

Would building a new road across the River Soar induce traffic and how much?

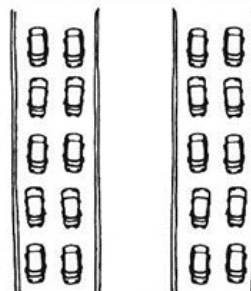
New roads almost always cause more traffic. How much more traffic and how fast it is generated varies enormously.

- In 1994 the Standing Advisory Committee to the Department of Transport¹ said “Some schemes, such as a new river crossing in the heart of a congested urban area with high capacity approaches could induce significant amounts of extra traffic.” (p.177). Given the links to the M1 and the M69 at Fosse Park there are already high capacity roads approaching this new road – and the roads and housing developments planned in the Leicestershire and Leicester Strategic Growth Plan will increase this still further.

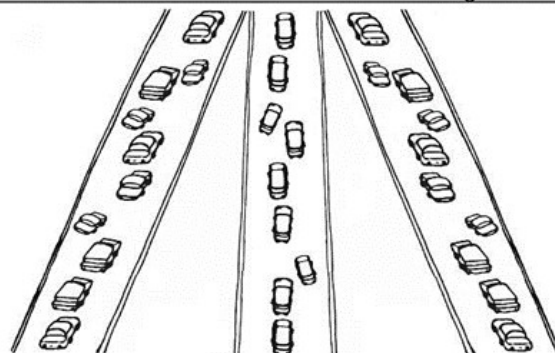
- “In urban areas where there are many alternative destinations, modes and activities, induced traffic may be an appreciable consequence of major road building schemes. Its extent, however, will be influenced by the availability of capacity on surrounding and downstream roads, and the effectiveness of any prevailing policies of traffic restraint.” (p.80, Department of Transport, 1994)

- The Impact of Road Projects in England² study, produced in 2017, drew on evidence of short-term impacts from over 80 road schemes, published by Highways England and long-term evidence from four road schemes that were completed 14-21 years ago. It found that new roads induced on average 7% more traffic in the short term(3- 7years) and 47% more traffic over 8-20 years. These were increases over-and-above background traffic growth.

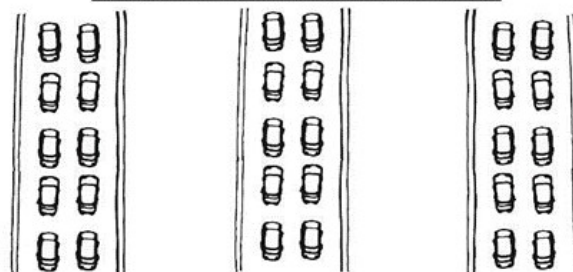
Current traffic levels on Upperton Rd and Middleton St



New road takes share of traffic and encourages car use



Future traffic levels on all three roads



“Where a road scheme was justified on the basis that it was needed to cater for current and future traffic ... it was common for the scheme to be followed by much development in car dependent locations, causing rapid traffic growth and congestion on both the road scheme and the preexisting road network.”
Impact of Roads Projects in England (p. 6)

These are averages. We might be lucky enough to be under rather than over them, but it’s also possible that in 10 years a new road across the River Soar could have induced over 50% more traffic than if the road hadn’t been built. This would mean as many cars on each of the three river crossings in the south of the city (including the proposed scheme across Aylestone Meadows) as there currently are on Middleton Street and Upperton Road alone.

There are solutions: car use can be managed instead of catered for. Public and active transport can be prioritised resulting in a happier, healthier and cleaner Leicester.