

**THE DOLGELLAU TO SOUTH OF BIRKENHEAD TRUNK ROAD (A494)
(DROME CORNER TO EWLOE IMPROVEMENT)
COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 200- .**

STATEMENT OF REASONS

INTRODUCTION

The A494 Drome Corner to Ewloe Improvement is located in the vicinity of Queensferry, Flintshire. The improvement lies between the junction with the A55 at Ewloe and the River Dee and is one of the primary links between North Wales and the North West of England.

The existing road runs through a built-up urban area at its northern end, and through more suburban and rural land in the central and southern sections. The urban area consists of the sewage works, industrial estates, residential estates and large retail warehouses while the rural land is predominantly permanent pasture, semi mature planting and overgrown hedgerows. Some local roads currently join the Trunk Road by way of sub-standard junctions including junctions at Old Aston Hill (northbound), Plough Lane, (northbound and southbound), Clay Lane (southbound) and the existing access to the sewage works area beside the River Dee.

THE NEED FOR THE SCHEME

The A494 at this location provides the main link between North Wales and Merseyside and also forms part of the shortest route between North Wales and the M56 and the North of England. The road also provides a common route for traffic to and from Mold, Wrexham and the M53. Local traffic is catered for from Ewloe, Buckley, Connah's Quay and the Deeside Industrial Estate and many other smaller towns and villages.

Traffic volumes have continued to grow and this section of the A494 is now carrying well in excess of the recommended maximum volume for a road of this type. Between the Deeside Park interchange and the St David's Park Interchange, the route corridor generally provides a facility for local traffic rather than through traffic normally associated with this type of road. Some 62,000 (Annual Average Daily Traffic, AADT) vehicles currently use the dual carriageway, with only 23% of the traffic entering Wales at Deeside having a destination beyond Northop on the A55.

This scenario changes to some degree during holiday periods when additional volumes of holiday traffic to and from North Wales pass through this section of road, causing further congestion and delay. The strategic requirements for the route corridor are enhanced as the corridor forms part of a high quality link between UK east coast ports and Wales and the Irish mainland via the port at Holyhead.

The route corridor will need to accommodate the continued growth in traffic volumes, together with additional traffic generated by the development of Deeside Park Industrial Estate, land at St. David's Park and other local developments. The current standard of the trunk road at this location is insufficient to accommodate these expected increases in traffic volume. The route currently suffers from significant congestion problems at morning and evening peaks, at bank holidays and during other holiday periods. This problem will continue to worsen over the coming years.

Additionally, the section of road under consideration has a poor accident record, particularly at junctions. There is also some evidence of peak spreading, i.e. some travellers are travelling earlier or later to avoid the congestion. Routine maintenance operations that require a lane closure are now restricted to night time periods leading to increased maintenance costs. Even in off-peak periods a lane closure can cause delays and generate a tail back of traffic. Additional lane capacity is therefore required from the River Dee to Ewloe.

PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

The scheme was added to the Welsh Office Roads Programme in May 1991. Options for Public consultation were developed and exhibitions held during June and July 1992 with comments being invited on 2 alternative alignments and junction combinations. As a result of this exercise a preferred option was selected, described in later paragraphs herein.

The Preferred Option based on the above proposal was announced by the Secretary of State indicating that the existing road should be widened with junctions at St. David's Park and Queensferry.

In June 2005 a Contract to take the scheme through the Statutory Process and on to Construction was awarded to Alfred McAlpine/Faber Maunsell based on the Preferred Option Announcement.

Following further engineering, traffic and environmental assessment a review was undertaken of all alternative junction options to ensure selection of the best option that considered both strategic and local objectives.

This review culminated in a slightly revised scheme, which closely followed the preferred option.

A public information exhibition to give local residents the opportunity to view the proposals prior to the publication of draft orders was held on 20 July–22 July 2006. Before the exhibition a large number of residents had expressed concern about the use of Old Aston Hill as part of the Improvement and in response to this concern a solution was identified and displayed at the exhibition. This solution is being taken forward as part of the-scheme and has been included in the draft orders. As a result of comments made at, and following, the exhibition a number of other changes to the scheme have also been made and included in the draft orders to address as many of those concerns as possible. These include:

1. Deletion of the proposed pedestrian route beneath the A494 on the northern side of the Wrexham – Bidston Railway line.
2. Deletion of the link road between Mountfield Road and Lower Aston Hall Lane
3. Addition of a new link road from the A55 Loop at Ewloe to the St David's Park Junction which includes re-opening of the road past the weighbridge. (This new link road was to be introduced as part of the proposals for the A55/A494 Ewloe Interchange Scheme).

THE PROPOSED SCHEME

The proposed scheme is an on-line improvement of approximately 4.25 km of the A494 between the St David's Park Interchange at Ewloe and the River Dee. The improvement will take the form of widening the existing 2 lane dual all purpose carriageway to a 3 or 4 lane dual carriageway with hard shoulders. Direct access junctions are to be closed resulting in the need for junction alterations and alternative routes for local roads.

A number of new structures are required. The existing footbridge between St David's Park and Ewloe will be replaced by an extended structure to modern access standards. At St David's Park Interchange both bridges require widening to accommodate additional lanes. The existing Wrexham Bidston Railway Bridge will be refurbished and a new bridge alongside the existing will accommodate the additional carriageways. An extension to the Plough Lane bridge structure is required. The existing Queensferry Viaduct will be demolished and two new bridges built to carry the new carriageways over the roundabout. The pedestrian routes through the junction are to be improved where necessary. At Queensferry Junction the existing subway is to be replaced with a widened and extended structure. A new bridge will be built beneath the Chester to Holyhead railway line to accommodate the southbound carriageway with the existing railway bridge being modified to carry the northbound carriageway + entry slip road and enable a separate cycleway to be constructed. At the River Dee a new bridge is required to carry the southbound carriageway. The existing bridge will be refurbished to carry northbound traffic and a separate footway /cycleway.

New local roads will be constructed to accommodate traffic movements from the closed, junctions which currently exist including Old Aston Hill, Plough Lane, Clay Lane and the existing access to the sewage works area beside the River Dee.

PLANNING PERMISSION

The Assembly does not require planning permission to carry out the proposed scheme. It is empowered as Highway Authority to undertake improvement to the existing trunk road under section 62 of the Highways Act 1980. The power to construct the new connecting road and the slip road, to de-trunk part of the trunk road and widen and improve the bridge over the River Dee (a navigable waterway) as part of the proposed scheme, will be obtained through "The Dolgellau to South of Birkenhead Trunk Road (A494) (Drome Corner to Ewloe Improvement) Connecting Road and Slip Road Order 200-". The power to stop up, alter, improve highways, footpaths and private means of access and to construct new highways, public footpaths and private means of access will be obtained through the 'The Dolgellau to South of Birkenhead Trunk Road (A494) (Drome Corner to Ewloe Improvement Side Roads) Order 200-" (SRO). The Connecting Road and Slip Road Order and the SRO published in draft on 29 December 2006.

THE CASE FOR COMPULSORY PURCHASE

This draft Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is published in association with the draft Connecting Road and Slip Road Order and SRO referred to above.

In certain circumstances the Assembly try to acquire land needed for minor highway development by agreement. To some degree, this approach has already been implemented on this project with a significant number of properties already purchased under blight powers. However, additional land is still necessary for the

construction of the scheme and a CPO is required to ensure the timely acquisition of the remaining land required to construct the improvement.

The CPO, if made, will involve the acquisition of land and buildings from certain landowners.

The alignment of the route follows the existing line of the trunk road as closely as possible in order to minimise the number of properties affected and minimise severance of land and businesses. The widening works have been designed to minimise the height of embankments and depth of cuttings, thereby reducing land-take to the minimum. The land that is subject to the CPO is the minimum necessary to construct the proposed scheme and to provide the necessary mitigation measures.

CONSULTATIONS

Surveys have been carried out which identify listed species affected by the proposals. These will be dealt with in the appropriate manner with licences being sought as necessary.

In consultation with interested bodies, Transport Wales has not received any objections to the proposals. There are no special considerations affecting the Order site, as there is no special property or designated land affected.

CADW have been consulted and have not raised any objections to the scheme proposals.

Both the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and the Environment Agency (EA) have been contacted with respect to affected statutory sites of ecological interest and have identified the River Dee as a SSSI and SAC as a designated site which is likely to be affected by the scheme. No geological or geomorphological statutory sites of interest are affected.

Discussions continue with respect to the mitigation measures required by CCW and the EA with respect to the SSSI features. Additionally, CCW specified that surveys for target protected species must be carried out and if any part of the site supported any European Protected Species a licence must be obtained. Transport Wales have commissioned a number of ecological surveys to identify and monitor protected species on, or in the vicinity of, the site including surveys for badger, lamprey, water vole and great crested newts. The results of these surveys and ongoing monitoring are available within the Environmental Statement produced in support of the scheme proposals and available for inspection at the deposit points listed herein.

Transport Wales confirms that the conditions specified by various Statutory Bodies have been addressed and this is reported in the Environmental Impact Assessment Determination Notice. There are no other social, economic, diversity or educational issues, which necessitate the involvement of other Government Departments.

DEPOSIT POINTS

The following documents will be available for inspection during normal working hours from 5 January 2007 to 16 February 2007 at :-

- Welsh Assembly Government, Transport Wales, Transport Planning and Administration Division 3, Cathays Park, Cardiff;
- Welsh Assembly Government, Transport Wales, Dinerth Road, Colwyn Bay, Conwy;
- Flintshire County Council, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire. CH7 6NB
- The A494 Project Office, 4 Bridge Cottages, Chester Road East, Pentre, Queensferry;
- Queensferry Library, Queensferry Campus, Queensferry, Deeside, Flintshire, CH5 1SE.
 - The draft Connecting Road and Slip Road Order and associated plan
 - The draft Side Roads Order (SRO) and associated map
 - The draft Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) and associated map
 - The Environmental Statement
 - The Non Technical Summary
 - Relevant plans and Scheme Drawings

MAKING OBJECTIONS

Any person wishing to comment on or object to the draft Compulsory Purchase Order may do so in writing to the Welsh Assembly Government, Transport Wales, Transport Planning and Administration Division 3, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ quoting reference BZ 910192-312 and stating the grounds of any objection. In the preparation of an objection and the statement of grounds of objection, it should be borne in mind that the substance of such an objection may be communicated to other people who may be affected by it. Letters should be dispatched to arrive no later than 16 February 2007.

DECISION PROCESS

The decision as to whether or not to proceed to make the draft CPO will be reached after taking account of any objections or representations made not only to it but also to the related Connecting Road and Slip Road Order and Side Roads Order. If statutory objections remain this may necessitate the holding of a Public Local Inquiry before an Independent Inspector. The appointed Inspector would then report his findings and recommendations to the Welsh Assembly Government who would then reach a final decision as to whether or not to make the Orders(s).