

Cabinet
8th July 2021

Title: A46 Link Road – Next Steps

Lead Officer: Andrew Cornfoot

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Cooke

Public report

Wards of the District directly affected: Kenilworth Abbey and Arden;
Kenilworth Park Hill; Cubbington and Leek Wootton

Contrary to the policy framework: No

Contrary to the budgetary framework: No

Key Decision: Yes

Included within the Forward Plan: 1,224

Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: Yes, by Warwickshire County Council for the A46 Link Road Phase 2 public consultation

Consultation & Community Engagement: Yes, public consultation; Development PAB

Final Decision: No

Accessibility checked: Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	14/06/2021	Chris Hunt, Andrew Jones
Head of Service	14/06/2021	Philip Clarke
CMT	14/06/2021	Chris Elliott, Andrew Jones, Dave Barber
Section 151 Officer	14/06/2021	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	14/06/2021	Andrew Jones
Finance	14/06/2021	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	17/06/2021	John Cooke

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report seeks to update members on progress on the A46 Link Road project that is being led by Warwickshire County Council. It also seeks approval for this Council's continued involvement in supporting the progression of the project and responds to the Notice of Motion at Full Council relating to this proposed development.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That Cabinet notes the update on the A46 Link Road project as set out in this report.
- 2.2. That Cabinet agrees to Warwick District Council's continued involvement in the process for the development of the Link Road scheme, noting the potential benefits and importance of infrastructure delivery in the area; and delegates to the Head of Development in consultation with the Place and Economy Portfolio Holder to write to Warwickshire County Council to this effect, subject to the points identified in paragraph 3.46.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1 The proposed Strategic A46 Link Road is a project that has been under consideration for several years and has been led by Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and also driven by Coventry City Council (CCC). The Link Road, if delivered in totality, comprises three elements:
- Phase 1: A46 Stoneleigh Junction improvements
 - Phase 2: Transport corridor from new Stoneleigh Junction, to A429 (Kenilworth Road) near to the proposed HS2 line and then on to Westwood Heath Road whilst also providing a new access into Warwick University
 - Phase 3: Link Road continues westbound into Solihull Metropolitan Borough and could link with the A452 or A45 to provide access to the proposed UK Central HS2 Interchange.
- 3.2 The purpose of the Strategic Link Road is to support planned housing and employment growth within Warwick District, Coventry City and the wider A45/A46 transport corridor. In their 12th September 2019 Cabinet Report, Warwickshire County Council identified the following objectives for the project:
- To facilitate and support the housing and employment proposals contained within the Local Plans for Warwick District and Coventry City
 - To support the growth aspirations of the University of Warwick (UoW) Stoneleigh Park and other key existing and proposed employment sites within the immediate area and wider A46 corridor in the context of the adopted Local Plans
 - To ensure the Coventry and Warwickshire area is well connected to the economic opportunities which will arise as a result of growth and development in the region including HS2 and associated growth at UK Central
 - To provide additional resilience to the Strategic Road Network (specifically the M6, M42, A46 and A45) through the delivery of a new high quality link

- To help reduce congestion in the A45 corridor which will allow further housing growth to come forward in North West, West and South West Coventry and parts of Warwick District
- To unlock land to help realise the opportunity for a number of strategic sustainable transport infrastructure improvements in the area, including a new railway station to serve the University of Warwick, improved access to Tile Hill station, bus priority and a network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

Current Position: A46 Link Road Phase 1 – Stoneleigh Junction

- 3.3 Phase 1 Stoneleigh Junction improvement scheme is a £38m investment funded by WCC, the Department for Transport (DfT), the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) along with developer contributions from the University of Warwick and employment development at Whitley South (part of the Coventry & Warwickshire Gateway Scheme). The approved design includes a new bridge across the A46, realigned slip roads and a new signalised gyratory system. The scheme aims to reduce the regular delays and queuing traffic, improve road safety for all users and ensure the junction has the capacity to meet future growth.
- 3.4 Major construction work commenced on site in March 2021, following a contract award to Colas-Siac Limited. The works will mostly be carried out away from the existing road network and therefore it is not expected that the works will be particularly disruptive to existing road users. The project is currently expected to be complete by Summer 2022.
- 3.5 The Stoneleigh Junction improvements are essential to the delivery of our most significant housing allocation in the current Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029, land at Kings Hill.
- 3.6 A layout plan and a computer-generated image (CGI) showing the approved design for Stoneleigh Junction can be found in Appendix 1.

A46 Link Road Phase 2 – Transport corridor between Stoneleigh Junction and Westwood Heath Road

- 3.7 Phase 2 of the Link Road is dependent upon the delivery of Phase 1. With Phase 1 now under construction, considerable attention is now being given to progressing the design and feasibility work for Phase 2 and exploring funding opportunities.
- 3.8 The route of the proposed link road is to the north of the proposed HS2 line and is through countryside largely used for agriculture. The land is within the West Midlands Green Belt. The full route of Phase 2 would see a transport corridor connecting Stoneleigh Junction and Westwood Heath Road with a junction with A429 Kenilworth Road. A spur would provide a new gateway into University of Warwick. The indicative route can be seen in Appendix 2.
- 3.9 Warwick District Council officers have worked alongside counterparts at WCC and CCC in this regard and the Council has had Corporate Management Team (CMT) representation on the Project Board for the scheme.

- 3.10 Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council were awarded £1.25m of funding as part of the DfT Large Local Major Scheme process to develop the business case for Phase 2 of the A46 Link Road and it is anticipated that this phase could cost in the region of £70-£100m. In addition to the involvement of the three local authorities in the area, the project has also seen engagement with Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP), the DfT, Highways England and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- 3.11 The objectives for the project as set out in Paragraph 3.2 remain applicable today. Coventry and Warwickshire has the fastest growing economy in the West Midlands and infrastructure is needed in key corridors such as the A45 and A46 to provide conditions for businesses to continue to invest in the area. The A46 Strategic Link Road aims to ensure an efficient transport network with sufficient capacity and resilience to maintain and support future growth.
- 3.12 The A46 Strategic Link Road aims to improve accessibility to the University of Warwick, one of the major employers in the area, and surrounding business parks and other employment areas and is critical should any further housing be planned in sustainable locations in this part of Warwick District. It also aims to improve local connectivity whilst tackling local traffic issues, such as the rat-running of through-traffic on unsuitable local roads.
- 3.13 Crucially, the proposal is not simply for a new road. The link road proposal includes provision for walking and cycling but importantly it is part of a wider programme to encourage multi-modal travel opportunities, including expanding the existing cycle network; a new railway station and interchange with the potential to link road and rail; and, very light rail (VLR). The wider programme also has the opportunity to provide congestion relief to Stoneleigh village and Kenilworth. The project name obscures this wider reality.

Phase 2: Public Consultation

- 3.14 An Issues and Options public consultation was undertaken for Phase 2 of the Link Road between 30th November 2020 and 14th February 2021. This identified issues and set out main options along with some of the key benefits and issues relevant to each. Responses to the consultation were invited from a range of partners, stakeholders and people who live and work in, or visit and travel through, Warwickshire and Coventry.
- 3.15 The public consultation lasted 10 weeks and amongst other methods of communication, involved a leaflet drop to approximately 11,000 households in the area and live broadcasts with question and answer opportunities. The survey received 522 responses and a further 98 representations were received.
- 3.16 A consultation analysis report has been produced on behalf of WCC. In light of the consultation feedback, officers at WCC and partner organisations involved in the project are now considering next steps. This includes how the

scheme should progress and developing its scope and direction, which will be used to inform the business case submission to the DfT (expected to be submitted in September 2021) and the development of funding applications. When clear decisions have been taken, further updates on the project will be made publicly available through WCC.

- 3.17 The consultation results offer mixed views on the link road proposal. Whilst the provision of the road did not receive overwhelming support (around half of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with each option), of the options tabled, Option 3 which was the full extent of Phase 2 of the link road received the highest levels of agreement/support. However, common concerns focussed on the proposed road potentially increasing or exacerbating congestion/traffic volume and environmental concerns (including pollution/air quality, noise, destruction of green belt land, wildlife, flooding). Questions were also raised over future travel patterns in a post-Covid-19 world.
- 3.18 Support was given to sustainable travel and active travel. In particular, where support was not given for any of the road options, the most common response was that there should be continued development of walking or cycling active travel options as an alternative.
- 3.19 Following conclusion of the public consultation, WCC has indicated that the following next steps are proposed with regards to the delivery of Phase 2
- Prepare an outline feasibility design and business case submission to the DfT
 - Development of funding applications
 - More site survey work.
- It is anticipated that both WCC and CCC will take reports to their respective Cabinets in September this year to consider next steps for this project.

Wider Context – South of Coventry area & South Warwickshire Local Plan

- 3.20 Before considering the Notice of Motion approved at 24th February 2021 Executive, it is helpful to place the A46 Link Road scheme in a wider context, including the emerging SWLP and known and potential development proposed in the area south of Coventry.
- 3.21 Cabinet will be aware that work has commenced on the South Warwickshire Local Plan, a collaborative process with Stratford-on-Avon District Council to set out the long-term spatial vision for South Warwickshire. By the time of this Cabinet meeting, the first public consultation 'Scoping and Call for Sites Consultation' will have concluded. The SWLP will set out the growth needs of South Warwickshire and will identify a spatial strategy and key sites required to meet these needs.
- 3.22 Whilst it would be premature to suggest where may or may not be suitable sites for strategic allocations to meet our needs including housing and employment requirements, it is prudent to begin to consider areas where these needs could partly be met and therefore not prejudiced by decisions made out of context such as on the A46 Link Road project. The Scoping Consultation will be important in any decision around the Plan period,

however, if the length of the Plan is longer perhaps to 2050 as officers have suggested in order to better plan for growth and associated infrastructure, then it is likely that a number of sites in various locations around South Warwickshire will be required to meet our needs that will be identified through the SWLP.

- 3.23 In the area South of Coventry there are two large sites that have been removed from the green belt in Land at Kings Hill (Local Plan allocation H43) and safeguarded land off Westwood Heath Road (Local Plan policy DS21). Planning Committee has made a resolution to grant outline planning consent for 2,500 dwellings at Kings Hill. This is more than the 1,800 allocated in the current Plan, although that acknowledges that the site has a capacity of up to 4,000 with the balance to come forward beyond the Plan period. The site is comfortably the largest single allocation in the current Local Plan.
- 3.24 The safeguarded land has an estimated site capacity of 700-900 dwellings. Whilst not currently allocated for development, it has been removed from the green belt. The main reason the site was not allocated was that the Inspector considering the Local Plan concurred with highways officers that additional highway capacity was required although did not consider the A46 Link Road project to be suitably progressed to justify its inclusion as an allocated housing site.
- 3.25 Highways officers at WCC have also been clear that without the A46 link road or similar infrastructure, it will be very difficult to support additional housing growth in the area south of Coventry beyond the initial 2,500 dwellings at Kings Hill. Whilst other sites may not be considered appropriate for future growth as that will depend on the chosen spatial strategy for the SWLP, it is important that through the SWLP process, growth options in sustainable locations on the edge of the existing built up area on sites not located within the green belt are explored, particularly as such sites would have to be discounted before any potential release of green belt land through the Plan process, which would be required to demonstrate exceptional circumstances. For this reason and given that the safeguarded land was not previously allocated because the A46 Link Road proposal was not deemed to be suitably progressed, it would be prudent for this Council to continue to work with partner organisations on this scheme.
- 3.26 In addition to the housing sites referred to above, WCC has also stated that further notable growth at the University of Warwick is unlikely to be supported by the Local Highway Authority without the A46 Link Road or similar infrastructure. University of Warwick are currently working on emerging masterplan proposals and the continued success and growth of the University is in part dependent upon being able to continue to grow and improve their offer on campus. This therefore is another reason for this Council to support the progression of the Link Road project.
- 3.27 On 20th September 2019, University of Warwick declared a Climate Emergency, and followed Warwick District's declaration on 26th June 2019 and Warwickshire County Council's declaration on 25th July 2019. This demonstrates the University's commitment to tackling climate change. Whilst the University understand the need for the A46 Link Road, it has also

implemented measures to promote sustainable travel and active travel including a bike hire scheme and are trialling a number of other measures including a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) (bus on demand) service, E-scooters and Enterprise Car Club vehicles. The University has also pedestrianised some areas on campus to give priority to those walking and cycling and are talking to partner organisations about extending the West Midlands Bike Hire Scheme into the University and bringing VLR to the University. It has also recently announced plans for a significant eco-park.

- 3.28 As well as potential housing and University growth referred to in the preceding paragraphs, there are several other known major developments and infrastructure projects that are either likely to come forward in the nearby area or are proposed. These include the HS2 route travelling through the area south-east to north-west, the development of Whitley South and Gateway South developments around Coventry Airport, significant housing growth and a new employment site in Kenilworth, the possibility of major investment in the form of a Gigafactory at Coventry Airport itself, changes to Stoneleigh Park necessitated by the route of HS2 and a possible football stadium for Coventry City near University of Warwick. It is likely that the SWLP call for sites will also generate sites being promoted for development. It is sensible to bear in mind these likely and possible developments when considering the A46 link road scheme as improved highway capacity and improved sustainable travel routes in the area will be necessary should some of these developments materialise.

Notice of Motion – 24th February Full Council

- 3.29 A Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Kennedy and seconded by Councillor Nicholls at 24th February Full Council. It was Resolved that the Motion as set out below be approved. This Motion reads as follows:

“That this Council notes that:

1. Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has recently closed a consultation on possible routes for the A46 link road from the A46 Stoneleigh junction to Westwood Heath Road. WCC is also currently consulting on its revised Local Travel Plan.
2. WCC has published ‘Healthy Travel Choices in Warwickshire’ in which they state “...our goal [is] to achieve a sustainable, healthy and green travel network; where walking and cycling are the primary modes of travel, with private car use of much lower importance.”
3. The Department of Transport published ‘Gear Change: a bold new vision for cycling and walking’ in July 2020 which aims to ‘encourage and empower’ local authorities to promote active travel plans.
4. The CWLEP has invested in the development of the Coventry Very Light Rail system creating new sustainable means of transport and local green jobs.
5. In June 2019, Warwick District Council declared a Climate Emergency with one of its aims that “total carbon emissions within Warwick District are as close to zero as possible by 2030”. Motor vehicles with internal combustion engines are responsible for 40% of all emissions across the District.

6. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has seen a shift in work patterns towards more home-working and less commuting, with a 73% drop in motor traffic during the height of the lockdown.

That this Council resolves to requests a report from officers setting out the relative merits of writing to WCC and Coventry City Council as the proposers of the A46 Strategic Link Road calling on them to suspend further development of the scheme until a full re-evaluation of the planning assumptions is made, including but not limited to:

(a) A reassessment of traffic flow forecasts based on new ways of working and commuting following the pandemic, and a sustainability analysis as mandated for all major new projects by the WDC Climate Emergency.

(b) A detailed analysis of the potential for enhancing active travel in the area taking into account Department of Transport policy and the emerging Warwickshire Local Travel Plan including the development of plans for a comprehensive cycle network and encouragement of the increasingly popular use of e-bikes for commuting.

(c) Consideration of fast-tracking the development of the railway station for the University and the early roll-out of the Coventry VLR scheme.

(d) Coordination with the development of the new South Warwickshire (Warwick and Stratford Districts) Local Plan and with the University of Warwick's new master plan, noting that the University has also declared a climate emergency".

- 3.30 The opening six points in the Notice of Motion are noted. Therefore, the following section of this report will seek to respond to the points a to d raised in the Notice of Motion.

Response to Notice of Motion (NoM)

- 3.31 The NoM is centred around the desire to encourage sustainable and active modes of travel and minimise environmental impacts that may arise from the development of the link road. This is of particular importance in the context of the Climate Emergency declared by this Council in June 2019.
- 3.32 Cabinet may recall a report taken to 18th March 2021 Executive which approved this Council's response to WCC's Local Transport Plan (LTP) key themes consultation (for a new LTP 4 covering Warwickshire). In that response the Council was clear in its support for active and sustainable modes of travel and that in its view, there should be a sequential approach to transport schemes, i.e. active travel options should be considered first and only where those alone cannot address the capacity/travel issues in question should major investment in roads be considered. It was also apparent from the consultation that WCC is also wanting to place greater emphasis on active travel options.
- 3.33 The title of the A46 Link Road scheme is perhaps unfortunate as whilst the proposal is clearly for a road, the title does not emphasise the sustainable travel aspects of the proposal nor capture the wider programme. However, the consultation did highlight these elements of the scheme, albeit with hindsight perhaps these could have been emphasised more. The link road would include dedicated high quality facilities for cyclists, it would provide a

route on which the proposed Very Light Rail (VLR) scheme could potentially operate, and it would connect with the proposed University of Warwick/Coventry South Railway Station. It is worth noting that the link road is considered to be one component of a package of schemes approved by CCC Cabinet in 2017 to support the south Coventry area, also including VLR, the proposed railway station/transport interchange and improvements to Tile Hill Railway Station.

- 3.34 Notwithstanding these sustainable and active travel benefits, both WCC and CCC as highway authorities are of the opinion that sustainable travel options alone will not sufficiently address existing highway capacity issues in the south of Coventry area which would only be exacerbated should there be further growth in the area, and therefore will not address the objectives of the scheme (see Paragraph 3.2).
- 3.35 Point a) of the NoM requests a reassessment of traffic flows forecasted based on new ways of working and commuting following the Covid-19 pandemic and also requests a sustainability analysis. It is agreed that consideration must be given to the likely longer-term impacts on travel patterns arising from the pandemic and that a sustainability analysis should be undertaken as part of the case for the Link Road. However, it is understood that traffic levels on the road network are now back to similar levels as prior to the pandemic. The significant difference from pre-pandemic levels is that the morning peak period flows are not as pronounced, with a more even spread of traffic through the day.
- 3.36 Point b) seeks a detailed analysis of the potential for enhancing active travel in the area, considering both national policy and emerging local policy and this should include the development of plans for a comprehensive cycle network and encouragement of e-bikes for commuting. As identified earlier in this report, the A46 Link Road project does seek to provide significant opportunities for active travel and the University of Warwick is also exploring sustainable travel options in the area. Furthermore, there are already other firm and emerging proposals in the locality that will significantly improve connectivity between key destinations including the Kenilworth to Leamington Spa strategic cycle route (K2L) which has been allocated £4.749m by the County Council, new cycle routes through strategic housing allocations in east Kenilworth, junction improvements and bus priority measures on the A452 between Kenilworth and Leamington Spa, a possible park and ride in the area and also a proposed railway station to serve the University of Warwick and the communities in the surrounding area. Therefore, there is confidence that this project is being progressed in the context of also encouraging active travel. It is agreed that the link road proposal should only be progressed if there is due consideration for options of enhancing active travel in the area and how the project can support delivery of those modes of travel.
- 3.37 Point c) requests the consideration of fast-tracking the development of the University of Warwick/Coventry South railway station, identified in the A46 Link Road consultation documentation, and the early roll-out of the Coventry VLR scheme. Officers from all local authorities involved in Phase 2 of the link road scheme along with University of Warwick are all keen to support the

planning and delivery of a University of Warwick/Coventry South railway station as early as is feasible. All parties have also expressed the desire for VLR to serve the University as part of a strategic network that covers the south Coventry/Warwickshire area, although it has to be acknowledged that the City Council's priority is delivering a route between the city centre and University Hospital Coventry, programmed to be operational by 2025. It is anticipated that if a route to the University of Warwick becomes the second priority, then delivery in the 2026-2030 period is likely. However, other developments in this area would add to the case for VLR to be provided to this area earlier than later.

- 3.38 Unfortunately, the planning and delivery of a railway station is unlikely to be a swift process. Midlands Connect are progressing work to look at improving rail capacity between Coventry and Leamington Spa. The Outline Business Case (OBC) was endorsed by their Programme Board in June 2020. DfT has acknowledged that it is a very strong scheme, however a decision to progress has been deferred due to the uncertainty around when to build given it is closely dependent on HS2. The current core scheme proposes to deliver partial double tracking. The West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) has funded an additional piece of work to look at the option to provide full double tracking and the benefits of doing so. If this option is progressed, there could be an option (subject to timetabling work) to deliver an additional local service which could help facilitate a University of Warwick station. It is very unlikely however that this could be delivered before 2030, a more realistic estimate would be the first half of the next decade. It is important to note that the railway station forms part of West Midlands Mayor Andy Street's plans for investment in rail across the West Midlands and the railway station is included on his '2040 Plan for Metro and Rail in the West Midlands' and therefore it is reasonable to expect that it will receive support from both him and the WMCA.
- 3.39 Therefore, it is unlikely that VLR or the proposed railway station which is more likely to also serve as a transport interchange for other modes of transport including VLR, will be delivered in the short-term. However, WDC and partner organisations should be keen to support their delivery as early as is reasonably possible.
- 3.40 There are likely to be significant benefits arising from a new railway station/transport interchange and VLR operating in the south of Coventry area. However, the business case for both is likely to be strengthened by the link road as it provides suitable infrastructure for VLR to operate and it would serve the railway station/transport interchange. Therefore, non-delivery of the link road may impact adversely upon the feasibility and deliverability of these two key sustainable transport options which would therefore be perverse in the context of the Notice of Motion.
- 3.41 Also relevant to the local area is Coventry's 'All Electric Bus City' plan which will see the City Council receive £50m from the DfT to fund 297 all-electric buses in the city. This programme will see all cross-boundary bus services operated by electric buses by the end of 2025 and therefore will also be beneficial to Warwick District and local air quality.

- 3.42 Point d) seeks co-ordination with the development of the new SWLP and with the University of Warwick's emerging masterplan, noting that the University has also declared a climate emergency. Officers are engaging in initial discussions with the University around their masterplan proposals and also on matters relating to the A46 Link Road and as such there should be confidence that the projects are aligned and opportunities are being explored at how best to provide the highway capacity for the University to experience continued success including the creation of more employment opportunities, whilst also promoting active travel options.
- 3.43 The A46 Link Road proposal needs to be considered in the context of the SWLP and officers are of the view that it should come forward as an identified key piece of infrastructure through the SWLP. Likewise, the strategic options for the Local Plan need to be kept open at this stage and for that to be the case, work on developing the scheme and funding it is therefore required to continue. The business case for the link road is in part dependent upon growth in the area and equally any growth in this area, would need road as well as the sustainable transport infrastructure, that may come through the Local Plan, such as possible housing sites and University growth. However, the scheme must be progressed in advance of the adoption of the SWLP (currently envisaged around mid-2024 although this is subject to many variables) to avoid the situation identified earlier regarding the safeguarded land and the current Local Plan.
- 3.44 It is worth noting that a parallel, but related, discussion is currently underway with the University of Warwick and other key partners to consider how existing, planned and potentially emerging development in the wider area to the south of Coventry can best be coordinated so that benefits for local communities can be maximised. Paragraph 3.280 above identifies a number of developments and these are already delivering, or have the potential to deliver, significant new infrastructure (including green infrastructure) to the local area. Officers are talking to the University about how work could be undertaken which would help to coordinate these various schemes, and help build a business case for the early delivery of key investment such as VLR and the new railway station. This may possibly take the form of a "masterplan" for this wider area. Understanding the role and purpose of the A46 link road will be important in supporting this work.

Next Steps

- 3.45 Given the following context:
- The multiple aims of the A46 link road scheme, which have sub-regional benefits
 - The known proposed and potential development proposals in the south of Coventry area and limitations upon growth in this area without significant infrastructure investment. This includes growth at the University of Warwick and large sites capable of delivering significant levels of housing to meet the District's needs that have already been found to be sustainable locations and have previously been removed from the green belt
 - The fact that WCC as Local Highway Authority is of the view that despite promoting and progressing sustainable travel infrastructure there is still a

need for additional highway capacity and that infrastructure improvements are essential to enable more journeys to be undertaken by public transport and active modes of travel such as walking and cycling

- The business case and deliverability of a new railway station and VLR are likely to be significantly weakened without supporting infrastructure and the link road will provide enhanced access to the area for bus services;

officers are of the view that it is important for the A46 link road scheme development to be progressed by WCC, in conjunction with key partners, and therefore this Council should continue to be involved in the project.

- 3.46 In summary, it is suggested that this Council should write to WCC as the organisation leading the A46 Link Road project along the following lines:

That this Council is supportive of WCC (and CCC) progressing the development of the A46 link road scheme, however this is subject to the following:

- That WDC officers should remain actively involved and continue to have a seat on the Programme Board for delivery of this project
- Phase 2 work shall progress albeit as part of a comprehensive and wider project to deliver sustainable travel options in the area and address identified issues/capacity needs. Even if it is project managed as a separate project, there should be a clear understanding of how it fits into the wider project for meeting the transport needs and supporting sustainable travel in the area. This needs to be seen also in the context of the SWLP consideration of strategic options and that this may require a masterplan of the wider area for this part of the SWLP area (A further report may be required to the WDC Cabinet on this aspect)
- That WCC (and CCC) do not take any decisions about applying for planning permission for the A46 Link Road phase 2 until WDC has made a strategic decision in the context on the Local Plan on the preferred spatial strategy for the location of development to meet the needs of South Warwickshire
- That WCC, in conjunction with transport planners at CCC, undertakes a reassessment of traffic flows forecasted based on likely new patterns of working and commuting following the Covid-19 pandemic
- That WCC undertakes a sustainability analysis of the Link Road scheme
- That WDC officers remain briefed by WCC on the progress of the University of Warwick/Coventry South railway station/transport interchange and the development of VLR and seek to progress these opportunities as quickly as is realistic
- That WCC supports WDC in providing the necessary evidence to support the case for the link road through the SWLP, subject to alignment with the preferred spatial strategy
- That WCC ensures that the link road project is consistent with key themes in the emerging Local Transport Plan 4 and can justify the scheme in this context throughout scheme development
- That WCC acknowledges WDC's support, subject to the points raised in this paragraph, in their proposed report to WCC's Cabinet about next steps.

- 3.47 Whilst it is not essential to this Council's support, consideration should be given by WCC to whether an alternative name to the 'A46 Link Road' for this

project may be more appropriate. A succinct name that highlights that this is more than simply a new road might be preferable to the current title of the project.

Current Position: A46 Link Road Phase 3 – continuing the link road towards Solihull and the HS2 Interchange

- 3.48 Officers at WDC have largely been involved to date in matters relating to Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the strategic link road. However, the delivery of Phase 3 would go further in delivering on the overarching aims of the link road as set out in paragraph 3.2. Phase 3 is dependent however on the delivery of Phase 2.
- 3.49 It is understood that CCC are leading on the progression of an options assessment for how Phase 3 could potentially proceed and currently propose to commence the preparation of a Strategic Business Case in September, likely to be completed during the current financial year.

4. Policy Framework

4.1. Fit for the Future (FFF)

- 4.1.1 The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects. This report shows the way forward for implementing a significant part of one of the Council's Key projects.
- 4.1.2 The FFF Strategy has 3 strands, People, Services and Money, and each has an external and internal element to it, the details of which can be found [on the Council's website](#). The section below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

4.2. FFF Strands

4.2.1 External impacts of proposal(s)

People - Health, Homes, Communities – Transport has a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing as well as being a key component of the infrastructure required to support new homes and existing communities. Badly planned transport and inaccessible transport can damage individual health and wellbeing and can impact on the wellbeing of whole communities. The proposed link road aims to reduce congestion and will create and enable sustainable travel options that without it may not be feasible therefore this will be beneficial to the health of residents and support active communities. The delivery of this infrastructure will provide opportunities for delivery of a mix of housing in sustainable locations, to meet the needs of the District.

Services - Green, Clean, Safe - The provision of new road infrastructure on the face of it might not sound in harmony with the Council's stated aim of seeing total carbon emissions within Warwick District being reduced to as close to zero as possible by 2030. However, one of the purposes of the link

road is to reduce congestion and thus it aims to improve air quality. It will also offer improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity in the area and unlock the potential to deliver other public transport options including enhanced bus services, provide infrastructure suitable for VLR and the development of a new transport interchange including a railway station. The design of the transport corridor would be expected to be visually attractive and there should be mitigation for any biodiversity loss arising from the scheme.

Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment – The link road will play an important role in supporting the local economy both in terms of access to goods, services and markets and in terms of commuting. As set out in the stated objectives for the strategic link road, the link road will help support the local economy by providing improved accessibility and connectivity in the area including to existing and proposed employment sites. The road is important for the continued growth and success of University of Warwick, one of the major employers in the sub-region.

4.2.2. Internal impacts of the proposal(s)

People - Effective Staff – Some WDC staff will be impacted by the link road should it ultimately be constructed. The road, its active travel options and further sustainable travel opportunities that may arise from it, will provide employees with a diverse and effective range of transport options to access their workplace and travel for work.

Services - Maintain or Improve Services - The delivery of the link road will enable opportunities for growth, including for housing and supporting the aspirations of University of Warwick. In turn, this will have an impact on the Planning Service and other Council services. The road and sustainable travel options likely to arise from it will provide improved accessibility for our customers.

Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term – This scheme is not being funded or delivered by WDC and as such there are no long-term implications for the Council's finances.

4.3. Supporting Strategies

- 4.3.1 Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies. The content of this report has been influenced by the following strategies:
- The current Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029 – this is a key strategy that cuts across the FFF strands
 - The emerging South Warwickshire Local Plan
 - The Climate Emergency Action Programme and in particular the ambitions for a zero carbon District

This report has acknowledged and considered the relevance of each strategy.

4.4. Changes to Existing Policies

- 4.4.1 This report does not seek to amend any existing policies. The delivery of the link road is broadly consistent with existing policies although given the complexities of strategic planning it is always a case of weighing up the benefits and disbenefits of a proposal and balancing sometimes competing

objectives. Impacts on the Local Plan will be considered separately as the Local Plan is reviewed through the SWLP. However as indicated above we may need a masterplan for a wider area to co-ordinate land use and infrastructure proposals.

4.5. **Impact Assessments**

- 4.5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken by WCC prior to commencement of the public consultation on the A46 Link Road Phase 2.
- 4.5.2 The options set out in the public consultation were subject to impact assessments by WCC that considered the benefits and disbenefits of each option. Should the scheme be progressed, it can be expected that WCC will undertake any necessary impact assessments at the appropriate point in time. The design and impact of the link road will be assessed through a formal planning process and its appropriateness on land within the green belt will be determined at that stage or through the SWLP.

5. **Budgetary Framework**

- 5.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. **Risks**

- 6.1. There is a risk that if the continuation of the link road project does not receive this Council's support then it may be afforded lower priority by WCC. Infrastructure such as this takes a considerable time to plan, design, secure necessary approvals and ultimately construct. The progress of the development of the scheme at this stage is important to ensure that the link road proposal is sufficiently advanced to support anticipated growth needs in the area and to further support the case for provision of associated sustainable travel options in the area. It is also important that the SWLP strategic options are not prejudiced or indeed reduced by ad hoc decisions on specific items of infrastructure.
- 6.2. A further risk is that the link road proposal could continue to be progressed without WDC support. Should that be the case, this Council and its officers will have less direct input in shaping the proposals.
- 6.3. There is a risk that there may be a perception that support for new road infrastructure may be contrary to the Council's stated aims regarding tackling climate change. However, as explored in this report, this is considered to constitute essential infrastructure to support growth and employment opportunities and what is proposed is a transport corridor including provision for active travel. Furthermore, the link road is an important component to support further sustainable travel opportunities in the area including a possible railway station/transport interchange and VLR. Through the design and planning process there will be opportunity to ensure that the development seeks to ensure harmony with the Council's climate change objectives and it is expected that there will be suitable mitigation for any biodiversity loss.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1. The Council could choose not to support further development of the A46 Link Road project. However, this option is not proposed as the infrastructure is key to supporting future growth and as infrastructure take considerable time to plan it would not be recommended that the project is paused whilst the SWLP advances. As indicated in 6.1, there is also a risk that if the decision was taken not to support this project, WCC may not give this scheme as high a priority as currently is the case if this Council is not expressing its support.

8. Background

- 8.1 The Warwick District Local Plan (2011-2029) was adopted in September 2017. This comprehensive Plan sets out the Council's policies and proposals to support the District through to 2029 and the long-term spatial vision for how this will be achieved.
- 8.3 A Local Plan review is required to take place by September 2022. This Council has previously taken the decision to prepare a joint South Warwickshire Local Plan with Stratford-on-Avon District Council and similar decisions have been taken by that council. Work has commenced on the South Warwickshire Local Plan and thus both councils are reviewing their current Plans through that mechanism. Alongside statutory considerations, such as conformity with the NPPF and the delivery of sufficient housing, the South Warwickshire Local Plan, will embed tackling the climate emergency within the Plan's new policies.
- 8.4 It is not yet determined exactly what the growth needs of South Warwickshire are and through the Duty-to-Cooperate, officers at the two councils will be working with neighbouring authorities to understand their ability to meet their growth needs. Various evidence documents will be commissioned to support the SWLP including a Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA). However, with a Plan period initially proposed to cover a period of 25-30 years, it is expected that there will be significant growth needs that will need to be met by allocating development sites in sustainable locations.