

## Appendix 6.7

Consultation Report, April 2010



# Stafford Western Access Improvements Consultation Report April 2010



**ATKINS**

 **Staffordshire  
County Council**

Front cover illustration shows Chell Road, Stafford

*the knot unites*



# STAFFORD WESTERN ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS CONSULTATION REPORT

JOB: Stafford Western Access Improvements			DOCUMENT REF: Consultation Report			
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STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTORATE						



## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) identifies Stafford as a Settlement of Significant Development. Staffordshire's County Town has also been recognised as a Growth Point by Central Government and is identified as an Impact Investment Location in Regional Funding Advice.

In order to deliver growth in the town, the highways element of the Stafford Western Access Improvements (SWAI) shown on Plan 1 will form a key element of the sustainable transport solution that is required to cater for transport demand in the period to 2026 and relieving town centre transport problems.

The public consultation process for the SWAI was based on a consideration of four major highway route options linking across the western quadrant of the town. A solely sustainable transport option had previously been subject to consultation with key stakeholders as part of the development of a Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) Full Business Case for Stafford in May 2009.

### **1.2 Purpose of Report**

This report:

- Outlines the highway route options under consideration for delivery of the highways element of the SWAI;
- Outlines the methods of consultation used to obtain the views of the public and key stakeholders;
- Considers the results of the consultation;
- Identifies a preferred option; and
- Discusses the next steps.

## **2.0 Description of Four Highway Route options**

Staffordshire County Council consulted on the following four route options (Plan 2);

### **2.1 Yellow route details (west to east):**

This option begins at the existing roundabout at the junction of Martin Drive, Redgate Drive and Kingsway. It then travels north-eastwards alongside the balancing pond before crossing over the West Coast Main Line (WCML) on a new bridge then through the Castletown residential area before joining Doxey Road at a new roundabout. The route then follows the existing Doxey Road to the roundabout at the entrance to Sainsburys. It then crosses the car parks in a north-easterly direction before swinging eastwards to cross over the River Sow via a new bridge. Finally the route passes to the north of the supermarket building, terminating in a new signalised junction with Chell Road.

Passing through Castletown, this option impacts upon local communities and requires property demolition

## **2.2 Blue route details (from west to east):**

The blue option begins at the existing roundabout formed at the junction of Martin Drive with Rose Hill at Castlefields. It then passes through the Doxey rail sidings (possibly requiring a new bridge), through the Saint Gobain site to Doxey Road before crossing over the WCML on a reconstructed bridge. From Timberfields Drive it follows the existing Doxey Road to the Sainsburys Roundabout, before traversing the car parks northward on a low viaduct. Finally it turns eastwards to cross the River Sow over a new bridge, and then on through Madford Retail Park, terminating in an improved traffic signal junction with A34 Foregate.

The eastern section of Doxey Road will be realigned to form a junction with the new road.

By following the alignment of the existing Doxey Road, adjacent properties in Castletown will experience a more heavily trafficked environment.

## **2.3 Red route detail (from west to east):**

Identical to the Blue route until it reaches Timberfields Drive, when it diverts to take a north-easterly route across the southern extremity of Doxey Marsh on a low viaduct above the River Sow flood plain. The red route then rejoins the blue route, crossing the River Sow on a new bridge through Madford Retail Park before joining A34 Foregate Street.

This route impacts most severely upon the SSSI

## **2.4 Green route detail (from west to east):**

The first part of this option is again identical to the blue route until Timberfields Drive when it diverts to follow a route north of Doxey Road, to a new roundabout a little to the north of the existing one on Doxey Road. The route then proceeds northwards, traversing the car parks on a low viaduct. Finally it turns eastwards to cross the River Sow on a new bridge, and then on through Madford Retail Park before terminating in an improved traffic signal junction with A34 Foregate Street.

It is noteworthy that in this option the eastern end of Doxey Road and the entrance to Sainsbury's car park would be realigned into the new roundabout facilitating a safer higher capacity arrangement and allowing the retention of the unused section of Doxey Road to function as a service road for frontage properties

This route option also impacts upon a small area of the existing in the vicinity of Doxey Road.



### **3.0 Methodology Adopted**

The importance of undertaking a comprehensive programme of consultation for the SWAI was recognised early on in the process. A number of key stakeholders and statutory consultees were identified including the following:

- Road Haulage Association;
- Bus Operators;
- Land Owners and tenants;
- Stafford Borough Council (the Local Planning Authority);
- Environmental groups;
- Emergency services;
- Freight Transport Association;
- Elected Members;
- Local businesses; and
- Network Rail.

The County Council was only required to consult the Highways Agency where the proposals would have a material impact on the National Highway Network. These proposals do not have a material impact and therefore the Highways Agency (HA) was not directly consulted, although the HA is represented on the Stafford Growth Point Transport Study Steering Group and has therefore been made aware of these proposals. The HA has also commented at the Regional Spatial Strategy Panel Review that it is supportive of the proposals and has no current concerns.

The public of course also play a key role in the consultation process and with this in mind approximately 1,250 individual letters and questionnaires were sent to Elected Members, key stakeholders, statutory consultees and members of the public at the end of November 2009, many of which were hand delivered to residences felt to be more directly affected by the proposals. A full page advertisement was also published in the local press inviting readers to complete the SWAI questionnaire.

The Department for Transport's best practice documentation, the Local Household Travel Survey (LTS) Toolkit, was used to inform the design of the SWAI questionnaire. The questionnaire was written with a focus on plain English and transparency and the format was felt to be objective and honest. It provides information on Stafford's status as a Growth Point, the potential for development to be focussed on the west of the town, the generation of additional traffic on the local highway network and the four route options. Respondents were asked to comment on whether they agree a new access route is required, their preferred route option and whether they have any additional comments regarding the proposals. Information gathered from the questionnaire also included the respondent's postcode, sex and age group. This would allow for later comparison with census data and expected results, and statistical analysis.

A convenience sampling method was adopted (as identified by the National Audit Office) to reflect the fact that completion of the SWAI questionnaire and engagement with the consultation process was voluntary. The amount of information gathered would therefore be dependent upon the number of responses received and be prone to volunteer bias. This method of sampling also meant that sample results could not be extrapolated to produce population results.

Copies of the SWAI questionnaire (appended) were made available to consultees between 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009 and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010.

In conjunction with the production and distribution of the questionnaire, a SWAI exhibition, open to the public, was held in the town centre (at Oddfellows Hall). This was advertised in the local Press, via Staffordshire County Council's internet pages, on-street and in Council buildings. This exhibition ran for two consecutive days on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009 and was staffed by County Council Officers.

The County Council's internet site incorporated specific web pages directly relating to the SWAI. The web pages provide information on what and when SWAI events are taking place, the estimated costs involved, the proposed route options, an on-line copy of the questionnaire, information on the environmental impacts of the proposals and forecasts relating to local traffic congestion. This information was available from 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009 throughout the consultation process.

#### **4.0 Results**

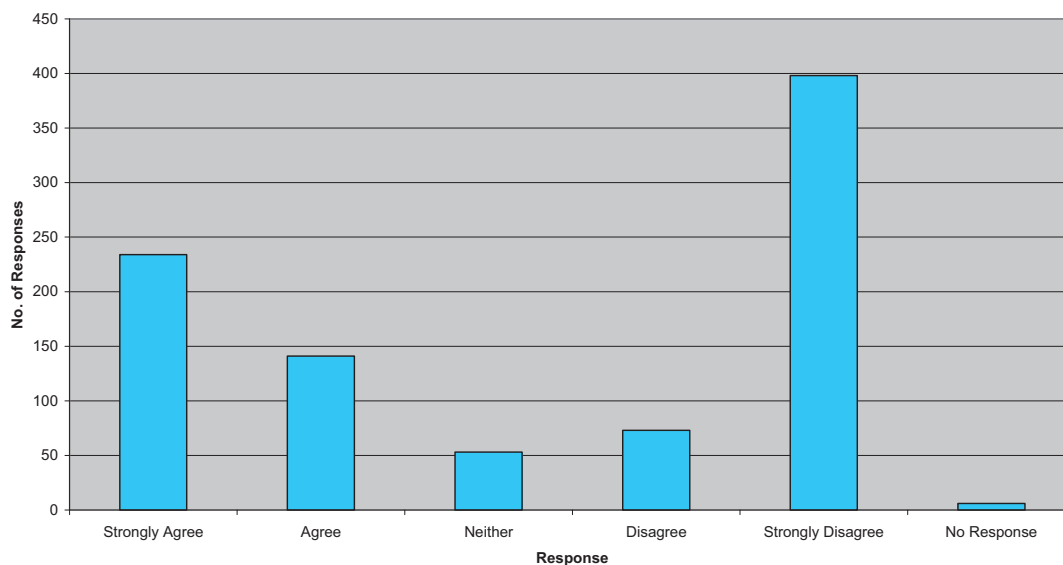
The consultation period ended on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010 and in excess of 900 responses were received relating to the SWAI proposals. The majority of these responses were received from local residents, with just four responses from statutory consultees (these were the Environment Agency, Network Rail, English Heritage and the Chamber of Commerce).

Graph 1 shows the pattern of responses received in relation to question 1 of the SWAI questionnaire concerning whether a new route is required serving the western quadrant of Stafford.

# Stafford Western Access Improvements

## Consultation Report

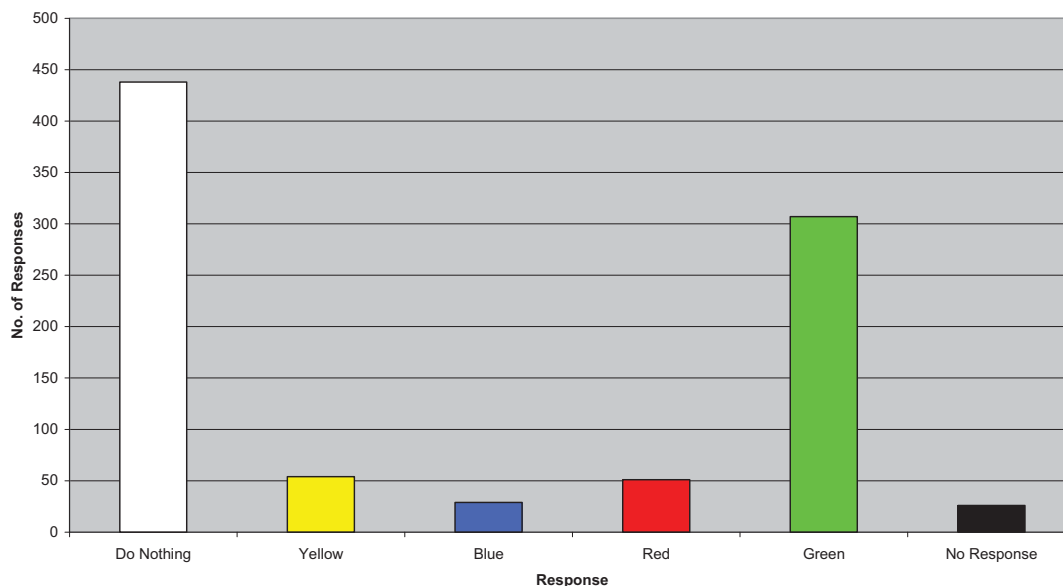
**Graph 1** Question 1 - How strongly do you agree or disagree that a new route is needed between A518 Newport Road and A34 Foregate Street?



The results indicate that the majority of respondents (52%) either disagree or strongly disagree that a new route is needed between A518 Newport Road and A34 Foregate Street.

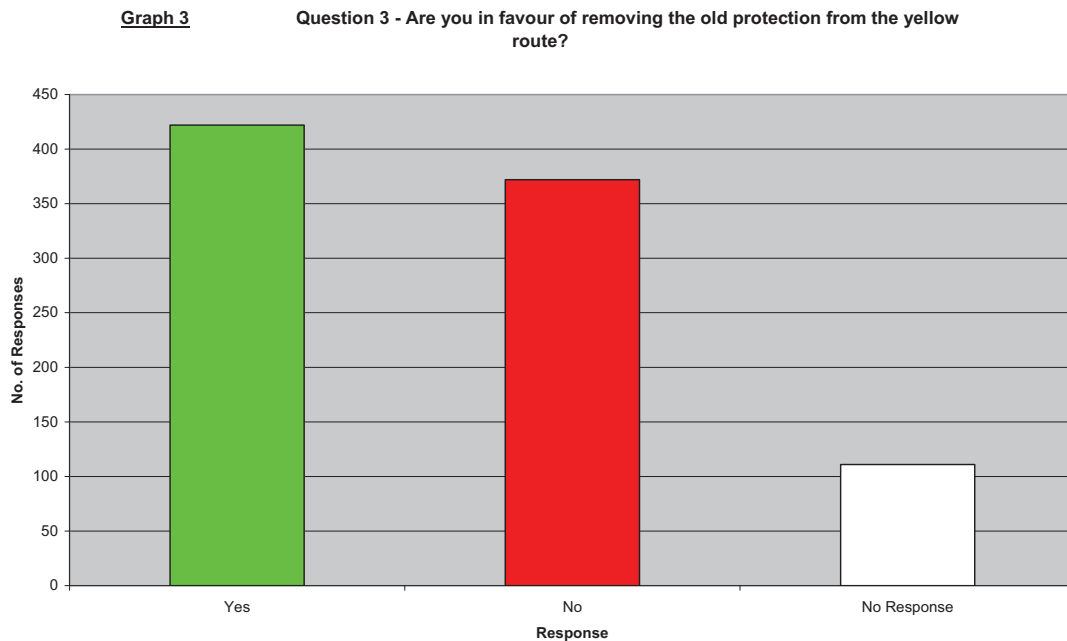
Graph 2 relates to question 2 concerning which route respondents would prefer to see implemented.

**Graph 2** Question 2 - Which is your preferred route?



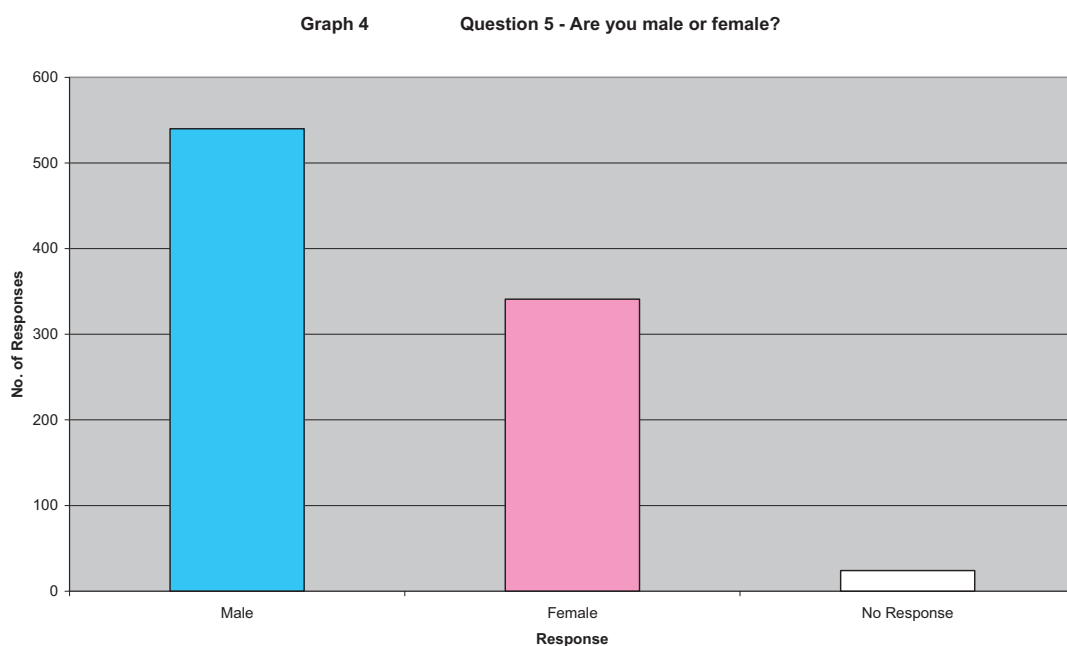
The results indicate that the majority of respondents (48%) felt that no new route should be implemented, although the green route option also received significant support (34%). Of the respondents who chose a preferred route option, the majority (70%) selected the green route.

Graph 3 relates to the yellow route option and whether the line of this route should remain protected. Historically the County Council has continued to protect three routes in Western Stafford for the construction of the Castlefields Link, the Chell Road Diversion and the Rowley Link. The Yellow Route is comprised of the old Castlefields Link and the Chell Road Diversion elements.



The results show that the slight majority of respondents feel that the line of the yellow route should no longer remain protected.

Graph 4 relates to question 5 of the SWAI questionnaire, are you male or female? The data shows that approximately 60% of respondents were male.



Graph 5 relates to the age range of respondents to the SWAI questionnaire. The results show that the majority of respondents fall within the 45-64 year old age bracket.

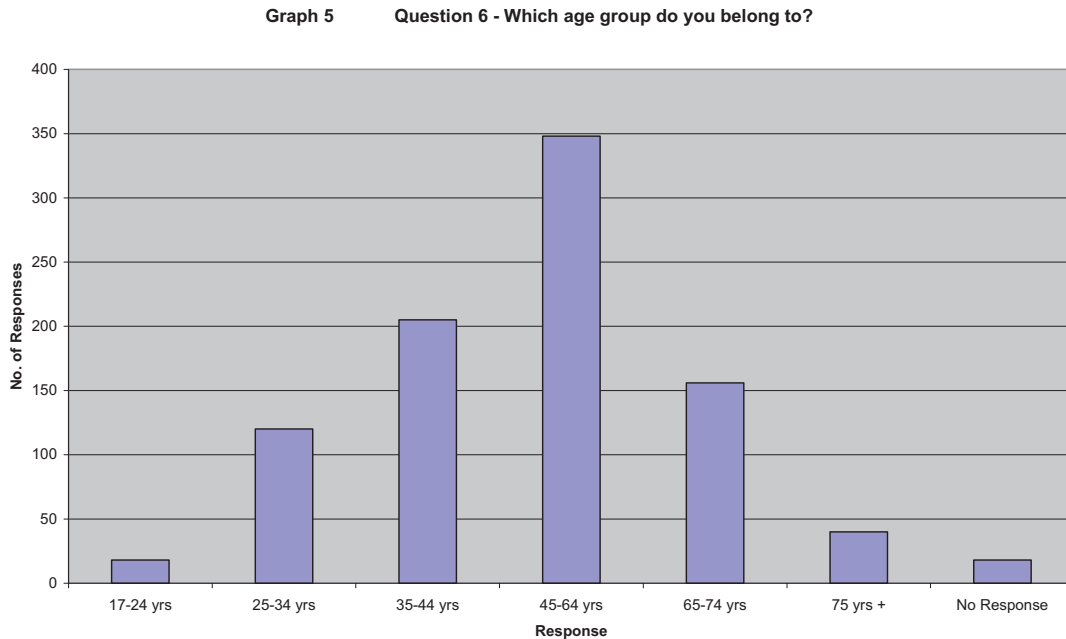


Table 1 shows the age distribution results observed compared to expected mid-year estimates of the age distribution of Staffordshire’s population.

**Table 1: Observed versus Expected Age Distribution (%)**

	17-24	25-34	35-44	45-64	64-75	75+
<b>Public Consultation (Observed)</b>	2	14	23	38	18	5
<b>Staffordshire (Expected)</b>	12	13	19	34	12	10

The comparison indicates that the 17-24 age group is significantly under-represented in the results, however the overall range of age groups and their associated level of response is felt to represent an accurate sample of Staffordshire’s population.

Respondents to the SWAI questionnaire were also asked to provide their full postcode to enable a geographical distribution of the respondents to be developed and analysed.

The results of this exercise are summarised on Plan 3.

As can be seen, 614 (68%) of the 903 respondents provided full postcode information and of these, 578 (94%) originated from addresses in Stafford Town and the nearby villages of Coppenhall and Derrington.

Consultation Report

Of the 578 'Stafford based responses' received, the vast majority 412 (approximately 71%) originated in Western Stafford (Castlefields and Doxey). A total of 98 (17%) of respondents were mapped to North East Stafford (Parkside, Cresswell, Tillington and Beaconside) and only 41% (7%) mapped to addresses in South Eastern Stafford (Weeping Cross, Baswich, Walton-on-the-Hill and Wildwood).

Table 2 shows that the 578 responses received for Stafford Town, Coppenhall and Derrington represented approximately a 2% return rate for the 30,969 'address points' identified within these areas. It is noteworthy that a much higher proportion of responses (4.8% of the 8658 residences) was achieved from Western Stafford. However in South East and North East Stafford the return rate, as a proportion of total address points was much lower (<1%).

Respondents preferring the 'do nothing' alternative were also mapped to give an overview of the areas of the town returning this view. As can be seen from Plan 4 the majority were residents of Castlefields/Doxey or Wildwood/Walton-on-the-Hill/Weeping Cross and Baswich Areas. Of the 48% returning this view it is noteworthy that 11% referred to the need for an eastern distributor road. The geographical distribution of these respondents is shown on Plan 5.

**Table 2: Percentage Response to SWAI Questionnaire from Specific Areas of Stafford**

Area	Full Postcodes	Address Points	% Response
<b>Stafford (inc. Coppenhall and Derrington)</b>	578	30969	1.87
<b>Stafford West</b>	412	8658	4.76
<b>Stafford East</b>	41	5287	0.78
<b>Stafford NE</b>	98	10623	0.92

The questionnaire, in accordance with Department for Transport guidance, asked respondents for any additional comments regarding the County Council's proposed routes. In excess of 1,100 comments were received via the consultation process falling into a number of different categories ranging from sustainable transport issues to concerns over flood risks.

**4.1 County Council Response to Consultation Comments**

The comments received during the SWAI consultation period raised numerous issues and these were grouped under a number of main themes.

Formal responses to these comments were then formulated. Responses received from statutory consultees were dealt with on an individual basis.

#### **4.1.1 Sustainable Transport and Integrated Transport Policy / Strategy**

Approximately 14.5% of comments received related to the need for an Integrated Transport Policy or Strategy and the importance of improving sustainable transport opportunities in the Town.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

A 10-year Integrated Transport Strategy for Stafford (Stafford Urban Area Transport Strategy SUATMS) was approved by the County Council's Executive on 11 September 2002 and is in line with the objectives of Staffordshire's Local Transport Plan. It focuses on the town centre, the surrounding central areas and the six main radial routes linking residential areas to the town centre. Around £4 million has already been spent on delivering schemes to help accommodate traffic from new developments, improving safety, encouraging modal shift from the car and improving accessibility to the town centre, including:

- Urban Traffic Control at signalled junctions and crossings
- Junction improvements
- Bus stop upgrades
- Walking and cycling routes
- Pedestrian crossings
- Railway station access improvements
- Variable Message Signs
- Town centre traffic management
- Publicity material that encourages sustainable travel

In the period to 2026, the Council's view is that the level of growth identified for Stafford can only be accommodated through a transport strategy which is focused on behavioural change accompanied by some additional strategic highway capacity.

Beyond 2011, an extended package of sustainable transport measures will be delivered to support the Stafford housing growth agenda. This will centre on 'making best use' of the existing highway network (including extending the Urban Traffic Management and Control System), providing improved bus services and reliability to make public transport more attractive, together with pedestrian priority and cycling schemes. There will be a stepped change in the promotion of sustainable travel choices through publicity and travel planning.

However, evidence suggests that high traffic volumes may act as a barrier to delivering a successful Integrated Transport Strategy in the future. Therefore additional strategic highway capacity provided by the proposed Stafford Western Access Improvements is seen as a key element of the sustainable transport solution. As well as helping to accommodate housing growth, it will enable improvements to be made to bus services and facilities, walking,

Consultation Report

cycling and environmental enhancements within the town centre and improved access to the railway station.

Moreover, the Stafford Western Access Improvements will increase accessibility by walking and cycling between the west of Stafford and the town centre. It will also provide the means by which high frequency bus services could directly access new development proposals, should Western Stafford emerge as a preferred location for new housing.

The overall objectives of the Stafford Western Access Improvements are to:

- Provide high quality transport infrastructure required to deliver development in Stafford as identified in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.
- Reduce congestion on routes into and around the town centre which act as a constraint on regeneration proposals.
- Facilitate improved access by sustainable modes between housing growth areas and the town centre.
- Facilitate improved access to public transport services.
- Improve safety and security for all road users.

#### **4.1.2 No Requirement for a New Road**

Approximately 8.5% of comments received stated that there is no requirement for a new road as suggested in the SWAI consultation.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The impact of traffic likely to be generated by the level of new development prescribed by the RSS has been modelled at the strategic level, for a future forecast year. These tests show that at peak times, demand to use key routes in the west of the town centre exceeds available capacity, resulting in severely congested conditions along A518 Chell Road - Broad Eye -Tenterbanks Victoria Road - Station Road and Newport Road.

Although the consultation results favoured the Do-Nothing option, the County Council does not consider this to be a realistic course of action. Stafford needs an integrated and sustainable transport strategy to deliver its Regional Spatial Strategy allocation and Growth Point ambitions. Evidence shows that without the provision of additional highway capacity, the forecast travel demand associated with new housing and employment leads to congestion which constrains the development of an effective and economically justifiable transport strategy. Western Stafford is the favoured location for providing additional capacity because of the likely distribution of new development emerging from the local planning authority's processes, and the practicalities of delivering an economically viable scheme which minimises adverse impacts.



### **4.1.3 Eastern Bypass**

Approximately 7% of the total comments received related to the perceived requirement for a bypass to the east of Stafford.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The County Council are committed to re-examining the case for transport improvements to the east of the town once the Borough Council has confirmed final locations for housing and employment development through their Local Development Framework. Although the County Council does not currently believe that an Eastern Bypass would satisfy the onerous requirements of the Department for Transport (DfT) to qualify for national funding, we have secured through the regional funding process (RFA) an indicative allocation for future transport investment in Stafford over the period 2018-2026. However, even if the Eastern Bypass satisfied DfT requirements, the County Council would not be in a position to bring forward any scheme in the period (2014 – 16) for which the funding identified for the Western Access Improvement is likely to be available.

### **4.1.4 Park and Ride**

Approximately 6.5% of the comments received via the SWAI consultation process related to a local demand for Park and Ride facilities.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Details of the long term transport strategy for Stafford for the period 2011 to 2026 will be published as part of an emerging Stafford Transport Study. This is being undertaken to support Stafford Borough Council's preferred land use option in their Local Development Framework (LDF) Draft Core Strategy which is expected to be published in 2010. Whilst at the moment, there are insufficient levels of traffic from outside Stafford to justify Park and Ride, the future need for Park and Ride is being kept under consideration and may form part of the longer term transport strategy.

### **4.1.5 Increased Congestion on A34 Foregate Street**

Approximately 5% of comments received raised concerns over the potential for increased traffic congestion on A34 Foregate Street.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

A34 Foregate Street and Greyfriars will undoubtedly be more heavily trafficked going forward and none of the options under consideration for the SWAI directly address this. However tests show that in the AM peak the forecast flows appear manageable with these specific links classified as 'approaching capacity' in 2031. However, in the PM Peak hour, Greyfriars is forecast to be 'part congested'.

Consultation Report

The County Council's view is that the level of growth identified for Stafford can only be accommodated through a transport strategy which is focussed on behavioural change accompanied by some additional strategic highway capacity in the West. The long term strategy for the town will therefore target the potential for some journeys to be re-timed or made by alternative modes, accompanied by more effective use of Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) techniques in order to manage peak hour demand in this corridor.

#### **4.1.6 Worse Areas of Congestion in the Town**

Approximately 5% of comments related to the perception that there are worse areas of local highway congestion around Stafford which should be prioritised for action.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The County Council acknowledges that currently at peak times and on Saturdays, there is localised congestion evident within the town centre and on several of the key radial routes. Congestion in these locations is being tackled where feasible through the implementation of interventions within specific radial route strategies that are already programmed.

The case for the SWAI scheme has been made in the context of the Stafford Growth Agenda (to 2026). Assumptions have been made regarding the locations where new major housing and employment will emerge (based upon the current evidence that identifies the most sustainable locations in transport terms) and the transport implications of these proposals have been assessed using a Strategic Traffic Model. These test results show that without additional highway capacity provided in the West of Stafford, key town centre roads will become more congested, impeding the provision of reliable public transport services and introducing severance. Moreover, a transport strategy focussed purely on walking, cycling and public transport priority has been shown to significantly disbenefit business users.

#### **4.1.7 Issues on A34 Lichfield Road**

Approximately 4.5% of comments received related to concerns over traffic issues focussed mainly on congestion on A34 Lichfield Road.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

A34 Lichfield Road (S) currently experiences peak hour traffic congestion between 0800 - 0900 hours and 1700 -1800 hours and at midday Saturday. The problems are most acute during the morning peak hour into town. This is largely attributed to high traffic demand at the key junctions of Lichfield Road / Queensway, Lichfield Road / Riverway, A34 Queensville / Silkmore Lane and A513 Weeping Cross / A34 Cannock Road.

Since 2002 we have been tackling these (and similar issues in other parts of Stafford) through the delivery of SUATMS (part of the Local Transport Plan

Consultation Report

which forms the basis of our short – mid term transport investment decisions). Essentially we are endeavouring to manage demand by encouraging travel outside the peaks and by modes other than the private car, whilst at the same time carrying out selective capacity improvements where resources permit and practical engineering solutions may be applied.

As an example, due to improvements undertaken at Queensville Roundabout and the new road and traffic signal layout introduced at A34 / Riverway, journey times have shortened and become more reliable from Weeping Cross in the AM peak.

The County Council is currently developing a Route Strategy for the whole A34 through Stafford with a focus alleviating local congestion, providing public transport priority and ensuring journey reliability. The Council is also committed to re-examining the case for highway and sustainable transport improvements between Baswich Lane and A518 Weston Road, once Stafford Borough Council has confirmed the final preferred locations for housing and employment through their Local Development Framework.

See also 3.1.3.

#### **4.1.8 Environmental Concerns**

Approximately 4.5% of comments related to environmental concerns connected to the SWAI.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The County Council has prepared environmental scoping opinions for each of the routes under consideration as part of the Options Assessment Report. This work was undertaken in accordance with DfT WebTAG guidance, using a combination of external consultants and environmental specialists within the employment of the Council.

Going forward, the preferred route option will be the subject of a formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), pursuant to a grant of planning permission. This will be undertaken by specifically commissioned environmental consultants, who will assess all of the environmental concerns and recommend a binding scheme of remediation.

#### **4.1.9 Traffic Signal Issues**

Approximately 4.5% of comments related to traffic signals in Stafford. Comments included a desire to remove some signal installations, the need to link signal controlled junctions and the requirement for improved Urban Traffic Management and Control systems.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Consultation Report

It has become necessary over the last ten years to signalise key junctions and co-ordinate their operation centrally in order to manage the town centre road network using an Urban Traffic Management and Control System (UTMC).

Beyond 2011, an extended package of sustainable transport measures will be delivered to support the Stafford housing growth agenda. This will centre on 'making best use' of the existing highway network (including extending the Urban Traffic Management and Control System, where appropriate), providing improved bus services and reliability to make public transport more attractive, together with pedestrian priority and cycling schemes. This approach is entirely consistent with that being taken by the Department for Transport summarised in the recent publication entitled 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' (DaSTS).

#### **4.1.10 New Bus Station**

Approximately 3.5% of comments received related to the desire for the provision of a new bus station in Stafford. These included suggestions that the centrally located Tipping Street re-development site could be utilised for a new bus facility.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Bus operators in Stafford have traditionally preferred to serve several key bus stops in the town rather than one centrally located facility. Even if this was not the case, the suggestion of using Tipping Street is no longer an option due to the imminent construction of new offices and retail developments.

Improvements to the Gaol Square bus interchange (including DDA compliance and enhanced passenger information) are provisionally programmed for 2010/11, resources permitting.

The introduction of new highway capacity in western Stafford will reduce severance and allow better interchange facilities to be provided in Chell Road and Station Road. New bus stops will also be provided at Madford Retail Park.

#### **4.1.11 Cost Issues**

Approximately 3% of comments received related to cost issues. In particular the perception that funding will be wasted by providing the SWAI and other traffic problems in Stafford should be targeted as well as improving sustainable transport provisions.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Local capacity improvement schemes, route strategies and sustainable transport schemes (that encourage walking, cycling and greater public transport use), have been progressively delivered in the town since 2002 as part of the Stafford Urban Area Transport Management Strategy (SUATMS)

Consultation Report

which runs to 2011. These have (and continue to be) funded by Local Transport Plan and Developer monies.

The County Council remains committed to following current guidance and continuing to pursue a sustainable integrated transport strategy for Stafford in the period to 2026, as resources permit through the Local Transport Plan and secured developer contributions. In this regard, providing additional capacity in Western Stafford will help by reducing the level of disbenefits referred to above and allowing complementary sustainable transport measures to be delivered.

The provisional allocation of £31M contained within the Regional Funding Allocation will only be available after the Business and Delivery Plan for the scheme passes the scrutiny of the Department for Transport (DfT). It therefore, potentially constitutes additional investment in Stafford. However, it is specifically ring-fenced for this scheme and is not transferable to any other proposal. The highways element of the SWAI has a Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) in excess of 2 which indicates good value for money.

#### **4.1.12 Planning Issues**

[Approximately 2.5% of comments received related purely to gaining access to possible development sites in the west of Stafford.](#)

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The Stafford Western Access Improvements are seen as a key element of the sustainable transport solution that will be required to deliver growth in Stafford. Whilst the proposed new routes will improve access to Castlefields and Burleyfields, they will also act to reduce traffic congestion within Stafford and provide opportunities to implement a significant package of sustainable transport improvements in the town.

#### **4.1.12 Issues on A449 Wolverhampton Road**

[Approximately 2.5% of comments received related to traffic issues on the A449 Wolverhampton Road, Stafford. Concerns raised included general congestion problems, congestion problems related to incidents on the M6 and the need to investigate congestion problems at the A34 Lichfield Road/ A449 Wolverhampton Road/ A518 Newport Road roundabout junction.](#)

Staffordshire County Council's response;

An A449 Route Strategy is currently under development to help alleviate localised congestion in these corridors. It is anticipated that this will be implemented using LTP funding together with developer monies (where appropriate).

The M6 forms part of the National Strategic Highway Network (SHN) which is under the jurisdiction of the Highways Agency (HA). In January 2009, the

Consultation Report

Secretary of State for Transport (Geoff Hoon) announced a Managed Motorway Strategy (MMS) and identified a number of Projects that would be progressed over the next few years. Whilst M6 Junction 10a-13 was announced as a scheme that would commence construction by 2015, the remainder from Junction 13 to 19, forms part of a longer-term strategy that is not expected to commence construction before 2015. The previous M6 Junction 11a to 19 widening scheme has now been abandoned.

The MMS employs new technologies to help maximise the capacity of the existing road, including where appropriate utilisation of the hard shoulder, to provide advanced warning of incidents, advise on alternative routes and meter the flow of traffic downstream of incidents and onto and off the SHN. The County Council is working with the HA to ensure that our incident management procedures are compatible and co-ordinated with the details of the MMS, where they relate to Stafford.

#### **4.1.13 Issues on A518 Weston Road**

[Approximately 1.5% of comments received related to traffic congestion issues on the A518 Weston Road, Stafford.](#)

Staffordshire County Council's response;

An A518 Route Strategy is under development to help alleviate localised congestion in this corridor. It is anticipated that this will be implemented using LTP funding together with developer monies (where appropriate).

The County Council are also committed to re-examining the case for transport improvements to the east of the town once the Borough Council has confirmed final locations for housing and employment development through their Local development Framework.

#### **4.1.14 Traffic Modelling Issues**

[Approximately 0.5% of comments received related to traffic modelling issues, including the need for a traffic simulation model and the availability of traffic flow information.](#)

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The County Council has constructed a SATURN traffic model to demonstrate and test the impact of the different route options. This model actively simulates the performance of the town's key junctions. During the development of the model, observed traffic flows and journey time data was used to validate the pattern of local traffic movements.

The flows derived from the SATURN model were made available at the public consultation exhibition, these included present and future traffic flow forecasts. Model output was also provided in response to individual requests for information. Flows from the traffic model have been used to assess the

Consultation Report

merits of route options and input to junction simulation programs to inform preliminary design work.

The traffic model will be further refined so that it can be used to prepare the major scheme business case for the preferred option emerging from the consultation exercise. Output from the updated model will also be used for detailed design work and to inform the various elements of the environmental assessment work.

#### **4.1.15 Parking Issues**

Approximately 1% of comments received related to parking issues. These mainly concerned the possible loss of long stay car parking spaces on the Doxey Road Car Park and the problems associated with existing on-street parking on Castlefields.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The issue of on-street parking on Castlefields will be investigated as part of the development of a preferred route option with consideration given to the implementation of Traffic Regulation Orders to manage the parking situation. The loss of any car parking capacity as part of implementing the SWAI will be assessed after selection of a preferred route.

#### **4.1.16 Noise, Pollution and Flooding Issues**

Approximately 1.5% of comments received related to noise, pollution and flooding issues linked to the construction of a new road.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The County Council will appoint Consultants to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the preferred route option which will identify any adversely affected properties, flood risks and any necessary mitigation measures. Production of an EIA is a Statutory requirement, pursuant to securing planning permission for a scheme of this nature.

#### **4.1.17 Traffic Issues at Tesco Junction A518 Newport Road**

Approximately 2% of comments received related to traffic congestion on the A518 Newport Road outside the Tesco supermarket.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The County Council has already developed an 'in principle' plan for proposed improvements at this junction. These will include amendments to traffic signal timings, improved pedestrian facilities and introduction of a more clearly defined pedestrian route to access the store. This scheme is intended to improve safety, manage traffic flows and encourage pedestrian usage of the junction and is currently programmed for implementation in 2010.

#### **4.1.18 Objections to Yellow Route Option**

Approximately 1% of comments received related to objections to the Yellow Route Option mainly based on opposition to the demolition of properties and possible land take.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Historically the County Council has continued to protect three routes in Western Stafford for the construction of the Castlefields Link, the Chell Road Diversion and the Rowley Link. The Yellow Route Option formed part of the long-standing proposal for a Castlefields Link cutting across from the Kingsway/Martin Drive roundabout junction over the railway line to Doxey Road through a section of Castletown. Progressing this option would clearly impact on residents and residences within Castletown as there would be a requirement to demolish a number of residential properties.

The County Council has therefore requested the views of consultees via the SWAI questionnaire as to whether this route alignment should remain protected. The majority of respondents to the questionnaire supported the removal of protection from the Yellow Route Option.

#### **4.1.19 Ring Road**

Approximately 1.5% of comments relate to the requirement for some form of ring road around Stafford.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Some of these comments are linked to the provision of an Eastern Bypass around Stafford. The County Council are committed to re-examining the case for transport improvements to the east of the town once the Borough Council has confirmed final locations for housing and employment development through their Local Development Framework. Although the County Council do not currently believe that an Eastern Bypass would satisfy the onerous requirements of the Department for Transport (DfT) to qualify for national funding, we have however secured through the regional funding process (RFA) an indicative allocation for future transport investment in Stafford over the period 2018-2026. However, even if the Eastern Bypass satisfied DfT requirements, the County Council would not be in a position to bring forward any scheme in the period (2014 – 16) for which the funding identified for the Western Access Improvement is likely to be available.

There are also suggestions that the County Council should consider creating a one-way inner ring road utilising the A34 Queensway, A518 Chell Road, Victoria Road and Station Road. The route options outlined in the SWAI consultation are intended in part to reduce traffic within the town centre area and improve the environment for sustainable travel. The routes are also intended to improve access and reduce the traffic impact of proposed



Consultation Report

developments on the western side of Stafford. This one-way inner ring road proposal would be unlikely to lead to an improved travel environment and would not provide access opportunities to these proposed development locations.

#### **4.1.20 Objections to Red, Green and Blue Route Options**

Approximately 2% of comments are objections to the Red, Green and Blue Route Options. These objections centre around the environmental impact of the route on Doxey Marshes, the proximity of the route to houses on Doxey Road and the traffic impacts on the Castlefields residential estate.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

An assessment of the relative impacts of each of these interventions will be provided in the Options Assessment Report, and published on the Western Access Improvement Website. The County Council also intends to undertake a full Environmental Impact Assessment for the preferred route option emerging from this process, which will identify affected properties and any necessary mitigation measures.

The County Council has also stated that its' preferred route option is the Green Route which avoids the need for the demolition of houses, moves the road away from properties on Doxey Road and minimises the impact on Doxey Marshes.

#### **4.1.21 Traffic Management Issues**

Approximately 0.5% of comments received related to traffic management and road safety issues mainly focussed on the Castlefields residential estate.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Upon selection of a preferred route option the County Council will develop a traffic management and road safety strategy for the new scheme taking into account the surrounding highway network. The new route would be designed and constructed in accordance with the latest DfT and Highways Agency guidelines. All new infrastructure would be the subject of independent road safety audits.

#### **4.1.22 Route Modifications / Combinations**

Approximately 2% of comments suggested route modifications and combinations. These suggestions were based around capacity, reduced costs, reduced environmental impacts, increased distance from residential properties and the requirement to demolish properties.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Consultation Report

Firstly a combination of the southern section of the Green Route and the northern section of the Yellow Route was suggested with the intention of reducing the impact on Doxey Marshes and the impact on Foregate Street. This route option has been considered within the SWAI Options Report as Consultation Route I. A similar option combining Phase 1 of the Green Route with a revised alignment of the Yellow Route to link into Gaol Square (rather than Chell Road) was also suggested. Again this option was included and assessed in the Options Assessment Report, as Consultation Route G.

Secondly a combination of the southern section of the Yellow Route and the northern section of the Green Route was suggested on the grounds that this route has less impact on the Castlefields estate and Chell Road. However, this is the most expensive route combination, would require the demolition of residential properties in Castletown and would be likely to result in additional development traffic on Martin Drive.

Thirdly a combination of the southern section of the Yellow Route and the northern section of the Red Route was suggested. This is an expensive route combination which would require the demolition of properties in Castletown and would have the greatest impact on Doxey Marshes.

Fourthly, a combination of the southern section of the Yellow Route and the northern section of the Blue Route was suggested on the grounds that it would be cheaper to deliver as there is no need for a new roundabout on the Doxey Road near Sainsburys. Whilst this would be a cheaper option, it would require the demolition of properties in Castletown and would not move the proposed new route away from properties fronting Doxey Road.

Fifthly it was suggested that any new route should be dual carriageway. It is not the County Council's intention to provide a dual carriageway road in this instance. The route will be designed in accordance with DfT and Highways Agency guidelines and will reflect the current and forecast year traffic scenario indicated in the SATURN traffic model. The additional cost and environmental impact of providing a dual carriageway route would make it very difficult to justify in Benefit Cost Ratio and Environmental Impact Appraisal terms.

Finally a modification to the Green Route was suggested, moving the alignment west to avoid the existing railway sidings therefore negating the potential requirement for a new railway bridge at this location. This option has been considered within the SWAI Options Assessment Report as Consultation Route H.

## **4.2 Comments and Objections from Statutory Consultees and Key Stakeholders**

### **4.2.1 Environment Agency**

The Environment Agency (EA) response noted that all four route options lie within the flood plain of the River Sow and as such within the highest risk Flood Zone 3b (functional flood plain).

The EA consider the SWAI to be classified as Essential Infrastructure and state that development would be acceptable in these locations if the Sequential Test and Exception Test were passed. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will be required for any options taken forward. The EA then outline some specific design and engineering criteria for the route and state that a Sequential Test would need to be applied based on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Stafford Borough.

The EA state that the Yellow Route is the only option not cutting across the Doxey and Tillington Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and would therefore have the least adverse impact on biodiversity. However, they also state that the Green and Blue options, whilst passing through part of the SSSI, actually only affect an area already mostly 'destroyed' and they would therefore be preferable to the Red route option which has the greatest potential to adversely impact upon the SSSI. The EA identify the Red route as their least favourable option.

The EA also comment that a significant proportion of all four routes involve crossing previously developed land and potentially brownfield sites. Consequently any planning application should be supported by a Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA). The PRA should identify the potential for contamination and possible risks to 'Controlled Waters' receptors (in this case the groundwater in the underlying Minor Aquifers, the surface watercourses and the SSSI). Providing that the option taken forward adequately considers the risk to Controlled Waters and undertakes any required remediation, the EA have no route preference in terms of risk to Controlled Waters.

Finally the EA state that they are willing to maintain their involvement in the process and in the selection and design of a preferred option.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The Options Assessment Report considers the impact on the Water Environment sub-objective for each of the routes.

The County Council will ensure that the EA's requirements are met during the development of the preferred option which emerges from the process.

#### **4.2.2 English Heritage**

English Heritage response to the consultation process identified their preferred route option to be the Green Route as it minimises the impact on the SSSI and the surrounding townscape. English Heritage also commented that opportunities should be maximised for integrated enhancements to the surrounding and linked townscape in conjunction to any mitigation measures associated with the SSSI.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Stafford Western Access Improvements

Consultation Report

The Options Assessment Report considers the impact on Heritage of Historic Resources, Townscape and Landscape sub-objectives for each of the routes.

The County Council will continue to liaise with English Heritage as a preferred option is developed.

#### **4.2.3 Stafford Chamber of Commerce**

Stafford Chamber of Commerce's initial response to the SWAI consultation commented that no new route is required in terms of the benefits accrued and the cost implications. It went on to indicate that they believe that the construction of a Stafford Eastern Bypass is a priority of the business community in Stafford Borough and that investment in this route would reap significant economic benefits.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Following a meeting with officers on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2010 the Stafford Chamber of Trade and Commerce were sufficiently convinced of the case for these Stafford Western Access Improvements to be able to issue a letter of support for the Green Route. At the same time they re-iterated support for completion of the Eastern and Southern Distributor Roads.

#### **4.2.4 St Modwen Properties Plc and Bellway Homes**

Peter Brett Associates responded on behalf of St Modwen Properties Plc and Bellway Homes suggested an alternative route alignment for the Green Route to avoid the Doxey Railway Sidings.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The merits of this proposal have been fully considered in the Options Assessment Report (Consultation Route H).

#### **4.2.5 Network Rail**

Network Rail commented on the difficulties experienced when attempting to access railway facilities in the vicinity of the proposed route options and that they are seeking to improve access in this location. As such Network Rail support for the proposals would be dependent upon the identification of improved highway access to railway facilities.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The County Council has subsequently secured a letter of 'in principle' support for the Western Access Improvements from Network Rail in the context of the proposed improvements to the railway bridge on Doxey Road. A Basic Asset Protection Agreement (BAPA) has also been offered.

#### **4.2.6 Pritchard and Associates**

Pritchard and Associates' response sets out three main objections to the proposals;

1. The routes proposed may lead to a loss of long stay parking spaces on the Doxey Road Car Park, owned by the Pritchard Group of Companies. Pritchard and Associates state that this will have an impact on the attractiveness of Stafford Town Centre for new investment.
2. The connection to Martin Drive at the existing roundabout is felt to be inappropriate as it was designed for access to the adjacent residential areas of Castlefields. Only the Yellow Route is felt to be suitable as it utilises the roundabout at the end of Redgrave Drive which connects directly to the dual carriageway access to Castlefields from the A518 Newport Road. Pritchard and Associates also state that without a link through to the A449 Wolverhampton Road no through traffic will be relieved from the town centre.
3. Pritchard and Associates also raise concerns over the proposed connection to Foregate Street near the Madford Retail Park in terms of increased traffic congestion and capacity issues.

Other comments concern the vertical alignment of the route and the infrastructure requirements to cross the River Sow and their associated visual and environmental impacts.

Pritchard and Associates provided a modified route alignment allowing the retention of a greater area of long stay car parking at Doxey Road.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Three of the four route options consulted upon would impact upon the car park in question. If necessary this site would be acquired by the County Council either by negotiation or by use of its' compulsory purchase powers. This car park is not well used, being quite remote from the town and it is also in Flood Zone 3b (functional floodplain). Its loss as a private long stay car park is unlikely to impact on the attractiveness of the town centre to attract new investment.

The capacity of the roundabout at the junction of Rose Hill and Martin Drive will be increased to accommodate the forecast traffic flows.

The Country Council are not considering constructing a link from Newport Road through to Wolverhampton Road, although a route is protected (the Rowley Link). Initial tests show that the new access road between A34 Foregate Street and A518 Newport Road which is under consideration relieves the Foregate Street-Chell Road–Tenterbanks-Station Road route.

Consultation Report

The degree of relief afforded by each route option is assessed in the Options Assessment Report.

The junction between Greyfriars Place and A34 Foregate Street can be improved to accommodate traffic flows for a 2031 design horizon (which includes all planned development including the RSS allocations for Stafford).

#### **4.2.7 Castlefields Residents Association**

The Castlefields Residents Association acknowledges the issue of traffic congestion on the A518 Newport Road and in the town centre. The residents association indicate that they do not believe that any of the route options would satisfactorily address these congestion issues. They also believe that the proposals will relocate and worsen congestion problems on Foregate Street and on Doxey Road. The association also suggest that an integrated transport plan should be formulated including consideration of Park and Ride, lift sharing, public transport improvements and a new centrally located bus station. They also expressed concern over the number of traffic signal controlled junctions in and around the town centre.

#### Staffordshire County Council's response

Staffordshire County Council Officers subsequently met with the Chair and another representative from the Castlefields Residents Association to discuss the SWAI in the context of the emerging transport strategy for Stafford (to 2026) and all other issues raised.

The Options Assessment Report describes 'congestion levels' for each of the routes under consideration.

#### **4.2.8 Staffordshire Police**

Staffordshire Police indicate their support for the Green Route and mention specifically their support for the re-siting of the roundabout on Doxey Road which would provide vehicle speed reduction benefits.

Staffordshire Police also raise concerns regarding the potential for increased traffic congestion at the A34 Foregate Street junction.

#### Staffordshire County Council's Response

The capacity of the A34 Foregate Street / Greyfriars Place junction will be increased to accommodate design flows. Traffic flows within Stafford are managed by an expanded Urban Traffic Management and Control System

#### **4.2.9 Staffordshire Wildlife Trust**

The Trust highlights the importance of supporting and encouraging sustainable transport and reducing car use. They voice their objection to the Red Route in terms of the negative impact on the Doxey Marshes SSSI. With

Consultation Report

regard to the other route options the Trust has no objections as long as the impacts are well mitigated and an overall gain is achieved for biodiversity. The Trust suggests mitigation measures specifically relating to traffic noise, drainage and biodiversity and makes recommendations relating to use of construction materials and lighting, these will be taken into account when designing the road scheme.

In relation to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the Trust expects to be consulted on the Scoping Report and the final Environmental Statement. The Trust then makes suggestions regarding mitigation and enhancement measures which will be referenced when preparing the EIA.

The Trust also suggests that associated footpath improvements could contribute to creating or opening up access to new areas of Doxey Marshes in line with Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The impact on each of the routes on the Biodiversity sub-objective is assessed in the Options Assessment Report

Following production of the Options Assessment Report the County Council can acknowledge that the undesirable impact of the red route on the SSSI cannot be satisfactorily mitigated and that this option will not be progressed.

The Wildlife Trust will be consulted during the scoping stage and on the final environmental statement. The County Council will implement mitigation package recommended in the EIA.

#### **4.2.10 Staffordshire Badger Conservation Group**

The Group indicates its support for the Green Route option as this is likely to have the minimum impact on badgers in the area.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The impact on each of the routes on the Biodiversity sub-objective is assessed in the Options Assessment Report

The County Council will request further comments and input when undertaking the Environmental Impact Assessment for the preferred route option.

#### **4.2.11 Taylor Wimpey UK**

Peter Brett Associates LLP (PBA) on behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK responded to Staffordshire County Council in writing on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

PBA consider the Yellow Route option to be less deliverable than the other options due to the requirement to demolish properties. PBA consider the other

Consultation Report

route options will deliver increases in capacity between Martin Drive, Doxey Road and the A34. However they also note that these options are subject to crossing the West Coast railway line and sidings. They also note that the Red Route would have a significant effect on Doxey Marshes making it less deliverable. PBA state that the Green Route would have a slight effect on Doxey Marshes but note that Staffordshire County Council will prepare an appropriate Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

PBA indicate that they are aware that the County Council is testing alternative route options as a result of the consultation process and that these are outlined in the Options Assessment Report.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

The modified Green Route suggested by PBA has been assessed as Option H within the Options Assessment Report.

#### **4.2.12 Political Stakeholders**

Mr David Kidney the current Member of Parliament for Stafford forwarded a letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010 from the West Midlands Regional Assembly to Staffordshire County Council requesting the Council's views. The letter from the Regional Assembly focused mainly on future development in Stafford and the provision of an Eastern Distributor Road.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

A letter was sent to David Kidney MP on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2010 outlining Stafford's status as a Growth Point and the promotion of the SWAI as part of a wider strategy to improve the overall environment of the Town Centre, and to provide additional highway capacity in order to accommodate new development. The letter also referred to the County Council's commitment to re-examine the case for highway improvements to the east of the town once Stafford Borough Council has confirmed final locations for housing and employment development.

Further to this letter a meeting was organised at Staffordshire County Council on 12<sup>th</sup> February and was attended by County Councillor Mike Maryon, senior officers and David Kidney, to discuss the relationship between development and transportation in Stafford. The meeting presented an opportunity to inform David Kidney of the key role of the SWAI within the overall integrated transport strategy being developed by the County Council in partnership with Stafford Borough Council and other key stakeholders.

Mr Kidney has recently written expressing the view that he remains unconvinced that the scheme will contribute towards an integrated land use policies in Stafford.

Mr Jeremy Lefroy, the Prospective Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Stafford contacted Staffordshire County Council concerning the SWAI in a



## Stafford Western Access Improvements

### Consultation Report

letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Mr Lefroy raised a number of issues including the need for an integrated transport strategy, congestion concerns relating to the A34 Foregate Street and partnership working between the County and Borough Councils.

### Staffordshire County Council's response;

A letter of response was sent to Mr Lefroy on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010 outlining the fact that a 10-year Integrated Transport Strategy for Stafford (Stafford Urban Area Transport Strategy SUATMS) was approved by the County Council's Executive on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2002 and is in line with Staffordshire's Local Transport Plan. The letter also identified that beyond 2011 a package of sustainable measures will be delivered to support the Stafford housing growth agenda. The need for the SWAI is clarified in terms of providing additional strategic highway capacity, enabling the delivery of development and increasing accessibility.

Further to this letter a meeting was attended by County Councillor Mark Winnington, senior officers and Mr Lefroy on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010 to discuss the relationship between development and transportation in Stafford. The meeting presented an opportunity to inform Mr Lefroy of the key role of the SWAI within the overall integrated transport strategy being developed by the County Council in partnership with Stafford Borough Council and other key stakeholders.

Mike Shone, Prospective Green Party Parliamentary Candidate for Stafford, also responded to the consultation exercise, voicing concerns regarding consideration of alternative transport options such as Park and Ride schemes or bus subsidies, the A34 Foregate Street junction, adherence to the objectives of Staffordshire's Local Transport Plan, and the need for an integrated transport and housing plan for Stafford.

### Staffordshire County Council's response;

A written response was sent to Mr Shone explaining the need for the SWAI to support housing growth and development in line with the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. However, it also stresses that people will need to change their travel behaviour going forward.

The response explains that separate consultations are underway relating to the emerging Local Transport Plan 3 for the period beyond 2011. A 10-year Integrated Transport Strategy for Stafford (Stafford Urban Area Transport Strategy SUATMS) was approved by the County Council's Executive on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2002 and is in line with Staffordshire's current Local Transport Plan, this identifies the likely need for a major scheme bid for the SWAI during the LTP period. The SWAI will facilitate improvements to bus and rail links through the reduction of private car traffic along Chell Road and Station Road, improving reliability for buses and allowing improvements to be made to the pedestrian environment. Details of the long term strategy for the period 2011-2026 will be published as part of an emerging Stafford Transport Study. This

Consultation Report

will support Stafford Borough Council's preferred land use option in the Local Development Framework (LDF) Draft Core Strategy which is expected to be published in 2010. Future requirements for Park and Ride schemes will be assessed and may form part of a longer term transport strategy.

With regard to the issue of the A34 Foregate Street junction and possible alternative route alignments, the response indicates that alternative alignments are being considered as part of the SWAI Options Assessment Report.

#### **4.2.13 Natural England**

Natural England (NE) responded in writing on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010 to the SWAI consultation process after receiving a follow up letter from Staffordshire County Council.

NE makes it clear that it is of paramount importance that the transport system seeks to protect and where possible enhance the natural environment, including biodiversity, landscape, geodiversity and soils. NE then outlines the possible adverse affects of transport on the natural environment and states that environmentally sustainable access improvements to the natural environment for local residents and visitors should be considered. The importance of considering sustainable transport options to reduce car use and congestion, and new developments in Stafford should minimise the need for car use through scheme design, is also stressed. NE advises that the new road design should include the opportunity for recreational use in the form of pedestrian and cycle facilities both along the road and along the river.

In outlining the potential adverse environmental impacts of the preferred green route option on Doxey and Tillington Marshes SSSI, NE notes that these are likely to be less than those associated with the red route option. NE makes it clear that areas to the west of the proposed route and within the SSSI (including sections of car parking) should be returned to nature and enhanced. This would allow the area to function as a key element of mitigation.

Where the new route crosses watercourses they advise that they should remain open if possible rather than in put in culvert and that existing culverted watercourses along the route should be restored to natural channels wherever possible.

As sections of the proposed route would be raised on embankments, there is an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the local area and an appropriate landscaping scheme could lead to the embankments becoming important wildlife corridors linking the marshes, the wider countryside and Stafford town.

Staffordshire County Council's response;

Consultation Report

The impact on each of the routes on the Biodiversity, Water Environment, Landscape, Local Air Quality, Noise and Greenhouse Gases sub-objectives is assessed in the Options Assessment Report

Officers have subsequently met with Natural England and agreed the principle of restoring as much as possible of the destroyed element of the SSSI and the addition of an amenity area.

#### **4.2.14 Stafford Borough Council**

Stafford Borough Council provided a letter of support on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2010. It endorses the need to submit a major scheme business case and supports the current partnership working between the Borough and County Council to achieve growth point objectives and deliver the Masterplan for the town centre.

### **5.0 Overview of Consultation Responses**

#### **5.1 Respondents**

The SWAI questionnaire responses were split approximately 60/40 in terms of male/female respondents. The majority of respondents (62%) were aged between 35 and 64 years old. The pattern of responses from different age groups matched expectations with the exception of the 17-24 age group (2%) which was significantly under-represented.

Eleven responses were received from statutory consultees and key stakeholders, as follows:

Environment Agency  
English Heritage  
Chamber of Commerce  
Staffordshire Police  
Castlefields Resident's Association  
Network Rail  
Bellway Homes and St Modwen Properties  
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust  
Staffordshire Badger Conservation Group  
Pritchard and Associates  
Taylor Wimpey UK

Follow up letters were sent to the remaining statutory consultees and key stakeholders in February 2010 requesting their response.

#### **5.2 Route Preferences**

Although the majority of respondents indicated that no new route should be implemented (48%) of those that expressed a route preference 70% indicated their support for the Green Route.

Consultation Report

The slight majority of respondents indicated that the line of the Yellow Route option should no longer remain protected.

### **5.3 Other Comments Received**

In excess of 1,100 comments were received during the SWAI consultation process. Approximately 25% of these broadly related to the importance and support for sustainable transport related projects, including new bus infrastructure, park and ride facilities and the need for an integrated approach to transport planning.

Approximately 8.5% of comments specifically indicated that respondents did not support a new road link between the A518 Newport Road and the A34 Foregate Street, whilst 4% indicated that respondents do support a new road.

Additional congestion on the A34 Foregate Street was also an issue with approximately 5% of comments raising concerns. Approximately 25% of comments related to traffic issues elsewhere in Stafford, with 7% relating directly to the need for a distributor road to the east of the town.

In terms of the environmental issues associated with providing a new road, approximately 5% of comments related directly to the importance of protecting and enhancing the natural environment along the route.

### **6.0 Conclusion and Next Steps**

The level of response to the SWAI consultation process was significant and satisfactory. Whilst support for a do-nothing approach was noteworthy, the need for a strategic transport intervention should not be underestimated with regard to the emerging Local Development framework for Stafford Borough. The underlying support for the Green Route should guide selection of a preferred option.

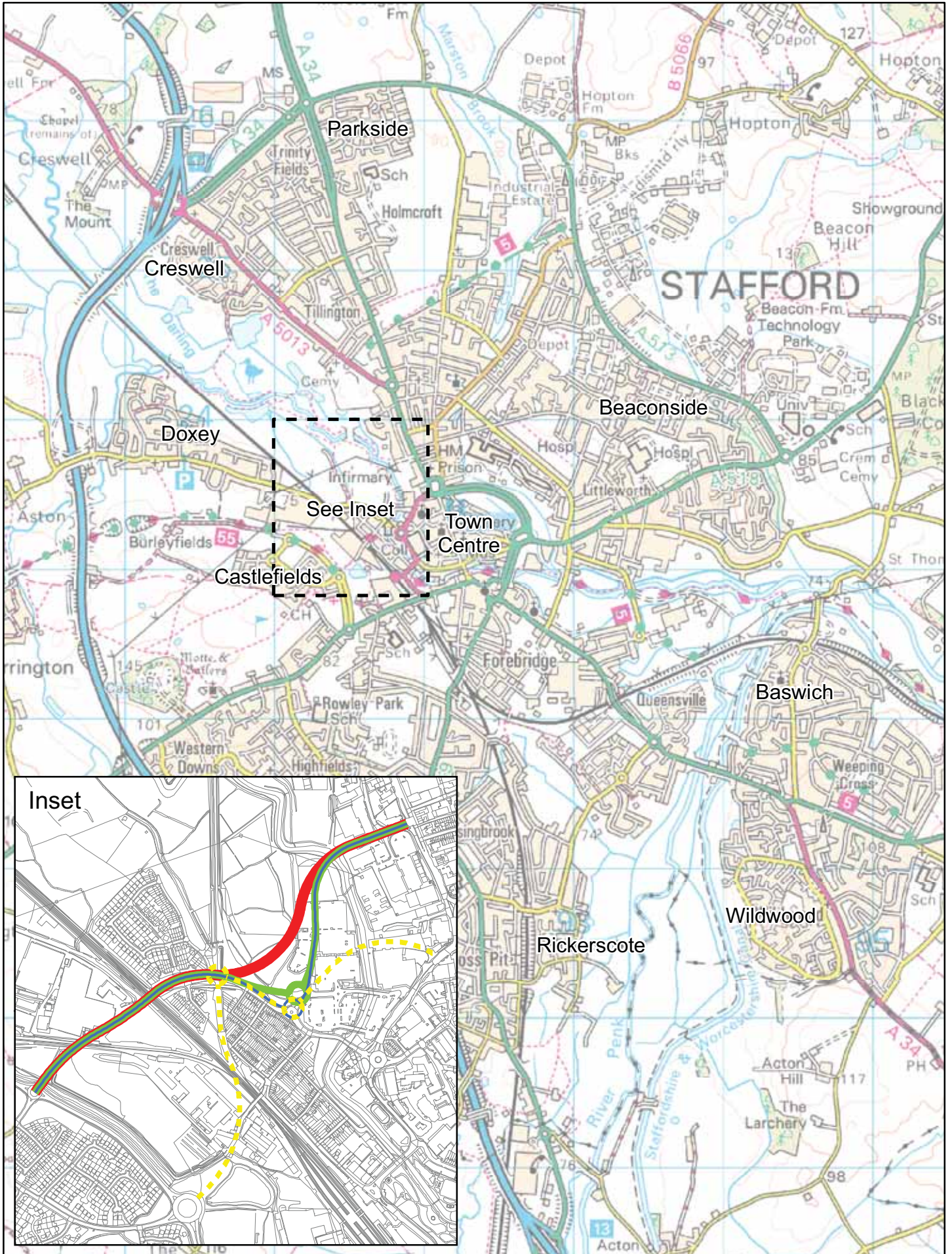
The importance of taking a sustainable and integrated approach to transport planning is crucial and the need to consider and assess the environmental implications of all options will remain high on the County Council's agenda.

The excellent response and level of engagement from the general public, stakeholders, statutory consultees and politicians is welcomed. Where appropriate views have been accommodated and options given full consideration. In other instances it is believed that full responses have been given to the issues raised.

In parallel to this Consultation Report, an Option Assessment Report has been prepared consistent with Department for Transport's (DfT) WebTAG guidance, to inform the decision making process. This report considers a solely sustainable transport option and options that combine both highway and sustainable transport solutions, together with further route variations that have been suggested via the public consultation process.

# Plan 1

## Location of Stafford Western Access Improvements

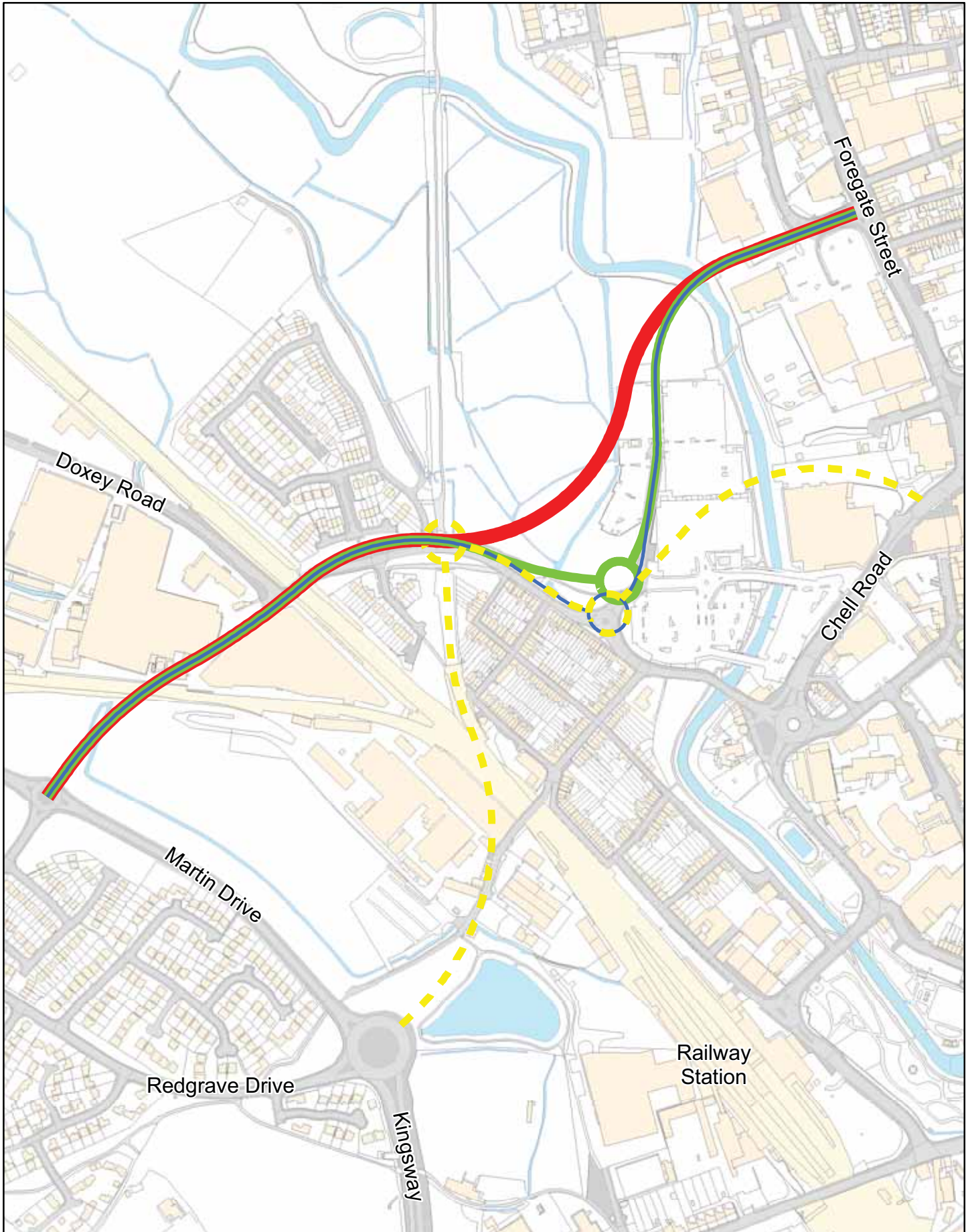


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# Plan 2

## Alignment of Stafford Western Access Improvement Options

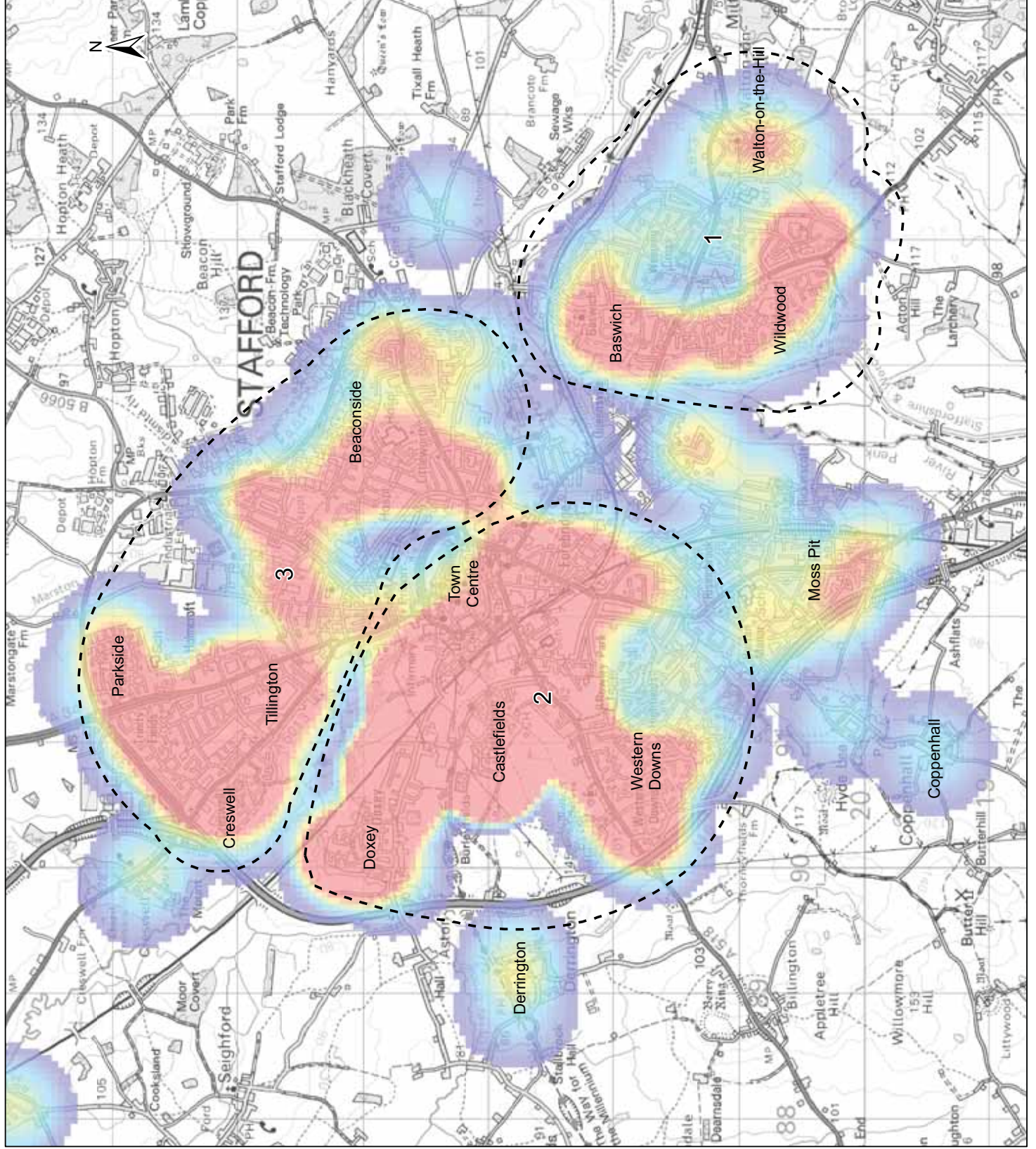
Red Route   Blue Route   Yellow Route   Green Route



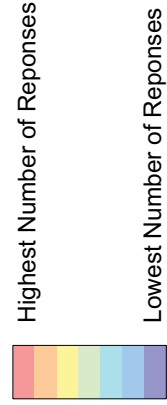
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# Plan 3

## Full Postcode Responses in Stafford Town Area



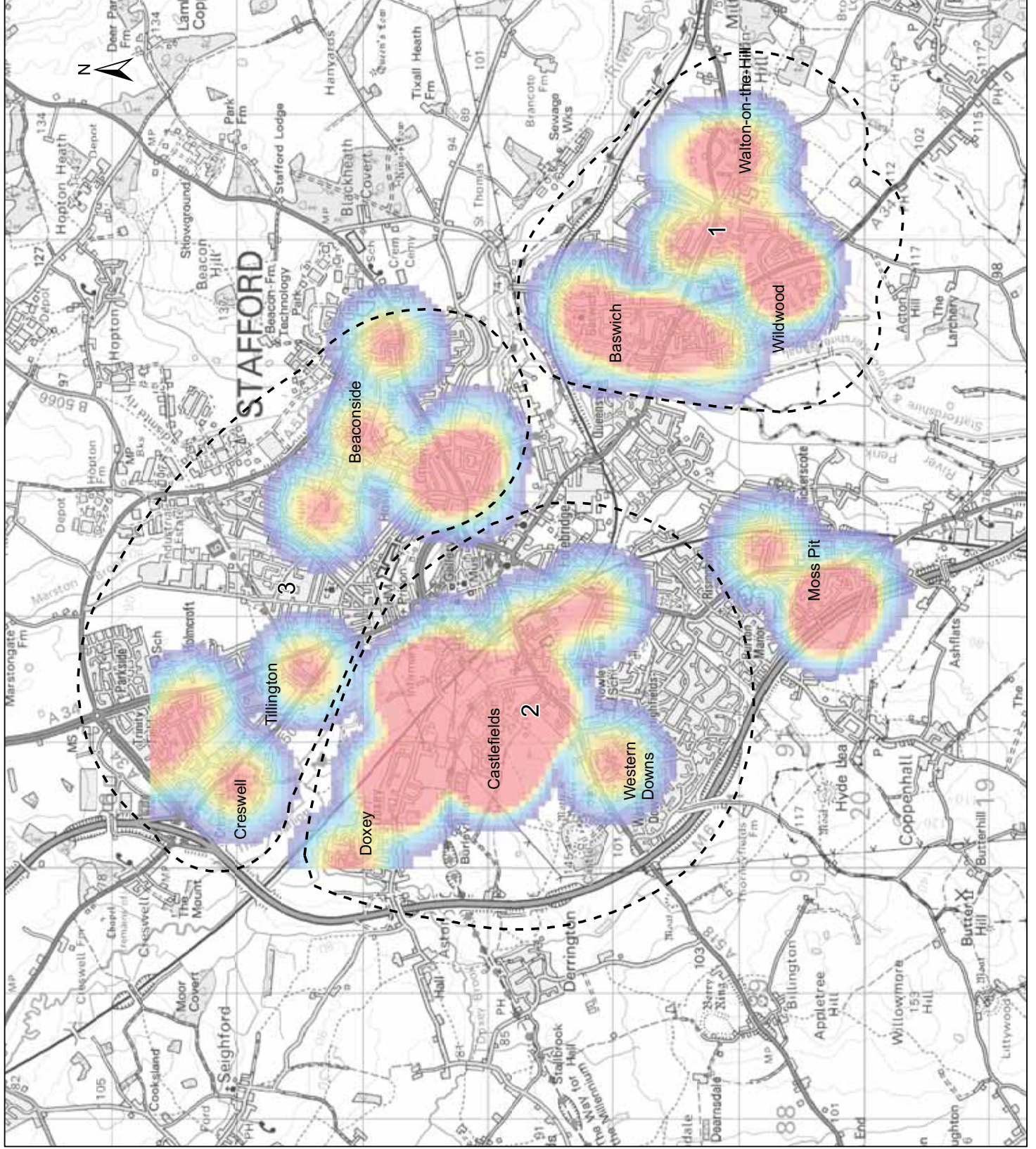
- 1. South Eastern Stafford Area
- 2. Western Stafford Area
- 3. North Eastern Stafford Area



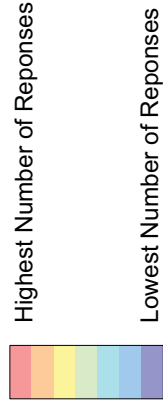
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# Plan 4

Postcode Distribution of Respondents Indicating a "Do Nothing" Preference



- 1. South Eastern Stafford Area
- 2. Western Stafford Area
- 3. North Eastern Stafford Area

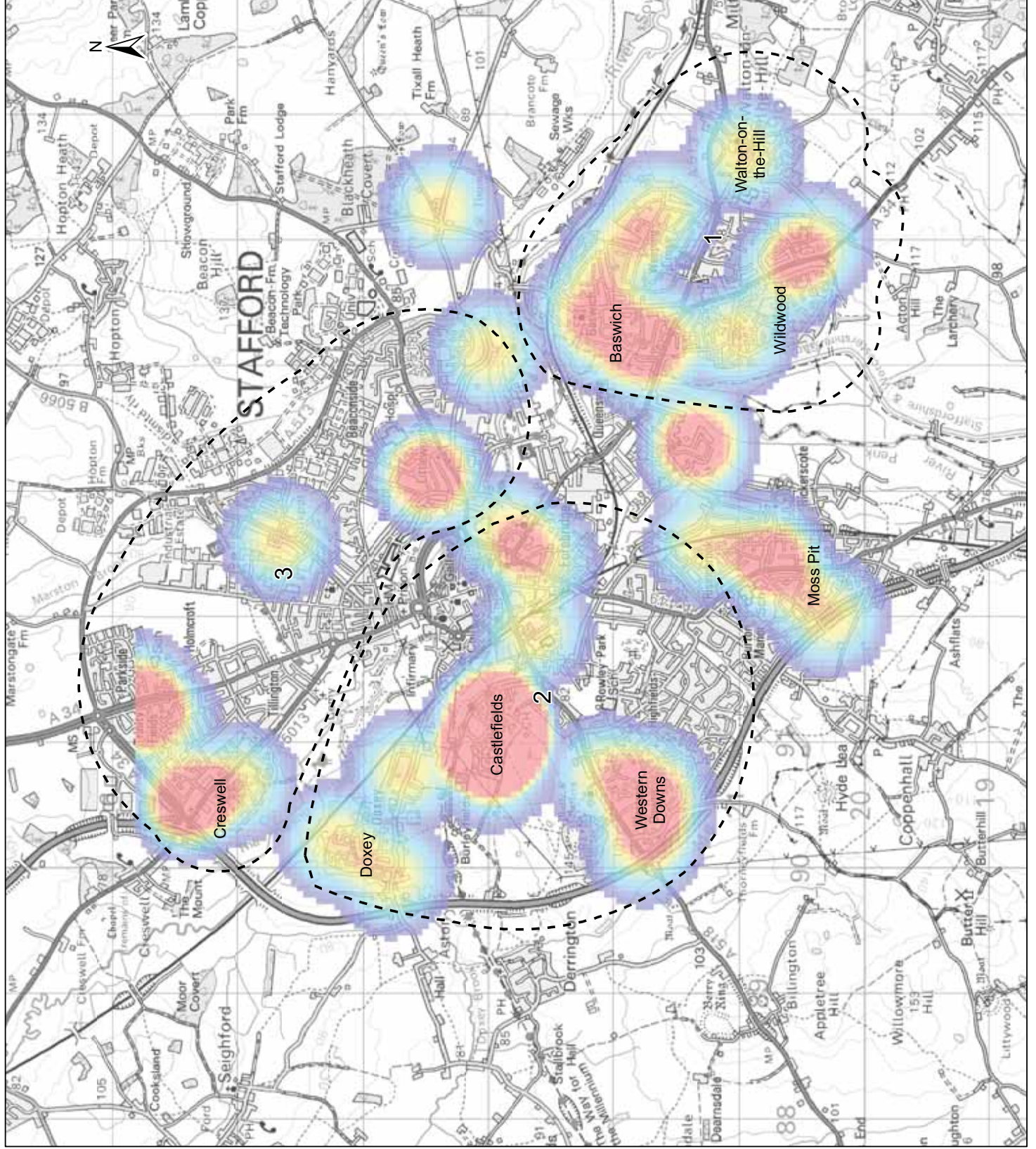


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# Plan 5

Postcode Distribution of Respondents Indicating a "Do Nothing" Preference but Supporting the Provision of an Eastern Distributor Road



- 1. South Eastern Stafford Area
- 2. Western Stafford Area
- 3. North Eastern Stafford Area



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