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HIGHWAYS AGENCY

**WHITFIELD URBAN EXPANSION SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT, MASTER PLAN  
(OCTOBER 2010)**

**TECHNICAL NOTE - 03**

PROJECT: HTT91271A/1546.2

**29 NOVEMBER 2010**

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 PB has been commissioned by the Highways Agency (HA) to review and comment on the consultation of the Whitfield Urban Extension Draft Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) dated October 2010. This is accompanied by a Transport Strategy, which we have also reviewed in an accompanying Technical Note. An initial review of the SPD was undertaken in August 2010 and the HA provided their comments to that document in a technical note dated 5 August 2010. This was issued to PBA and Barton Willmore.
- 1.2 One of the key points we made previously was that the trigger points for provision of infrastructure required for delivery of the Whitfield Urban Extension (WUE) needed to be supported by traffic modelling. We note some of the specific comments are now addressed within the Transport Strategy (TS) and we have outlined these within a separate technical note relating to the TS.
- 1.3 Our comments below are outlined in the order set out in the SPD as far as possible.

**2 PREPARATION OF THE SPD**

- 2.1 We note that in **paragraph 3.3** the TS has been included within the list of evidence that supports the SPD and we have provided a separate technical note outlining our comments in relation to that document.
- 2.2 We would recommend that the extensive consultation that has taken place with the HA is outlined within this section.

**3 HABITAT REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 The HA is self regulating in their approach to habitat protection. Transport schemes that come forward that affect HA roads or land will have to meet their requirements, to ensure habitats are understood and any identified issues addressed appropriately.

**4 DEVELOPMENT AREA**

- 4.1 We would suggest that accessibility should be included as a consideration within **table 6.1**, with more accessible parts of the urban extension being suitable for more dense levels of development, and those with poor access, less suitable.
  - 4.1.1 As stated in **paragraph 6.8**, the HA has been consulted previously on a new access to the A2. The Government's policy on access to the network is laid down in Department for Transport Circular 02/2007 'Planning and the Strategic Road Network'.
  - 4.1.2 Paragraph 41 and 42 of Circular 02/2007 state:

*"41. There is a general presumption that there will be no additional accesses to motorways and other routes of strategic national importance, other than the provision of service areas, facilities for the travelling public, maintenance compounds and, exceptionally, other major transport interchanges. Access from other types of development to motorways and other routes of strategic national importance will be limited to existing junction with all-purpose roads. Modifications to existing junction*

*will be carried out only where traffic flows and safety will not be adversely affected. Connections to slip roads and/or connector roads will not be permitted.*

*42. The agency will adopt a graduated and less restrictive approach<sup>1</sup> to accesses on the remainder of the strategic road network, but there will still be a presumption in favour of using existing accesses and junction. Any additional junctions or increased junction capacity should be identified in the LDD and/or RTS and will be considered within the context of the Agency's forward programme of works."*

- 4.2 We note that the A2 is not designated as a route of strategic national importance and that the signed route to Dover (and the port) from the M25 is via the M20/A20 corridor. We agree that there is a lack of alternative access options access the land at WUE and that a new access from the A2 would be beneficial .
- 4.3 It is acknowledged in **paragraph 6.16** that the location of the junction is constrained by a number of factors. We previously commented that the HA considered it imperative that the location of the junction is determined early in the process to ensure it is deliverable. We note that a preferred location has been identified at **paragraph 6.16** and that some sketches of the junction layout have been included within the TS. We note that dualling of the A2 between the proposed new roundabout access and the Whitfield Roundabout will be required to address traffic management issues. However, we would expect to see preliminary designs and modelling outputs that demonstrate the benefits of the preferred option for highway access to the site, as set out in **paragraph 6.7 and 6.16**, to be referred to within the SPD and detailed within the TS. Currently this detail has not been included. It is important that the SPD demonstrates whether it is physically possible to deliver the proposed improvements and it should demonstrate whether the improvements can be delivered within the land available.
- 4.4 **Paragraph 6.23** considers signalling Whitfield Roundabout, however it is suggested that the SPD should specify the point at which this will be required. This should also address the possible difficulties of signalling a five arm roundabout. We would like to reiterate the need to ensure that conditions at Whitfield are 'no worse off' as a result of any development which is to be permitted.
- 4.5 We will expect to see outputs from the VISSIM model to demonstrate that the highways options put forward will accommodate the traffic generated by the development proposals. We have provided more detailed comments in our response to the TS. We would also expect the Masterplan to clearly set out the levels of development traffic, if any, that can be accommodated at the Whitfield roundabout prior to it being signalised or other improvements being introduced. Again, the modelling to demonstrate these thresholds would be needed to provide evidence to support the conclusions.
- 4.6 We note that at **paragraph 6.36** a target of a 20% reduction in car trips from the WUE is put forward. This seems an overly ambitious target. Evidence should be provided of the mode splits achieved at equivalent locations to Dover. However, it is our understanding that this reduction has not been applied to the trip rates used within the traffic assessment in the TS. We would like to see this confirmed within the text at this section.
- 4.7 We would agree with the comment at **paragraph 6.35** that routing strategies will need to be agreed to ensure that suitable safe routes are identified. The HA will be concerned about the impact of construction traffic on the SRN and would suggest that this should be investigated in more detail within the Masterplan.
- 4.8 The potential for a new footway/cycle bridge over the A2 is identified at **paragraph 6.43**. Whilst we acknowledge that accessibility to the site by non car modes is essential in reducing

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<sup>1</sup> The graduated and less restrictive approach to existing and new accesses depends on the standard and status of a given route. Safety and the free flow of traffic will continue to be the Agency's primary concern when making considerations.

the impact of development at WUE on the SRN, it is suggested that it is unlikely that there will be HA funding for a scheme of this nature.

- 4.9 After a meeting with Barton Willmore and Dover District Council on 19 November 2010, Dover District Council asked the HA to review proposed changes to wording within the Masterplan with Barton Willmore. In a letter to the HA on 23 November 2010, Barton Willmore has proposed changed wording of **paragraph 6.32** which currently reads:

*“Finally, a bus gate is proposed on Singledge Lane. This lane currently provides an access for Whitfield residents to and from the A2 corridor. Discussions with Highways Agency Officers have confirmed that the intensification of this sub-standard access junction would not be acceptable. The masterplan therefore proposes a new access junction on the A2 to the west of the Singledge Lane junction and a traffic management feature on Singledge Lane once the new access on the A2 is available. This arrangement would provide management of the traffic flows able to use Singledge Lane and its junction with the A2.”*

- 4.10 Barton Willmore’s proposed rewording of this paragraph is:

- 4.11 *“Singledge Lane currently provides an access for Whitfield residents to and from the A2 corridor. Any intensification of and improvement to the Singledge Lane/A2 junction and Singledge Lane associated solely with the identified extension to the south of Singledge Lane must be demonstrated to be acceptable in highway terms. The masterplan proposes a new access junction on the A2 to the west of the Singledge Lane junction and a traffic management feature on Singledge Lane to the west of the identified extension once the new access on the A2 is available. This arrangement would provide management of the traffic flows able to use Singledge Lane and its junction with the A2 in the longer term.”*

- 4.12 The HA is concerned that the layout of the Singledge Lane junction with the A2 is substandard and that there are potential safety issues related to the increased use of this junction, particularly in respect of the right turn movement. Not only would the developers need to demonstrate that the development traffic could be accommodated here, a suitable construction route would also need to be identified. We would hope to see the right turn movement at the Singledge Lane junction with the A2 closed in the longer term.

The HA would suggest the alternative wording below:

*“Singledge Lane currently provides an access for Whitfield residents to and from the A2 corridor. Any intensification of and improvement to the Singledge Lane/A2 junction and Singledge Lane associated solely with the identified extension to the south of Singledge Lane must be demonstrated to be acceptable in highway terms. The masterplan proposes a new access junction on the A2 to the west of the Singledge Lane junction. **Access to the land to the South East of the new junction will need to be provided on completion of the new A2 roundabout and traffic management measures installed to discourage through traffic. The gap in the central reservation of the A2 at Singledge Lane should be closed on completion of the A2 roundabout to prevent right turns from the A2 to Singledge Lane.**”*

- 4.12.1 We note that the traffic modelling undertaken to date has not assumed any increased use of Singledge Lane and the impact of any proposed increases will need to be considered.

## 5 EXPANDING WHITFIELD: OVERALL INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 We would support the requirement that development will only be allowed to come forward as appropriate infrastructure is provided. We note that **Appendix 2** outlines the infrastructure requirements for WUE. We would expect this to provide more detail about the quantity of development that can come forward prior to the infrastructure improvements being in place in terms of number of houses and associated trips, rather than just the expected years of delivery. Further detail of expected funding sources should also be provided. This

information is required in order to demonstrate that the proposals are likely to be deliverable. The SPD should also identify the implications to the plans, should certain schemes it relies upon not come forward.

- 5.2 The signalisation and any other improvements to Whitfield roundabout should also be included within the transport table in **appendix 2**, as should other public transport infrastructure referred to in section 9.

## 6 THE CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

- 6.1 Under the heading Land Ownership (**paragraph 9.28 – 9.130**) this section considers the parcels of land that could come forward throughout the development of WUE. We note that for some sites the SPD has identified infrastructure required prior to development coming forward. However this needs to be much more clearly set out, either within this section or the **Section 10 – Delivery and Implementation**. Any statements relating to the phasing of development and infrastructure will need to be detailed within the TS. The implications to the rest of the phased delivery, should large sites not come forward in the planned timescales with their supporting infrastructure, should be considered.

- 6.1.1 **Paragraph 9.53** outlines the need for a new junction to the A2 prior to development of land south of Singledge Lane. Within correspondence dated 23 November, the HA has been advised of Barton Willmore’s proposed amendments to paragraph 9.53, the proposed changes are outlined below. Whilst we do not have any specific objection to this amendment, we would emphasise that this is **provided that** the developers can demonstrate that a suitable access can be provided, as outlined above. The HA is still to be convinced that this can be demonstrated.

*“The area of land south of Singledge Lane to the A2, between the Ramada Hotel and Green lane is relatively flat and is capable of development. Singledge Lane is a narrow road with a rural character which should be maintained. Access to this area of land will be acceptable from an improved Singledge Lane/A2 junction and Singledge Lane provided it is demonstrated that this is acceptable in highway terms and that the character of Singledge Lane is respected. Vehicular access to development (excluding emergency access) will be from a single point along Singledge Lane.”*

- 6.2 We note that Barton Willmore have also requested that the last sentence of **paragraph 9.56** is removed. It is currently states:

*“Due to the highway constraints on Singledge Lane this area of land can only be developed when the A2 roundabout has been built.”*

- 6.3 We would suggest that this could be reworded to state:

*“Due to the highway constraints on Singledge Lane this area of land can only be developed when suitable access for development and construction traffic has been agreed with the Planning Authority and the Highways Agency.”*

- 6.4 **Paragraph 9.9** provides an outline of the intended public transport infrastructure to support development of the WUE. It is noted that Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is an integral part of the sustainable transport strategy. It is important therefore to understand that delivery of the BRT and associated transport infrastructure are essential to help facilitate sustainable development. Further details should be provided regarding the delivery of BRT when they are available. The traffic impacts of any bus priority measures should be modelled to ensure they do not increase congestion on the A2.

## 7 DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1 We note that the importance of sequential delivery is outlined in **paragraph 10.10**. As outlined above, we consider a phasing plan, based on thresholds and which infrastructure required for development to be essential to the successful delivery of the whole of the WUE. We would expect these thresholds to be developed at this Masterplanning stage to ensure that they can support the whole of the WUE.

- 7.2 We accept that alternative sites may have to come forward if the annual delivery of the development phases drops, however the infrastructure required to support these may need to be reassessed if this occurs.
- 7.3 We would question the statement in **paragraph 10.14** that access via the A2 will be more difficult to achieve than access via the A256. The Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) has changed the way that schemes such as this are brought forward and it is our understanding that it would be open to a party other than the Highways Agency to make an application to the IPC for a new junction. It would however still fall to the HA to oversee the delivery of any improvements to the SRN. It is the policy of the current administration to remove the IPC and this statement should be investigated further once the replacement arrangements are in place. The final phasing that is agreed for the SPD should be supported by traffic modelling to demonstrate that it can be delivered.
- 7.4 It is stated that any application for development at the WUE beyond the first 2,000 dwellings must include an evaluation of the effects at Whitfield Roundabout using the VISSIM microsimulation model. We would like to see all applications for development at the WUE supported by an assessment of the impact upon Whitfield roundabout using traditional capacity assessment packages (such as ARCADY or equivalent). This should identify that appropriate mitigation may be required and to ensure that conditions are no worse than if the development had not taken place, as required by paragraph 37 of DfT Circular 02/2007 'Planning and the Strategic Road Network.' We would expect to see mitigation measures brought forward that can accommodate a robust development scenario.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The SPD has been reviewed in conjunction with the TS and separate responses have been provided. We note that the transport evidence to support the SPD is provided within the TS.
- 8.2 The SPD needs to consider the implications to the plan if development sites that are required to deliver mitigation measures do not come forward in the expected timescales.
- 8.3 Comments above relating to the SRN should be addressed within the masterplan particularly demonstrating that the proposals are deliverable. Issues in relation to the Singledge Lane junction with the A2 and Whitfield Roundabout improvements will also need to be addressed.