

The Highways Agency is inviting your feedback on our planned improvements to the A556 trunk road between M6 Junction 19 and M56 Junction 7 in Cheshire. The purpose of this document, our Statement of Community Consultation,

is to set out how we will consult the local community about our proposals. It firstly gives some background to the project and how the application to build it will progress.

The Application

We are developing this scheme under the Planning Act 2008. We are publishing this statement under Section 47 of that Act. We have consulted Cheshire East Council, the local authority in whose area the project will be built, about our plans to consult the local community.

The Planning Act 2008 requires us to make an application to the Infrastructure Planning Commission ('IPC') for a Development Consent Order to build the scheme. The IPC is an impartial public body whose role is to consider whether permission should be given for major infrastructure projects like this scheme. We intend to make our application in 2012.

The provisions of the Localism Act 2011 are due to commence in April 2012. Under this Act the IPC will be abolished and its role as an examining body replaced by the Planning Inspectorate. Therefore, any references in this document to the IPC's capacity as an examining body, which includes the making of recommendations on applications, should be read here also as references to its successor.

The likely process then is that the IPC will examine the application for this project and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, whose role it will be to make the decision on whether it should go ahead.

The Government is publishing National Policy Statements ("NPSs") relating to the types of projects the IPC examine. These will provide frameworks for the IPC to use when considering applications. The draft National Road and Rail Networks NPS is expected to be launched for consultation in January 2012, with an anticipated designation date late in 2012, which may be after we submit our application to the IPC.

When we submit our application the IPC must consider whether our consultation has been adequate. This pre-application consultation will be important in relation to the examination process that follows after an application is accepted by the IPC. Therefore, the best time to provide feedback on this scheme is now by taking part in this pre-application consultation.

You can find more information about the IPC and the Planning Act 2008 on the IPC's website: <http://infrastructure.independent.gov.uk/> or by calling them on 0303 444 5000.

The Project

The A556 between M6 Junction 19 and M56 Junction 7 is part of the main route between south Manchester/North Cheshire and the West Midlands/South. The existing road is mainly single four-lane carriageway, and suffers from congestion, variable journey times and a poor accident record. It also has negative impacts on the local environment. The project objectives are to:

- Improve the local environment in Bucklow Hill and Mere
- Improve road safety and journey time reliability
- Reduce conflicts between long distance and local traffic
- Minimise the environmental impacts of the scheme, during construction and once open to traffic.

The scheme will improve the route to a consistent standard of modern dual carriageway to achieve these objectives. The main aspects of the project include:

- Construction of a new section of the A556 from M6 Junction 19 to north of Bucklow Hill, to bypass Over Tabley, Mere and Bucklow Hill
- Improvement of the existing A556 north of the new bypass, to the M56
- Improvement of the layout of M56 Junction 7 at Bowdon
- Creation of junctions allowing local traffic access to the new A556
- Narrowing of the bypassed section of the A556 and changes to side road connections
- Measures to mitigate environmental impacts of the scheme and improve the local environment

The Consultation

Your feedback before we send our application to the IPC is important to us. We held consultations in 2007 and 2009 on the outline route options, and are now building on these events through this current public consultation on more detailed design proposals.

We want to make sure that the local community, the residents, local interest groups, businesses, visitors and road users, have the opportunity to fully understand the scheme and comment on our proposals.

To do this we are holding this 12 week public consultation. **It will start on Monday 23rd January 2012 and will end on Monday 16th April 2012.** We will provide consultation information on various issues including:

- Junction layout and strategy
- Works to the existing road ('de-trunking') and side roads
- Environmental assessments and potential environmental impacts
- Environmental mitigation measures
- Arrangements during construction of the scheme

We have carried out an Environmental Impact Assessment for the scheme, and are publishing a document called the Preliminary Environmental Information as part of the consultation material. This gives information about the potential environmental effects of the scheme and the measures proposed to reduce those effects, such as landscaping, so to assist well-informed responses to consultation.

Our public consultation will involve:

- A consultation exhibition held at Cottons Hotel & Spa, Manchester Road, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 0SU. This will be held in the Verandah Suite on:
 - Saturday 28th January 2012 from 10am until 5pm
 - Tuesday 31st January 2012 from 10am until 9pm
 - Thursday 9th February 2012 from 1pm until 9pm
- The publication of our consultation leaflet on our scheme webpage, www.highways.gov.uk/a556knutsfordbowdon The leaflet gives information about the scheme and the issues you are being consulted on. It includes a questionnaire, which you can use to provide feedback to us electronically.
- The distribution of our consultation leaflet to addresses in the parishes through which the scheme will pass.
- Meetings with local residents, businesses and groups about the scheme in general or particular issues. If you are interested in this, please let us know
- The publication of our consultation information on our webpage, www.highways.gov.uk/a556knutsfordbowdon As well as the consultation leaflet, the consultation information will include:

The Preliminary Environmental Information.

A non-technical summary of the Preliminary Environmental Information

The Scheme Assessment Report. This summarises the engineering design and business case for the scheme

The Junction Options Comparative Assessment Report

This Statement of Community Consultation

A notice required under Section 48 of the Planning Act 2008 to publicise the consultation in the local and national press

All this information will be available to download free of charge

- The deposit of our consultation information between Monday 23rd January 2012 and Monday 16th April 2012 at the following local community facilities for you to see:

Knutsford Library, Toft Road, Knutsford, Cheshire, WA16 0PG. Open: Monday 9am – 5pm, Tuesday 9am – 7pm, Wednesday 9am – 1pm, Thursday 9am – 7pm, Friday 9am – 5pm, Saturday 9:30am – 1pm. Telephone: 01625 374873 email: knutsford.library@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Cheshire East Council's Macclesfield Customer Service Centre, Town Hall, Market Place, Macclesfield, SK10 1EA. Open: Monday – Friday 8:45am – 5pm. Telephone: 0300 123 55 00

Sandbach Library, The Commons, Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 1FJ. Open: Monday 9am – 7pm, Tuesday 9am – 5pm, Wednesday 9am – 7pm, Thursday 9am – 1pm, Friday 9am – 5pm, Saturday 9:30am – 1pm. Telephone: 01270 375355 / e-mail: sandbach.library@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Trafford Council's 'Welcome Point', Waterside House, Sale Waterside, Sale, M33 7ZF. Open: Monday 9am – 7pm, Tuesday 9am – 5pm, Wednesday 9am – 7pm, Thursday 9am – 5pm, Friday 9am – 5pm, Saturday 10am – 4pm. Telephone: 0161 912 2000 email: access.trafford@trafford.gov.uk

Little Bollington Cof E Primary School, Lymm Rd, Little Bollington, Cheshire. Likely viewing times: Monday – Friday 3.30pm – 4.30pm. Telephone: 01565 830344

Highways Agency office, 9th Floor, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Viewing times: Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm. Telephone: 0161 930 5998

All this information will be available to view free of charge. You will be able to take away paper copies of the consultation leaflet, the statement of community consultation, the Section 48 Notice and the non-technical summary of the Preliminary Environmental Information free of charge. Alternatively you can obtain these documents in paper form free of charge by contacting the project team using the details below. Paper copies of other documents can be provided on request. There will be a charge for each document. Please contact the project team for further details regarding prices and payment methods. You can also obtain a free copy of the complete Preliminary Environmental Information in a CD format by contacting the project team.

Following the consultation we will produce a Consultation Report to summarise the views and comments received and outlining how we have taken your comments into consideration. We will send this report to the IPC as part of our application. The IPC will decide whether our application meets the required standards to proceed to examination, and will determine whether our pre-application consultation has been adequate.

We need to collect and assess all responses to consultation before compiling our application to the IPC. To allow us time to do this, we must set a date by which we need to receive your consultation feedback. **We therefore must receive your feedback by Monday 16th April 2012.**

If you want to contact us or find out more about this project, you can:

- Visit the scheme webpage: www.highways.gov.uk/a556knutsfordbowdon
- Email us: a556knutsfordbowdon@highways.gsi.gov.uk
- Call us: 0161 930 5998
- Write to us: A 556 Knutsford to Bowdon Project Team, Highways Agency, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

