

# Road Safety Audit Review

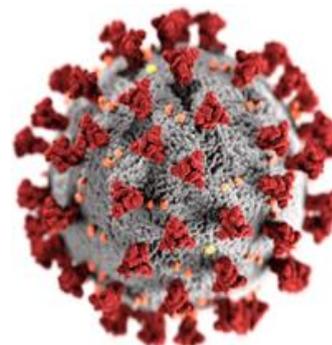
November 2020

This Road Safety Audit Review provides road safety auditors, designers, other road safety professionals and project managers with an update on current road safety audit related topics in addition to the review of Road Safety Audit (RSA) reports.

This November edition comprises the review of 60 RSA reports submitted to the Highways England inbox ([roadsafetyaudit@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:roadsafetyaudit@highwaysengland.co.uk)) between January and June 2020 (inclusive).

## The effect of COVID-19 on road safety audits

In March 2020, as England entered into the first COVID-19 national lockdown, Highways England relaxed the mandatory requirements around the need for site visits as part of the RSA process. This included relaxing the site visit requirements for Stage 1 and Stage 2 road safety audits while maintaining Stage 3 site visits. These temporary relaxations aimed to reduce the risk of road safety audits delaying projects, whilst limiting the risks to road safety auditors.



## The relaxations were effective between 27 March 2020 and 30 June 2020.

Based on current Government guidance, a similar relaxation has **not** been introduced during the lockdown effective from 5 November 2020.

## What is included in this Road Safety Audit Review?

- The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Road Safety Audits
- Common problems featured in road safety audit reports
- Use of combined Stage 1 and 2 road safety audits
- Areas for development
- Good practice

# Overview

This review focuses on a sample of the road safety audits uploaded to Highways England's RSA database during the period January to June 2020. A total of 148 RSAs were submitted to the Highways England inbox, 147 of which were carried out to GG 119. It is noted that this is more than the 130 RSAs submitted to the inbox during the period July to December 2019. A total of 60 of these RSAs have been considered in detail for this review.

**KEY REMINDER: Please remember to submit finalised road safety audits to [roadsafetyaudit@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:roadsafetyaudit@highwaysengland.co.uk)**

The purpose of this review is to inform discussion on good practice and highlight areas that might need further development.

Other focus areas for this period are to determine the impact of the **COVID-19 pandemic** on road safety audit and to understand how many **Combined Stage 1 and Stage 2 RSAs** are being undertaken.

The types of schemes covered by the submitted RSAs are shown in Figure 1 and indicate that the majority of the RSA reports submitted to [roadsafetyaudit@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:roadsafetyaudit@highwaysengland.co.uk) were for maintenance schemes, with a smaller proportion for signing and lining schemes, junction improvements and drainage schemes.

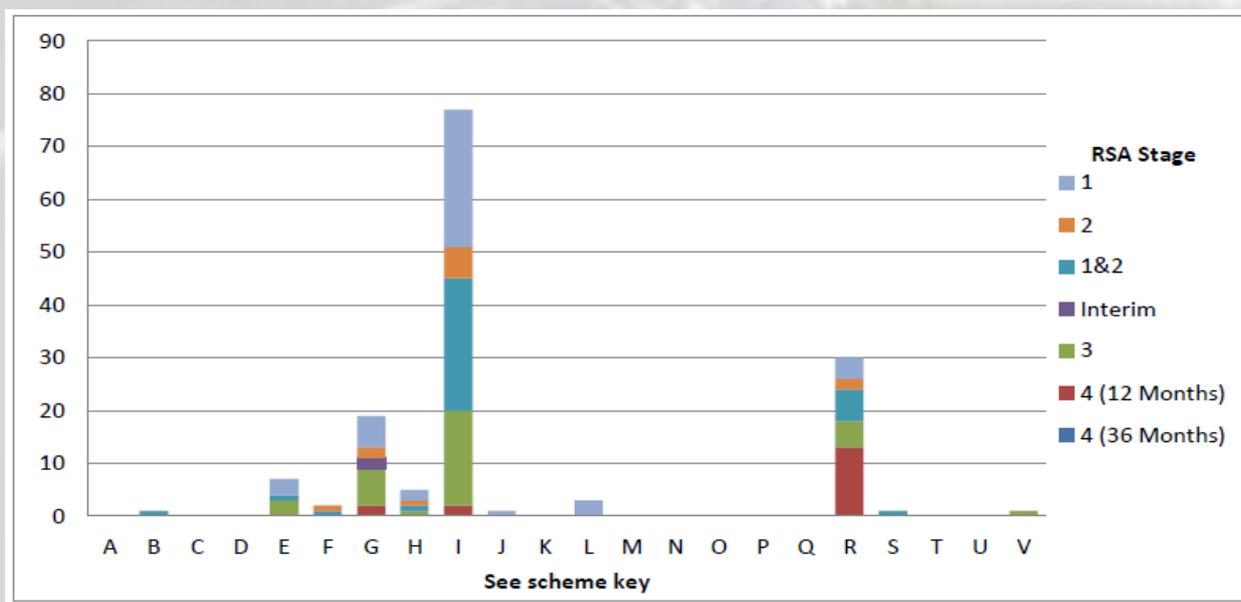


Figure 1 – RSAs by scheme type submitted during this 6-month period (January – June 2020)

Scheme Key			
All-Lanes-Running / Smart Motorways	A	WCHR Path / Way / Route	L
Bridge	B	Public Realm / Urban Regeneration	M
Bus Lane / Guided Bus	C	Public Transport Interchange / Hub	N
Conversion from Single to Dual Carriageway	D	Road / Access Closure or Feature / Facility Removal	O
Drainage	E	Shared-Use (WCHRs & Traffic)	P
Enforcement Infrastructure / Cameras	F	Shared-Use (WCHRs Only)	Q
Junction Improvement	G	Signs / Markings	R
Link Improvement	H	Temporary Traffic Management	S
Maintenance Infrastructure / Access / Safety	I	Tram or LRT Route / Facility	T
Traffic Signals (New)	J	Tunnel	U
WCHR Crossing	K	Widening	V

# The sample

Of the 148 reports submitted, 60 sample reports were selected for review. Figure 2 illustrates the number of each stage of RSA in the study sample.

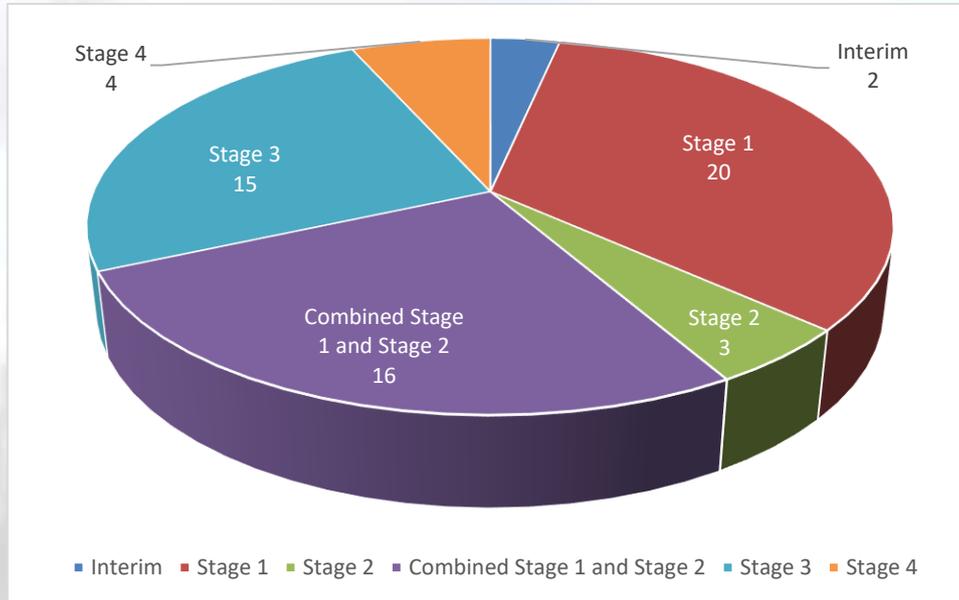


Figure 2 – RSAs by stage for the sample reviewed in this 6-month period (January – June 2020)

# RSAs submitted by Highways England Areas

Figure 3 shows the number of RSAs submitted to the Highways England inbox between January and June 2020 by each Highways England Area (Area 5 is captured in the DBFO column).

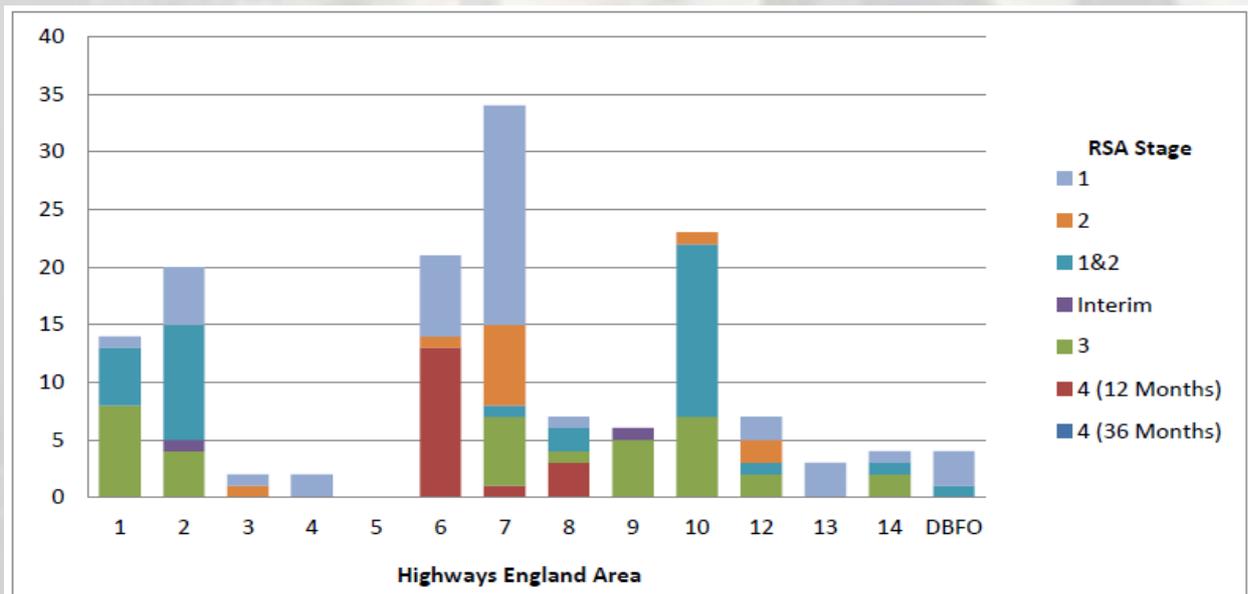


Figure 3 - RSAs submitted in this 6-month period (January - June 2020) by Highways England Operational Area

Area 7 have submitted the most RSA reports in this 6-month period. In the previous two quarterly reviews, Area 9 submitted the most RSAs.

# Road safety audit during the COVID-19 pandemic

Of the 60 RSAs reviewed, 18 were undertaken during the first lockdown, of which 7 did not include a site visit by both Team Members. None of these 7 were associated with a Stage 3 RSA, in line with the relaxations authorised by Highways England's Chief Highways Engineer (CHE). Of the 11 RSAs undertaken during the lockdown period that did include a site visit, 8 were Stage 3 RSAs and the remaining 3 were an Interim RSA, a Stage 1 RSA and Combined Stage 1 and 2 RSA. The visits for these 3 RSAs were not necessary under the relaxations at the time.

A number of these reports quoted the statement in the CHE letter which read 'Online mapping was used in place of the site visits.' None of the reports in the sample had access to a 3D model.

**KEY REMINDER: There is a requirement for a fully compliant Stage 1 or Stage 2 Road Safety Audit to be undertaken, including a site visit in accordance with GG 119, if the project has not moved beyond this stage after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.**

All 18 of the RSAs made reference to the CHE letter and 4 of these audits did not raise any issues. It will only be apparent at the next RSA stage if the site visit relaxations had an impact on the number or type of problems raised.

The ways in which this was documented in the RSA reports varied across the sample, although some good practice approaches were noted as follows:

- ✓ The RSA Team Statement was updated to state that the RSA had been undertaken in accordance with GG 119 and the CHE letter.
- ✓ A copy of the CHE letter was included as an appendix.
- ✓ One of the reports made reference to the relaxations in the recommendation, stating that a full RSA should be undertaken when the site can be visited.

## Common problems raised in RSA reports

### **Overgrown vegetation obscuring traffic signs**

A number of reports included problems regarding overgrown vegetation obscuring traffic signs. This is something that should be captured by the designer within the design drawings / specifications.

### **Ponding**

A number of problems related to the ponding of surface water in low spots. It is important to consider where the proposals will affect the existing drainage provisions or when an existing issue might be made worse by a new scheme.

### **Practical assessment of roadside cabinets in terms of usage and siting**

It is important that designers consider how these features will operate when siting them within a design i.e. Will the operative have their back to oncoming traffic?

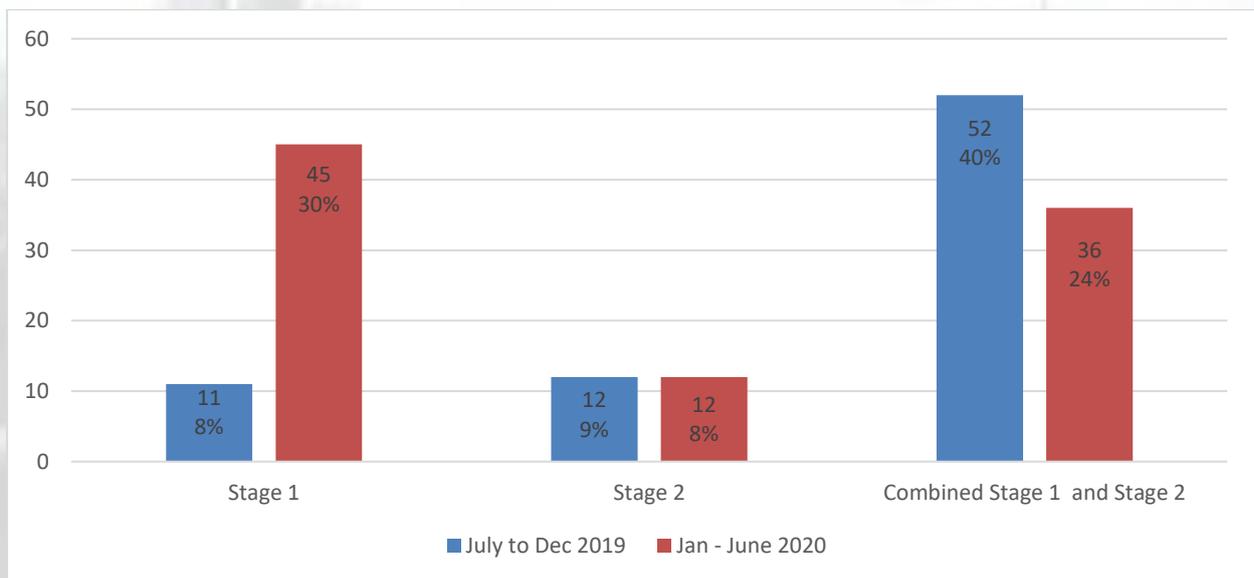
### **Gaps in VRS**

Where short gaps are left between the VRS, the terminal ends themselves can be a hazard when struck. Designers should consider removing short gaps to provide a continuous section of VRS.

## Combined Stage 1 and 2 RSAs

There has been a reduction in the number of combined Stage 1 and Stage 2 RSAs submitted to the inbox during this 6-month period compared with those submitted between July and December 2019. Figure 4 illustrates the change in submissions and indicates an increase in Stage 1 RSAs, possibly reflecting the clearer requirement in GG 119.

**KEY REMINDER: GG 119 requires that a stage 1 RSA is carried out at the completion of preliminary design. The combination of stage 1 and stage 2 RSA reports is only permitted at completion of the detailed design stage where no preliminary design has been undertaken. See clause 5.17.2 in GG 119.**



**Figure 4 – Comparison of RSA design stages with the preceding 6-month period<sup>1</sup>**

One of the combined Stage 1 and Stage 2 RSAs included drawings which were badged as preliminary design. In this instance the RSA team should challenge the project manager and highlight the requirements within GG 119. If the RSA stage is not changed by the project manager then the RSA team should state this within the RSA introduction.

**KEY REMINDER: Auditors should challenge the contents of the RSA brief if they do not consider the level of detail is sufficient for the RSA stage being requested.**

## Areas for development

Based on the RSAs reviewed in this sample, this section aims to identify elements that could be changed to align better with GG 119, or that could be improved so the reports follow best practice.

### **Audit Team requests for additional information**

A number of the submitted RSAs stated that the information provided with the RSA brief was lacking in detail or there were discrepancies in the information. Despite this, the RSAs were

<sup>1</sup> Percentages are a proportion of all RSAs submitted (including stages 3 and 4).

undertaken with reduced scopes. The RSA team should recommend that an interim RSA is undertaken where the information provided to the team is insufficient for the requested RSA stage or delay the RSA until the appropriate level of detail is available.

#### **Issues which are relevant to more than one location**

GG 119 specifies that the RSA report shall contain a separate statement for each identified RSA problem, describing the location and nature of the problem and the type of collisions or road user injuries likely to occur as a result of the problem.

One of the RSA reports included a number of problems in relation to ponding at various locations across the scheme. This RSA included 15 problems, of which 4 were related to surface water ponding. Problems with a common theme could be consolidated as a single problem and reference made to the various locations to which it is applicable.

#### **Collision analysis in RSA reports Stages 1 to 3**

A number of the RSA reports included detailed analysis of collision data in the introduction. GG 119 for RSA Stages 1 to 3 states that a summary of road traffic collision data should be provided to the audit team as part of the RSA brief.

**KEY REMINDER: At RSA Stages 1 to 3, the RSA team is not required to undertake detailed collision analysis of the scheme being audited. See Table C.5 in GG 119.**

#### **Problems considered to be resolved reiterated from previous RSA stages**

In some of the RSA reports, problems raised at previous stages were reiterated despite having been resolved. GG 119 requires that any RSA actions in the RSA response report from the previous stage that have been agreed for action but not completed shall be detailed. It is not necessary to make reference to problems which are considered to be resolved.

**KEY REMINDER: At RSA Stages 1 to 3, RSA problems and recommendations relating to incomplete RSA actions shall be reiterated at the subsequent stage. See clauses 5.23 and 5.27 in GG 119.**

#### **Stage 3 RSAs – Invitations to maintaining agent representatives**

Thirteen of the 15 Stage 3 RSAs reviewed in this period detailed the invitation of a police representative, but only 7 detailed the invitation to the maintaining agent.

**KEY REMINDER: RSA teams for Road Safety Audit Stage 3 are required to invite both police and maintaining agent representatives in accordance with Table 5.42 in GG 119.**

#### **Stage 4 RSAs**

One of the Stage 4 RSAs submitted in this period stated there had been no collisions since scheme opening, however a site visit was undertaken. As no collisions had been recorded, this would typically negate the need for a Stage 4 RSA and no information was provided to explain why the RSA was undertaken.

**KEY REMINDER: A Stage 4 RSA report is not needed where no road traffic collisions have been recorded in the vicinity of the highway scheme over the 12-month period of post-opening validated road traffic collision data. See clause 5.34 in GG 119.**

### Details in the introduction

A number of the reports did not include details of who approved the RSA brief. The RSA brief is required to be approved by the overseeing organisation. See clause 4.3 and 5.13 in GG 119.

**KEY REMINDER: The RSA report needs to include details of who supplied the RSA brief, who approved the RSA brief and who approved the RSA team.**

### Description of the RSA process

A number of the RSAs included a section in the front of the report which detailed the RSA process and various responsibilities throughout. It is not the responsibility of the audit team to manage the on-going RSA process between the overseeing organisation and the design team and this does not need to be included within the report.

## Good practice

### Approach to the RSA during COVID-19 restrictions

All of the reports which were impacted by restrictions in place at the time of the site visit included detailed information on how the restrictions affected the RSA process and the approach that was taken in light of them. This ensures that in the future we understand why the RSA was undertaken differently.

### Communication with police and maintaining agent representatives during the COVID-19 relaxations

The relaxations put on site visits during the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the number of members of the team that needed to attend the site to two. A number of the Stage 3 RSAs reviewed made reference to other ways in which they incorporated comments from the police and maintaining agents, including sending photographs or inviting them to comment on the RSA. This enabled the views of those unable to attend the site to be captured.

### Traffic flows during the pandemic

Where site visits were undertaken at a time when government restrictions were in place, some of the RSAs made reference to the likelihood that traffic flows would be lighter than usual. It is important to note this variation from the norm as this could impact on the road safety implications of the proposals.

### Photographs

GG 119 requires a RSA report to include photographs of the problems identified, if available. A number of the RSAs expanded on this requirement and included an appendix for the photographs taken on site. This enabled a good visual representation of the site as a whole to the reader.

Photographs have been used extensively in the submitted RSAs to better illustrate the problems raised. This is an effective way for an auditor to clearly illustrate a problem to the designer / overseeing organisation.

### Details in the introduction

GG 119 requires that RSA reports include details of who supplied the RSA brief, who approved the RSA brief and who approved the RSA team. This was something that was highlighted as an area for improvement during previous reviews. The majority of the reports reviewed during this period included details of who supplied the RSA brief and who approved the RSA team, but not who approved the RSA brief.

# CPD

## Continuing professional development

Table 3.8.2 in GG 119 provides guidance on continuing professional development (CPD) for road safety auditors. Whilst COVID-19 has prevented the majority of face-to-face CPD opportunities, there are numerous online resources available which auditors can access to maintain their CPD record.

**KEY REMINDER:** Examples of organisations offering online resources suitable for CPD include the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (CIHT), the Society of Road Safety Auditors (SoRSA), the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) and Road Safety GB.

**DID YOU KNOW?** New guidance to help road safety auditors apply good practice on highway schemes has been published by the CIHT. This online guidance has been developed specifically to assist those new to road safety auditing – or not involved in the practice on a full-time basis – to understand their roles and responsibilities through the audit process. GG119 requirements and advice remain the standard for all Highways England schemes.

The link to the Road Safety Audit Guidance Manual is provided here.

<https://www.ciht.org.uk/news/road-safety-audit-guidance-manual-launched/>