

OVERVIEW

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'



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February 2008

1 Introduction

- 1.1 My name is George Batten and I am the Director of Environmental Services. I am a chartered civil engineer and a Fellow of the both the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Highways and Transportation.
- 1.2 I have worked for Wiltshire County Council three times during my career, most recently since 1990 joining the former Planning and Highways Department, now Environmental Services. I have risen through the management ranks to become Chief Officer in 2002.
- 1.3 I am a past branch Chairman of the Institution of Highways and Transportation, and I am currently Hon Secretary and Treasurer of the County Surveyors Society.
- 1.4 David Bullock has assisted in the preparation of this proof. He holds the degree of Bachelor of Engineering and is a chartered civil engineer being a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers. David has held the post of Highway Improvements Manager, Environmental Services Department of Wiltshire County Council since July 2005. He has 16 years professional experience working in the private and public sector on major highway and bridge projects.

2 Summary Scheme Proposals

- 2.1 The proposal provides essential infrastructure to achieve the scheme objectives that support the economy of West Wiltshire by providing improvements to access important employment sites and give significant traffic relief to the historic market town of Westbury.
- 2.2 The A350 provides a key transport corridor for goods and services in West Wiltshire and beyond. Improvements to the A350 have been implemented over the years and the A350 Westbury Bypass builds on the previous transport infrastructure investment to enable the area to achieve its growth potential and improve access to established employment centres serving the settlements in West Wiltshire.
- 2.3 The A350 Westbury Bypass has been part of the County Council's Structure Plan policy for some time to aid the growth of the West Wiltshire Towns. In developing the scheme appropriate consultation has been undertaken and views considered. A Planning Conference was held in the late 1990's and following further public consultation it was clear that although there was recognition of the problem there was no clear public support for any particular route.
- 2.4 The economic viability of route options has been assessed by independent engineering consultants who have reviewed the options and made recommendations to the County Council. Key decisions have been made democratically by County Council Committee.
- 2.5 The eastern bypass proposal provides the most effective solution balancing the national, regional and local policies, plans and priorities. It provides an improvement to the strategic corridor,

improved access to West Wilts Trading Estate and significant traffic relief for Westbury.

3 Scope of Evidence

3.1 In my evidence I will:

- (i) Outline why the A350 Westbury Bypass is important to Wiltshire and the reasons for the priority that Wiltshire County Council attaches to its provision.
- (ii) Provide an outline description of the A350 Westbury bypass scheme.
- (iii) Describe in broad terms the history and evolution of the A350 Westbury Bypass and confirm its current status in the statutory process.
- (iv) Provide an overview as to why the A350 Westbury Bypass is needed and identify the objectives of the scheme.
- (v) Outline the national, regional and local planning policy context for the scheme.
- (vi) Provide a summary of the alternatives that were considered.
- (vii) Summarise the consultations that have taken place as part of the process in arriving at the proposed scheme including the position of statutory bodies, the objections to and support for the planning application, compulsory purchase order and side roads order and the discussions that have taken place with those whose land is affected.
- (viii) Confirm the position with regard to available funding streams.

(ix) Confirm that there is no impediment to implementing the scheme and all necessary consents and licences have been or can be obtained.

3.2 In so doing I will draw upon the evidence of the other experts, as required, who are presenting evidence to the Inquiry.

4 Background

Wiltshire's Highway Network

4.1 The Strategic Transport Network in Wiltshire is defined in Policy T11 in the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 (DD09) as the:

(1) NATIONAL PRIMARY ROUTE NETWORK: ROUTES OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR THROUGH AND LONG DISTANCE TRAFFIC.

- M4 MOTORWAY
- A303 TRUNK ROAD
- A419 TRUNK ROAD
- A36 TRUNK ROAD
- A420 (East of the A419)
- A4 (West of Chippenham)
- A30 (St. Thomas's Bridge to Salisbury)
- A338 (South of Burbage)
- A346 (M4 Junction 15 to Burbage)
- A350
- A354
- A361 (West of Semington)
- A429

The Strategic Transport Network is primarily intended to serve the needs of through and inter-urban movements. Policy T10 of the Swindon and Wiltshire Structure Plan 2016, encourages heavy goods vehicle (HGV) traffic to use the National Primary Route Network to minimise environmental damage. In encouraging HGV's to make use of the most appropriate routes, measures restricting their use in clearly defined, usually rural areas, can be considered.

4.2 The Highways Agency is responsible for the M4 Motorway and the A303, A419 and A36 Trunk Roads in the county. Wiltshire County Council is responsible for all other parts of the highway network.

The duties and responsibilities of the County Council as the Highway Authority are set out in the Highways Act 1980 and other relevant legislation, including the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991.

- 4.3 It is important to maintain and improve the Strategic Transport Network for regional and national economic reasons. The Western Wiltshire Sustainable Transport Strategy (WWSTS) as set out in the Local Transport Plan 2001/02 – 2005/06 (DD19) aims to regenerate the economies of the towns in the western part of Wiltshire. The main National Primary Routes serving this area are the A350 and the A36. Difficulties of access to the towns by these routes, in particular the A350, have contributed to slow economic development and the build up of employment problems.

The A350 Primary Route

- 4.4 RPG10 states selective infrastructure proposals should be supported to improve the safety and efficiency of the road network, reduce congestion and achieve environmental improvements. The A350 north/south route to the west of Wiltshire carries the highest volume of traffic and heavy goods vehicle movements on the County's non-Trunk Road Primary Routes. It provides a north/south route and links the M4 motorway, A36 and A303, and acts as a route of regional and national importance for longer distance traffic between the Bournemouth/Poole area, and Wales and the North. Because of its regional importance, and the significant traffic growth that has occurred in the last ten years, the route requires improvements to maintain and enhance journey time reliability.
- 4.5 The importance of the A350 to the County road network is defined in the Swindon and Wiltshire Structure Plan 2016 where the route is designated as a National Primary Route. The A350 has been a priority route for the County Council for many years and the LTP

2001/02 – 2005/06 stated within the Western Wiltshire Sustainable Transport Strategy that *“There is a need for a strategic north-south corridor on the west side of Wiltshire to cater for both South-Coast port traffic enroute to South Wales and the Midlands, and for strategic traffic serving the West Wiltshire area.”*

- 4.6 The A350 links five major towns in west Wiltshire (Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster) that have a combined population of about 122,000 with the total population in the corridor being in the region of 140,000. The towns are located along the north/south corridor of the A350 Primary Route and of the five west Wiltshire towns Trowbridge is designated as a Strategically Important Town/City in the RSS (DD12). The RSS emphasises the functional links of the towns and the key importance of transport connections for the area to achieve potential growth. It also states in paragraph 4.2.65 that *“certain targeted improvements to the wider transport network may be required to enable the area to achieve its growth potential to improve access to established employment centres and to build on previous infrastructure investment.”*
- 4.7 The Western Wiltshire Sustainable Transport Strategy set out the priorities for delivering improvements to the environment and economy in western Wiltshire and described how the five towns tend to act as a single economic unit with the A350 being the primary link between them and beyond for the movement of goods and services.
- 4.8 The route has been improved and major schemes implemented to the north and south of Westbury; Chippenham and Melksham/Semington to the north and Biss Bottom (Upton Scudamore) and East Knoyle to the south. Further improvements to improve journey time reliability, road safety and reduce environmental impacts on communities on the A350 corridor at Yarnbrook/West Ashton and Melksham are a priority and are

included in the operative Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016. The structure plan states that *"The proposed improvements to the A350 National Primary Route Network, including those at Yarnbrook/West Ashton and Melksham, where journey times are unreliable, will provide significant relief and environmental benefits, particularly for local residents, and the improved standard of provision of this road will aid the economic and social regeneration of the west Wiltshire towns."*

Westbury

- 4.9 Westbury with a population of 17,960 (2006 figure) provides an important local shopping and service function. The town centre is linear in form, comprising of three distinct shopping areas. Market Place/Maristow Street and High Street/Edward Street are both within the Westbury Conservation Area and are accessed off the A350 whilst the third shopping area, Warminster Road is part of the A350. The town is home to the Westbury White Horse, a Georgian market square and a number of interesting historic buildings. Westbury has a long history with traditional industries of cloth-making, weaving and glove making.
- 4.10 The busy A350 weaves through the centre of the town, severs the community and presents problems of traffic congestion, pollution, safety and accessibility. Community facilities including the town's only secondary school, doctors' surgery, police station and leisure centre are accessed from the A350. The main shopping area is located to the east of the A350 whilst the majority of residential properties, including the recent development at Leigh Park are to the west. Many of the footways alongside the A350 through the town are narrow and access to community facilities is poor. The road alignment, width and visibility are restricted and there are many adjoining residential roads leading to safety concerns. The opportunities to improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists

are limited due to the restricted road space, poor alignment and visibility, and high volume of through traffic.

4.11 There is potential for Westbury to become a popular tourist destination in its own right as it provides a potentially good base for accessing other attractions on the tourism trail in Wiltshire and the surrounding area. However with only 4 hotels and Bed and Breakfasts registered in Westbury on the Visit Wiltshire tourism website it would appear that this is currently limited. The A350 travelling through Westbury is the through-route to other destinations and the volume of traffic makes it very difficult for the town to promote itself as a destination in its own right. The bypass would give Westbury significant traffic relief and provide an improved environment attracting visitors to the area.

4.12 The A350 also provides an arterial route through the centre of Westbury including the Westbury Conservation Area (Haynes Road) mixing local and long distance traffic. The route has many adjoining roads, junctions and roundabouts and road safety is a concern. Accident details are covered in more detail within the Engineering proof produce by Mr. R. Stokes.

West Wilts Trading Estate

4.13 Westbury's recent industrial history, particularly toward the 20th century has seen an influx of heavier industry with companies either moving branches to Westbury or opening up business there. This has predominantly been seen to the north of the town from the railway line to the Ham area and trading estate beyond. In 1915 the G.W.R. opened their locomotive workshops there and in 1926 Aplin and Barrett established a factory for making processed cheese in a group of former Air Ministry buildings at The Ham; production continues there today operated by the French Company ULN.

- 4.14 The West Wilts Trading Estate is one of the largest areas of manufacturing, warehousing and service industry businesses in Wiltshire and was developed on the site of a World War Two army camp. It lies part in Westbury and Heywood Parish and part in the adjoining parish of North Bradley. The current site is formed of West Wilts Trading Estate approximately 64.4 ha (159.1 acres) and Brook Lane/Northacre Park approximately 53.9 ha (133.18 acres). West Wiltshire District Council as the local Planning Authority has identified the trading estate as an important general employment site within the District where development has already taken place and there is potential for further development or redevelopment. West Wiltshire District Council is generally supportive of proposals for further appropriate employment development within this established employment area.
- 4.15 Within their promotional material for the trading estate West Wiltshire District Council acknowledges the constraints and states that *"the site is well located to the north of Westbury. There are a large number of established employers on site. However, there may be opportunities to re-use or redevelop existing sites. A few vacant plots are available. Accessibility onto the site will be improved by the proposed improvements to the A350 at Westbury."*
- 4.16 Poor access, especially from the south through the town centre limits the economic future of the trading estate. The other routes into the trading estate follow narrow county roads with poor alignment and visibility. This threat was acknowledged LTP 2001/02 – 2005/06 Annex I: Western Wiltshire Sustainable Transport Strategy where it was stated *"that economic regeneration is being throttled by poor transport links, and where particular employment sites, such as the West Wilts Trading Estate, suffer obvious transport and access problems."* There is a need to provide adequate access to this important employment area.

Cement Works

- 4.17 In 1947 and 1948 planning permission was given in principle for the building of a cement works to the north-east of Westbury town by the Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers. Chalk was to be excavated from the escarpment of Salisbury Plain, near the White Horse, and carried by underground pipe-line to the valley below, where another large excavation would supply clay.
- 4.18 The cement works in its current location started producing cement in 1962 and a second kiln was added in 1965. The factory produces up to 700,000 tonnes of cement a year and employs 130 people at the site and the nearby quarry. It is estimated that the works, now operated by La Farge, contribute £10 million a year to the local economy. The chimney at the works is a significant landmark and can be seen for miles around, rising 400 feet (122 metres).

Local Environment

- 4.19 West Wiltshire has a rich and attractive landscape heritage, comprising of a wide range of natural habitats, and a wealth of historic towns and villages. Westbury is an historic market town located between the scarp slope of Salisbury Plain to the south east and the broad shallow valley of Biss Brook to the west. Between Salisbury Plain and the south eastern fringe of the town an area of countryside is designated as a Special Landscape Area (SLA), a non statutory designation. Further to the south Salisbury Plain is a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 4.20 Westbury White Horse is located to the south east of the town on a scarp slope to Salisbury Plain. The White Horse and Bratton Camp, the latter located at the top of the scarp slope, are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The current Westbury White Horse was cut into the hillside in 1778, replacing an older horse, possible

commemorating King Alfred's nearby victory over the Vikings. In 1873 the horse was restored and reshaped with edging stones to hold the chalk in place. In the late nineteen-fifties the horse was covered in concrete and painted white, this process was repeated in 1995 and repainted in 2006. At its closest point the proposed A350 Westbury Bypass route as it crosses the B3098 Bratton Road, is 1.3 kilometers away from the White Horse.

- 4.21 To the eastern side of the town the countryside gives way to a low lying landscape dominated by the La Farge cement works. The northern edge of the town is constrained by a main London to the West Country railway line and the floodplain of the Bitham Brook, a tributary of the River Biss.
- 4.22 To the north east the main railway line marks the edge of the current residential development of the town. Beyond the main line a series of other railway lines, separated in part by small lakes, cross each other in a strategic east-west and north-south railway junction. Beyond that is a large area designated for employment, part of which is built out as the West Wilts Trading Estate and Northacre Park.
- 4.23 To the west of the town recent residential and community developments at Leigh Park are encroaching ever closer to the floodplain of the Biss and its tributaries. Further development is constrained by a major north-south railway line.
- 4.24 To the south west lies the built area of Westbury Leigh, a linear development that stretches from Westbury south westward as far as the railway line, beyond which is another linear development at Dilton Marsh.
- 4.25 A location plan is contained in Appendix A.

5 Description of A350 Westbury Bypass

- 5.1 A detailed route description is provided in the Engineering proof produced by Mr. R. Stokes.

Scheme limits

- 5.2 Up until 2001, Wiltshire County Council's proposal for an A350 improvement at Westbury included an extension to the scheme which provided improvements to the junctions at Yarnbrook and West Ashton. Investigation and consultation into the alignment of potential improvement options at Yarnbrook and West Aston was undertaken in 2000, but no preferred option was confirmed due to the need to establish the impact of a number of constraints. These constraints to the potential improvement corridors comprise of a floodplain to the west, built up areas which include private houses and businesses along the length of the A350, and to the south a dense and popular area of woodland, Picket Wood which is a designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 5.3 Following discussions with the Government Office for the South West, Wiltshire County Council decided that due to the uncertainties surrounding the choice of the improvement to Yarnbrook and West Ashton, it should be removed from the Westbury Bypass proposal to ensure a deliverable length of scheme was proposed. The amended proposal comprising of the A350 Westbury Bypass and Glenmore Link to the West Wilts Trading Estate, could be developed independently and consequentially improve cost certainty and deliverability. The improvements to West Ashton and Yarnbrook would be developed as a separate proposal and this was agreed by the County Council's Cabinet at its meeting on the 11th July 2003. (See Appendix B)
- 5.4 A scheme to improve Yarnbrook and West Ashton remains a priority for WCC and is included as a separate named improvement in the

current Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 Policy T12(3). The structure plan recognises that further study work is required to identify the improvement works necessary and states that *“Improvements at Melksham will be prioritised below those to secure the Westbury Bypass and a Yarnbrook/West Ashton scheme.”* WCC is currently looking to develop an improvement scheme for Yarnbrook/West Ashton and has allocated Capital Funds this financial year (08/09) to review the previous work and undertake discussions with stakeholders.

- 5.5 The construction of the A350 Westbury Bypass does not prevent any future improvements planned for this route nor does it require it to take place.

Route

- 5.6 The design approach adopted for the scheme has sought to provide a fully integrated solution. Landscape, environmental and ecological mitigation have been fully incorporated into the engineering design. The scheme alignment has been defined to minimise the impact on the landscape and environment by careful detailing, reducing the loss of natural vegetation and providing low and sympathetically graded embankments and cuttings. The structures have been designed to be visually unobtrusive and blend in with the natural surroundings. Many incorporate planting of native species and have been designed as wildlife crossings. A sustainable approach has been adopted throughout the scheme to minimise waste and ensure a cut and fill balance is achieved.
- 5.7 In total the proposed scheme would comprise approximately 5.8 kilometres of new single carriageway road around the eastern and northern sides of Westbury.
- 5.8 Roundabouts would connect the bypass to the existing A350 both north and south of the town, between which there would be no

