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Media Release

For Immediate Release

Work to begin on new M4 underpass

Motorists will notice major changes to the M4 motorway near Swindon from next week when a huge engineering project moves up a gear.

From Monday (18 May) the latest phase of work will begin on the Wichelstowe Southern Access (WSA), which will create a new route into one of Swindon's newest housing developments.

The scheme, which is being delivered by Alun Griffiths Ltd on behalf of Swindon Borough Council, will see a new underpass built below the M4 motorway and will help to support 4,500 new homes, a new district centre and around 2,000 new jobs by unlocking 12.5 hectares of employment land.

In order to facilitate the underpass, both carriageways of the motorway will be moved onto a newly-created embankment over the coming weeks.

The motorway will be closed overnight from Monday (18 May) to Wednesday (20 May) to allow the necessary traffic management to be put in place. Next Tuesday (19 May), the speed cameras previously installed on the M4 will be switched on, where a 50mph speed limit will be in operation.

The restrictions will be in place for a two-kilometre section of the motorway but all lanes, which will be narrowed, will remain open throughout. The speed restrictions will remain in place for approximately 10 months.

As well as providing the fourth access to the Wichelstowe development, the WSA will form part of the eventual connection, through Wichelstowe, from Hay Lane and Wharf Road to Redposts Drive to the north and Croft Road to the east. It will connect to both Hay Lane and Wharf Road via a new roundabout on the south side of the M4.

There is expected to be very little impact on traffic along Hay Lane and Wharf Road, south of the M4, for most of the construction period as the majority of work will happen off the local highway network.

The Department for Transport (DfT) allocated £22.9m in funding towards the scheme via Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership, with Swindon Borough Council contributing an additional £3m.

Councillor Gary Sumner, Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, said: "The building of the Wichelstowe Southern Access will unlock thousands of new homes and employment land, bringing with it a significant number of jobs to the town.

“These carefully considered plans for the project mean that other than speed restrictions for a small stretch of the M4, there will be minimal impact on residents during the construction.

“Our contractor has been working hard over the last few months to create the new embankment being careful to observe the social distancing guidance from the Government.

“This phase of the work will be a real feat of engineering, moving both carriageways of the motorway to allow us to create the new underpass. The fact the motorway will remain open while this work is taking place is also a real benefit to motorists.”

Regular updates on the scheme will be available via the Council's highways news e-newsletter at: www.swindon.gov.uk/newsletter. Further details about the Wichelstowe Southern Access scheme are available on the Council's website: www.swindon.gov.uk/wsa

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For more information, contact Amy Chapman – achapman@swindon.gov.uk 07929 012208.



