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Subject: A47 Great Yarmouth Junctions - National Highways scheme updates including the other Road Investment Strategy (RIS) schemes

**Report to: Executive Leadership Team - 21 December 2022
Economic Development Committee - 9 January 2023**

**Report by: Ian Parkes Principal Transport Planner – Norfolk County Council
David Glason – Director of Planning & Growth**

SUBJECT MATTER

This report updates Members on the progress and investment being made on key National Highway infrastructure projects along the A47

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note the updates presented in this report

1. Executive summary

National Highways (NH) are progressing work on the Vauxhall Roundabout scheme and have engaged consultants Mott MacDonald and contractor Graham. The scheme will increase capacity and reduce congestion at the A47/A149 Vauxhall roundabout, which is the principal entry point into the town from the west, by providing an improvement that will be compatible with a dualled Acle Straight. Ground Investigation and environmental surveys have been completed. Some of these activities required traffic management and engagement with Norfolk County Council (NCC) to agree what could be done to maintain traffic flow and minimise the impact on the busy holiday period in Great Yarmouth.

For Harfreys roundabout, National Highways have entered into a contract with NCC to design and build the scheme. This is being carried out by NCC staff and the BAM Farrans joint venture that is building the Third River Crossing. Construction on Harfreys roundabout is expected to commence in February 2023 with an opening alongside the Third River Crossing in May 2023. The scheme will reconfigure the junction to be more efficient and favour the movement towards the Third River Crossing which will become the principal entry point into the town from the south when the new bridge is in place.

There are 3 other Road Investment Strategy (RIS) schemes being progressed by National Highways along the A47. These are the:

- A47 Blofield to North Burlingham scheme
- A47 North Tuddenham to Easton dualling

- A47/A11 Thickthorn junction improvement

Development Consent Orders (DCO) have been granted by the Secretary of State for all of these schemes but there has been a legal challenge. A series of drop in events for the public with detailed information about the first two schemes were held by National Highways over the period 27 September to 9 December 2022.

2 Background

2.1 In December 2021 the joint Member Great Yarmouth Transport and Infrastructure Steering Group (GYT&ISG) noted the progress made by National Highways on the Vauxhall and Harfreys Roundabout schemes. The Members were also encouraged to respond to the National Highways consultation on their proposals for the two junctions which ran until 10 January 2022. In addition, Member comments were collated from the discussion at the GYT&ISG meeting and a response was submitted to National Highways.

2.2 The then Secretary for State made a commitment that government would ensure National Highways would devise improvements to the Great Yarmouth junctions that could be implemented shortly after the Third River Crossing opened in 2023.

Vauxhall roundabout

2.3 The National Highways preferred option for Vauxhall roundabout was for an elongated roundabout without traffic signals.

Harfreys roundabout

2.4 For Harfreys roundabout the preferred option is a modified standard roundabout that caters for the strong right-turn towards the Third River Crossing. It will provide a satisfactory improvement scheme for current flows and have sufficient operational capacity for the future design year. This does not require traffic signals for vehicular movement or additional land acquisition and is achieved by road widening and carriageway markings.

2.5 The scheme also includes enhancements for walking and cycling and provides a significant upgrade on the key desire line across the A47 towards the Harfreys Industrial Estate to better connect the residential and commercial areas.

3 Progress

3.1 Officers have continued to work closely with National Highways to keep up momentum on the delivery of the two schemes.

Vauxhall roundabout

3.2 Ecology, noise and landscape surveys at Vauxhall Roundabout were carried out this year to help refine the design and ensure the impact of the scheme on the surrounding environment is reduced.

3.3 In addition to these, ground investigations have been carried out which will give engineers a clearer picture of the type of soils, rock and groundwater beneath the area of the roundabout.

- 3.4 This work involved using temporary traffic management, including lights. Due to the sensitivity of road works during the summer period in Great Yarmouth, NCC network staff were in close liaison with National Highways to keep delays to a minimum.

Harfreys roundabout

- 3.5 Because the Harfreys improvement is a much more straightforward scheme to deliver, and there is a desire to open it at the same time as the Third River Crossing, NCC is designing and building it on behalf of National Highways. NCC have therefore entered into a legal agreement for this to happen and the Third River Crossing construction supply chain (BAM Farrans Joint Venture) is taking this forward. There are monthly meetings with all involved and construction is expected to commence in February 2023 with completion in May 2023 when the new bridge is programmed to open.

4 The next steps

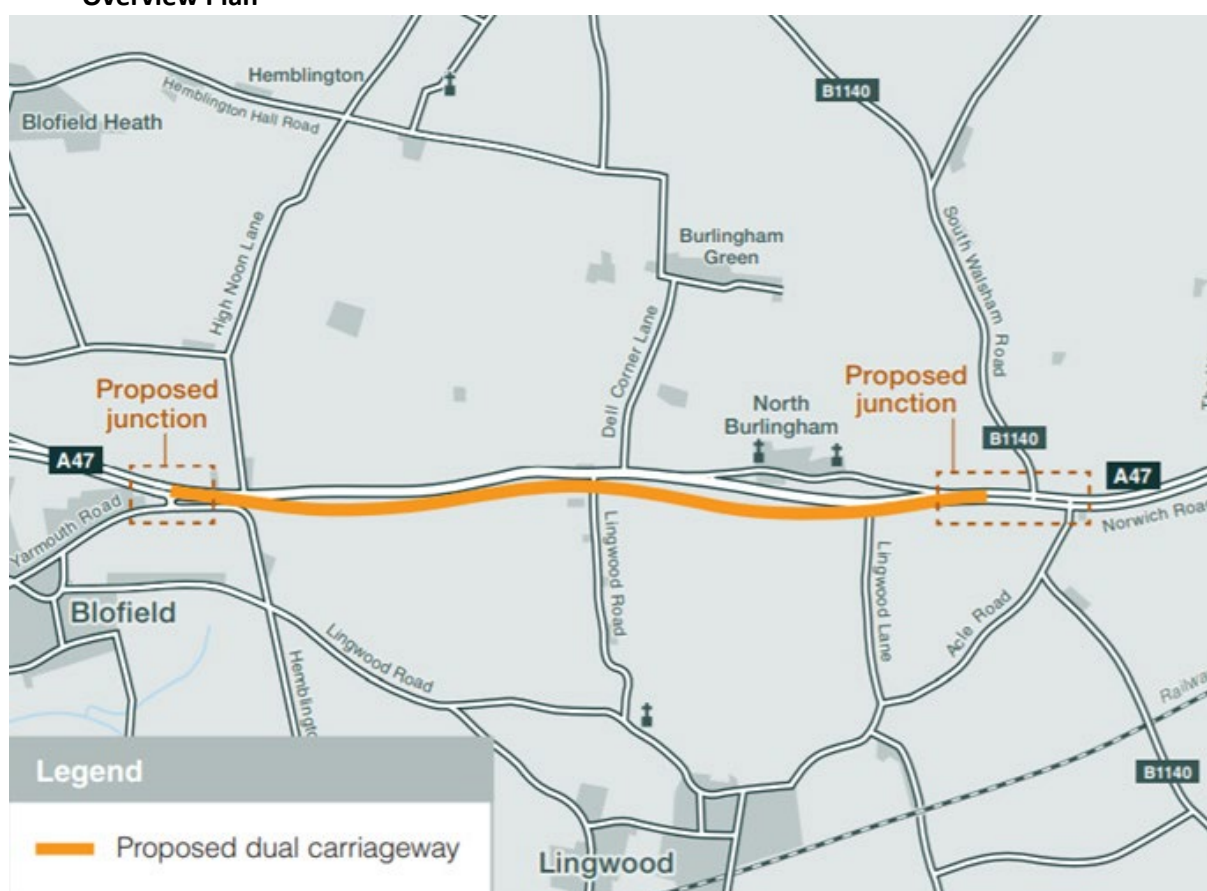
- 4.1 The Vauxhall roundabout improvement will take longer to design and procure as it is a much larger and more complex scheme that requires bridge building over the railway line. National Highways are taking this work forwards with their consultants Mott MacDonald and contractor Graham. They envisage that the scheme approval process to be via the Highways Act 1980 rather than a Development Consent Order (DCO).
- 4.2 With regards to risks to delivery, this is low for the Harfreys scheme as National Highways have already agreed to provide the necessary funding via a legal agreement and some sums have already been paid for the ongoing work. For the Vauxhall scheme, the expectation is that the scheme could be in place soon after 2025 which is a couple of years after the Third River Crossing opens. So referring back to the original commitment by the Secretary of State, some of the overall scheme (Harfreys roundabout) will open when the new bridge opens to traffic and the Vauxhall scheme will be 2-3 years later. As reported to the joint member Great Yarmouth Transport and Infrastructure Steering Group (GYT&ISG), National Highways has confirmed that the Vauxhall scheme will be compatible with a dualled Acle Straight. The A47 Alliance continues to lobby National Highways on the Acle Straight dualling scheme for inclusion in the Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3).
- 4.3 Engagement to date has ensured that the Active Travel provision at Harfreys roundabout is appropriate and in line with our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Continued involvement with National Highways and their consultants on the development of the Vauxhall roundabout improvement will mean we can ensure the Active Travel provision is appropriate and in particular picks up on the need to serve the Vauxhall Holiday Park. No bus priority measures are envisaged at either of the two roundabouts as this is not considered proportionate to the demand, but buses will clearly benefit from the improved operation of the junctions.
- 4.4 With regards to funding, the National Highways website indicates a cost for the two schemes of between £25 million and £50 million and an end date for delivery of 2024-25. The two schemes are inextricably linked in terms of calculating the Value for Money (VfM) in the business case, so it could be concluded that as spend has started on Harfreys roundabout, the remainder will naturally follow for Vauxhall roundabout.

- 4.5 The progress that has been made on Vauxhall roundabout since the consultation last December does appear to demonstrate a strong commitment from National Highways and government to deliver the scheme as soon as possible. However, NCC and GYBC officers will continue to champion these important schemes and work collaboratively in the continued development and delivery of the Vauxhall and Harfreys improvements.

5 Other Norfolk National Highways Road Investment Strategy (RIS) schemes

A47 Blofield to Burlingham

Overview Plan



Link to Brochure with more scheme details

https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a47-blofield-to-north-burlingham-dualling-statutor/supporting_documents/A47%20Blofield%20to%20North%20Burlingham%20Dualling%20%20Statutory%20Consultation%20Brochure.pdf

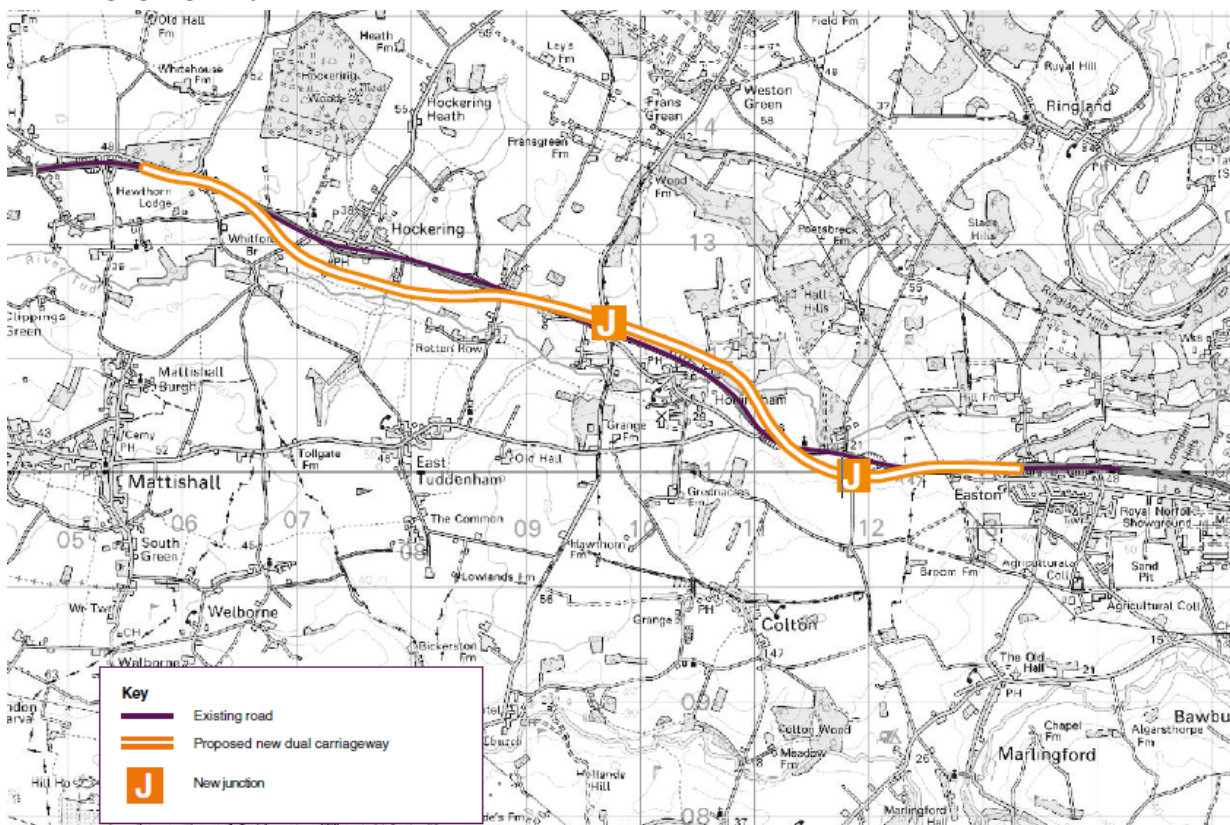
- 5.1 Although National Highways has recently been granted a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the improvement to the A47 between Blofield and North Burlingham, there has been a legal challenge by Dr Boswell which has been upheld in an oral hearing in court on 14 December 2022 and the case will now go to the High Court. This is likely to be heard in spring or summer 2023. We know that National Highways are keen to progress the scheme as soon as possible afterwards if they win the case. However, the

actual start date might be constrained by time of year in terms of site clearance and ecological considerations. Norfolk County Council will be liaising closely with National Highways on this issue so we can advise the Borough Council and other interested parties of the programme implications.

- 5.2 The scheme comprises replacing the existing single-lane section of the A47 between Blofield and North Burlingham with a new two-lane dual carriageway 70m south of the existing road. It will include safety improvements to the Yarmouth Road junction, closing the right turn and adding a dedicated lane to join the A47. There will be a new bridge over the new dual carriageway to connect the villages of Blofield and North Burlingham and take traffic from Blofield towards Great Yarmouth. In addition, there will be changes to the east junction, with a new two-tier junction connecting B1140 South Walsham Road (north of the A47) with B1140 Coxhill Road (south of the A47). For safety reasons, the direct access from Lingwood Road and Lingwood Lane to the A47 will be closed.

A47 North Tuddenham to Easton improvement

Overview Plan



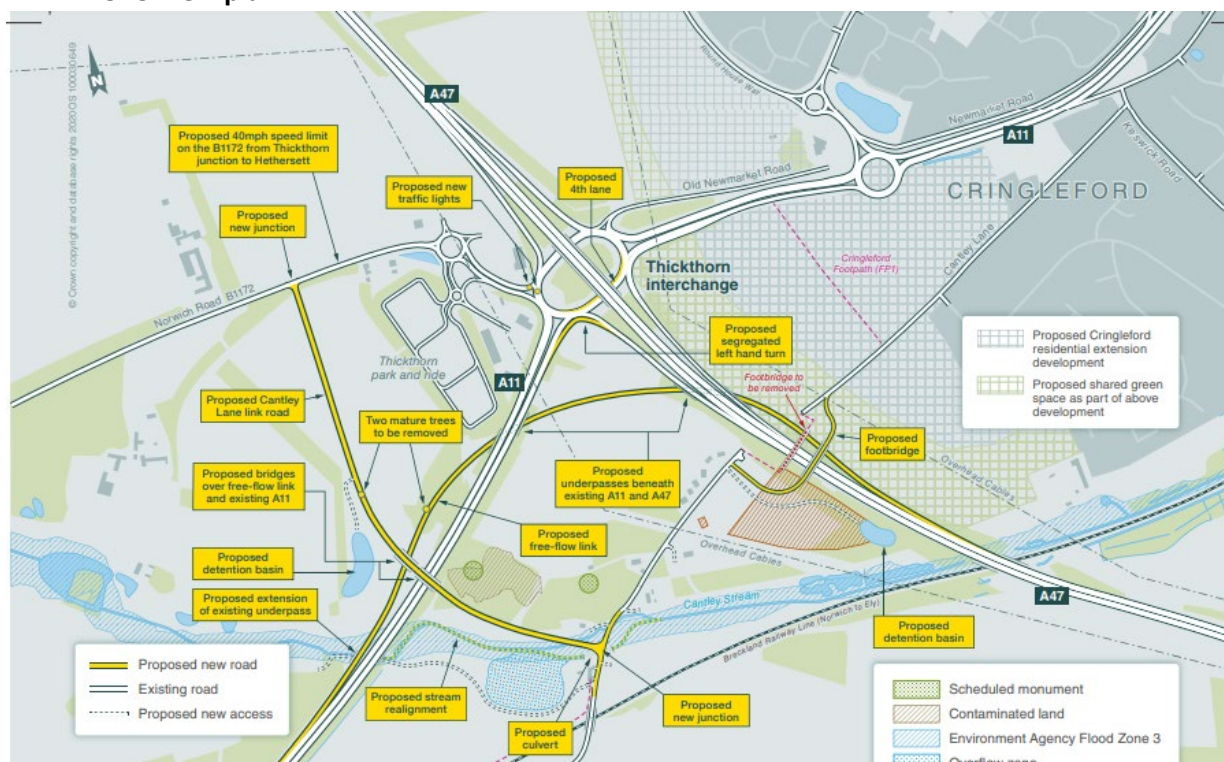
Link to Brochure with more scheme details

https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a47-north-tuddenham-to-easton-february/supporting_documents/A47%20North%20Tuddenham%20to%20Easton%20%20Consultation%20Brochure.pdf

- 5.3 Although National Highways has recently been granted a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the improvement to the A47 between North Tuddenham to Easton, the legal challenge described above in paragraph 4.1 also applies to this scheme.
- 5.4 This section of the A47 connects key economic growth areas of Norwich where the current road is unable to cope with the high traffic volume and there are limited opportunities to overtake slower moving vehicles on the single carriageway. The upgrade will complete the dual carriageway between Norwich and Dereham, supporting economic growth and easing congestion in the area. The scheme includes two new junctions at Berry's Lane/Wood Lane, and at Blind Lane/Norwich Road. Because of these new junctions which will better connect side roads into the new dual carriageway, the Easton roundabout will be removed.

A47 Thickthorn junction

Overview plan



Link to Brochure with more scheme details

<https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.highwaysengland.co.uk/roads/road-projects/A47+thickthorn/Project+update%2C+latest+design%2C+July+2020.pdf>

- 5.5 Although National Highways has recently been granted a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the improvement to the A47/A11 Thickthorn junction improvement, the legal challenge described above in paragraph 4.1 also applies to this scheme.
- 5.6 The A47/A11 Thickthorn junction is important for commuter, business and commercial traffic, on both short and long-distance journeys. There are also approximately 3,000 new residential dwellings planned for near the junction, along with commercial business units.

This local growth is likely to increase the demand on the junction and the adjacent roads. The project will help relieve congestion at Thickthorn junction by providing two new free-flowing slip roads that will connect the A47 with the A11. The new slip roads will re-route traffic away from the junction and take it through two new underpasses. The existing footbridge over the A47 will be removed and an enhanced new one will be installed for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

6 RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note the updates presented in this report

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	Through ELT
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	Through ELT
Existing Council Policies:	Great Yarmouth Local Plan
Financial Implications (including VAT and tax):	Considered – no issues
Legal Implications (including human rights):	Considered – no issues
Risk Implications:	Considered – no issues
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	Considered – no issues
Crime & Disorder:	Considered – no issues
Every Child Matters:	Considered – no issues