

Appendix 6.6

Communication Plan



Stafford Western Access Route

Communication & Engagement Plan

REVISION RECORD

REVISION	DATE	ORIGINATOR	DESCRIPTION
1.0	20/06/2014	D Sargeant	Draft
2.0	18/07/2014	D Sargeant	Final – working
3.0	17/10/2014	D Sargeant	General update
4.0	10/02/2015	D Sargeant	Update

INTRODUCTION

The Stafford Western Access Route is crucial to providing additional highway capacity to the west of Stafford and will enable the removal of through traffic from the town centre, creating improved conditions for bus services, pedestrians and cyclists while opening up further opportunities to provide complementary sustainable transport measures within and to the town centre. It will also help to accommodate future development traffic in Stafford and, in particular, it will improve the access arrangements to development sites in western Stafford.

In 2009 public consultation took place on a number of route options and the preferred option will see a single carriageway highway between Martin Drive and A34 Foregate Street / Greyfriars Place, to afford relief to A518 Chell Road, Tenterbanks, Victoria Road, Station Road and Newport Road.

SCHEME OBJECTIVES

The scheme objectives are as follows:

- To deliver a scheme to promote growth to the West of Stafford and minimise congestion in the town centre
- Support wider regeneration of the town
- Facilitate improved access between housing growth areas and the town centre

BACKGROUND

During December 2009 and January 2010 Staffordshire County Council carried out a consultation exercise to share with local residents and stakeholders the options for improving transport infrastructure in Stafford to help accommodate likely forecast traffic growth. Four possible road alignments to the West of Stafford were suggested and consultees were invited to express their views about the proposed alternative solutions. The outcome of the consultation process informed the decision regarding which option should be taken forward as the preferred route. In May 2010, Staffordshire County Council gave approval for the preferred Stafford Western Access Route which comprises sections A, B and C.

Staffordshire County Council has been fully engaged with the Borough Council in statutory consultations on The Plan for Stafford Borough (the Local Plan). The Planning Inspector concluded in June 2014 that the Borough Council met the legal requirements of the Duty to Co-operate in terms of maximising the effectiveness of the plan-making process and actively co-operating and engaging with the relevant bodies on an ongoing basis.

The Stafford Western Access Route was considered as part of the Borough Council's public consultation events in September and October 2011 on the Draft Publication version to seek views on the development strategy, key infrastructure, locations for strategic growth and revised core policy wording. Overall, transport was the focus of many of the 1,000 comments that were received and the key issue that was discussed with County Council staff by the 600 people attending exhibitions. The main transport comments received during the exhibitions included: congestion and the potential for conditions to deteriorate as new development comes on stream and the need for better public transport as well as cycle and pedestrian routes.

The Publication (pre-submission) version of the Local Plan was consulted on during January and February 2013, seeking representations on soundness and legal compliance. There were only three respondents out of 145 to this version of the Local Plan who objected to the Western Access Route.

Stafford Borough Council submitted The Plan for Stafford Borough to the Secretary of State on 20th August 2013 in accordance with Regulation 22 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. As part of the Independent Examination of the Plan, hearing sessions took place between 23rd October 2013 and 1st November 2013. The County Council presented evidence on the Western Access Route at hearings on the Development Strategy, West of Stafford and Infrastructure.

The Inspector issued his Final Report on 11th June 2014. The Inspector's Report concludes that The Plan for Stafford Borough is legally compliant and provides an appropriate basis to guide future development across the Stafford Borough area until 2031, subject to a number of modifications being made to the Local Plan. These modifications have been made and the Local Plan was adopted on 19th June 2014.

APPROACH

In developing the detailed design of the scheme, the county council organised a public information event which was held on 31 October 1 November 2014. The purpose of this event was to update local residents, businesses and other interested parties on the scheme. Consultation and engagement with local communities and stakeholders will continue throughout the design development and implementation stages of project delivery.

AIM OF THE INFORMATION EVENT

The primary aim of the October/November 2014 event was to refresh stakeholders on the details of Stafford Western Access Route project while evaluating feedback provided. Having consulted on the route options in 2009, this event was an opportunity to inform and share details of the project with local residents and stakeholders. In addition, the event was an opportunity for the project team to capture views on:

- Environmental landscaping and community areas
- Overall layout of the Stafford Western Access Route
- Construction approach
- Proposed environmental and social mitigation

A number of years have passed since the 2009 consultation event and more detail is now available for the chosen alignment.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

- To raise awareness and inform stakeholders, road users and residents about the Stafford Western Access Route
- Promote the public information event to ensure everyone who wants to have their say has the opportunity to do so
- To engage all stakeholders, road users and residents with an interest in the project

NEXT STEPS

The project team has identified all known local stakeholders with an interest in the Stafford Western Access Route; the team will continue to ensure they are kept informed and have the opportunity to give their views on elements of the project during design development.

Members of the project team have organised local events with the residents associations of Castlefields and Castletown as well as focused discussions with representatives of Doxey Parish Council. These local events/discussion provided opportunity for those who attended to provide feedback on the project; the project team will continue to engage with these groups as the project design develops.

Following stakeholder engagement towards the end of 2014, the project team will evaluate comments received for consideration and incorporate into the design where possible. Ongoing engagement and liaison with stakeholders will continue where appropriate but the project detail will be the subject of a further consultation as part of the planning process.