



Norwich Western Link – Local Liaison Group

April 2020

TO	NWL Local Liaison Group	FROM	NWL Project Team
DATE	27 April 2020	CONFIDENTIALITY	Public
SUBJECT	Project Update April 2020		

Introduction

This summary note provides an update on progress with the Norwich Western Link scheme, whilst face to face meetings are suspended in accordance with UK Government guidance on COVID-19.

The Project Team is continuing to press on with the scheme and making good progress despite the current COVID-19 situation. We are working to ensure that as soon as restrictions are lifted we will be ready to undertake the public consultation and, subject to DfT approval confirmation, the procurement process.

Progress Update

Despite the current restrictions, technical work is continuing to progress on the project. We have completed updates to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping report. We are also continuing with work on the reference design; highways and drainage design, developing Non-Motorised User (NMU) proposals, pavement design and signage strategy, with a revised date proposed for the start of the procurement process in June 2020.

Funding and Business Case

While the NWL's Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) was not approved in March's Budget, this was also the case for the majority of the Large Local Major and Major Road Network schemes put forward by sub-national transport bodies. We have received positive feedback from DfT who expressed that they are satisfied with our SOBC and no further work is required on this.

Going forward, in summary, we are continuing with work on the procurement documents and taking opportunities to enhance these, preparing the Outline Business Case and undertaking environmental assessment work to be included in the planning application next year.

The updated scheme objectives were approved at Cabinet in February 2020 – these will be taken into account within the next stage (Outline Business Case). Our traffic modelling update work is also continuing following DfT review of the proposed model specification earlier this year. This will include revalidating the model to a 2019 base year.

Surveys and Land

There is some disruption and delay to our survey schedule due to COVID-19 implications. Affected surveys will be recommenced as soon as possible, taking into account latest government guidance and advice from the project board.

Further to the above in order to minimise delays and risk to the programme, and having received guidance from DEFRA on this issue, we intend to continue with seasonally constrained ecology surveys to avoid missing the seasonal time window, adjusting our processes to take social distancing measures into account, where applicable.

Stakeholder Engagement

We have continued dialogue with relevant stakeholders via online meetings where possible. Meetings scheduled with the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England (NE) since social distancing guidance came into force have been cancelled, however communication has continued remotely.

NCC have reviewed the Highways England (HE) public consultation materials on the North Tuddenham to Easton dualling scheme and responded to their consultation – the NWL project team fed into this wider response. The response has been published on our website [here](#). Highways England have extended their North Tuddenham to Easton dualling scheme public consultation response deadline to 30 April 2020.

We are also continuing dialogue with HE via monthly team meetings and separate traffic modelling discussions, seeking to align and harmonise assumptions across both schemes. Both teams are also still working together and sharing work in progress draft scheme designs to allow a joined-up approach.

Local Access Public Consultation

As per our previous stakeholder email, the public consultation originally scheduled to launch in April has been postponed due to COVID-19. Work to prepare the consultation materials has continued in anticipation of holding the consultation as soon as possible after the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. It is currently anticipated that the earliest the consultation could commence is late June.

Programme

In light of the current situation with COVID-19 and approval of the SOBC, the project is experiencing an approximate 6 month delay. Therefore a revised planning submission date of October 2021 is envisaged, with pre-application public consultation now expected in May 2021. Commencing the design and build contractor procurement process by placing an OJEU notice has been assumed to be in June 2020, and is subject to DfT funding approval. We therefore expect to mobilise for construction in mid-2023, with the scheme opening to the public in 2025.