

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF M1 J28



Interviews with local firms and stakeholders at M1 Junction 28

Midlands Connect has undertaken a series of in-depth interviews with local firms and stakeholders surrounding the at-capacity Junction 28 on the M1.

The junction is a critical logistics and employment hub for Derbyshire, and the wider region yet has become famous for its daily queues.

Midlands Connect submitted a plan to government for funding in 2022, however a year on, local firms are telling us that the junction is holding back business, damaging the environment, risking safety, making it harder to recruit and throttling the region's economic growth.

Over the next few pages, we provide a summary of what firms and stakeholders have been telling us.

What did local firms and stakeholders say?

On the junction's impact on business operations, as well as the wider community

Firms feel they are positioned strategically on the M1, in a location that should provide easy access to the rest of the country. However, the junction is impacting business operations, inhibiting delivery of services and ultimately risking client confidence.

A medical supplier explained that they can receive urgent requests for vital medication and M1 J28 makes it difficult to comply with time-critical deliveries.

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The daily issues we encounter with Junction 28, being two minutes away, introduces challenges that could potentially affect the delivery of these medical products.

(Jamie Dluzewski, Alliance Healthcare)

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The junction has a tremendous impact on our business. From drivers' hours, TAC code and fuel usage...as a transport company, it is very difficult to mitigate because the M1 is our main access to the rest of the country.

(Daniel Varnam, XPO)

On how the traffic is costing businesses and the local economy money

All road users can face congestion, and planning journeys to avoid peak times is often necessary in business planning. However, local firms argue that delays at J28 are costing them daily, but also potentially preventing investment in the region also.

This sentiment reflects research undertaken by Midlands Connect, highlighting that congestion at peak times costs the local economy £419.72 per hour per day - a total of over £1.6 million per year.

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We do calculations on average spend per visitor (£30/£31), every one car that doesn't reach us, is one less customer to spend at the centre.

(Paul Sutton, McArthurGlen)

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All the traffic builds up towards the roundabout. We double man our routes coming down the route because of the delays. Some of our drivers sit upwards of an hour in traffic.

**(Jamie Dluzewski,
Alliance Healthcare)**

On lack of safety for all users

Local firms raised concern that the junction is not just inconvenient but unsafe. Firms referenced several recorded instances of serious incidents due to queues and congestion, the most alarming of which being the death of an employee as they cycled to work near the junction.

The unsafe conditions for cyclists and pedestrians further exacerbate the traffic problems. While local businesses have tried to encourage active travel initiatives, many employees feel this is a critically unsafe option.

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There is an increasing health and safety risk with the way the junction operates at the moment. We must acknowledge the alarming rise in serious incidents and address the flaw immediately to allow opportunities for a safer route, not just for businesses but for those living in nearby communities.

(Jamie Dluzewski, Alliance Healthcare)

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We have tried to encourage other modes of transport to work, however you wouldn't feel safe unless in a car.

(Cllr Renwick, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Environment, Derbyshire County Council)

On concerns the junction is damaging for the environment and local health

Research conducted by Midlands Connect in April 2023 demonstrated that due to congestion and slow-moving but high-volume traffic flows, Junction 28 contributes largely to local poor air quality.

Firms shared similar concerns, acknowledging that these issues are frustratingly exacerbated by their own fleet, causing unnecessary additional air pollution.

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The stationary traffic caused by the junction is nothing short of an environmental disaster for local people. We have looked at all sorts of interventions we could undertake to improve air quality, however we need the government's support.

(Jamie Dluzewski, Alliance Healthcare)

On a sentiment that firms have spent money to mitigate issues, and feel it is time for government to do the same

Local firms and stakeholders recognise the importance of this location, strategically positioned on the M1, in a location that should provide easy access to the rest of the country. The location should attract investment and drive economic growth in Derbyshire and the wider region.

Businesses and local stakeholders welcome the investment and local growth, but all parties acknowledge that with the junction already suffering from an excessive amount of traffic and congestion, further expansion is a challenge.

One firm suggested that National Highways has even objected to planning applications for new businesses or business expansion locally, noting that the junction is at capacity. This prevents the local economy from reaching its potential, diverting local investment and the jobs that could come with it.

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A lot of work was done in 2019 to change the whole infrastructure of our internal road network to improve customer experience. However, the junction remains a barriers in travelling to our centre.

(Paul Sutton, McArthurGlen)

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As a business, we have reduced our fleet and are constantly looking not just at cost efficiency but how to increase road users' confidence by keeping the roads as safe as possible. However, vehicles still get caught up in lengthy queues. We need the government's support, there is nothing that Co-op can do in the meantime.

(Gary Roberts, Co-op)

In conclusion...

Discussions with local firms and stakeholders have revealed concerns that go beyond business operations, but also regarding safety, environmental impact and a wider constraint of the region's growth.

Firms and local stakeholders have revealed extensive work undertaken, at significant cost, to mitigate impacts of the junction. They believe there is little more they can do to help the matter, and the next step forward needs to be taken by government.

Those we spoke to believe that the current junction arrangements at M1 J28 are costing the East Midlands financially, environmentally and socially.

Local firms and stakeholders feel investment at M1 J28 would address these issues, widening access to skilled labour and new markets, improving safety, reducing carbon emissions and ultimately, unlocking regional growth.

Local businesses and stakeholders are urging the government to recognise the urgency of this much needed investment.

They feel a commitment to support the junction improvements as part of the next round of road infrastructure funding will unlock the potential of the area, and in doing so, improve and secure the futures of residents and businesses alike.