

Improving the environment | **A556**  
Knutsford to Bowdon  
M6 Junction 19 to Mere Hall  
Supplementary Consultation



Public consultation • September 2009



## Introduction

The Highways Agency proposes to improve the A556 between Junction 19 of the M6 and Junction 7 of the M56. Having considered the views expressed by the public at a consultation undertaken in March 2007, the Secretary of State for Transport announced a preferred route for the scheme on 16th December 2008 (as shown right).

Since the Secretary of State's announcement, it has become necessary to consider changes to the southern end of the scheme and we are now inviting comment from the public on options for these proposed changes.

## Why are the changes needed?

The design of the scheme presented at the March 2007 public consultation (Brown option) did not include improvement to a short section of the A556 adjacent to Junction 19 of the M6, through Over Tabley. This section of the route was to be improved as part of a future M6 Junction 11 to 19 widening scheme, which was to provide a direct connection to the A556.

More recently, the Highways Agency has reviewed plans for the M6 widening scheme and has concluded that a smaller scale improvement focussed on M6 Junction 19 alone, within a Managed Motorway context, is likely to be the preferred solution and will therefore not include improvement to the section of the A556 through Over Tabley. Consequently the Highways Agency is developing proposals for including the section of route between Over Tabley and Junction 19 as part of the A556 project, in order to ensure that the entire route between the M6 and M56 is upgraded to the required standard.

## Supplementary consultation

Two alternative route options (an on-line 'Blue' option and an off-line 'Red' option) have been identified and assessed, and these are presented overleaf for your consideration, along with the previous proposal which is now referred to as the 'Brown' option.

The aim of this supplementary consultation is to seek your views on potential options for the route between M6 Junction 19 and Mere Hall. Based on the results of this consultation and the results of the studies undertaken, the Secretary of State for Transport may decide to amend the preferred route at the southern end of the scheme. It is anticipated that this decision would be made in Spring 2010.

It is not intended to change the line of the route to the north of Mere Hall.





## The project objectives

Most of this section of the A556 is 4-lane single carriageway with short sections of dual carriageway, and many direct accesses from properties and field entrances. The whole route between M6 Junction 19 and M56 Junction 7 suffers from congestion for much of the day and has a poor accident record, with 200 reported accidents in the period 1998 to 2005, including five fatalities and 39 serious injuries.

The improvement scheme as a whole aims to provide a high quality route for the A556 with the following objectives:

- to improve the local environment in Bucklow Hill and Mere;
- to improve road safety and journey time reliability;
- to reduce conflicts between local and long distance traffic; and
- to minimise the environmental impacts of the proposed scheme both during construction and once the scheme is open.

## Update on progress

<b>2003</b>	Route Management Strategy, consulted upon and approved. Studies commenced to look at ways to improve the safety, reliability and environment of the A556 corridor.
<b>March 2007</b>	Public consultation on route options for the A556 Knutsford to Bowdon Improvement.
<b>December 2008</b>	Secretary of State for Transport announced a preferred route.
<b>January 2009 – August 2009</b>	Options identified for M6 Junction 19 to Mere Hall section. Environmental, Engineering and Traffic and Economic studies undertaken to compare the options.
<b>March 2009</b>	North West Region confirmed scheme priority in Regional Funding Allocation process.
<b>April- August 2009</b>	Selection of contractors to be invited to tender for an Early Contractor Involvement contract (i.e. a contract to design and construct the improvement scheme).
<b>September 2009 Current position</b>	Supplementary consultation on M6 Junction 19 to Mere Hall section.





## Scheme options

In order to improve the section between Over Tabley and M6 Junction 19, two alternative options to the **Brown option** (shown below), have been identified and assessed (**Blue option**, shown right and **Red option**, shown below right).

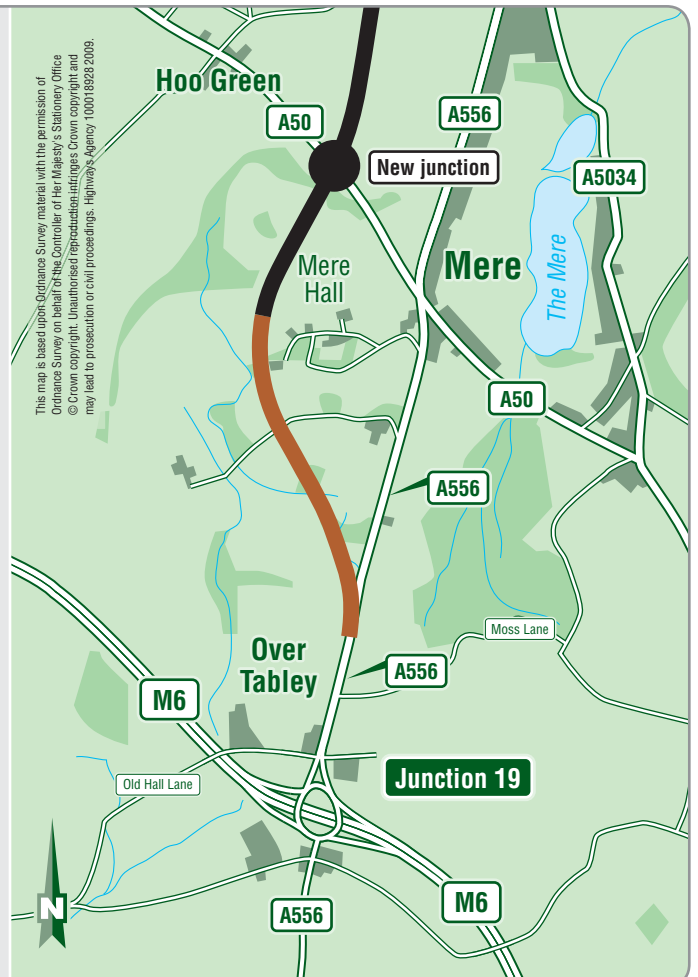
A summary of the comparative effects of these three options is provided in the option comparison table overleaf.

### Brown option (Original option)

The Brown option is the original proposal upon which the December 2008 preferred route announcement was based. This option would not improve the existing 4-lane single carriageway section between M6 Junction 19 and Over Tabley as it was expected that this part of the scheme would be improved as part of the M6 widening project.

Existing private and commercial property accesses to this section of the route would remain unchanged.

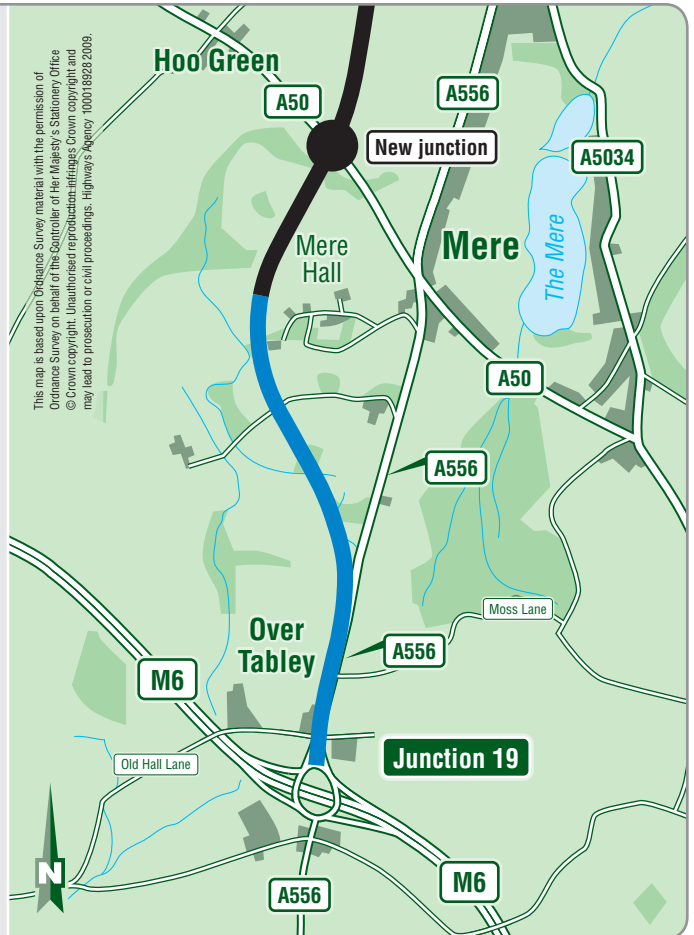
This option was considered as a first stage until such time as proposals for the M6 Widening and M6 Junction 19 Improvement schemes were constructed. This option would not improve safety on the section between M6 Junction 19 and Over Tabley, and neither would it resolve existing conflicts between local and long distance traffic. Therefore, it is considered that this option now only partially meets the objectives of the scheme.



## Blue option

This option follows the same line as the Brown option. However, the Blue option would include upgrading the existing A556 4-lane single carriageway between M6 Junction 19 and Over Tabley to a dual carriageway, providing a consistently higher standard of road for the full length of the A556 Improvement scheme.

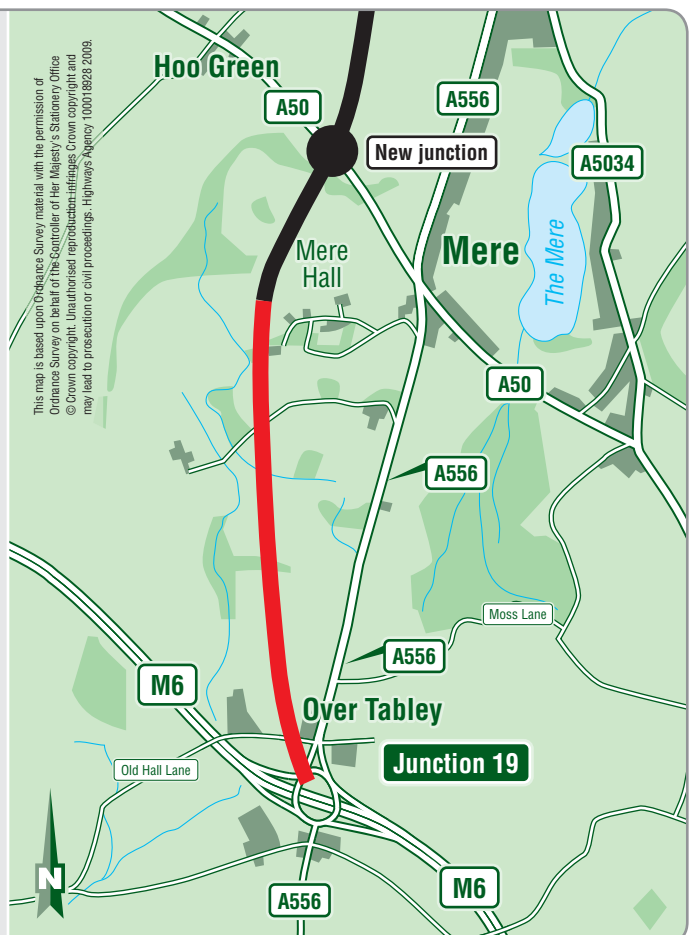
Direct access onto the upgraded A556 from houses and commercial properties would be closed and alternative means of access would be provided to the local road network. Properties on the existing A556, north of the proposed widening, would access the new route via the new junction with the A50, to the northwest of Mere.



## Red option

From M6 Junction 19, this option would cross Old Hall Lane before passing to the west of Tabley Parish Hall. Continuing in a northerly direction, the route would pass across generally open farmland, tying into the preferred route to the west of Mere Hall.

The existing A556 would be closed south of the access to Old Hall Lane. Properties on the existing A556 would access the new route via the proposed new junction with the A50, to the northwest of Mere.



## Option comparison

This scheme aims to improve the environment, road safety and journey time reliability whilst minimising adverse impacts both during construction and once the scheme is open. The following table gives an indication of the comparative effects of the route options under consideration in relation to these areas.

	Brown option	Blue option	Red option
<b>Safety</b>	The A556 Knutsford to Bowdon Environmental Improvement scheme as a whole would create significant reductions in accident rates, whichever improvement option is chosen at the southern end. The following comments compare likely impacts for the southern section of the scheme only.		
	Unlikely to be any improvement in safety on the southern section.	Improvements to current situation therefore better than Brown option.	Further improvements to Blue option.
<b>Congestion</b>	All of the options would significantly reduce congestion compared to the existing route.		
	Congestion levels higher than for Red and Blue options.	Improvement from Brown option due to closure of access.	Further improvement to Blue option.
<b>Disruption due to construction</b>	Some disruption particularly during tie in works at Over Tabley.	Heavy disruption due to online widening between M6 Junction 19 and Over Tabley.	Some disruption particularly during tie in with M6 Junction 19 Roundabout.
<b>Air Quality</b>	No improvement in Air Quality Management Area between Over Tabley and M6 Junction 19.	Slight improvement in Air Quality Management Area between Over Tabley and M6 Junction 19.	Further improvements in Air Quality Management Area if compared to Blue or Brown options.
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	All three options would have similar slight impacts on sites of cultural heritage interest and similar impacts on the setting of Mere Hall.		
		Two residential buildings of local historic interest would be demolished.	Closest option to Over Tabley Hall, but improves setting of five other buildings of local historic interest.
<b>Ecology and Nature Conservation</b>	Some effects are expected on bats, badgers, Great Crested Newts, hares, ponds, woodland and hedgerows. They would require mitigation.		
<b>Landscape Character</b>	All options run through open countryside and woodland, which would have an adverse impact on the landscape character. Some mitigation would take place.		
	More impact on woodland than the Red option.		More open countryside would be taken than with other two options.
<b>Visual Impact</b>	Townscape unchanged between Over Tabley and M6 Junction 19.	Some visual impacts will not be capable of mitigation.	Removes traffic away from some properties on existing A556. Visual impacts can mostly be mitigated.

	Brown option	Blue option	Red option
<b>Demolition</b>	No demolition required.	Two residential buildings would be demolished.	No demolition of residential buildings required. Tabley Parish Hall may need relocating.
<b>Agricultural Land</b>	Some loss of agricultural land and disruption of access.	Some loss of agricultural land. Increased disruption of access.	Greater loss of agricultural land than the other options. Some disruption of access.
<b>Traffic Noise and Vibration</b>	In the remaining online sections between Over Tabley and M6 J19, there would be an increase in noise, due to predicted increase in traffic.	Compared to the Brown option, many properties would experience noise benefits, whilst some properties would experience negligible adverse noise impacts.  More properties would experience less vibration nuisance than with the Brown option.	Many properties would experience significant benefits compared with the Brown option. However, some properties would experience more adverse impacts than for the Blue or Brown options.  More properties would experience less vibration nuisance than with the Brown or Blue option.
<b>Pedestrians, Cyclists etc</b>	Little scope to improve facilities. Increased traffic will make it more difficult to cross A556 south of Over Tabley.	Greater crossing restrictions than Brown option, however, scope for improving facilities.	Greater scope for providing facilities than the Brown or Blue Options, especially at Old Hall Lane/Swains Walk bridleway. The existing A556 would become a local road south of Over Tabley.
<b>Driver Stress</b>	All three options would provide less stressful journeys overall.		
	There would be no improvement between M6 Junction 19 and Over Tabley.	General improvement but less benefit than for Red option.	General improvement, with consistent road standard throughout route.
<b>Water Quality and Drainage</b>	Existing drainage unimproved between Over Tabley and M6 Junction 19. Least adverse impact on flood risk as no additional paved areas.	Improved water quality due to improved drainage system. Higher flood risk than Brown option due to additional paved area, though this would be mitigated.	Improved water quality due to improved drainage system. Higher flood risk than Brown and Blue option due to additional paved area, though this can be mitigated.

## Environmental Considerations

Environmental issues are very important to us. A team of environmental specialists is working very closely with the design team and is involved in all the key decisions. Detailed Environmental studies are underway so that we can compare the effects that each option would have on the environment. These studies will lead to the publishing of a more detailed Environmental Statement for the preferred route. As part of this work, we are consulting with a wide range of national and local stakeholders, including all the relevant planning authorities, Natural England, the Environment Agency and English Heritage.

## Your views are important to us

Two alternatives for the M6 Junction 19 to Mere Hall section of the A556 Improvement scheme, along with the Brown option, have been prepared for you to consider. We wish to obtain the views of local residents and those who might be affected by the proposals. We would be grateful if you could please complete and return the enclosed freepost questionnaire to help us identify the most suitable option.

An online version of the questionnaire is also available at [www.highways.gov.uk/A556Improvements](http://www.highways.gov.uk/A556Improvements)

The closing date for this consultation is **18th December 2009**. Please ensure that you return your questionnaire before this date to allow us to take your views into consideration.

## Further information

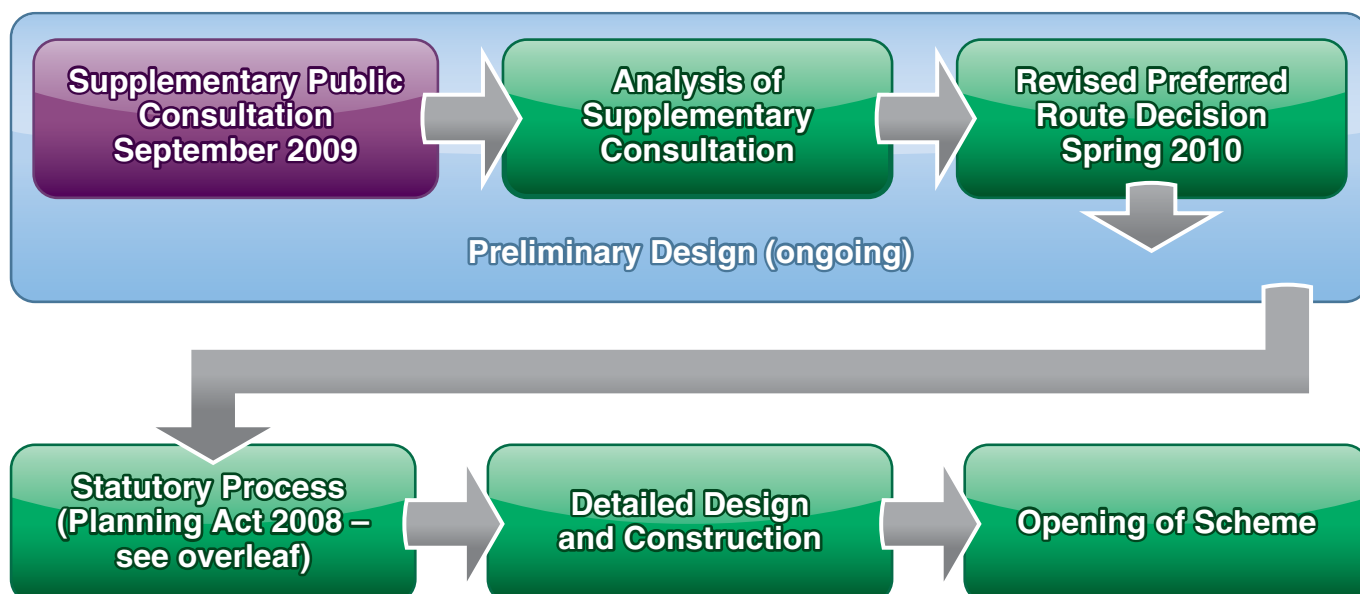
Further scheme details can be obtained from the Highways Agency scheme website at [www.highways.gov.uk/A556Improvements](http://www.highways.gov.uk/A556Improvements)

Any further views can be emailed to the Project Team using the scheme email address: [A556knutsfordbowdon@highways.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:A556knutsfordbowdon@highways.gsi.gov.uk)

## What happens next?

Following this consultation we will analyse your feedback along with feedback from other stakeholders, and the Secretary of State for Transport will consider them carefully along with the results of the technical assessment work before making a decision on a possible amendment of the preferred route. It is likely that this decision will be announced in Spring 2010. The scheme is progressing as planned and we are currently undertaking the preliminary design.

## Current programme





## Planning Act 2008

From 1 October 2009, the creation of the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) established under the Planning Act 2008 will result in changes to the statutory process for major road schemes with the aim of creating a faster, fairer, consent system. Consultation with local communities, local authorities and those directly affected by the proposals will be taken prior to the application to the IPC. The IPC will thoroughly examine the application and eventually issue a recommendation to the Secretary of State.

### Code of Practice On Consultation

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Government's Code of Practice on Consultation. The seven criteria are listed below:

1. When to consult: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.
2. Duration of consultation exercises: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.
3. Clarity of scope and impact: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.
4. Accessibility of consultation exercises: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.
5. The burden of consultation: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

6. Responsiveness of consultation exercises: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.
7. Capacity to consult: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

A full version of the Code of Practice on Consultation is available on the Better Regulation Executive web-site at:  
[www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf](http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf)

If you have any comments about the extent to which the criteria have been observed and any ways for improving the consultation process, or any complaints about the consultation process (rather than the consultation itself) please contact:

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Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidentiality. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided

as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Agency.

The Agency will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances; this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties. Confidential responses will be included in any statistical summary of number of comments and views expressed.

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