

# Design Review Report

Caernarfon Gateway

**DCFW Ref: N336**

Meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> April 2025



## Review Status

Meeting date  
Issue date  
Scheme description  
Scheme location  
Scheme reference number  
Planning status  
Planning status of DCFW comment

## Public

4<sup>th</sup> April 2025  
23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025  
Transport Infrastructure Project  
Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 1NN  
N336  
Pre-Planning  
Material Consideration

## Key Points

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- Support for taking the opportunity to reconsider and downsize aging civil engineering and building assets, and for seeking public and stakeholder engagement in consideration of options.
- The project needs to shift focus from what is to be removed to what is going to be created.
- A bolder, more radical vision is needed to make the most of the opportunity and build a more convincing case for funding.
- The feasibility study has focused on highway-engineering. There now needs to be a placemaking, urban design and people-focused study.
- There is further work needed to develop car parking and bus strategies for the town.
- More work is needed before the next formal design stage to ensure that the scope, brief and key decisions are correct before commitment to more detailed design.

## Consultations to Date

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The Design Commission provided advice to Transport for Wales on the brief for the feasibility study and in a meeting with the appointed design team at the start of the project in November 2024.

There has been some client engagement with stakeholders in January 2025 with a feedback session in March 2025.

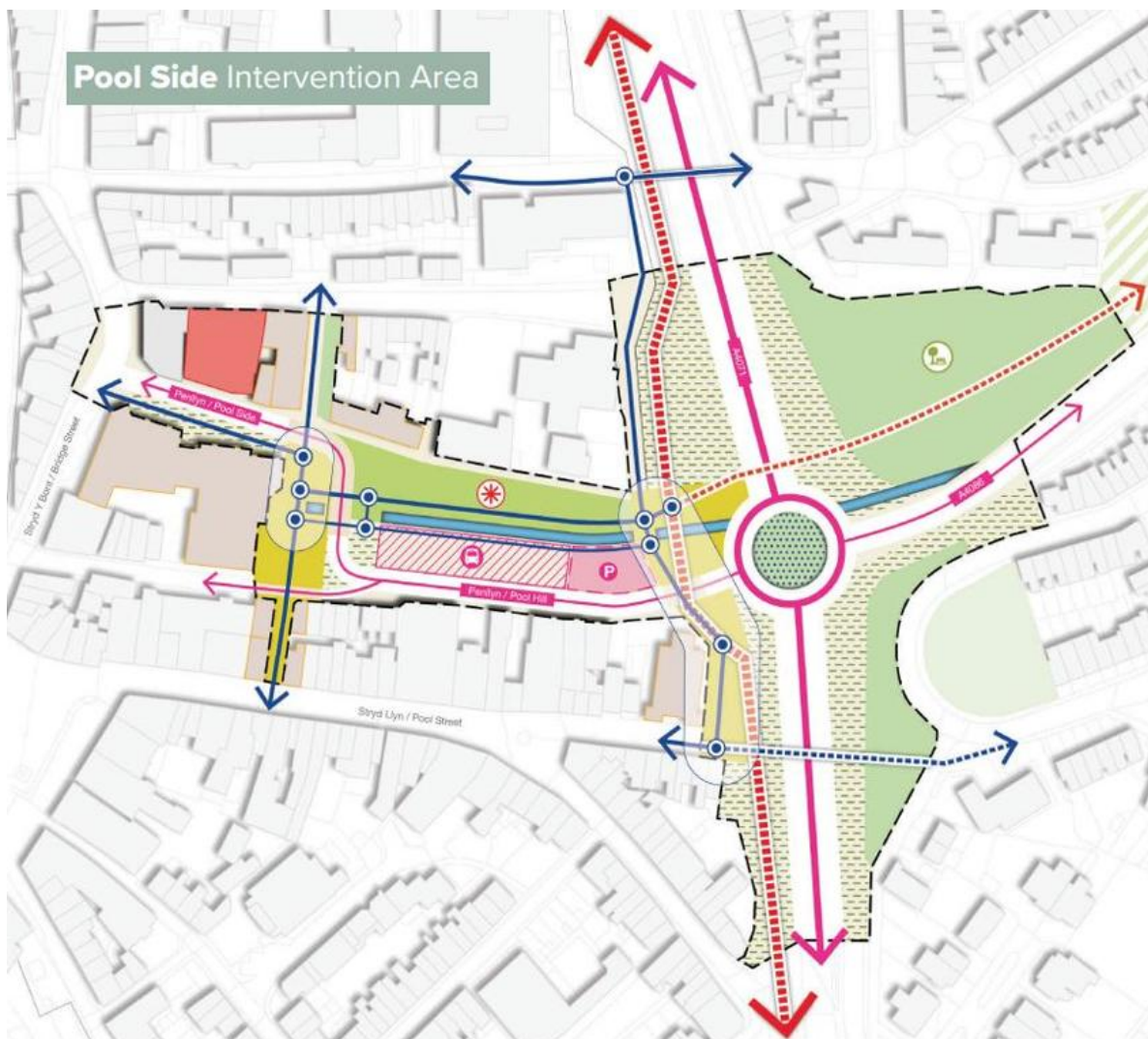
## The Proposal

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The project aims to better connect east and west Caernarfon, deliver public realm improvements, and create a 'gateway' into the town for residents and visitors.

The project will remove the A4871 flyover: opening the A487 Caernarfon to Bontnewydd bypass, in February 2022, has significantly reduced traffic on the A4871 through

Caernarfon. Removal of the A4871 flyover, and creation of a revised roundabout layout, was the preferred one of the options presented in the 2021 public consultation. The 2023 Caernarfon Placemaking Plan includes this, as well as identifying the multi-storey car park as a problematic structure to be resolved.



*Caernarfon Placemaking Plan – Pool Side Intervention Area Concept Plan*

The Caernarfon Gateway Project has developed options to test what may be possible if the structures are removed and the current spaces reallocated or reused to improve transport and regeneration in Caernarfon. AECOM were commissioned in September 2024 to undertake a feasibility study to explore a range of design options, informed by feedback from key stakeholders. The images below show the preferred 'Do-Maximum' option.





*Do-Maximum (Central) Option*



*Do-Maximum (South) Option*





*Do-Maximum (North) Option Proposal*

## Context

The A4871 runs through Caernarfon. This road was the main trunk road but has seen its role and use significantly changed since the construction of the A487 Caernarfon to Bontnewydd bypass, which redirects through traffic around the town. The multistorey car park is access off the A4871 flyover roundabout and is located on the inland edge of the town centre.



*Birdseye view of Caernarfon's A4871 Flyover and Multi-Storey Car Park*



The A4871 was constructed in the 1980s and, as the historic photograph and map below show, resulted in the severance of streets and demolition of houses, businesses, a library, schools, and recreational facilities.



*Historic map of Caernarfon from 1965 – line showing the route of the A4871*



*Historic photograph during construction of the A4871*

## Main Points

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The Design Commission is supportive of the ambition to fundamentally change this part of the town. We welcome how Caernarfon Council and Transport for Wales are taking the opportunity to look afresh at the new bypass' impact on the A4871 route through the town centre. We support the ambition to improve the nature of the place whilst encouraging active travel and public transport.

From the material presented, we sense that the starting point for the project has been the aim to demolish the flyover and multi-storey car park, due to their problems (limited asset life, low usage levels and in the case of the car park, antisocial behaviour) and ongoing maintenance costs. The wider benefits to the town and local community have followed, in part, as justification for the proposed interventions. We recognise the significant positive impact of demolishing the flyover and potentially from demolishing the car park, but what they are replaced with must ensure that the positive impact is maximised and does not leave issues unresolved or even create other problems.

There was a strong feeling that the linkage between the two interventions - the road reconfiguration and the car park demolition - was a little artificial. Whilst they have common origins around aging assets and low usage levels, consideration should be given to moving them forward separately as two independent projects. That is projects which are broadly seeking to achieve two different sets of objectives:

- reducing street severance, enhancing non-motorised access and use for residents (for residents) and creating land parcels for useable development or other beneficial purposes (the road reconfiguration)
- creating an upgraded public transport interchange, enabling greater bus movement and patronage along with creating public space or other new facilities for residents and visitors. (the car park demolition)

It should be recognised that it is entirely possible that funding sources and thus delivery timescales could be different between the two.

### **Flyover**

The options considered for the replacement of the flyover in this study are not sufficiently different to the current road system and would, in placemaking and urban design terms, replace the flyover with a road that is broadly similar in the way it functions. The proposed road layouts have been designed to prioritise vehicular movement functions over its potential place function. The proposals would not significantly improve people's experience crossing the road, the green spaces are inaccessible and patchy, and the project has not looked at how the land could be used differently.

A more radical design approach is needed to make it feel like the bypass was never there and mend the town. A bolder approach is needed to maximise this unique opportunity to fundamentally improve the town and demonstrate public benefits to obtain funding.

The feasibility study has been focused on traffic flow and highway engineering and developing previously identified options. However, there is a need to think more broadly and have a design that is led by urban design and placemaking – this requires a different professional team.

There is a need for exploration and analysis of the character of the place: what it is now and what it should become. Consideration needs to be given to how the interventions can reverse the severance caused by the road and stitch the streets back together – but too meet today's needs not just replicating parts of what was previously in place. Greater focus is needed on how to prioritise pedestrians over vehicles, exploration of different road alignments, testing how much the carriageway can be narrowed, how to create a street rather than a road and how to integrate buildings that face onto the new streets and release public land that could provide new housing development.

A roundabout is not an appropriate feature for a town centre – it is an anti-urban form. A signalised junction would be appropriate even it is slower and less 'functional' for vehicular traffic. There may also need to be broader consideration of bus routes and HGV routes for the town centre, assuming the roundabout to the north is retained. Revision of the one way gyratory at the junction with the A4085 should be part of this project as the historic street severance is significant here too.

Further work is needed to create public realm with a purpose, with more joined-up accessible and usable landscape, consideration of how cycle routes connect key destinations and integration with the wider active travel network.

Overall, before any future design stages or applications for funding, further work is needed to understand how the interventions and wider benefits can help improve the of the town centre. We strongly recommend that work is now undertaken that takes a placemaking approach, includes a character study, develops a simple and clear vision, and culminates in an urban design led proposal. This work needs to be undertaken now, not in the next formal design stage.

### **Car Park**

We recognise that the car park is an eyesore, an unpleasant place for people using the car park and bus users, and that there are problems with anti-social behaviour. We support



the ambition to improve this situation and create a more welcoming entrance to the town and a better environment for the people in the area.

However, the decision to demolish the car park needs to be informed by a wider car parking survey and strategy. What is the overall car parking demand in the town centre at different times of the year? Which car parks do people currently use? Which car parks are in the best location to accommodate this demand? Is it better to refurbish the existing asset, and thus concentrate/enhance car parking in this multi-storey car park on the edge of town or to use other car parks in the town? Which car parks have the most opportunity as sites for development (such as affordable housing) or the creation of a successful public space? All these questions need to be considered as part of a town-wide car parking strategy. This is especially true given the embodied carbon within the existing asset and its positive location with easy accessibility adjacent to the A4871.

It was good to hear that there is a relatively high level of bus use in the area and that the Council is looking to build patronage from this relatively strong base. Wider consideration and testing is needed about whether this is the best location for the bus station. Where is the best location? Is it likely to need expanding in the future? What is the best way to optimise this distribution? Answering these questions would aid in the 'case-making' for intervention at this location and give confidence that there will be sufficient activity to activate any new public space (see below). It would allow a full consideration of the benefits to a wide range of user groups beyond the relocated car drivers.

If the car park is to be demolished, then further consideration is needed about what should go in its place, along with any enhancements to the bus station. Is a public open space in this location needed? How much open space is the right amount within the town centre? How do you create a vibrant space that does not feel too quiet? This needs urban design and placemaking leadership to ensure the space is well used and successful. There are, for example, backs of buildings facing onto the proposed public space that would lack an active frontage suitable for a public square. Consideration should be given to whether a building should be developed on part of the site, such as at the roundabout end, to make the public space more enclosed and feel part of the town. There is also a culverted watercourse that may have potential be opened up and integrated into the public realm.

## Next Steps

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The Design Commission will continue to offer support to Transport for Wales and Cyngor Gwynedd Council. We can help support the development of a brief and procurement process to appoint a design team to undertake placemaking and urban design work to complement and enhance the work to date. This would help with defining and more clearly

articulating the case for intervention (and investment/expenditure) and focus the outcomes on as wide and as inclusive group of users as possible. This should enhance the opportunities to seek funding from as wide a range of sources as possible. We encourage the team to contact us to discuss this further as soon as possible.

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

## Attendees

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Client: Joe Ephraim, Transport for Wales  
Adam Graham, Transport for Wales  
Steffan Jones, Cyngor Gwynedd Council  
Gerwyn Jones, Cyngor Gwynedd Council  
Rhian Elin George, Cyngor Gwynedd Council  
Iwan Ap Trefor, Cyngor Gwynedd Council

Design Team: Katrina Keddle, AECOM  
João Ribeiro, AECOM  
Gary Dawson, AECOM  
Jane Ash, AECOM

### **DCFW Design Review Panel**

Chair: Ewan Jones

Panel: Simon Power  
Max Hampton, DCFW Design Advisor

Observing: Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW Chief Executive

## 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.

There were no declarations of interest.