

# New A46 Leicester bypass would boost economy by tens of millions a year, say transport bosses

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Officials have been making the case for the hugely controversial Expressway project

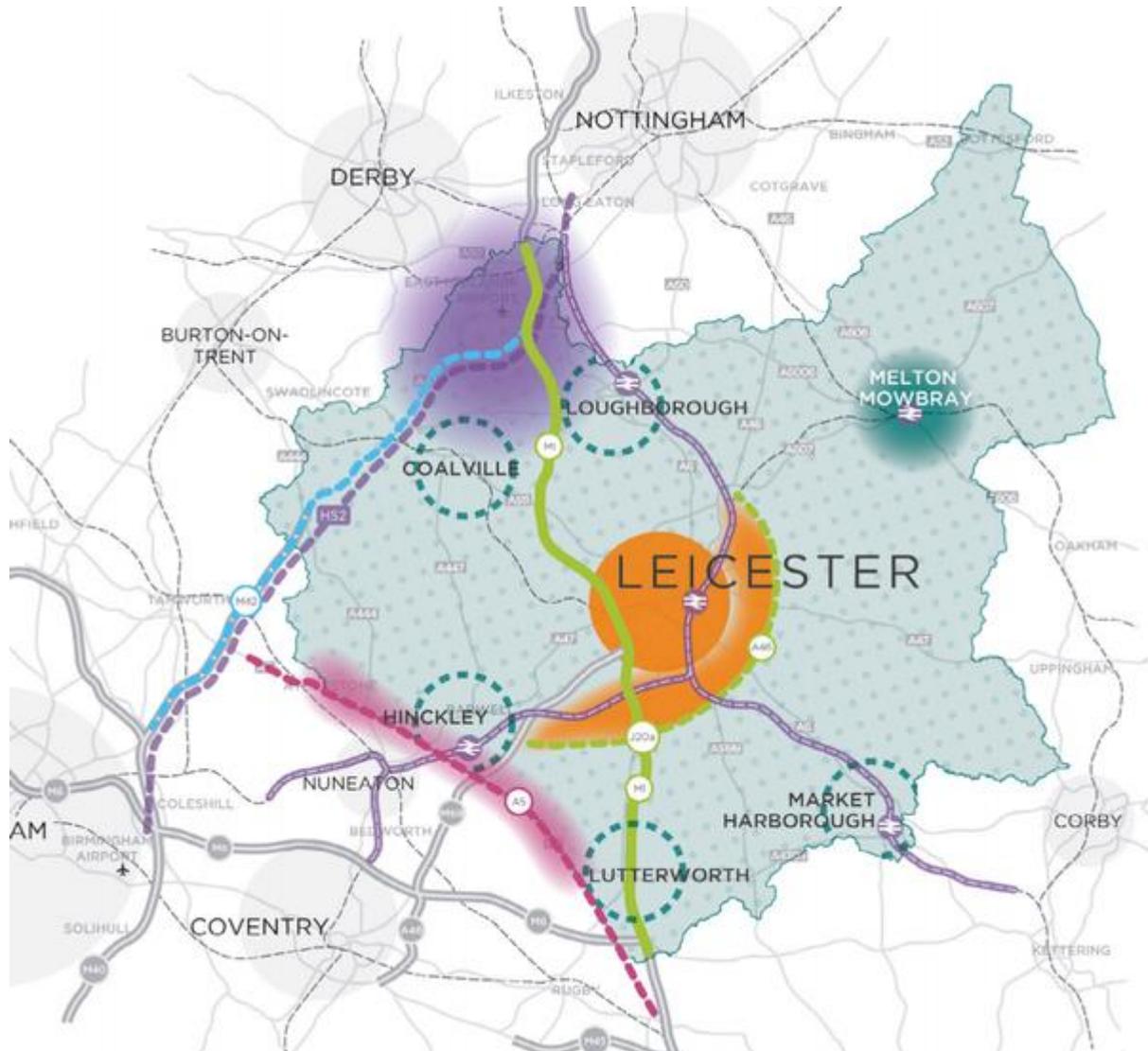


The A46 near Leicester

Transport bosses have set out their case for building a major bypass round the eastern and southern side of Leicester, arguing it could boost the local economy by tens of millions of pounds a year.

Controversial proposals are being drawn up for [an A46 Expressway](#) looping from the Hobby Horse roundabout in Syston, round the city before then joining the M1 at a new junction near Whetsone.

So far the precise route for the new road has not been released – only a broad arc on the map – but Midlands Connect has now revealed some more details about the scheme and the arguments for it in a new strategy document.



The revised strategic growth plan



Map key

Midlands Connect is a group of councils and business leaders working with the [Department of Transport](#) to try to improve the region's road and rail infrastructure.

It says the new Leicester bypass would be a major enhancement of the country's transport network and would relieve pressure on the congested M1 through the county and the current A46 north of Leicester.

Under the plans there would also be a major upgrade of the existing A46 and the Hobby Horse interchange, but no specific details have been disclosed as yet.

The new study says that, if the new by-pass were to be built, Leicester's economy would benefit to the tune of at least £27.4 million a year by 2041.

The equivalent estimate for Harborough is £13.3 million, £12.3 million for Blaby, £8.5 million for Charnwood and £5.5 million for [Hinckley](#) and Bosworth.

Midlands Connect says Leicester is one of the worst traffic pinch points along the 155 miles of the A46 from Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire to the Grimsby on the east coast.

It surveyed 250 companies close to the A46 in Leicestershire and nearly half of them said current traffic conditions negatively impacted their businesses.

Three Quarters of those firms said traffic had got worse in the last five years and nearly 20 per cent were considering relocating because of the snarled up [A46](#).

The southern bypass plan also underpins long-term plans to find land for some 90,000 new homes the Government says will be needed in Leicestershire by 2031.

Some 40,000 of them could be built along the corridor the new by-pass would create.

## Sir Peter Soulsby's view

Leicester mayor [Sir Peter Soulsby](#) said: “The A46 is locally, regionally and nationally significant. Improvements to the road will serve a vital local purpose, freeing up land to develop badly needed housing.

“Businesses along the corridor are crying out for us to help them to move freely right along the A46.

“It’s essential to them and the nation that it becomes a reliable link across the centre of the country.

“We have at last got ourselves joined up, now the government must help us join up the Midlands and join us to the rest of the nation.”



Sir Peter Soulsby (Image: <http://www.plumbimages.com>)

East Midlands Chamber of Trade chief executive Scot Knowles said: “Our research confirms that travel delays and congestion are having a negative impact on business. Many businesses have told us they have considered relocating in a bid to beat traffic jams.

“According to the Government’s own figures, the East Midlands receives only 60% per capita average infrastructure investment.

“We are lobbying for national parity by 2020 so that we can have the infrastructure we deserve for the contribution we make to the national economy.”



Maria Machancoses (Image: Birmingham Post)

Midlands Connect director Maria Machancoses added: “Using today’s approach to funding, it could be 40 years before the A46 receives the

investment it needs to match the growth in jobs and housing expected along the corridor.

“We must do things differently and accelerate a long-term investment plan to make sure economic growth isn’t held back. Delivering our vision will not only make our businesses in Leicestershire more prosperous, it will improve the quality of life of people living and working along the corridor.

“Doing nothing will hold back this progress.”

## Huge concerns

The A46 Expressway has proved hugely controversial because, whatever its exact final route, it will drive through currently undeveloped countryside.

Critics have said it would cause huge environmental harm and not solve existing traffic problems.

There are doubts locally about it ever being affordable with some estimating the price tag to be at least £1 billion.