

Review of Consultation for Highway and Transportation Schemes

Response to Scrutiny Review Recommendations

Listed below a number of recommendations which are felt would improve the consultation process to CPZs by involving more of the people who are affected but would not add a considerable burden to the officers and not add to its timescale of the process.

Some of the recommendations (eg. 2, 4 and 10) *will* add significantly to workload that in turn will lengthen the process or reduce the number of schemes that can be worked on simultaneously. A balance must be struck between additional work and benefits received.

It would be helpful to have a general introductory comment recognising that every case needs to be treated on its merits and that no one model fits all situations. There can be a presumption that the recommendations will normally apply, but not necessarily in every case.

1. That where there is firm evidence of overall support for the scheme Stages 1 and 2 should be combined.

We are unlikely, particularly *before* consultation to have 'firm evidence'. However, there may be times when a combination of factors (objective and subjective) give 'confidence' that a streamlined process would be appropriate.

There could also be cases where combining stages 2 and 3 or 3 and 4 are appropriate. Eg – if it's a small simple zone like the one around the Leisure Centre, the detail (stage 3) can be included with the principle (stage 2). Equally, if there is confidence about the design options, the statutory consultation (stage 4) can be done at the same time as the detail (stage 3) – this is often done for simple yellow line schemes, although less often for CPZs – it may well be appropriate for some CPZ reviews.

Recommend: Where there is confidence that a more streamlined approach is appropriate, various of the 4 stages of consultation should be combined.

2. That more use be made of Public Meetings and/or exhibitions at Stage 2. However, the meetings need to be well organised with options not “fait accompli”.

Exhibitions are likely to be more useful at Stage 3, when there is a detail proposal to exhibit. Public meetings are very unpredictable and often not representative.

Recommend: More use of exhibitions at Stages 2 and/or 3. Care should be taken to be impartial, explain options and emphasise it is not “fait accompli”.

3. That use is made of Street Notices, the Council website and Press Notices at the beginning and during all stages of the process. The website etc should be amended to keep the information up to date and relevant especially the results of the consultation and the final scheme.

Agreed generally. Street notices represent a minor conflict with the objective of reducing street clutter. It is normal practice to erect them at Stage 4 as part of ‘advertising’ the draft order. It is suggested that apart from Stage 4 they are only used to publicise exhibitions and are taken down promptly.

Press Notices are relatively expensive (c£1k each). It is a statutory requirement to use them at Stage 4. At other stages we can either use advertisements (similar cost) or press releases.

Recommend: That more effort be made to publicise the consultation process. The Council website should be used at all stages of the process, including for publicising the results and the final scheme. Street notices should be used to publicise exhibitions as well as for statutory notices. Press releases should also be used to publicise the consultation and results.

4. There is a need to improve consultation with business and face to face meetings are suggested.

This would be difficult to achieve and very time consuming. The current practice is that businesses sign for receipt of consultation documents. Whilst this proves delivery to the premises, it does not guarantee that the appropriate person in a business receives and considers the documents. An alternative could be that at each business the distributor ascertains the name of the owner/manager and either personally hands them the documents or personally addresses them to the owner/manager. Contact details of the relevant officer should be included in the consultation material so that businesses can discuss the matter before completing the consultation, if required.

Recommend: Greater effort should be made to ensure that consultation documents reach the appropriate senior manager/owner of businesses. (Briefing note to issued to all delivering such documents)

5. Where schemes have a low response rate non-responders should be targeted in an attempt to increase the response rate

A large proportion of responses are received near the end of the consultation period. In practice therefore this means sending reminders to about 80% of premises. Distribution is currently done by hand by transportation staff to all premises within the consultation area. Royal mail is not used and no database of addresses is created. This would make identification of non-responders difficult where there are conversions or multi-occupation eg. different businesses within the same building. In the past, Ealing tried sending out a reminder card to *all* consultees one week before the closing date. However, this appeared to have only marginal impact and they subsequently abandoned the practice. The disadvantages of doing this, apart from the resource implications, include potential criticism, particularly from those that have returned the questionnaires, about wasting resources.

6. A one off use of a communications advisor to review language and layout to create a clear consistent style and identity.

Agreed. Important to link also to corporate style and identity will form part of the overall Council review of style.

7. Roads just outside the CPZ area should be alerted to possible consequences that might arise once the CPZ is in operation

This is done at the Stage 2 stage, when the consultation area is normally set wider than the likely eventual zone (as far as it is predictable at this stage). To do so at a later stage, ie after a zone has been designed/advertised, may result in residents just outside the proposed zone requesting to be included. This would require a redesign and thereby generate a further need to alert residents just outside the revised boundary, and so on. A balance needs to be struck between on-going consultation and timely and efficient scheme delivery. Experience has shown that residents rarely opt to be included in a zone initially if they are not already experiencing some parking problems. An early review is a means of responding to the changed patterns of parking and provides the opportunity to extend the zone in the light of actual problems (if they materialise) rather than potential problems.

Recommend: Wherever practicable, roads just beyond the immediate problem area should be given an opportunity for opting to be included in a proposed zone.

8. At consultation stage the pros and cons of the scheme should be explained street by street

This is currently done at stage 3.

9. CPZs should be as non-political as possible and members should be impartial.

10. All respondees to the consultation process should be written to once the final scheme is approved for Traffic Orders

A tick box could be included on consultation questionnaires asking 'do you want to be advised of the outcome of this consultation?', so as to ensure that we only write to those who request it. This will inevitably generate correspondence and calls, particularly those that do not support the scheme, with consequential workload implications.

Possible alternative wording: insert after 'process', 'who request to be kept informed'

11. Consultation process of 2-3 weeks is best compromise between genuine consultation and not delaying scheme unduly

Agreed.

12. A Parking Guide for the zone is issued to coincide with the commencement of the scheme and be issued to all households within the zone and copies placed in local libraries.

Agreed, but delete 'households' and insert 'premises' so as to include businesses and other organisations.