

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment of the study area to identify the scope and effects of any proposed highway improvement works will follow a three stage process. The purpose of the three stage approach is to review the options at increasing levels of detail. At all three stages the schemes must be assessed in terms of the potential advantages, disadvantages and constraints against four main headings:

- Environment
- Engineering
- Economics
- Traffic

STAGE 1

Stage 1 takes an overview of the study area and identifies a broadly defined improvement corridor. The aim at Stage 1 is to identify the major factors that may influence the later route selection process. Such factors may include the existing geography across the study area, the presence of planning policy areas, areas of special ecological or historical significance, etc. At the end of Stage 1 a broad route corridor is identified as the preferred option for further examination at Stage 2.

STAGE 2

Stage 2 takes a more detailed look at the lands included within the preferred route corridor. Alternative routes are examined in some detail including, for example, engineering design of major earthworks. This is to allow the anticipated effects of alternative routes to be compared against each other. At the end of Stage 2 a preferred route is identified for further examination.

STAGE 3

During the Stage 3 process the preferred route is assessed in further detail, resulting in the publication of an Environmental Statement. The purpose of this Statement is to give the public an opportunity to express an opinion before a project is initiated. The Statement must be comprehensive yet concise, easy to read, and include all relevant information on the existing situation, proposed mitigation, and, forecast significant impacts.

To gather and collate this information, further site surveys including walkover studies and geotechnical investigation will be carried out in the forthcoming months.