

## **OVERVIEW**

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF  
GEORGE BATTEN BSC (HONS) CENG FICE FIHT  
ON BEHALF OF WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO:

WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATION W07.09002  
LAND TO THE EAST AND NORTH OF WESTBURY, WILTSHIRE,  
DEVELOPMENT: CONSTRUCTION OF A SINGLE CARRIAGEWAY ROAD  
WITH CLIMBING LANE OVER PART OF THE ROUTE, ROUNDABOUT  
JUNCTIONS, ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE  
CALLED IN FOR DETERMINATION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE,  
COMMUNITIES & LOCAL GOVERNMENT (SECTION 77 TOWN AND  
COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 AS AMENDED)

THE WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (A350 WESTBURY BYPASS  
CLASSIFIED ROAD) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 200'

THE WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (A350 WESTBURY BYPASS  
CLASSIFIED ROAD) SIDE ROAD ORDER 200'





## 1 **Background**

2 The A350 is a significant part of the Strategic Transport Network in Wiltshire providing a route of national and intra-regional importance for through and long distance traffic.

3 The A350 provides access to important employment areas and links five major towns in West Wiltshire (Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster). The towns function as a single economic unit and the transport link between them is vital for potential economic growth.

4 Proposals for improving the environment and economy in West Wiltshire are set out in the Western Wiltshire Sustainable Transport Strategy (WWSTS), a 10 year strategy to regenerate the economies of the towns and settlements served by A350. The A350 Westbury bypass is a key component of this strategy.

5 Building on previous transport investment will continue the improvement of access to employment areas. Improvements to the A350 have been made at Chippenham, Melksham/Semington, Biss Bottom (Upton Scudamore) and East Knoyle, along with other local junction improvements schemes.

6 The historic market town of Westbury is adversely affected by the A350 as the route severs the town centre. Heavy through traffic is mixed with local traffic on substandard roads with poor alignment giving rise to road safety concerns. Air quality is an issue and a section of Warminster Road is classified as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The road is inadequate for the volume and type of traffic that it carries.

7 The West Wilts Trading Estate is home to one of the largest areas of manufacturing, warehousing and service industry business in

Wiltshire. Poor access limits its economic future and improvements to the A350 are essential.

## **2 Description of A350 Westbury Bypass**

1 Detailed engineering evidence is provided in the Engineering proof produced by Mr. R. Stokes reference WCC/P/3.

2 The scheme limit have been determined by Wiltshire County Council (WCC) following discussions with the Government Office for the South West (GOSW). The scheme is a deliverable length and provides cost certainty and value for money.

3 The design seeks to minimise impact, providing a fully integrated approach to landscaping, environmental and ecological mitigation. Innovative measures have been used and a sustainable construction approach adopted.

4 The proposed route is a single carriageway road of approximately 5.8 kilometres. From the south of Westbury the route runs from the A350 at Madbrook Farm in an easterly direction where it passes under Newtown and heads in a northerly direction over Bratton Road to join with the A350 at a new roundabout a short distance north of the access to the LaFarge Cement Works. The Glenmore Link runs from the roundabout at the Cement Works in a westerly direction to a new roundabout at Hawkeridge Road and a further roundabout is proposed at the Hawkeridge Road/Link Road junction. There are realignments to Hawkeridge and Bratton Road and a short length of climbing lane on the route, southbound between Bratton Road and Newtown.

## **3 History and Evolution of the A350 Westbury Bypass Scheme**

1 The history of the scheme is linked to the development of WCC's strategy for West Wiltshire.

- 2 From the 1990's the A350 corridor has been investigated to identify potential improvements to achieve regeneration of the economy and a sustainable pattern of development in West Wiltshire.
- 3 WCC's Structure Plans have supported improvements to the A350 including a bypass for Westbury.
- 4 A planning conference held in Westbury in 1997/98 explored potential route options. The results of the conference and public consultation showed support for a bypass but made it clear that no particular route was favoured and selection would be contentious.
- 5 Route options have been investigated by independent consultants resulting in the recommendation of the Eastern Route. This route has been adopted by WCC as the most effective at achieving the scheme objectives.
- 6 The WWSTS in the Local Transport Plan (LTP)(DD02) 2001/02 – 2005/06 identified that Westbury Bypass is essential to improve access to the southern part of the corridor to increase the area's attractiveness for new investment and job creation.
- 7 A bid for funding in 2001 this was delayed pending the outcome of the Bristol/Bath to South Coast Study commissioned by GOSW. By 2003 this had sufficiently progressed and a bid was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT).
- 8 In 2005 a Planning Application was submitted. However, following consultation there was a need to undertake further studies. Additional wildlife mitigation measures were identified and the cumulative affect on the proposal warranted the submission of a new Planning Application in 2007.

9 The Planning Application was reported to WCC's Regulatory Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2007. The Committee was minded to grant permission but subsequently The Secretary of State called in the application by way of letter dated the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

10 Side Roads and Compulsory Purchase Orders were published on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2007.

#### **4 The Need for the Scheme**

1 The need for the A350 Westbury Bypass should be considered in its local and regional context.

2 The objectives of the scheme were set out by the County Council in November 1997, and are:

- To improve the transport links into West Wiltshire and between the West Wiltshire towns in order to facilitate economic regeneration.
- To ease the transport of goods to and from commercial and employment areas so as to encourage new businesses to locate and existing firms to invest.
- To provide traffic relief for residents and visitors to Westbury.

3 The A350 Westbury Bypass meets an important regional need, providing journey time reliability and connectivity to strategic infrastructure. RPG 10 states that selective infrastructure proposals should be supported to improve the safety and efficiency of the road network in West Wiltshire to reduce congestion and achieve environmental improvements.

- 4 The Bristol/Bath to South Coast Study identified a 'strategic need' for the A350 Westbury Bypass concluding that the A36/A46/A350 routes fulfil an important intra-regional function.
- 5 The A350 serves the Western Wiltshire towns and improvements will create more reliable movement and a greater opportunity to improve the economy, job and service opportunities and thereby contribute to the overall well-being of Wiltshire.
- 6 High levels of heavy through traffic are restricting the economy of Westbury town, the wider West Wiltshire area and the county. Important employment areas at West Wilts Trading Estate/ Northacre Park have poor access and will directly benefit from the bypass which will also support the development of an intermodal freight facility at Westbury.
- 7 The A350 traffic has an adverse impact on Westbury in terms of safety, traffic noise and air pollution, with Warminster Road in Westbury having been declared an AQMA. The volume of traffic also creates problems for pedestrians and cyclists, with the A350 route causing severance of the community.

## **5 Policy Context**

- 1 A detailed proof setting out the policy context is provided separately by Mr. C. Simkins reference WCC/P/6.
- 2 The Scheme addresses national transport 'shared priorities', as set out in the LTP 2006/07 – 2010/11 and the WWSTS, delivering improved accessibility, safer roads, better air quality and tackling congestion.
- 3 The Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan (2016) includes an A350 Westbury Bypass as a specific scheme in Policy T12.

- 4 The supporting text of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan (2016) notes also (at paragraph 5.37) that the Bristol/Bath South Coast Study (BBSCS) completed in 2004 recommended that the Westbury Bypass should proceed.
- 5 The Draft RSS included the A350 – South East Dorset to M4 as a regionally significant road route where a corridor management approach (TR10) should be adopted. The Panel Report issued in January 2008 following the Examination in Public in April 2007 has developed this approach with a specific new policy (TRANS7E) for the 'Bristol/Bath to the South Coast' corridor. A Westbury Bypass is consistent with this approach for improving the reliability and resilience of journey times.
- 6 The West Wiltshire District Plan considers a Westbury Bypass package to be an important element of the required A350 improvements.
- 7 The Scheme is in accordance with National, Regional and Local Planning Policy guidance and is consistent with policies controlling the development of land as contained in the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 and the West Wiltshire District Plan. The Scheme is also included in the Wiltshire LTP.

## **6 Outline of Main Alternatives**

- 1 Alternatives are covered in detail by Mr. S. Boyle proof reference WCC/P/7.
- 2 A thorough assessment of alternative solutions to address the identified objectives has been undertaken by independent consultants. The alternatives considered were variations on the following route corridors.
  - (i) Eastern Route

- (ii) An Inner Western Route
- (iii) An Outer Western Route
- (iv) A Far Western Route
- (v) A36 Improvements

3 A further detailed review has been undertaken by independent consultants of the Eastern and Far Western route.

4 The overall conclusion of the review was that the Eastern Route provides a stronger solution and satisfies the objectives set by the County Council in 1997 to a greater extent than the Far Western Route.

## **7 Consultations**

1 Consultation with statutory, non-statutory bodies and the public has been ongoing throughout the development of the proposals.

2 A planning conference was undertaken in 1997/98 and consultation has continued through the development of the County Council's plans and policies. A draft Orders Exhibition was held in Westbury from 28<sup>th</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

3 At the end of the consultation period on the planning application and Side Roads (SRO) and Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) there are objections from the following statutory parties.

- (i) Heywood Parish Council.
- (ii) Blue Circle/ Lafarge.
- (iii) Mr. F. Shephard.
- (iv) Mr. T. Painter.
- (v) Mrs. M. Brittan.

4 Wiltshire County Council and its agents are continuing discussions to enable the withdrawal of objections. Further details can be found

in the Engineering proof produced by Mr. R. Stokes reference WCC/P/3.

## **8 Funding**

1 In 2003 WCC submitted a bid for funding to the Department of Transport (DfT). The DfT referred the funding decision to the 'Region' and subsequently the scheme has been evaluated against regional policies and included in the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) Programme for the period to 2016.

2 The DfT confirmed to the South West Regional Assembly in July 2006 that they anticipate funding the A350 Westbury bypass in the next three years.

3 WCC submitted a new bid for funding to the DfT in the form of a Major Scheme Business Case in May 2008.

## **9 Consents and authorisations**

1 Subject to the grant of planning permission and confirmation of the Orders there is no impediment to implementation of the scheme.

## **10 Consideration of Objector Issues**

1 In relation to specific matters these are dealt with by witness proofs.

2 Non-specific matters raised by objectors include the proposed improvements to the Westbury town centre. These improvements are not included in the A350 Westbury Bypass planning application.

3 Other matters are addressed within the Overview proof reference WCC/P/1.

## **11 Summary and Conclusions**

- 1 Wiltshire County Council is totally committed to the delivery of the A350 Westbury Bypass and it is an integral part of its plans and policies.
  
- 2 I therefore suggest that there is a compelling case for the A350 Westbury Bypass scheme to proceed.