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## PRESS RELEASE

### CPRE WARN OF BIRMINGHAM WESTERN ORBITAL BY STEALTH

CPRE say statements that the Birmingham Western Orbital road proposals have been scrapped are thoroughly misleading and warn they will not be sleep-walked into watching the destruction of over thirty miles of Green Belt by a tactical change of name. (1)

Plans currently under consideration for Stourbridge and Wolverhampton Bypasses would pass through the same corridor as the Western Orbital and, together with a proposed Motorway Connection from the M54 to the Birmingham Northern Relief Road, would amount to a Western Orbital by stealth.

The bypasses could be dual three lane highways and because they would be built separately might reopen sensitive questions of routing around Green Belt villages like Wombourne, Codsall, Blakedown and Hagley.

Peter Sturgeon of CPRE says: ***“The Western Orbital has not gone away. It’s been renamed. It might be different. It might be marginally better in some ways but worse in others. Residents and environmentalists will not be fooled by a change of name.***

***The roads lobby is busy trying to return us to major new Green Belt Highway construction and motorway widening in the West Midlands, even though such road building would fail to solve congestion and lead to factories and houses in the countryside sucking the life out of the Black Country. West Midlands CPRE will not stay quiet while that is going on or allow new roads to be built by stealth in the region.<sup>2</sup>”***

CPRE praised the Government for deciding three years ago to jettison the Western Orbital from the roads programme. They say the arguments against it are just as strong as ever. They say it could become every bit as controversial as the BNRR with environmental campaigners and local people fighting all the way to resist proposals which could be every bit as destructive and misguided as the original scheme.

## **Notes for Editors**

*(1) The Western Orbital was in the Government's Road Programme from the 1980s, but was dropped in 1998, largely for environmental reasons after a long campaign of opposition. Terry Mulroy, director of the West Midlands Multi-Modal Study, which is considering transport issues across and around the West Midlands conurbation, is quoted in the Birmingham Post (April 28) as saying the Western Orbital had been scrapped. In fact the Study is considering two bypasses, which would have much the same effect.*

*(2) 'West Midlands First', for example, have a lobbying document 'Transport Priorities' which calls for a return of the Western Orbital, as well as M6 and M42 widenings.*

*CPRE is a national charity that helps people protect their local countryside where there is threat, to enhance it where there is opportunity, and to keep it beautiful, productive and enjoyable for everyone. Our Patron is Her Majesty The Queen. We have 55,000 members, a branch in every county, eight regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in Westminster. CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning. Our President is Prunella Scales.*

*CPRE West Midlands is one of eight CPRE regional groups in England. CPRE's West Midlands Region Group represents branches covering Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire.*

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