

# Design Review Report

A40 Llanddewi Velfrey to Penblewin

**DCFW Ref: N144**

Meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020



## Review Status

Meeting date	23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2020
Issue date	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2020
Scheme location	Pembrokeshire
Scheme description	Road infrastructure
Scheme reference number	N144
Planning status	Pre-application

## PUBLIC

## Declarations of Interest

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Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare ***in advance*** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review and meeting Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Simon Power declared that his employer, Mott MacDonald, via a separate department to his own, working with Welsh Government Employers Agent Arcadis, in a minor a capacity. All present were content to proceed. Ewan Jones declared a working relationship with separate team at Arup relating to a separate project. Everyone present was content to proceed.

### Note on current operational context:

The Design Commission for Wales is operating during necessary public health measures due to the impact of the Coronavirus Covid 19 pandemic and this report follows the recent online review meeting.

## Consultations to Date

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The scheme was previously reviewed by the Commission in June 2017, November 2018, December 2019 and February 2020. This report should be read in conjunction with the reports from the previous review meetings.

## The Proposals

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The existing A40 runs through Llanddewi Velfrey, in part splitting the community. Provision for non-motorised users is limited to intermittent substandard footways. The landscape is formed of gently rolling countryside with wide shallow valleys divided by low ridges. At Llanddewi Velfrey the existing A40 follows the crest of a ridge with relatively steep slopes falling to the north. A sequence of cuttings and embankments will be required across the ridge at the eastern end of the proposed scheme.

The proposed highway improvements will divert the trunk road to the north of the village. This allows all local access onto the trunk road to be rerouted to strategic junctions. The new carriageway will be to a Wide Single (WS) 2+1 standard with a third lane providing safe, unambiguous overtaking opportunities in both directions.

At the review of the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019, further information became available as to the Western part of the scheme, and current consideration of consultation responses on Option 2B. This was not reviewed in full at the time. Details of this part of the proposal were discussed at the February 2020 Review. Following the February review the core A40

eastern proposal was the subject of Public Local Inquiry (PLI). The Inquiry scope did not include the Western (Redstone) part of the scheme. Reports and comment of the Design Commission for Wales were included in the evidence provided for the Inspector. <https://a40lvp-publicinquiry.co.uk/>

The review meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020 focussed largely on the Eastern Llanddewi Velfrey de-trunking opportunities. This followed some broad discussion as to the outcome of the PLI and the methodology for protecting stated design intent through procurement and delivery. Further reviews are planned for the remaining elements of the project and to comprehensively consider the whole.

## Main Points

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The Design Commission welcomed the further opportunity to be engaged on this proposal as it continues to evolve and following Public Local Inquiry in March 2020. All parties are keen to understand the Inspectors report.

The procurement and construction programme anticipates a 2021 start date. As previously noted, an opportunity exists to establish Welsh Government requirements as client, regarding expectations of quality and achievement of desired outcomes. These must be clearly identified and expressed in subsequent contractual arrangements within a likely Design & Build process. The stated design intent must be secured and supervised throughout the procurement and delivery process.

The Commission welcomed refined presentation material and clearer, comprehensive documents, better communicating the proposals and reflecting the suggestion of a 'Design & Access Statement' approach. However, there are still some challenges to be met and the Commission reiterated their concern to about the importance of establishing and protecting the design intent throughout. This systematic approach to use of the design process to clearly demonstrate that each of the design objectives will be achieved, and how, remains important. It should inform procurement and detailed client requirements.

The Commission previously encouraged an approach that clearly responds to the obligations and ambitions of the Welsh Government and to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Active Travel Act legislation. Our earlier reports note the need to exceed minimum design standards and this must be explicit in all materials to ensure that the delivered scheme, and in fact subsequent schemes, provide the greatest value from the substantial public investment. We continue to emphasise this as an obligation of a publicly funded project of this scale.

The focus of discussion moved to the potential for 'joining up' the overall proposal with the de-trunking scheme and the wider benefits this offers for the village. Whilst we continue to urge robust measures to ensure the active travel focus is followed through to high quality delivery, the Commission welcomes the strengthening of partnerships and the approach currently taken to this opportunity. The Commission particularly welcomed the presence of officers from the local authority and the clear demonstration of collaboration.

DCFW's previous report details the potential for village benefit and the evolving proposals are very encouraging. The Commission is particularly interested to see the use of its *Shape My Town* resource and is keen to learn from the teams' experience as we work to evolve this resource.

The following points summarise remaining key elements from the discussion:

- A workshop/meeting in the very near future, with DCFW, to collaborate on the consideration of draft documentation informing and linked to the forthcoming contractor specification. This would be useful for assisting the team on the protection of design intent. As previously noted, this should also carefully consider two elements – the main proposals and the de-trunking. This should assist the design team with consideration of which elements of design can be established via performance specification (to provide genuine D&B flexibility) and which are essential requirements requiring prescriptive definition at tender stage.
- The integration of the de-trunking is a very encouraging and tangible step forward. If delivered to a high standard, this aspect of the scheme has the potential to be an exemplar for proper consideration of de-trunking as an integral part of future bypass works elsewhere.
- Clearer communication of the design intent, character zones etc balanced with affordability is helpful for others. Robust steps will be needed to ensure it is completely tied into the core project and fully implemented as described, so that the added value it offers can be secured.
- There would be merit in considering initially the whole village, i.e. its historic core further to the south in initially developing a full set of holistic village placemaking and public realm improvements. Even if it is recognised the initial phase within the former A40 corridor is all that can be delivered in the short term. It is important to avoid a sense that the de-trunked highway has been 'over treated' or 'beautified' at the expense of other valuable areas of village public realm.
- Further thinking about uses and users would be beneficial – the emphasis on leisure cycling is welcome however there is a wider opportunity to imagine the possibilities of a '21<sup>st</sup> century village' in terms of amenities and facilities for users to ensure more than a highway project. Consideration of the village as a destination 'Stop-Off' on an attractive long-distance cycling route could secure multiple benefits for the village. Illustration ideas and possibilities will help galvanise public involvement and enthusiasm.
- Whilst we recognise the formal inclusion of requirements of the highways act - flexibility on interpretation of standards for signage etc and the use of designed-in calming measures will need to be exemplary. Road width variations could help reduce road speeds, minimize the need for signage and assist the informal flow of leisure users.
- Integration with the ambitions of Pembrokeshire Council in terms of strategic and local development planning objectives will benefit from continued co-operation and collaboration. In this context serious thought could be given to the enabling factors of the project – what opportunities could it enable, and which ones should the whole team be sure to avoid closing down.

The Design Commission has not lost sight of previously noted concerns on the overall scheme objectives and will be keen to understand the outcome of the PLI. However, we very much welcome the progress on the aspects of the scheme considered at this review and credit the team for the steps forward and the approach taken. We welcome a further early opportunity for the next stage of DCFW engagement, following up the items above and ideally considering the procurement and design intent items noted above.

It would also be beneficial to consider in advance of its Public Local Inquiry the Western section to Redstone area; particularly its connectivity and relationship to Narbeth, where some objectives and design intent queries were raised previously. It remains the case that the A40 Penblewin to Redstone Cross Improvements scheme has not been subject to significant design review to date.

We look forward to welcoming the team again soon.

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***A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.***

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Mark Dixon, Welsh Government
Design Team:	Gary Davies, ARUP Juan Dominguez, ARUP Tom Edwards, ARUP Andrew Sumner, RML
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist	Simon Power Kedrick Davies Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Efa Lois, Place Advisor, DCFW Carole-Anne, Chief Executive, DCFW