

Design Review Report

A55 Junctions 15 & 16 Improvements

DCFW Ref: 201

Meeting of 13th June 2019



Review Status

Meeting date
Issue date
Scheme location
Scheme description
Scheme reference number
Planning status

PUBLIC

13th June 2019
28th June 2019
A55 Junctions 15 & 16, Conwy County
Improvements
201
Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

Martin Knight of Knight Architects made a declaration noting that he had previously worked with this department of the Welsh Government but had no relationship with this project.

Consultations to Date

Ongoing consultation as part of the process with the Welsh Government, the Local Authority and other stakeholders.

The Proposals

The purpose of the project is to replace the two at grade roundabouts at Junction 15 and 16 on the A55 in North Wales. This is with grade-separated junctions allowing free-flow of traffic, thus reducing delays and make the junctions safer both to traffic travelling along the A55 and for people wishing to enter and leave the A55 in these locations; primarily by car. The scheme's key objective is to improve access to regional, national and international markets and employment opportunities for strategic highway traffic. The scheme also incorporates objectives to support building healthier communities and better environments; and to enable north-south access across the A55 for cyclists, equestrians and pedestrians (NMUs)

Summary

The panel welcomes the team analysis and insight regarding travel, traffic, future opportunities and the area overall enhancement. It was clear the proposals have already been taken through the initial stages of an appraisal process in accordance with Welsh Government procedures.

Based on the material provided, there is a clear design ambition behind the project focusing on the highway and the delivery of future enhanced links and spaces for the area, however, the aspects of connections, road safety, active travel, visual impact and public realm are topics that should be consider within a holistic design impact rational and this is not evident in the proposal. It is imperative that the access narrative is translated into all levels in the design process. It would have been helpful to understand the more strategic options available, including improving at grade provision for people, before the decision to arrive at grade separating the interchanges was arrived at.

It is the view of the panel that exploring a design approach focusing on community benefits at all levels and at this stage will contribute to a positive outcome. This would manifest itself with further contextual analysis, potentially by an urban designer, particularly examining how the area is used by cyclists, pedestrians, equestrians and local servicing traffic. In particular to explore the existing opportunities and constraints between the communities and the sea/local facilities – independent initially of the proposed highway infrastructure interventions. This may aid an understanding of the degree to which the locations proposed for non-vehicular crossings etc provide meaningful connection; or are a convenient by-product of the junction changes.

This exercise would better identify the degree to which the interventions proposed within the highway boundary by one part of Welsh Government might most effectively be combined with other WG and public sector interventions “off-site”, to provide a more holistic approach to improving the places in proximity to the proposed works.

On the junction improvement works themselves, the panel were concerned over the height of the walls proposed; particularly in views from the landward side of the A55. They also commented that any detailing in features proposed to adorn the walls should acknowledge that they will either be seen/experienced close-up and slowly, or at high speed and from a distance by vehicle travellers.

Main Points in Detail

Taking into account your previous information, we suggest that that the following aspects should be incorporated in your next public consultation:

- To make the project ‘story’ transparent through a clear holistic vision and emphasizing who is going to benefit with the project on the basis that it will accomplish wider aspirations such as future generations act;
- Start from community, listening to local community real experiences, aspirations and strategically incorporate them into the project, this as an opportunity to make a difference and add value to the community;
- To make explicit the environmental narrative behind the proposal, the strategic decisions regarding the green infrastructure and its future benefits such as linkages and crossing points and the sea connectivity;
- Consider the opportunity of improving existing physical accesses, restoring stone walls and native planting;
- Explore the road junction’s distinctive character and emphasize their sense of sense of arrival through calming road strategies, including the parallel roads; consider viewer’s and resident’s point of view and proximity;
- Consider strategies of how statutory and non-statutory, stakeholders might be incorporated and/or enabled by the infrastructure intervention.

The Design Commission welcome the team for a further review.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer	Welsh Government
Architectural/Urban Designer	Rob Griffiths, Jenny Bringloe (Ramboll) Andrew Sumner (Richards, Moorhead, Laing)
Local Authority	Peris Jones (Welsh Government)
Design Review Panel	
Chair	Carole-Anne Davies
Lead Panellist	Martin Knight
Panel	Lynne Sullivan Simon Power Toby Adam Larissa Berquó