and other stakeholders were taken on board and included within the final version of proposals and remain included within the current scheme. Further impacts may come to light as part of this process and consideration will be given at all stages to ensure that any reasonable impacts are mitigated by the final proposals.

Resource implications

- 24. There are no specific resource implications from the report itself.

Legal implications

- 25. This report provides the framework by which the recommendation to Cabinet will be analysed and qualitatively assessed. The relevant legal provisions for this decision can be found in the council's constitution, www.herefordshire.gov.uk/constitution.

Risk management

26. The key risks associated with the approval of the assessment criteria and requirements are set out below

Ref	Risk	Potential Impact	Mitigation
1	Criteria not met by the Full Business Case	The council is unable to proceed with the construction of the scheme	Officers have published an information report for members setting out the early value for money assessment of the scheme to enable better decision making in setting the final criteria.
2	Criteria not correct or robust enough to provide assurance	Council proceeds with a scheme which isn't value for money	Consideration and challenge of the draft criteria by scrutiny and with input from technical consultants.
3	The council is not successful in acquiring land through negotiation.	The council is unable to proceed with the construction of the scheme	The council is working closely with landowners to incentivise the acquisition of the land through negotiation to ensure that the council receives good value for money and remove the need for a compulsory purchase order and the associated high costs. Failing this CPO will be used to acquire the necessary land.
4	The council is not successful in acquiring land through the CPO process.	The council is unable to proceed with the construction of the scheme on the unacquired land.	The council is looking to keep the land CPO requirements as close to the same requirements that were approved by the secretary of state previously when the Southern Link Road was being progressed. This should limit any potential challenge to

			the CPO given the previous CPO was approved.
5	Construction costs estimate exceeds available budget	The council is unable to proceed with the construction of the scheme	During the PCSA the contractor will work with Herefordshire to develop a series of value engineering measures to ensure costs can be reduced and sufficient contingency is available in budgets before construction starts.
6	Required approvals from Network Rail, National Highways and Natural England are not achieved	The council is unable to proceed with the construction of the scheme	Officers have engaged early with key external organisations that need to approve elements of the scheme working towards design approvals.
7	Required planning permissions are not achieved	The council is unable to proceed with the construction of the scheme variation in costs that the council may be subject to.	Officers have carried out a pre-application review with the planning team to identify the key considerations and requirements.

27. Assurance Statement:

28. The strategic risks associated with the Herefordshire Western Bypass – Phase 1 setting decision criteria have been reviewed and are being managed in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Strategy. The key risk areas identified, including the impacts of not meeting the criteria, are appropriate and proportionate to the scope and stage of the programme. Oversight of risk mitigations will continue through the Council's established governance and assurance frameworks to ensure risks are effectively monitored, escalated, and addressed.

29. I have reviewed the risks identified within the report and am satisfied that they have been appropriately assessed and are being managed through proportionate and reasonable mitigations. The risk management approach taken is in line with the Council's expectations for a project of this scale and complexity.

Consultees

30. The following consultation has taken place

Consultation	Date	Feedback
Political groups consultation on a key decision	16 th April 2026	Comments have been incorporated into the report. Independents for Herefordshire comments at Appendix C
Connected Communities Scrutiny	15 th April 2026	Recommendations included in Appendix B

Appendices

Appendix A – Assessment Criteria and Requirements

Appendix B - Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee Recommendations

Appendix C – Political Group Consultation comments from Independents for Herefordshire

Background papers

[Procurement Strategy for the Hereford Western Bypass -Phase 1ref: 10762](#)

[Hereford Western Bypass Phase One Land Acquisition CPOref: 10964](#)

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report

Appendix A – Assessment Criteria and Requirements

Case Model	Components	Quantitative/Qualitative or Requirement	Assessment Criteria and Requirements	How it will be reported
	Project need	Qualitative	Why is the project necessary?	The business case evaluates the problems and issues and how the delivery of Phase One will impact these.
	Objectives	Qualitative	Project objectives are identified and measurable	A logic map that lists the objectives and demonstrates the outputs, outcomes and impacts associated with the objectives.
Strategic Case (Case for change)	Aligns with policies	Qualitative	Alignment with national and local policies	The business case demonstrates alignment with national and local policies
	Traffic outcomes	Quantitative	Improvements to Journey Times	List of routes with improved journey times
	Traffic outcomes		Any routes showing slower journey times	List of any routes where journey times worsen
	Safety	Qualitative	Any routes showing reduction in accidents	Total expected reduction in slight accidents by severity
	Safety	Qualitative	Any routes showing increased accidents	Total expected increase in serious and fatal accidents by severity
	Safety	Quantitative	Overall accidents as measured by Cobalt assessment	Total disbenefit figure
	Equalities	Qualitative	Identification of the potential impacts of the scheme on different groups across society	Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)
	Resilience	Qualitative	Modelling work demonstrates increased resilience to incidents and peak-period congestion	Summarise the outcome of the modelling outputs regarding improved resilience.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Scott Tompkins, email: scott.tompkins@herefordshire.gov.uk

	Environmental	Quantitative	Woodland compensation	Number of additional acres of tree planting to compensate for loss of approximately 2 acres of ancient woodland
	Environmental	Quantitative	Carbon reduction as measured by VECAT assessment	Total reduction in carbon estimated over the 60-year appraisal period compared with the Do Minimum scenario.
	Environmental	Quantitative	Noise and air quality assessments	Assessment outcomes from the noise and air quality modelling
Economic Case (Value for Money)	VfM	Quantitative	Benefits to Costs Ratio (BCR) represents value for money having achieved a Medium or High assessment score.	A BCR score above or equal to 1.5
	VfM	Quantitative	Net Present Public Value (NPPV) is positive demonstrating the scheme represents an expected overall gain in public value.	A positive NPPV score
	Benefits	Quantitative	Present value of benefits	Combined Present Value of Benefits (PVB) is greater than £50m
	Benefits	Quantitative	Wider economic Benefits (WEBs)	Direct user benefits (Level 1 impacts) included within the economic appraisal of the scheme.
	VfM	Qualitative	Report the impacts on the logistics industry and freight movements.	Value of Time (VoT) for freight across the network
	Social Value	Qualitative	Wider social value benefits	A table listing the wider social benefits and how these are distributed across different groups
	Risk	Qualitative	High, medium and low growth scenarios have been used in the modelling work assessment to ensure that wider economic impact risks are being considered	Assessment of benefits and impacts for high, medium and low scenarios are provided

Commercial Case (Procurement and Market)	Procurement	Requirement	A compliant and commercially robust tender process was used to secure the contractor appointment, and a tender evaluation report has been signed off by the director.	Report produced and signed off by director
	Contract	Requirement	Risk have been allocated fairly within the construction contract, and the council is reasonably protected from costs increases.	Legal team have reviewed PCSA and Construction contracts and have advised on nature of the council risks and this has been accepted by the Director.
	Risk mitigation	Quantitative	Cost increases during PCSA period related to inflation or any extraordinary circumstances as well as all value engineering opportunities explored	List of known cost changes impacting on the original tender costs.
Financial Case (Affordability and Funding)	Financial	Quantitative	Final construction cost estimates are agreed taking into account all planned value engineering, utility diversions, and known cost increases.	Final Construction cost estimate
	Financial	Quantitative	Final development costs incurred including land purchases, design costs and professional services costs.	Development cost figure
	Affordability	Quantitative	Having taken into account the revised construction budget following the PCSA and development costs there is sufficient budget in place to deliver the scheme.	If total estimated scheme costs are less than available Capital and Revenue budget, then the scheme is affordable
	Financial	Requirement	Whether DfT have accepted the scheme as a 'retained' scheme with no objection to the partial use of Local Transport Grant funding.	DfT's position confirmed
Management Case (Deliverability)	Programme	Requirement	Full construction programme in place identifying clear critical path and dependencies	Programme in place. List construction start and estimated completion dates.
	Risk	Requirement	A joint contractor and client risk register is developed and a process for monthly reviews of risk by the project board is in place.	Risk register in place

OFFICIAL

Social Value	Qualitative	Contractor has provided a deliverable plan with defined actions and with local organisations supported.	Report social value actions taken during PCSA period to date and deliverable plan assessment
Programme	Requirement	Clear demonstration that approvals have been obtained or are well advanced, with AIP's moving through the respective governance processes within National Highways and Network Rail.	Report on current position with Network Rail and National Highways AIP's.
Planning	Requirement	Planning permission for the main scheme in place	Approved planning
Planning	Requirement	All pre-construction planning conditions discharged (or have route to discharge) or with sufficient mitigation strategies in place to enable a start on site.	Conditions discharged
Planning	Requirement	Temporary work planning applications have been prepared for submission and meet any pre-application advice requests.	Status of applications
Land	Requirement	Sufficient land is in council ownership or control with remaining land enroute to acquisition through CPO or private treaty acquisition.	Report of land in council control and commentary on CPO or acquisition processes approved by director.
Environmental	Qualitative	Clear environmental mitigation strategies are in place and agreements with Natural England are in place or well advanced.	Summary paragraphs highlighting what mitigation plans are in place or will be agreed.
Environmental	Qualitative	Contractor has submitted a carbon management plan demonstrating they have measures in place to manage carbon during construction	Confirmation of submitted plan with summary commentary



Appendix B

Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Move from pass/fail assessments to scored or graded assessments, to ensure more granularity in traffic outcomes, safety outcomes, land acquisition, carbon reduction, woodland mitigation, biodiversity net gain, construction price, social value, affordability, and value for money.

Recommendation 2

Widen the criteria for measuring social value to include the distribution of impacts on people in Herefordshire.

Recommendation 3

Ensure clearer reporting of project risks, assumptions and uncertainty

Recommendation 4

Ensure the report to Cabinet incorporates high/medium/low growth risk scenarios.

Appendix C

Independents *for* Herefordshire



Date: 23 April 2026

Political Group Consultation Response on behalf of Independents for Herefordshire regarding proposed Assessment Criteria for the Southern Link Road

As presented to scrutiny and to the member PGC briefing, the assessment criteria to inform a future Cabinet decision on whether to proceed to construction of the Southern Link Road are muddled and confusing.

Officers have given the assurance that the investment case will be fully compliant with the government Green Book and with the DfT WebTAG Framework. Both these approaches are published and available in the public domain. Any assessment approach put forward by officers should be clear as to its alignment with both of these frameworks and should evidence clearly that this is the case.

Since this road scheme is now being cast as forming part of a larger scheme which is intended to provide a compliant and credible rerouting of the A49 Trunk Road – part of the National Highways Strategic Road Network for the UK – the assessment approach should also make clear whether this particular scheme will also be assessed as regards its alignment to the National Highways Route Investment Strategy, its assessment categories and its scoring approach. If alignment with this requirement is not being proposed for this section of the larger road scheme, reasons for this should be made clear and be justified.

The current assessment criteria muddle essential qualifying steps in the journey to the point where the proposed project is CAPABLE of being taken forward, e.g. planning permissions, land acquisitions, approvals from national bodies (e.g. Natural England), alignment to policy, etc. with the sort of criteria which assess and quantify the impact of the scheme (positive and negative) – which are the sorts of indicators that should inform the judgement as to whether the project is sufficiently DESIREABLE to be taken forward.

Clearly, the essential qualifying criteria must all be met before the question of whether or not to proceed can be considered. These qualifying criteria are Yes-No hurdles to be cleared, and – for clarity – should be listed separately and progress towards their achievement should be being tracked and reported against some sort of risk assessment or RAG rating.

The Green Book and WebTAG assessments should both form part of the evidence to inform the desirability of the scheme. In addition to these, there should – quite properly – be other, more locally defined, assessment criteria that are meaningful to Herefordshire which then add further to the evidence to be weighed in the balance as regards the desirability to proceed.

In recent years Herefordshire has received LuF funding for transport projects. The LuF schemes were all assessed against requirements including:

- **Transport Investment** - Connectivity improvements, modal shift potential

- **Regeneration** - Economic development catalyst effect
- **Strategic Fit** - Alignment with local/national priorities

There may be some overlap here with criteria embedded in Green Book and WebTAG frameworks – but we consider it worth considering whether the LuF criteria are useful at the local level – and if not, explaining why not. Given that we have been successful in framing previous arguments for proceeding with government funded projects in these terms.

We consider that the local assessment criteria should include impacts that are assessed in financial and in non-financial terms, as well as the assessment process being capable of identifying and stating the distributed effects of the scheme. Since it is likely that the scheme will deliver positive effects in some geographies and negative effects in other places. These are to be expected, but should also be articulated and understood so that decision-makers and the public can be clear about who and where will benefit from this scheme and who will be worse off as a result.

This is not the first road scheme ever to have been developed. Independents for Herefordshire are not in favour of reinventing the wheel, and would like to see evidence that the assessment criteria agreed upon to use here align to what is recognized within the Highways community and across local authorities as being best practice. There have been a number of local authority road schemes developed in recent years, so it should be quite possible to obtain the assessment frameworks used in these cases and to explain why we have chosen to deviate from these – where/if we do so. Such schemes include:

- M4 Relief Road South Wales – 2019
- A303 Stonehenge Tunnel (£1.7bn) - 2020
- A417 Missing Link Gloucestershire (£460m) - 2021
- Preston Western Distributor – 2021
- Oxfordshire Expressway - 2021
- A27 Arundel Bypass Options - 2023
- Lower Thames Crossing – current

The criteria informing the decision on whether or not to proceed should be measurable or assessable in a consistent and repeatable/replicable manner.

The assessment process should include a sensitivity analysis to modelling assumptions – e.g. project cost, fuel price, traffic volumes from new development, location of new development, variations in assumptions around stimulated economic growth, etc.

We consider that alternative options to achieve similar outcomes to the scheme have never been properly considered and where they have, they have been considered at the wrong point (too early) in the development process.

We would recommend that the options contained in the 2022-23 City masterplan work which has been buried and mothballed for political reasons, should be properly considered as part of the assessment of this scheme.

We consider the detail at which the data is used to inform assessment criteria should be at a fine enough level and be sufficiently graduated and nuanced to enable differences to be visible.

We also consider that the assessment of the scheme should not be limited to its build phase or to the immediate area in which the scheme is located. The assessment time period should align with the lifetime of the scheme itself – presumably at least 60 years.

The Council has declared a climate emergency and the ecological and environmental impact of the scheme should be very carefully assessed and considered explicitly. Full lifecycle carbon accounting should be used throughout. Associated with this should be the identification of any environmental red lines – e.g. SSSI impacts, ancient woodland, significant biodiversity loss and that these are clearly stated as overriding economic benefits or clear statements made that this has explicitly not been the case.

The assessment approach should be capable of identifying and handling cumulative impacts and should make a meaningful and rounded assessment of the social impact of the project profiled across the lifetime of the scheme, since this is unlikely to be evenly delivered or similar across all stages of the scheme's lifetime.

The Information Report makes it clear that the modelling informing the scheme has a number of weaknesses and gaps. We shall be addressing these concerns separately, but addressing these is likely to impact on the assessment process, if not also upon the criteria comprising that assessment.

Independents for Herefordshire Group Assessment

The assessment criteria seem very much at an early draft stage and officers seemed quite poorly equipped to explain clearly the thought process behind the way in which the set presented had been chosen and organized.

Significant improvement needs to be made to obtain a clear set of qualifying achievements and assessment measures capable of informing a sound decision on whether to proceed with this scheme.

Councillor Liz Harvey
Group Leader – Independents for Herefordshire
Herefordshire Council

Date: 23 April 2026

Submitted on behalf of the Independents for Herefordshire