Royal Sutton Coldfield Gateway / Frequently Asked Questions

What problems is the scheme trying to solve?
The Strategic Outline Case (SOC) identifies several key issues:

- The ring road creating a barrier between communities
- The poor environment and connectivity for walking, wheeling and cycling.
- Limited crossing opportunities.
- Dated bus infrastructure and waiting environments.
- Poor links between the railway station, bus interchange, town centre and Sutton Park.
- Barriers to regeneration and investment within the town centre.

What has been done so far and what happens next?
A SOC for the project was approved by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) in September 2024. This defined the core outcomes and objectives to be delivered by the scheme and identified the likely funding opportunities via the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and Transforming City Regions programmes which specifically fund sustainable transport improvements.

The next stage is to develop an Outline Business Case (OBC) and preliminary design which forms the focus of this public consultation exercise. The outcome of this consultation will help to shape the finalised preliminary design taken forward in the business case with submission to WMCA in March 2027. A Full Business Case (FBC) would follow including the finalised details of scheme delivery, programme, budget and detailed design ahead of the future site delivery phases.

What happens if we do nothing?
The SOC concludes that existing issues would remain and potentially worsen due to increasing traffic levels. Without investment in sustainable transport infrastructure, it would be more difficult to achieve the regeneration and accessibility ambitions set out in the Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the emerging Birmingham Local Plan and Birmingham Transport Plan (BTP).

How does this align with policy?
The scheme directly supports:

- Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Masterplan SPD
- The emerging Birmingham Local Plan
- Birmingham Transport Plan
- Birmingham Road Harm Reduction Strategy
- City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS)
- West Midlands Movement for Growth Strategy
- West Midlands Road Safety Strategy
- West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan

These policies support improved public transport, safer and more connected environments for walking, wheeling and cycling, sustainable growth and town centre regeneration.

Why improve walking and cycling infrastructure?
The Sutton Town Council Masterplan SPD and BTP identify improving active travel connections as a key priority for Sutton Coldfield town centre. The ~~Strategic Outline Case (~~SOC~~)~~ highlights opportunities to make it easier, safer and more enjoyable for people to walk, wheel and cycle between destinations. These proposals aim to create a more welcoming, accessible and inclusive town centre environment, helping people of all ages and abilities move around comfortably, whichever mode of transport they choose.

Why is the ring road being changed?
The Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Masterplan SPD identifies improving connections across the town centre as a key objective. The current ring road can make movement between destinations more challenging, particularly for people walking, wheeling or cycling. The proposals seek to create a more connected town centre by improving crossing opportunities, enhancing accessibility and making it easier, safer and more convenient for everyone to reach shops, services, public spaces and other local destinations.

Why improve bus facilities?
Lower Parade is an important place for people changing between bus services, with around 25,000 passengers boarding buses there each week. However, the facilities are outdated, there is limited information available for passengers, and the waiting areas are not very comfortable. This project aims to improve facilities for passengers, make the area more accessible, and create a better overall experience for people using the bus services.

Why are improvements proposed at the wider junctions?
The improvements at the following junctions form part of a wider network approach to improving connectivity:

- Coleshill Road / Riland Road
- Victoria Road / Coleshill Street
- Lichfield Road / Tamworth Road
- Monmouth Drive / Somerville Road

The SOC identifies poor walking, wheeling and cycling connectivity across the wider network linking into the town centre. These junctions are proposed for traffic light upgrades to improve crossing opportunities and make it easier for traffic lights to work efficiently for everyone walking, wheeling, cycling and driving. They will also help connect surrounding neighbourhoods with the town centre and wider active travel network. The junctions are intended to support the overall scheme objectives rather than address isolated issues at individual junctions.

Why have these specific junctions been chosen?
The SOC includes these junctions as part of the wider package of network improvements designed to improve walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport connectivity.

They are key routes into the town centre and support the scheme objectives of making it easier for people to travel around the area, improving access to public transport and creating a more connected active travel network.

Have traffic impacts been assessed?
Yes, transport modelling and network assessment work has been undertaken as part of the scheme development, and will continue to be refined through future design stages and business case development. The purpose is to understand the impact of the proposals on the highway network and to refine the designs to mitigate its impact.

It is predicted that implementation of the proposed changes to reduce the dominance of the ring road principally around Park Road, Station Street and Mill Street junctions may result in more traffic using alternative nearby routes. These effects have been evaluated and incorporated into the scheme proposals, including a new suite of integrated traffic light junctions to improve traffic flow and efficiency. This will help to ensure the network operates effectively whilst delivering the core scheme objectives.

Will traffic still be able to move through the town centre?
Yes. The scheme is intended to maintain access to and through the town centre whilst improving conditions for walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. Traffic impacts have been considered through the scheme development process and through transport modelling.

Won't reducing road space increase congestion?
Traffic impacts have been carefully assessed through modelling and technical analysis. The current street environment is primarily designed to maximise the movement of motor vehicles, which can make walking, wheeling, cycling and accessing public transport far less convenient, safe and attractive.

The proposals seek to create a more balanced local transport network that supports greater travel choice, improves accessibility for all users and makes it easier for people to move around the town centre in different ways. This approach aligns with wider policy objectives to enhance public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling connections, while maintaining access to the town centre for those who need to travel by car.

The scheme seeks to balance the needs of all users rather than focus solely on vehicle capacity. The roads surrounding the town centre have limited space, with one lane in each direction. Providing extra lanes on the ring road will have limited benefit to the operation of the network and traffic flow whilst making it much harder and more dangerous for people to reach the town centre by walking, wheeling, cycling or public transport.

Are you trying to stop people driving?
No. Essential access to the town centre by car is being retained and the scheme recognises that some people must travel by car and will continue to do so.

The cost of owning and operating a vehicle is increasing, placing additional pressure on many households. By improving options for walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, the Council aims to provide people with greater choice in how they travel, helping them select the most convenient and cost-effective option for their needs. The objective is to ensure that residents, businesses and visitors have a wider range of attractive travel choices available to them.

Why are you encouraging modal shift?
National, regional and local transport policies support greater use of public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling where suitable alternatives exist. One of the scheme's objectives is to reduce dependency on a single mode of transport and provide people with greater choice in how they travel.

As the costs of owning and operating a vehicle continue to rise, improving infrastructure and connectivity can help ensure that residents, workers and visitors have a wider range of convenient and affordable travel options available to them. The aim is not to prevent people from driving, but to create a transport network that offers greater flexibility, supports individual travel choices and makes it easier for people to choose the option that best meets their needs.

What do you mean by behavioural change?
Travel choices can change when better alternatives are available. The scheme seeks to improve walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport facilities so that people have realistic alternatives available to them. This approach is consistent with the BTP and wider regional transport policy objectives.

Why are you improving connections with Sutton Park?
The SOC identifies improving links between Sutton Park, the railway station, bus interchange and town centre as a key objective. Sutton Park is one of Sutton Coldfield's most significant destinations and improving access between these locations supports wider connectivity objectives.

Will this scheme be impacted by the Langley Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE)?
Langley SUE is referenced in the SOC as part of the wider growth context for Sutton Coldfield. However, Sutton Gateway is not being promoted because of Langley. The need for the scheme is based on existing town centre issues, including severance, connectivity, public transport infrastructure and regeneration objectives identified in the Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Masterplan and Birmingham Transport Plan.

Is the Royal Sutton Coldfield Gateway scheme dependent on the Langley SUE?
No. The scheme has been developed independently of Langley SUE, through different funding streams, and is intended to address existing transport and connectivity issues within Sutton Coldfield town centre. Langley is referenced only as part of the wider planning and growth context for the area.

Why not wait for redevelopment first?
The SOC states that engagement has already taken place with Gracechurch developers and that the scheme has been developed to complement future redevelopment of other sites including the Red Rose Centre. Opportunities for integration will continue to be considered as the project develops.

Will the scheme prevent future redevelopment opportunities?
No. In fact, highly accessible and well-connected town centres are often among the most attractive locations for investment and regeneration. The scheme is designed to improve connectivity, accessibility and the overall quality of the public realm, helping to create the conditions that developers and investors typically look for when considering future opportunities. SOC references engagement with developers and recognises opportunities to integrate future redevelopment proposals with wider improvements to the town centre. By creating a more accessible and welcoming environment, the scheme is expected to support and stimulate future investment interest rather than constrain it.

Why was Sutton Coldfield selected for this investment?
Sutton Coldfield is identified within adopted local and regional planning and transport policy as a strategic centre with an important role in supporting economic activity, public transport, regeneration and future growth.

Why not spend the money elsewhere?
The identified funding is principally provided by WMCA's City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) and future Transforming City Regions (TCR) programmes, which are specifically intended to fund sustainable transport improvements. Sutton Gateway was developed to meet the objectives of the programmes and adopted transport policy.

Is the funding already secured?
Only the funding to develop the OBC. The required funding allocation to develop the Full Business Case and future scheme delivery is dependent on future approval. The SOC states that CRSTS / TCR funding has been identified for the scheme and is subject to the required internal BCC and external WMCA business case approvals and assurance processes.

Why are we consulting if the scheme is already being developed?
Consultation forms an important part of the design and business case process. Feedback helps inform future design development and provides evidence to support the OBC and future decision-making.

Has a final decision already been made?
No. The scheme will continue to be refined through the OBC, future design stages, additional assessment and consultation. Feedback received through consultation will help inform the next stages of development.

How do we know the scheme will work?
The scheme has been developed using baseline evidence, policy objectives, transport surveys, modelling and Department for Transport and WMCA business case methodologies. Additional modelling and review will continue as the scheme progresses. Key outcomes and outputs have been identified in the SOC and agreed with WMCA to measure performance of the scheme. A full monitoring and evaluation plan will ensure these aspirations are delivered in accordance with the funding requirements.

Links to supporting information / policy:

Birmingham Transport Plan:
https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50348/transport_plan_and_policies/2032/birmingham_transport_plan

Sutton Gateway Strategic Outline Case:
https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/29836/sutton_gateway_-_strategic_outline_case

Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council Sutton Gateway Webpage:
https://suttoncoldfieldtowncouncil.gov.uk/sutton-gateway-scheme/

Sutton Coldfield Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD):
https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/19613/sutton_coldfield_town_centre_masterplan_supplementary_planning_document_spd

Emerging Birmingham Local Plan:
https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20008/planning_and_development/2477/new_local_plan_for_birmingham

Birmingham Road Harm Reduction Strategy:
https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50348/transport_plan_and_policies/3048/road_harm_reduction_strategy_and_action_plan

West Midlands Movement for Growth Strategy:
https://www.tfwm.org.uk/media/3ukj3yw0/movement-for-growth.pdf

West Midlands Road Safety Strategy:
https://www.tfwm.org.uk/media/rmyd1vzf/refreshed-regional-road-safety-strategy-2023-2030.pdf

West Midlands Bus Service Improvement Plan:
https://www.tfwm.org.uk/media/0g1johwp/bsip-2024-v2-3.pdf

Transport for City Regions Funding Allocation:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-for-city-regions-funding-allocations