



A12 Archaeological Trial Trenching Project

Highways England is currently preparing information to present at our Statutory Consultation this summer but at the same time, archaeology surveys will be starting along the A12 route.

This work will help to inform the Environmental Statement which will be submitted next year as part of the Development Consent Order application.

The length of the proposed route needs to be investigated for undiscovered archaeology and evidence of local cultural heritage buried in the earth.

Around 28 archaeological sites have been identified within the footprint of the proposed scheme, which extends over 15 miles (25km) between Chelmsford and Marks Tey.

These include Roman farmsteads, an early medieval field enclosure at Rivenhall End and other medieval sites. There is also a possible deserted medieval settlement near Hatfield Peverel and several post-medieval and more modern buildings.

Mesolithic and Iron Ages

Another 35 sites from earlier periods have also been identified, ranging in date between the Mesolithic and Iron Ages.

This month, a 100-strong archaeology team will use three methods to investigate the length of the proposed scheme, including traditional archaeological excavation, geophysical surveys and boreholes.

Soil sampling and precondition surveys, undertaken on foot, are already underway and progressing well.



Stephen Elderkin, Project Director, said: *“Our archaeologists are really excited about what they may find.”*

“Geophysical surveys use a variety of instruments to analyse the conditions below ground level and can indicate areas of interest and possible archaeology to enable properly targeted excavation.”

“We will be using traditional techniques to excavate approximately 2,400 trial trenches over six to eight months, with a contingency of a further 600 trenches if required. Each trench will be 30 metres by 1.8 metres and will be excavated by mechanical excavator. The trial trenches will be spread across the length of the scheme.”

Investigations

To investigate the prehistoric and palaeolithic archaeology, boreholes will be sunk in eight targeted locations. The boreholes will be between five to ten metres deep, and once the cores are removed they will be analysed for their archaeology.

Palaeolithic test pits will also be excavated by a tracked excavator to a depth of three metres. The contents of these pits will be sieved to observe any archaeology.

The data and any finds collected from these excavations and surveys will be used by the design team to inform the further scheme design and any archaeological considerations required to safeguard the cultural heritage of the area.

Digging for History along the A12

Archaeologist Emma West can't wait to get her hands dirty as she looks for history along Highways England's A12 to A120 proposed scheme route.

Emma, the lead archaeologist, heads the 100-strong trial trenching team which includes 50 archaeologists. They will be looking for evidence of archaeology from all periods, including medieval sites near Rivenhall End as well as Mesolithic to the Iron Age activity near Hatfield Peverel.

Emma said: "A range of surveys, including geophysical and cropmark surveys, have already been carried out. The trenching will help us to establish how significant it is and if we need to carry out a full excavation.

"What we will find is still unknown. We are very excited that we will be working in the next field to the Kelvedon Warrior, which was a beautiful late Iron Age warrior burial excavated in the 1980s.

"We are also excited about possible Saxon settlements around Witham and Kelvedon, and Iron Age and Roman farmsteads across the route."



Emma West

Emma continued: "Another interesting prospect is some evidence of Palaeolithic or old Stone Age archaeology, particularly around the Hoxnian lakes and perhaps signs of very early human life, something that many of us haven't worked on before. We know the potential when we start trial trenching but we're always hoping to find more than we expect!"

Trial trenching facts and figures



The work may be visible from nearby roads and properties



2,400 trial trenches excavated over 8 months



A further **600** trenches if required



Trenches measure **30m x 1.8m**



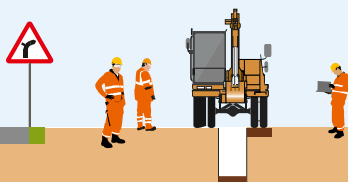
100 experts working on site



Trial trenching doesn't cause noise disruption, it's similar to a tractor working



If work must take place next to residential properties we will write to residents in advance with full details of what is happening and when



Road users will see staff wearing full personal protective equipment (PPE) and machinery on farmland near the proposed route.

Where will we be working?

Our experts will be working in three areas of private land located around existing junctions.



Land around existing junction **20B**



Land between junctions **23 to 24**



Land around junction **24**



Looking for Bats

Our Ecology experts are out and about in the next two months, looking for bats!

They're carrying out surveys around buildings, bridges and other structures along the full 15 miles of the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme route. The information they gather is used to assess the potential impact of our proposed scheme, allowing us to look after and protect the bats. The surveys continue throughout the May and June usually at dawn and dusk when the creatures are easier to spot.



Stakeholder workshop update

The team has hosted over 50 hours of workshops and forums in the last few months.

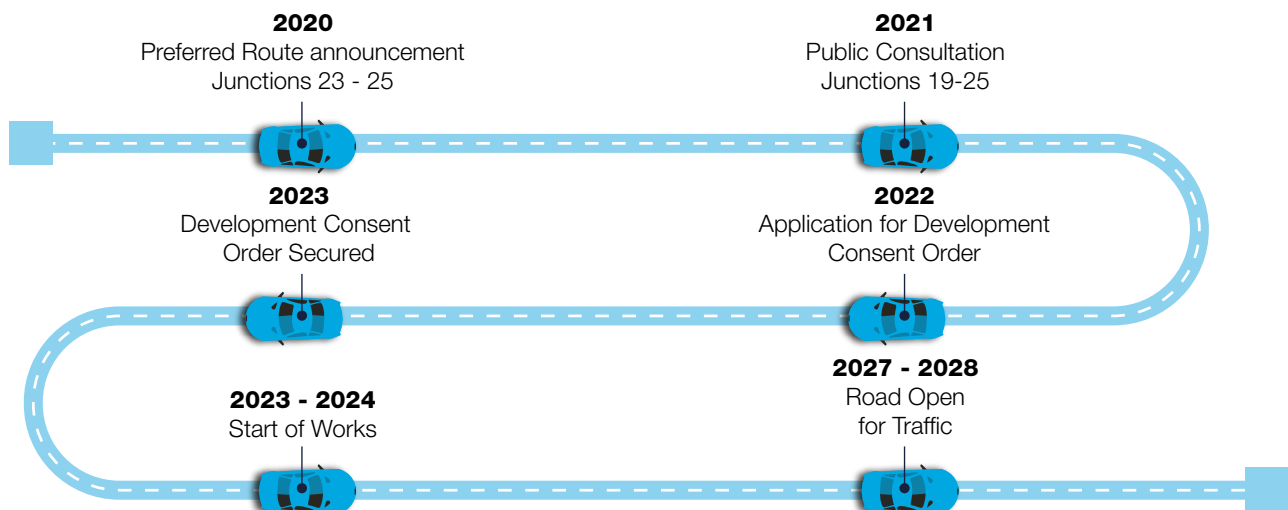
This engagement has included representatives from planning authorities, county and parish councils, local businesses, road users and customers groups. We've relayed the valuable feedback from these sessions to the design team and this, together with everything we learnt from earlier consultations in 2017 and 2019, has influenced changes in the design. We will continue to discuss design changes with our stakeholders as we move towards statutory consultation this summer.

Public Consultation

We intend to launch the public consultation for the proposed scheme in June. The consultation will run for 8 weeks and we will advertise its launch widely with local letter drops, social media, press releases and adverts. The statutory consultation will be accompanied by a full brochure outlining the proposed scheme and cover every aspect of interest to local residents, stakeholders and businesses. It will be further enhanced by a virtual exhibition, webinars and, if Covid-19 restrictions allow, by open exhibitions at local community locations.

Further information will be available on our webpage at www.highwaysengland.co.uk/A12 or by calling 0300 123 5000.

A12 scheme timeline 2020-2028



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You can find out more about the scheme at www.highwaysengland.co.uk/A12

Sign up for updates at https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKHIGHWAY/subscriber/new?topic_id=UKHIGHWAY_2653

For any other queries, please email info@highwaysengland.co.uk