

North Somerset Core Strategy
Examination in Public

Highways Agency Submission
Matters Relating to M5 Junction 21

18 November 2011

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this submission is to set out the Highways Agency's position in relation to the impact of the Core Strategy upon junction 21 of the M5 in combination with the Weston Package Major Scheme proposals, funding of which is subject to consideration by the Department for Transport.
- 1.2 The Highways Agency's (HA) primary consideration in engaging with this Examination in Public is to ensure that the safe and efficient operation of the SRN is not compromised by the North Somerset Core Strategy development proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The HA have previously submitted to North Somerset Council (NSC) their agreement in principle to the Weston package proposals, including the proposed highway alterations for M5 junction 21. Recent considerations by NSC have resulted in the proposed scheme options for the junction evolving with two options now proposed. The scheme options in question are identified by NSC as follows:
 - Weston Package Scheme 1 (The HA have previously provided in principle agreement to this scheme).
 - Weston Package Scheme 1- Combined NSC Proposals - Outbound Option 2A
- 2.2 Alongside the proposed highway scheme improvements put forward by North Somerset the submitted Core Strategy provides commitment to the development of 1.5 B class jobs/ dwelling over the plan period. The HA have supports an employment led strategy for Weston-super-Mare as this promotes improved self containment and is in accordance with the policy guidance set out in HA Circular 02/2007.
- 2.3 In order to understand the potential implications of the Weston Package scheme options along with the sensitivity of ensuring that development is led by a robust employment led strategy the HA have completed a broad level transport impact assessment of the Core Strategy upon junction 21. This is summarised under Section 3.

3. TRANSPORT EVIDENCE POSITION

- 3.1 The HA have prepared a Vissim Microsimulation Model of M5 junction 21 in order to consider how the level of growth associated with the Core Strategy may impact upon the operation of M5 junction 21.
- 3.2 The assessment completed is based on a forecast year of 2026 assuming the implementation of the North Somerset Core Strategy and more specifically the impact of development traffic arising from the two predominant development areas for Weston namely Winterstoke Village and Weston Parklands. From herein these are collectively defined as the Weston Villages. The assessment recorded in this submission is completed on the basis that the Weston Package Scheme 1 infrastructure improvements are implemented at junction 21 with three separate development scenarios. Each scenario is completed for an AM and PM peak assessment period with the broad summary of these development scenarios as follows:
 - Weston Package Scheme Layout – Core Strategy Assessment - Residential Trips Only

- Weston Package Scheme Layout – Core Strategy Assessment - 50% Containment of Employment Trips.
- Weston Package Scheme Layout – Core Strategy Assessment - 25% Containment of Employment Trips

3.3 The purpose of the assessments completed is to;

- 1) Provide a broad evidence base of the implications of permitting development in Weston-super-Mare which is not driven by employment led schemes.
- 2) Provide a broad evidence base as to how a higher level of trip containment benefits the safety and efficiency of M5 junction 21.

3.4 In both of these assessments, the Agency's interest is in ensuring that queuing on the off slips can be accommodated within the length of the slip road without blocking back onto the mainline carriageway. Queues extending onto the mainline would have a material safety and journey time reliability impact on strategic through traffic and under these circumstances development could not be supported without further travel demand measures and / or mitigation.

3.5 The key findings arising from The Agency's review is that in both employment containment scenarios, for the weekday AM and PM peaks, mainline queuing can be avoided. The assessments completed therefore confirm that by adopting an employment led strategy, coupled with the proposed Weston Package Scheme 1 improvements at junction 21, the impact upon the safe and free flow of traffic on the SRN can be managed.

4. CONCLUDING POSITION

4.1 The Agency's concluding position is as follows:

- The NSC Core Strategy employment led strategy is supported.
- The implementation of the Weston Package Scheme 1 improvements at junction 21 is supported. Furthermore it is agreed that the scheme improvements are likely to provide a solution that ensures mainline queuing can be avoided if growth in Weston-super-Mare is delivered in line with the NSC Core Strategy.
- The implementation of the Weston Package including Scheme 1 Combined NSC Proposals, Outbound Option 2A improvements at junction 21 is supported in principle. The Agency's position on this matter will be clarified subject to further modelling assessments of the scheme option.
- All Weston Package improvements for junction 21 will need to be subject to detailed consideration at design and commissioning stage with signal timings set to ensure mainline queuing on both the north and south bound off slips is avoided.

4.2 The Agency propose to submit an addendum to this position statement incorporating a statement on the Weston Package including Scheme 1 Combined NSC Proposals, Outbound Option 2A improvements, ahead of the 13th December hearing, Issue 4a-g – Delivery, Provision of Infrastructure.