



Mersey Gateway Project

Consultation on possible modifications

The Mersey Gateway Project is a major scheme to build a new six-lane toll bridge over the Mersey between Runcorn and Widnes.

It will also bring major highway improvements, employment, inward investment and regeneration opportunities to the area.

The project was approved in the Government's spending review (CSR) last year and received full planning approval in December 2010.

Our discussions with Government, local residents, councillors and others have identified ways that could improve value for money and better meet the concerns of residents along the Central Expressway. Although the changes

identified are relatively small, our estimates show that this amended approach could reduce the cost of the scheme by at least £30 million.

To deliver the changes identified would require minor amendments to the existing planning approvals but before any planning applications are submitted we are keen to hear your views.

We would like you to look at the amended plans summarised here and come along to one of our public exhibitions over the next few weeks so you can give your views.

Possible modifications

This consultation and the modified plans include minor changes to the infrastructure of the new bridge and to the proposed access roads at a number of locations in Widnes and Runcorn.

These modifications will allow a more flexible approach to the design for the specialist contractors to improve the construction process and maximise value for money. This map shows where these modifications would alter the detail along the route.



Open Road Tolling

The Mersey Gateway Project team wishes to use an Open Road Tolling (ORT) system, which would mean using cameras and modern technology to record vehicle details for the collection of tolls for crossing both the new bridge and the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

This would mean that vehicles would still be charged for crossing the river, but there would be no toll booths or barriers along the route and the traffic would be more free flowing.



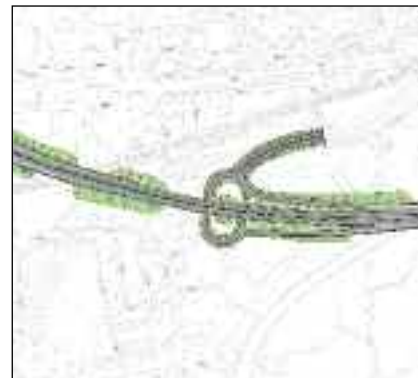
1. Physical removal of toll plazas

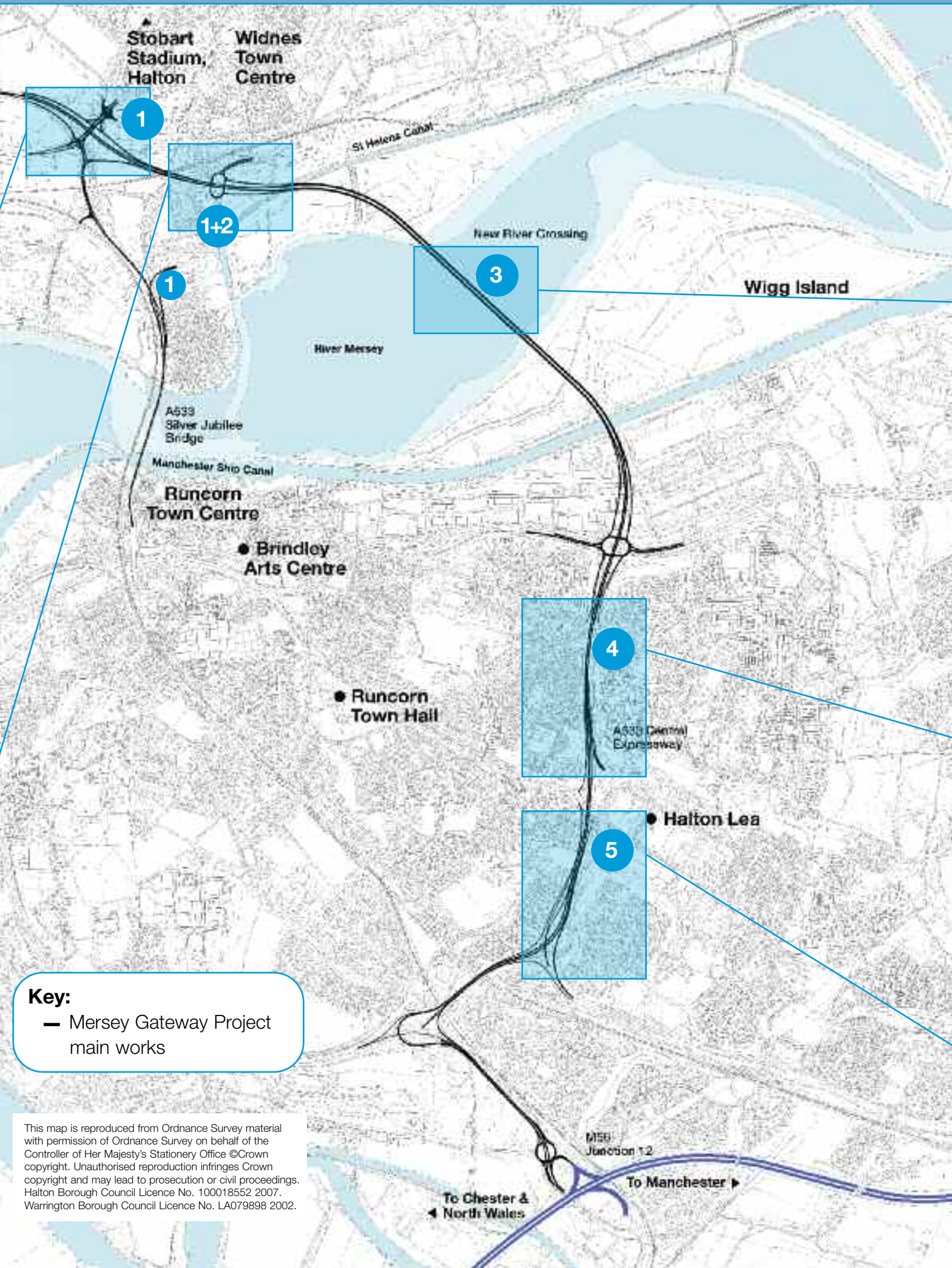
Under the plans for Open Road Tolling there would be no need to build toll plazas at four different locations in Widnes, which allows us to plan a simpler and quicker route through the town.

2. Widnes Loops / Victoria Road

Without the need for toll plazas a conventional roundabout could be built to the north of the new bridge to allow traffic travelling to or from the A557 Widnes Eastern Bypass to move to or from the new bridge. This roundabout would replace the previously proposed Widnes Loops.

There could also be modifications to the bridge structures between the Garston to Timperley Rail Freight Line and Widnes Loops, including the structure that crosses over Victoria Road, which could be at a lower height than previously proposed. This could make some of the structures in this area more suited to being supported on an embankment rather than the open structures previously proposed.





Key:

- Mersey Gateway Project main works

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3. The new bridge

The new bridge would still follow the same route across the river.

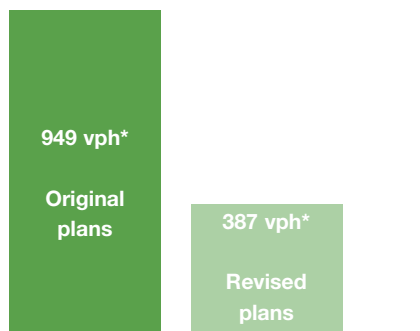
However, the proposed modifications will permit more flexibility in the design allowing specialist contractors who will build the bridge the opportunity to improve the construction process and maximise value for money.

The areas that may be modified are:

- 1) the form and construction of the bridge deck,
- 2) the spacing and form of the bridge supports and the geometry of the cables that support sections of the bridge deck, and
- 3) the selection of materials used to construct the bridge, specifically the use of steel and concrete for the towers and bridge decks.

The council is still committed to accommodating a river crossing for light rail should a route be promoted in the future. By modifying our planning permissions, it would mean that any future light rail services that might be developed could be carried across the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) instead of the new bridge.

Results from our research into this option show that it would be a feasible alternative. Using SJB for public transport, including possible future light rail services, would also be more compatible with the council's sustainable transport and regeneration plans.



Traffic levels on slip road next to Warrington Road

*vehicles per hour – forecast morning peak time traffic flows for the opening year.

4. Central Expressway slip roads

We have listened to the concerns of local residents and councillors and adjusted the plans to reduce traffic levels along the slip roads at either side of Halton Brow.

The proposed changes to the plans would mean:

- a reduction of up to 60% in projected peak time traffic levels using the slip roads at either side of Halton Brow alongside Warrington Road,
- there is no longer any need to adjust Calvers, and
- there would be improved access for traffic between the Central Expressway and Halton Lea to/from the north.



5. Busway bridge

The existing Busway bridge over the Central Expressway, which was previously due to be replaced to accommodate the realigned Central Expressway, would be retained.



Exhibitions to show possible modifications

We are holding two exhibitions in October to show where the proposed changes to the plans would take place. There will be one exhibition in Runcorn and one in Widnes.

If you would like to find out more about these proposed changes or give your views please come along to any one of the exhibitions and speak to a member of our team.



**Runcorn Town Hall,
Chambers**

**Tuesday
18 October 2011
12.00pm to 7.00pm**



**Stobart Stadium,
Widnes
Box 8**

**Wednesday
19 October 2011
12.00pm to 7.00pm**



Giving your views

The proposed new applications relate specifically to the modifications outlined here and presented in more detail at our exhibitions and online at www.merseygateway.co.uk

The applications do not propose any major changes to the fundamentals of the project or the benefits it will bring.

However, all of the modifications proposed are aimed at improving the plans and maximising value for money by saving up to £30 million on the cost of the project.

We are welcoming comments from members of the local community on the details of the amended plans before they are submitted.

You can do this:

in person – by coming along to one of our exhibitions and completing a comments form

by post – send your views to
Halton Borough Council
FREEPOST W1 P4
Widnes
WA8 7BR

online – look at the detailed plans and completing a consultation form at www.merseygateway.co.uk

by email – send your views to mersey.gateway@halton.gov.uk

Please provide your comments and feedback to this consultation no later than Friday 28th October.

The Mersey Gateway Project team intends to submit planning applications before the end of 2011.

The proposals will then be considered by Halton Borough Council, and it will undertake a further consultation exercise as part of its work to determine the plans.

If any such applications are not progressed, then the approved scheme that was discussed at the public inquiry in 2009 would be taken forward to construction.

If you would like to ask more questions about any aspect of this consultation you can call the Mersey Gateway Project team direct on **0151 495 4091** or email us at mersey.gateway@halton.gov.uk