Wakefield Eastern Relief Road (WERR)

Key Issues
Spawforths acted as lead consultants, which involved co-ordination of the full consultant team and the preparation of the Environmental Assessment. This 4km road required both a railway and river bridge crossing and will provide a strategic link around the east of Wakefield. The Environmental Assessment focused upon heritage, flood, noise and air quality matters along with other technical areas and demonstrated a package of mitigation measures to address areas of potential significant impact.

This Case Study will focus on development of this road scheme which was required to accord with an existing masterplan framework covering a wider area. This originally proposed the road to be developed in a series of phases as the wider site came forward for development. However due to the availability of funding, the road was able to be delivered in its entirety in one phase. Nevertheless, the team were required to develop the scheme within the context of the Masterplan Framework and therefore the wider site to ensure that the development fully reflected the comprehensive vision especially with regard to environmental and technical considerations. The site and the wider site area are allocated for mixed use redevelopment in the Development Plan and are identified as being ‘one of the key proposals’ within the development strategy for Wakefield and the wider district.

The original Vision for the wider site allocation (including the application site) was ‘to create a sustainable urban extension of Wakefield that will deliver social, environmental and economic benefits and improve the quality of life for its local population’. The Masterplan Framework for the site was produced by the Wakefield East Consortium to show how the Wakefield East site allocation would be spatially delivered.

The case study will also focus on how the design of the scheme was heavily influence by the Environmental Assessment itself as well as community consultation and stakeholder engagement. Full engagement with landowners and their representatives occurred throughout the evolution of the proposals to ensure co-operation and agreement to the WERR’s alignment.

Purpose of the project
Spawforths secured planning permission for the strategically important WERR on behalf of Wakefield Council. This is a £33 million scheme funded by the West Yorkshire+ Transport Fund. The road will help address existing infrastructure problems within Wakefield, facilitate future development including the Wakefield East urban extension providing much needed new homes and jobs, ease congestion in the City Centre and improve air quality.

Description of the project
The site, which is some 49 ha in extent, is located adjacent to the urban area of Wakefield. The site is defined by two main arterial routes of the A638 Doncaster Road in the south and the A642 Aberford Road in the north.

The application which was made in full was as follows:

Construction of the Wakefield Eastern Relief Road comprising a single carriageway highway with footway and cycleway from the A642 Aberford Road/Finkin Lane, Bar Lane/Aberford Road roundabout and Ferry Lane to the A638 Doncaster Road/Black Road, including new roundabout junction to Bar Lane/Aberford Road with junctions to the application site and Stanley Hall, a gyratory junction with Doncaster Road/Black Road, and new junctions to Aberford Road/Finkin Lane, Ferry Lane, Park Lodge Lane and Welbeck Lane, bridges over the River Calder and under the Wakefield- Normanton-Castleford railway line, embankments and associated works including earthworks and landscape, ecological and drainage mitigation.
Best Practice

The WERR application proposals fully accord with the overriding Masterplan Framework and take some of the detailed design associated with the WERR further than the level considered as part of the Masterplan Framework.

The WERR proposals allow the design process for subsequent phases of the urban extension development to come forward whilst providing certainty over the delivery mechanisms for the WERR. This was achieved through on-going team discussions and ensuring full collaboration between the design team, ES team and the client team. The team considered various scenarios to ensure that the proposals for WERR would not conflict with the delivery of the wider masterplan and ensured the best scheme came forward. The ES team were an important component to this process as they considered implications of WERR on the environment as well as the wider masterplan as part of the work undertaken.

The ES was prepared at the same time as the detailed design and the planning application which allowed the team to identify a range of issues and conflicts as well as opportunities really early on in the process. This allowed the scheme to be developed with mitigation built in to the original scheme negating the need for mitigation at a later stage. The environmental assessment undertaken showed that whilst the development will have impacts on the environment, some of which may be adverse, their significance will largely be reduced through suitable mitigation and balanced by the significant benefits that the proposals will bring.

The mitigation includes landscaped drainage attenuation areas that also provide ecological benefits and enhancements; a fully landscaped road corridor to assimilate it into the landscape; and other design aspects to manage traffic routing and traffic flows. The proposals will provide significant benefits in terms of facilitating development in a sustainable location, and redistributing traffic away from the centre of Wakefield with subsequent benefits for air quality, improved accessibility and highway safety.

The future development that would be facilitated would provide houses and employment, in close proximity to existing housing, employment, services and facilities and hence will also help to reduce reliance on the private car.

The team held fortnightly meetings with WMDC Officers to discuss the evolution of the proposals including discussions regarding road design, junctions, alignment, drainage, planning and environmental matters. This allowed any concerns/issues which arose to be addressed and dealt with by the team efficiently. The full ES team ensured regular contact was made with the Council to discuss technical matters as they arose again to ensure effective and timely decision making.

Significant consultation with the Community and Members had already been undertaken during the evolution of the masterplan for the LDF site allocation which meant the community were already aware of the proposals. More specific consultation was undertaken as part of the evolution of the WERR proposals. Given the linear nature of the proposals meetings with the community were held at two different locations to allow a greater opportunity for people to be involved in the process. Individuals were given an opportunity to discuss and comment upon proposals as well as highlight any issues and potential opportunities that might arise as part of the development.

Comments from all discussions and events were taken on board by the team and allowed elements to be assessed which might not have otherwise been a focus. This allowed for a more robust submission to be made to the Council.