

Project: **Weston-super-Mare Developments**

Subject: **Appendix to Position Statement (Issue 4 a-g)**

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Date: **3rd November 2011**

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Date: **4th November 2011**

1 OVERVIEW

1.1 This EiP Statement addresses highway and transportation infrastructure requirements in relation to future development in and around Weston-super-Mare. Specific consideration is given to Issue 4 a-g *Delivery, Provision of Infrastructure* items c and d:

c) Projects required to support development

d) Timing and funding of projects

2 WESTON PACKAGE MAJOR SCHEME BID (MSB)

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Mead Realisations expressed its support of the Weston Package in a letter to North Somerset Council dated 8th August 2011. Meads' principal interest in relation to the MSB is its role in terms of alleviating existing transport problems, which constrain the economic development potential of Weston-super-Mare, and facilitating future employment and housing growth in the town.

2.1.2 The regeneration and growth of Weston-super-Mare is constrained by problems including:

- Queuing and delay on the local road network and at M5 Junction 21
- Insufficient public transport
- Limited facilities for sustainable transport users

2.1.3 Unreliable journey times due to traffic congestion, and time lost due to delays need to be overcome if the area is to compete on a regional and national scale.

2.1.4 We have undertaken a full assessment of the MSB in terms of its compliance with government guidance, relevant policies and also in terms of its likely operational impact.

2.1.5 We agree with the Council's view that the MSB proposals would initially address the transport impacts which arise from the current traffic generation and travel demand arising from Weston-super-Mare.

2.1.6 We note the statement by the West of England Partnership that:

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‘Work to improve the operation and increase the capacity of M5 Junction 21 is included as part of the Weston Package, but it is possible that both housing and business development in the future will mean that this work is simply not sufficient to handle the likely increase in traffic.

A bypass to the junction, allowing traffic to move along an alternative route, would significantly reduce congestion in the area.’

- 2.1.7 We understand that further funding has been made available by North Somerset Council in order to address issues on the local highway network which would not be alleviated by the MSB.

2.2 Joint Local Transport Plan 3 Review

- 2.2.1 Analysis of the West of England Joint Local Transport Plan 3 Strategic Environmental Assessment Non-Technical Summary identifies a number of alternative plan options. In addition to the preferred option for the Joint Local Transport Plan 3 which is known as Option 1, the Integrated Transport Option, five alternative options were assessed.

- 2.2.2 Chapter 10 of the Joint Local Transport Plan 3 explains that *“as levels and the type of future funding are confirmed by the Government the full three year Delivery Plan 2012/13 to 2014/15 will be published as part of an early refresh of the JLTP3 in late 2011”*. That is, provided the Department for Transport does not fund the Weston Package Phase 1, there will be an opportunity to influence the refreshed Joint Local Transport Plan 3 late 2011 or more likely early 2012 as the decision on the Weston Package may not be available until the end of 2011.

2.3 Local Development Framework

- 2.3.1 The Weston Package is considered to be an integral component of the planning process and so is included in ‘North Somerset Futures, Local Development Framework, Core Strategy Consultation Draft (November 2009)’.

- 2.3.2 Planning Policy Statement 12 requires that the plan should manage uncertainty in that:

“It is important... that the core strategy makes proper provision for... uncertainty and does not place undue reliance on critical elements of infrastructure whose funding is unknown. The test should be whether there is a reasonable prospect of provision. Contingency planning – showing how the objectives will be achieved under different scenarios – may be necessary in circumstances where provision is uncertain.”

- 2.3.3 Planning Policy Statement 12 goes on to state that:

“Plans should be able to show how they will handle contingencies: it may not always be possible to have maximum certainty about the deliverability of the strategy. In these cases the core strategy should show what alternative strategies have been prepared to handle this uncertainty and what would trigger their use. Authorities should not necessarily rely on a review of the plan as a means of handling uncertainty.”

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2.3.4 The strategy in place and outlined in Policy CS30 deals comprehensively with transport infrastructure, including the Junction 21 relief road and park and ride.

2.4 Policy Alignment

2.4.1 The context set out in the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West 2006 – 2026 identified out-commuting as a key issue facing Weston, stating that:

“Weston-super-Mare has undergone major changes through the loss of industries and restructuring in the tourism sector, developing more of a dormitory relationship with Bristol through significant housing development in recent years. The proximity to the M5 Motorway and links to Bristol, particularly the large increase in employment opportunities along the M5 and the readily accessible north fringe of Bristol, taking account of the mainline rail link, has resulted in increased levels of out-commuting, largely by car. This has placed greater pressure on the strategic road network and has culminated in a less sustainable pattern of development in the western part of the sub-region”.

In other words, at least part of the cause of out-commuting has been the ease of access to Bristol by both road and rail.

2.4.2 As well as recognising the issue, it is a strategic priority to address it, as shown by the following extract from the Local Development Framework’s vision for the town:

“By 2026 an employment-led development strategy will have achieved a strong and diverse economic profile in Weston-super-Mare with an improved range, quantity and quality of local employment opportunities which redresses the imbalance between employment and homes reducing dependency on out-commuting by car for work and improving self-containment and sustainable living.”

2.4.3 According to the Major Scheme Business Case for Weston Package Phase 1, its aim is: *“To enable the sustainable development of Weston-super-Mare”* and the key to realising this goal is to readdress the aforementioned imbalance between jobs and residents, which results in high levels of out-commuting, mostly by car via the M5 motorway.

2.4.4 At 5.2.5 of the Regional Spatial Strategy it states that the *“the following measures will need to be implemented to improve network management:*

- *Action to minimise the use of the motorway network and main longer distance routes by local commuter traffic at peak times*
- *Improved Park and Share facilities (linked to other solutions)*
- *New network management measures to manage the demand for road space including consideration of congestion charging”*

2.4.5 The comprehensive transport infrastructure proposed, including bypass and park and ride, will enable and support the LDF vision.

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3 INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS OUTSIDE OF MSB

3.1 Park & Ride

- 3.1.1 It is understood that a Park & Ride site is not identified in the Major Scheme Best & Final Bid.
- 3.1.2 It is considered that this is at least partly a function of the Council's previously-proposed location of sites west of M5 Junction 21, towards Weston-super-Mare town centre. It is usual practice for Park & Ride sites to be located where a change of mode from private car to bus would be attractive to drivers in terms of financial and time cost – i.e. at a location where they might realistically feel that a transfer to the bus would save them time and / or difficulty in terms of traffic congestion and parking.
- 3.1.3 Mead Realisations supports a Park & Ride site at a strategic location adjacent to M5 Junction 21. This location is considered to be a good 'decision point' for drivers, allowing them to transfer to the bus before committing themselves to driving into the town.
- 3.1.4 Combined with proposals for a development-led Junction 21 bypass, discussed at greater length below, it is considered that a Park & Ride and bypass would offer an attractive, direct and more lightly-trafficked public transport route into Weston.

3.2 M5 Junction 21 Bypass

- 3.2.1 Mead Realisations has an extensive land holding to the east of the town, traversing the M5 south of the congested Junction 21. This land offers the potential for the provision of a bypass for Junction 21, linking the A370 with Wolverhill Road to the south.
- 3.2.2 Policy CS30 of the Core Strategy identified the need to deliver '*integrated strategic transport infrastructure including...junction 21 relief road or alternative*'. However, it is understood that concerns over cost and deliverability (including land ownership / CPO) precluded the inclusion of the Relief Road within the MSB. Mead Realisations supports the opportunity to developer-fund and deliver this key infrastructure element which cannot be delivered by the MSB, at no cost to the public purse.
- 3.2.3 Further to our review of the MSB, we have undertaken extensive traffic modelling of the local and strategic (M5 J21) networks using ARCADY and LinSig3. This work supports the premise that the MSB will address current problems but may not accommodate significant levels of development traffic over and above that which currently exists on the surrounding highway network due to the substantial traffic generations associated with current planning proposals and recent consents.
- 3.2.4 We consider that the development sector holds the key to unlocking the future growth of Weston-super-Mare by delivering the M5 Junction 21 Relief Road as a parallel, closely-linked infrastructure project aligned with the MSB. The Core Strategy supports this approach.

- 3.2.5 Our strategic review indicates that provision of the Relief Road, in line with the Council's Core Strategy aspirations will enable a significant uplift in the performance of the MSB proposals for Junction 21 in particular, enabling future developments to be brought forward within Weston-super-Mare.
- 3.2.6 As currently envisaged, the Relief Road would take the form of a wide single-carriageway connecting the A370 with Wolvershill Road. Off-carriageway foot / cycleways would be constructed adjacent to the road, in order to provide safe and convenient access for sustainable transport users. Whilst the final standard and alignment of the route is to be confirmed through the masterplanning process, it is noted that the proposals are broadly consistent with the aspirations of the West of England Partnership's 2008 Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) scheme.

4 SUMMARY

- 4.1 Mead Realisations remains committed to the Council's aspirations for transport improvements to be delivered including the Weston Package MSB and other projects included within the Core Strategy
- 4.2 We remain convinced that developer-led provision of a M5 Junction 21 relief road east of the motorway would, in combination with a potential Park & Ride site in this area, play a key role in addressing the transportation needs of existing and future developments in the town.
- 4.3 The proposals for a strategic Park & Ride facility have been dropped from the MSB. However, it remains a commitment in the Core Strategy and land in Mead Realisations' control affords the opportunity to deliver a Park & Ride.

- 4.5 It is apparent that the development sector is able to deliver key elements of transport infrastructure which have long been aspirations of the Council but which are currently beyond its ability to deliver.

- 4.6 In the context of the information presented within this Statement, Mead Realisations strongly requests that all current transport infrastructure proposals supporting growth in Weston-super-Mare are included within the Core Strategy, including the bypass and park and ride. This would be compliant with the full range of relevant policies and would add substantially to the ability of the private sector to assist in providing strategic developments and associated infrastructure in line with the Council's wider growth aspirations.

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