



Meeting note

File reference	MetroWest Phase 1 – Portishead Branch Line
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	19 May 2017
Meeting with	North Somerset Council and the MetroWest Partnership
Venue	Offices of Bond Dickinson LLP, Bristol
Attendees	The Planning Inspectorate Tom Carpen – Infrastructure Planning Lead David Price – EIA and Land Rights Manager Emre Williams – Case Manager, National Infrastructure Richard Price – Case Manager, National Infrastructure The Applicant Richard Guyatt – Bond Dickinson LLP James Willcock – North Somerset Council Colin Medus – North Somerset Council Colin Field – Network Rail Carolyn Francis – CH2M
Meeting objectives	Project update
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The Planning Inspectorate advised on its openness policy, explaining that any advice given would be recorded and placed on the Planning Inspectorate's website under section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Applicant explained that the Proposed Development had been revised to address issues of affordability following a detailed review of costs which were found to be unaffordable. The review of the Proposed Development had resulted in three options being identified as follows:

- Option 1 - Proceed with a more affordable Proposed Development by revising the proposed service patterns.
- Option 2 – Cease promotion of the Proposed Development.
- Option 3 - Re-scope the Proposed Development in a valued engineering approach.

The Applicant explained that it considered that Option 1 was the most favorable in terms of deliverability. Option 1 would necessitate some significant design changes,

particularly with regard to the design of track and services from the section between Pill through the Avon Gorge to the Clifton Suspension Bridge. Reducing work in the Avon Gorge would result in a reduced operating speed and reduced frequency of the passenger service. Proposals to alter the local road network for businesses on Ashton Vale Road were also no longer considered justified for the Proposed Development with a reduced frequency service pattern impacting less on the level crossing at Ashton Vale Road.

Option 1 would secure the required objectives for the Proposed Development including the financial imperative to remain within an agreed cost envelope. The Applicant was considering the funding stream options for funds beyond those already agreed with the Department for Transport (DfT), but there was confidence that this would be secured and that there were numerous options available to the Applicant in this regard. A meeting was scheduled to be held with DfT in June 2017 to discuss financial matters in detail.

The Applicant explained some of the particular aspects of the Option 1 proposal that were being considered, including arrangements to address concerns in respect of the level crossing at Ashton Vale Road. The Applicant explained that it was considering options to maintain safety and accessibility for both the existing commercial properties and the Proposed Development. The consideration extends to increased understanding of the existing safety systems and how they can be more appropriately integrated with wider systems. The Applicant also explained that ongoing traffic modelling would influence decisions such as local road design proposals and/ or the need to consider other options for pedestrian access. The Planning Inspectorate advised that during match days at Ashton Gate stadium Ashton Vale Road was a busy pedestrian access which would need to be considered in the context of the Proposed Development, particularly to ensure that safety is maintained. The Applicant explained that it was aware of this and was working up solutions to address these points.

The Applicant provided a run-through of the revised timescales for the preparation of its application for a Development Consent Order (DCO), making certain assumptions about the local political decision-making programme. In particular the Applicant suggested that its statutory consultation under s42 of the PA2008 would commence in October 2017, with a view to submitting the DCO application by summer 2018.

There was a brief discussion regarding recent changes in the landscape of the local political agenda, including the new Mayor for Bristol and the Metro Mayor. The Applicant explained that the governance for the Proposed Development was set and was independent of recent political appointments. However, the Applicant had committed to further investigation in this regard to ascertain the extent to which the Metro Mayor may wish/ choose to become involved with the Proposed Development.

There was a brief discussion regarding the status of existing and proposed environmental survey work and the scope of the assessment to date. The Applicant identified that despite the changes to the Proposed Development it was content that the original scoping opinion received from the Planning Inspectorate was sufficient in order for it to proceed. The Planning Inspectorate pointed to the fact that the new Infrastructure Planning EIA Regulations 2017 had been made and that they included transitional provisions which should be considered in the context of the Proposed Development.

Specific decisions/ follow up required?

- The Applicant to confirm to the Planning Inspectorate to arrange the next project update meeting shortly before the commencement of the Applicant's statutory consultation in October 2017