

Letter from Somerset County Council Strategic Commissioning Manager – Highways and Transport

Dear [REDACTED]

Apologies that it has taken some time to respond to your query. I thought it would be useful to set out the recent history of the Glastonbury and Pilton proposals to set the context for the response to your specific queries:

In December 2018 the Department for Transport (DfT), following a national consultation, set out the final Major Road Network (MRN) and the eligibility requirements for schemes that could see funding from the National Roads Fund (this is set out within the “Investment Planning Guidance For the Major Road Network and Large Local Majors Programmes”). A route across Somerset, including the A361 from Beardsly Batch to Glastonbury, was included within that network.

In early 2019 the DfT invited local authorities to consider where, on the MRN network, improvements are required to the road to meet five objectives. Those being reduce congestion, support economic growth, support housing delivery, support all road users and support the Strategic Road Network. Glastonbury and Pilton were identified as pinch points on the network which currently cause issues for road users and have a significant impact on the lives of local residents. The submission deadline for the information was the end of July 2019.

All applications for funding from the DfT are required to follow their “Transport Business Cases” guidance which sets out the process and three business case gateways. For the MRN DfT added an additional phase for potential schemes that are not yet developed to a sufficient level detail to meet the “Transport Business Cases” guidance, this is call the pre Strategic Outline Business Case stage (pre SOBC). This phase is for potential schemes where a problem has been identified but very little or no solution investigation has taken place, where there is no preferred option as the optioneering work is still to be carried out in detail and where there construction of a scheme, if it gets to that stage, would be some years hence.

The potential scheme for Glastonbury / Pilton has been submitted to DfT in this new pre SOBC phase. The development of major schemes always starts with defining the problem and objectives of a scheme. We then pull together the ideas for solving that problem. Due to the timing of the submission to DfT we were not able to carry out detailed options development with supporting technical work so we will be undertaking this work as part of a full optioneering exercise for submission with the next gateway business case (SOBC). I have attached the pre SOBC business case that was sent to DfT in July, it is our intention to publish this on our website in the near future. I have omitted some of the appendices, SCC has not published this information because it may prejudice the commercial interests of individuals or businesses without need. The options are still work in progress.

Thank you for providing a copy of the Mendip presentation. The plans that you have seen are a few of the ideas that have been put forward within various background technical reports commissioned by Mendip DC as part of the first stage of consideration. With only limited technical work having taken place these plans do not represent firm options or proposals at this stage.

It is the intention to carry out public consultation once the next stage of work (SOBC) has been completed; this consultation will include all of the options that have been considered, set out the technical

work that we have carried out and will ask the public's opinion on a short list of options. We currently anticipate the consultation taking place in late summer / autumn 2020 although this is subject to change as it depends on the outcome of the technical work. Before the consultation takes place we will contact affected property owners to discuss the implications. All of the feedback will be considered alongside the technical information to inform a preferred option. The preferred option will be taken through County Council approval processes before being finalised. It can then be taken forward to the Outline Business Case and Final Business Case stages, assuming that we get approval from DfT at each stage.

Schemes of this nature take many years to develop, at this time there is no funding commitment from DfT and therefore no certainty of any scheme being delivered.

In terms of the relative priority of the scheme within the material submitted to Government, this is ranked 5 out of the 6 schemes submitted by Peninsula Transport Sub-National Transport Body but DfT will not necessarily stick to that order in terms of their own views on the schemes. DfT's funding has to be committed by March 2025 so a contract will have to have been awarded by then in order for funding to be released and we are currently working to that timescale.

I hope this clarifies the situation.

Kind regards

Mike O'Dowd-Jones

Strategic Commissioning Manager - Highways and Transport

Somerset County Council