

Adran yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Department for Economy and Infrastructure



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**THE CHESTER TO BANGOR TRUNK ROAD (A55) (JUNCTIONS 16 AND 16A
IMPROVEMENT REALIGNMENT AND SLIP ROADS) ORDER 202-**

**THE CHESTER TO BANGOR TRUNK ROAD (A55) (JUNCTIONS 16 AND 16A
IMPROVEMENT REALIGNMENT AND SLIP ROADS) (SIDE ROADS) ORDER 202-**

**THE WELSH MINISTERS (THE CHESTER TO BANGOR TRUNK ROAD (A55)
(JUNCTIONS 16 AND 16A IMPROVEMENT REALIGNMENT AND SLIP ROADS))
COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 202-**

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE

Note: See Document Reference WG 1.07.02 for full evidence and referencing

Jonathan Stoddard CMLI

WELSH GOVERNMENT, LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

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1. Author

- 1.1 I am Jonathan Stoddard, a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute with over 29 years of experience.
- 1.2 I am the project landscape architect and have been responsible for undertaking the landscape and visual impact assessment of the Scheme and on the landscape and visual amenity of people.
- 1.3 My involvement in the A55 Junction 16/16A improvement scheme commenced in 1998 when I joined Richards Moorehead and Laing Ltd (RML). Prior to joining RML, I have previously worked on a number of projects along the A55 and in the Llanfairfechan and Penmaenmawr area.
- 1.4 I provide an overview and summary of the key findings in relation to the impact of the Scheme on landscape and visual amenity and the potential effects of the scheme should it proceed to the stages of construction and operation.

2. Background to the Project and its Setting

- 2.1 The Junction 16 and 16A improvement is located on the coast of North Wales along the existing A55 North Wales Expressway and on the coastal plain and northern fringe of Snowdonia National Park and the Carneddau Mountain Range. The coastal setting is spectacular, with rocky headlands rising above wide-open beaches and with open views to the north across the sea to the Anglesey Coast and the mountains of Snowdonia to the south.
- 2.2 The main road that passes through the town, Conway Road, used to be the main route for traffic travelling along the North Wales Coast. Increasing volumes of seasonal traffic passing through Penmaenmawr was causing congestion and prompted the need for a by-pass.
- 2.3 In 1989 the Penmaenbach to Dwygyfylchi improvement scheme opened, with a new tunnel constructed for westbound traffic, together with Junction 16A for westbound access to the village. The Penmaenmawr By-Pass between Junctions 15 and 16 was also constructed during this period of time. The road corridor runs parallel to and south of the railway, between the town centre and the coast.
- 2.4 The existing roundabout junction at Junction 16 lies approximately 1 km north-east from the centre of Penmaenmawr and 900 metres west from the centre of Dwygyfylchi. The Scheme will remove the existing roundabout at A55 Junction 16 and will replace it with a grade-separated junction with an overbridge and slip roads at Junction 16A. A new link road connection between Junction 16 and Junction 16A is proposed where the Junction 16 westbound slip roads would be retained.
- 2.5 The Scheme will provide over 2 km of active travel improvements, consisting of new off-road cycleways/footways and crossings. These works will extend from Conway Road in Penmaenmawr to the south of the improved A55 Junction 16 to Glan-Yr-Afon Road in Dwygyfylchi and along the proposed new link road. These enhancements will improve the safety of both pedestrians and cyclists, including those using the NCNR5.

3. Method of Assessment and Study Area

- 3.1 A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) of the Scheme proposals has been undertaken as part of the wider Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and is presented on Chapter 9 of the Environmental Statement.
Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects
- 3.2 The assessment of landscape and visual effects are two separate but related processes and should be clearly distinguished between each other as highlighted below:
- a) Assessment of Landscape Effects: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right; and
 - b) Assessment of Visual Effects: assessing visual effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.
- 3.3 An assessment of the likely effects of the Scheme on the landscape and visual amenity was undertaken at three stages:
- a) Construction;
 - b) Year 1 Opening; and
 - c) Year 15 after construction.
- 3.4 The Scheme includes areas of landscape mitigation has been designed to perform various environmental functions such as visual screening and the integration of structures and earthworks.

4. Landscape and Visual Effects

- 4.1 The Junction 16/16A improvement Scheme provides replacement junctions within or adjacent to the existing road corridor and provisions for Active Travel such as footpaths and cycleways. These represent similar features that occur within the existing road corridor and therefore no significant changes to the landscape character of the existing A55.
- 4.2 Junction 16A and the new link road would have some adverse effects on the landscape character of Pendyffryn Pasture and Parkland (LCA 10) to the north of Dwygyfylchi. The landscape character would be significantly affected during the construction period causing direct physical impact through site clearance of roadside vegetation, adjacent hedgerows and earthworks operations. The Scheme requires a significant amount of land within this area for the construction of the link road and false cutting. Land is also earmarked for a site compound in the fields west of Glan-yr-Afon Road.
- 4.3 On completion of construction the impact would subside and gradually diminish as the landscape mitigation measures start to establish. By Year 15 the landscape mitigation would be established and would integrate the overbridge, link road and associated structures and landform into the localised landscape. Overall, the landscape effect caused by the Scheme on the area north of Dwygyfylchi would represent no change to the landscape character of the area.
- 4.4 There would be no significant adverse effects on any landscape designations. However, the Scheme is likely to have some localised impacts on areas within the Snowdonia National Park during the construction period.
- 4.5 The existing A55 road corridor is overlooked by many properties within Dwygyfylchi. The open aspect of the view to the north, across the road corridor towards the open sea and coast of Anglesey, Puffin Island and the Great Orme, is of considerable value to some residents of Dwygyfylchi. The Scheme through the inclusion of the false cutting and extensive planting, would provide beneficial effects to residents on the outskirts of Dwygyfylchi afforded by the landscape mitigation that would screen views of the A55 road corridor and link road while retaining views north across open sea towards Conwy Bay and the Great Orme. Views of passing traffic at night would also be screened all year round by the false cutting topped with a masonry wall.
- 4.6 The Scheme would pass closer to the residential properties at Maes y Llan, but existing views north across the open sea from the properties would be retained. The details of the landscape mitigation at Maes-y-Llan is subject to ongoing consultation with local residents who, we understand, wish to retain views across the road corridor north towards the open sea. This also includes

further consideration of noise mitigation measures proposed for reduction of noise levels that are currently experienced by the residents. This issue is also dealt with in the evidence of my colleague Craig Barson.

- 4.7 Views south from the A55 road corridor would be contained by the roadside planting and earthworks between Junction 16 and Junction 16A while retaining distant views of landmarks to the east and west and the mountainous backdrop to the south. This green corridor would create a continuous band of value to the visual amenity experienced by motorists and non-motorised users of the link road with added benefits to biodiversity.
- 4.8 Landscape mitigation planting around Junction 16 and Junction 16A would integrate the structure and associated earthworks into the localised landscape while creating areas of visual amenity for users of the local road network and create an attractive entrance at the gateways to the town of Penmaenmawr and village of Dwygyfylchi.
- 4.9 Finally, it should be noted that the visual impact of the Scheme during the site clearance and construction phase of the project would cause significant short-term disruption to landscape and general amenity of the area and nearby residential properties. This would be extremely difficult to mitigate against due to the elevated nature of the village and wider area with open views to the north. The most effective mitigation would be to minimise the programme for the works to an absolute minimum and this would be a matter for the main contractor to address in their work programme.

5. Conclusion and Declaration

- 5.1 My proof of evidence includes facts which I regard as being relevant to the opinions which I have expressed, and the Inquiry's attention has been drawn to any matter which would affect the validity of that opinion.
- 5.2 As a landscape architect I have endeavoured and sought, with the engineering and other environmental specialists in the team, to minimise impacts of the Scheme and to optimise the effectiveness of proposed mitigation.
- 5.3 In my opinion the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, has been carried out and published in accordance with legislation and professional guidance.
- 5.4 In my opinion the development of measures to mitigate the landscape and visual effects of the Scheme are effective, justifiable and achievable.
- 5.5 I believe the facts I have stated in this proof of evidence are true and that the opinions expressed are correct.
- 5.6 I understand my duty to the Inquiry to assist it with matters within my expertise and believe that I have complied with that duty.