

Briefing Note – Update on Major Road Network Schemes in Mendip

Background

In July 2019 SCC submitted, to the Department for Transport, the pre-strategic outline business cases for Walton Ashcott Bypass and Glastonbury Pilton pinchpoint improvement schemes.

In November 2019 SCC received feedback from DfT that raised a number of queries relating to the business cases. It is the Department's role to ensure the webTAG process is being followed to ensure that the prescribed outcomes are derived from that process; it is not their role to comment on specific options at this stage.

Walton Ashcott Bypass

Overall the scheme was rated as Amber. This means there are some aspects of the business case which need further work, or clarifications before it can progress. The clarifications to be addressed and the response that has been provided are detailed in the following table –

DfT Comment	SCC Response
As the scheme develops, Highways England (HE) would like to see more evidence on the schemes impact on the SRN (M5 J23) through modelling. The scheme is in close proximity to the proposed Glastonbury scheme (A361 Glastonbury and Pilton Pinch Points Improvements). You should make reference to the impact these schemes may have on each other, particularly during construction, in case of combined impact.	SCC has used a cordoned version of Highways England's South West Regional Traffic Model to undertake our initial assessments of the schemes. The cordoned area includes M5 J23. We have carried out a number of initial tests using a range of high-level scenarios and none of the scenarios that we have tested to date have an impact on M5 J23. We are in the process of producing a technical note which we will use as part of our engagement with

<p>This is not required in the pre-SOBC but it should be included for SOBC.</p>	<p>Highways England during the development of the SOBC.</p> <p>An assessment of the construction impacts has yet to be made due to the uncertainty around preferred option however it is currently anticipated that the majority of the construction will be off of the major road network and that the impact will only be felt at the tie in points. A detailed assessment will be carried out as part of the development of the scheme for the SOBC and submitted at that stage.</p>
<p>The timeline in the management case does not seem to have factored in all elements of the project. The Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) has been programmed in for six months which does not look realistic</p>	<p>We have reviewed the overall programme and found an error in the way the project had been set up, the project now shows the CPO process taking twelve months. An amended timeline is shown in section 6 and an amended programme is shown at the end of annex 4. SCC would prefer to negotiate for the land required to deliver the scheme however we acknowledge that on a scheme of this scale that it will not be possible to secure all of the land in this way. The CPO will be twin tracked with a negotiated approach with the aim of securing the land at the earliest point possible.</p>
<p>Please provide more detailed information on governance in the management/commercial case</p>	<p>SCC has a rigorous governance arrangement that is in place for the delivery of all major schemes. We have provided additional information about these arrangements in annex 8.</p>

<p>The financial case is very limited and requires clarification. More detailed cost breakdowns are required</p>	<p>An initial cost estimate has been prepared for SCC by ,consultants WSP as part of a Concept Design Development study. We have included the report of this study, including the cost estimate in annex 9. The cost estimate information can be found in section 8 (page 23) of the report.</p>
<p>It is not clear if the scheme will provide opportunities to create cycling and walking provision in the town as there would be less traffic going through the town. This needs to be clarified.</p>	<p>The nature of the scheme, as it is currently designed is that it will bypass two villages. Once the traffic has been removed the environment in the villages will be significantly improved and more suitable for active travel. At this stage the scheme does not include any remedial measures to improve the infrastructure in the villages however this will be under constant review through the development period.</p>
<p>We would like you to ensure that appropriate cycling and walking measures are considered and incorporated unless there is a strong reason not to. With supporting all road users being one of the objectives of the MRN, not considering such measures could impact adversely on future assessments of the scheme. Cycling and walking measures should meet our soon to be published national cycle design guidance (or equivalent) where applicable</p>	<p>The concept design does not currently include specific measures for walking or cycling however we acknowledge that these should be included. We also intend to include suitable links from the villages to the new road, where possible.</p> <p>We are eager to understand the emerging guidance and hope that it is published in the near future.</p> <p>It is anticipated that a segregated footpath /cycleway will be added to the design to facilitate longer distance travel from the villages and to accommodate users of the public rights of way that the scheme would impact.</p>

Glastonbury Pilton pinchpoint improvement

Overall the scheme was also rated as Amber. This means there are some aspects of the business case which need further work, or clarifications before it can progress. The clarifications to be addressed and the response that has been provided are detailed in the following table –

DfT Comment	SCC Response
<p>The problem is clearly defined but the supporting evidence needs to be developed further. An options assessment has been included but would be stronger with more supporting evidence. Further analysis is required to demonstrate why options have been selected.</p>	<p>A light touch options assessment report was completed for the pre-SOBC submission. SCC has commenced a full options assessment process in order to fully understand the options. An options workshop took place in October 2019 the notes of which have been appended to initial OAR within annex 5.</p> <p>We have also amended the text in section 2 of the pre-SOBC proforma to reflect the early stage of options development and the nature of the ongoing work.</p>
<p>Clarification is needed on the financial case; more detailed cost breakdowns are required.</p>	<p>The scheme is at a very early stage of development however an estimate of the Glastonbury short by-pass element of the scheme has been costed. The estimate for this has now been provided as annex 8 to the business case. Given the early stage of option development work for the Pilton element of the scheme we were unable to produce a cost estimate and therefore made an assumption that it</p>

	would be of the same order of magnitude as the Glastonbury short by-pass element.
As the scheme develops Highways England (HE) will need to see more evidence from modelling on the scheme's impact on the SRN, in particular on the M5 J23. The scheme is in close proximity to the proposed A39 Walton and Ashcott Bypass. The scheme promoter should make reference to the impact these schemes may have on each other, particularly during construction, in case of combined impact.	<p>SCC has used a cordoned version of Highways England's South West Regional Traffic Model to undertake our initial assessments of the schemes. The cordoned area includes M5 J23. We have carried out a number of initial tests using a range of high-level scenarios and none of the scenarios that we have tested to date have an impact on M5 J23. We are in the process of producing a technical note which we will use as part of our engagement with Highways England during the development of the SOBC.</p> <p>An assessment of the construction impacts has yet to be made due to the uncertainty around the options however it is currently anticipated that the majority of the construction will be off of the major road network and that the impact will only be felt at the tie in points. An initial assessment will be included within the SOBC.</p>
We would like you to ensure that appropriate cycling and walking measures are considered and incorporated unless there is a strong reason not to. With supporting all road users being one of the objectives of the MRN, not considering such measures could impact adversely on future assessments of the scheme. Cycling and walking	Somerset is keen to promote walking and cycling as part of the transport offer and will include measures within schemes where there is a demonstrable benefit to the travelling public or local communities. By-pass schemes will be designed to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists

measures should meet our soon to be published national cycle design guidance (or equivalent where applicable).	along their length and suitable access points will be accommodated. All schemes will be designed to the most up to date guidance at the time.
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As there had been recent correspondence with local stakeholders we took the opportunity to amend some text in section 8 and added annex 9 (correspondence with Glastonbury Town Council) to clarify the position of our stakeholders at this time.

Next Steps

SCC has commissioned WSP to undertake the technical work needed to produce the Strategic Outline Business Case for the Glastonbury Pilton scheme. An options workshop has taken place and options assessment is ongoing.

No further work has been commissioned on the Walton Ashcott scheme at this stage.