

# How Highways England plans major schemes

**Find out how Highways England designs and develops proposed major road schemes, including schemes of national significance**

[Highways England](#) manages [England's motorways and major A-roads](#). These roads support our daily life and are vital to our economy.

We are charged by government with delivering their [road investment strategy](#). This programme of investment aims to improve journeys, tackle congestion, support the economy and maintain safety.

We are responsible to you, the tax payer. So when we plan a project, we have to make sure that we meet the stated aims for the project and get the best value for money. Each scheme goes through a rigorous process to make sure this happens.

## Schemes with national significance

Many of the major road schemes we manage are of national significance, for example the [A303 Stonehenge: Amesbury and Berwick Down](#). Under the [Planning Act 2008](#) these schemes require a type of planning permission called a [Development Consent Order](#), which is granted by the [Secretary of State for Transport](#).

To obtain this order, we submit an application to the [Planning Inspectorate](#). The application sets out the design of the new road, the effect on other roads and the land needed for the scheme.

All schemes of national significance are legally required to go through extensive consultation before an application is submitted.

Smaller projects may not require a development consent order, or require a full formal public consultation, but they follow a similar rigorous process.

### Have your say

We ask for feedback from the public at regular intervals when planning a road scheme. Whether you are a local, someone who travels through the area or are the representative of an interested business or organisation, we want to hear your views. We use the feedback you give us to shape our designs and proposals.

Look out for the "Have your say" boxes to see when in the process you can contribute your views.

## Route options

When government decides that a major road scheme is needed, we begin by investigating and assessing route options.

We assess options carefully to determine if they are feasible and will meet the aims for the scheme set by government. Sometimes there may only be one appropriate option.

### **Have your say**

Once we have worked up viable options we outline our proposals and describe the various options. For each option we describe the likely effects and benefits on the local area.

We publish these proposals online and make them available at locations near the proposed scheme, such as local libraries. We may hold public information events and web chats to explain the options under consideration and give you an opportunity to discuss our proposals.

Then we ask the public and relevant organisations for their views on our proposals. This is your opportunity to have your say.

We take into account all the feedback we receive and use this to prepare a consultation report, which we make available online.

## **“Preferred route” selection**

Next we combine your feedback with our ongoing technical analysis to determine which option we would like to take forward.

As part of this we carry out an environmental impact assessment. For larger schemes and for those with a significant environmental impact, we will prepare and publish a detailed and extensive Environmental Statement. This will record our assessment of the environmental impacts and tell you what steps we propose to take to reduce that impact.

Considering all the information and feedback we have gathered, we will then select the option that best meets our aims for the scheme while minimising environmental impact and providing value for tax payers’ money.

## **“Preferred route” announcement**

The Secretary of State announces the “preferred route” for the scheme. We will publish this along with the work we carried out to compare the options.

At this stage we often register the preferred route with the local planning authority and asking them to protect a corridor within (usually) 67 metres of the centre line of the route.

The local planning authority will then tell us about any planning applications made in their area which fall within the protected zone/corridor. They will also reveal the scheme on local land searches carried out by anyone planning to buy a property within 200 metres of the route.

### **Have your say**

We will outline our preferred route and describe the likely effects and benefits on the local area.

We publish these proposals online and make them available at locations near the proposed scheme, such as local libraries. We may hold public information events and web chats to explain the options under consideration and give you an opportunity to discuss our proposals.

Then we ask the public and relevant organisations for their views on our proposals. This is your opportunity to have your say.

We take into account all the feedback we receive and use this to prepare a consultation report, which we make available online.

## **Planning consent: Development Consent Order**

Having confirmed our preferred route, we submit a special kind of planning application, called a Development Consent Order to the Planning Inspectorate for a detailed examination. If it accepts our application, the Planning Inspectorate then has 6 months to examine our proposals.

### **Have your say**

The Planning Inspectorate will give you the opportunity to register as an interested party and to have a say during their examination. [Find out how to participate.](#)

Once the examination is complete, the Planning Inspectorate produces a report of its findings and recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport.

Find out more about the [Planning Inspectorate's examination process.](#)

## **Decision**

The Secretary of State will look at the findings and consider their recommendations. Whatever the examiner's recommendations, the Secretary of State takes the final decision whether to approve or refuse the scheme.

If the Secretary of State approves the scheme we will tell everyone directly affected and will publish notices in the press and at the scheme location.