Warminster Road MOD Site: Transport Improvements

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Bath MOD Sites: Concept Statements

Bath and North East Somerset Council

7 March 2012

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Contents

1 Concept Statement - Transport

1.1 Background

Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) is seeking to produce 'Concept Statements' to guide the future residential development of three sites currently used by the MoD at Ensleigh, Warminster Road and Foxhill in Bath. The aim of preparing such concept statements for each MOD site is to capture in a concise manner:

- The aspirations for each site; and
- The key planning priorities and requirements for new development.

This will thus act as a framework to shape the development management process, providing the context for master-planning work by future developers and informing the approach to site disposal, marketing, and other non-planning elements.

A necessary part of the statement for each of the MOD sites has been an assessment of the change of use of these sites from commercial to residential led mixed use development and the resulting impact on the transport network of the City. This particular statement sets out the transport improvements considered necessary to bring forward the Warminster Road MOD site; both to promote sustainable travel and ameliorate any adverse operational impacts on the local highway network. Locations referred to in this document are indicated with an appropriate reference on key plan Figures 1; with this reference also given in the appropriate text.

1.2 Existing Transport Network and Issues

1.2.1 Highway Operation

The Warminster Road MOD site is bounded by the A36 Warminster Road along the whole of its southern boundary. Just west of the site this key road divides to form two routes around Sydney Gardens at the traffic signal controlled Beckford Road/Sydney Road junction. Beckford Road provides the extension of the designated A36 route around the gardens into Sydney Place.

There are no regular operational problems caused by a shortfall in capacity at junctions in the vicinity of the site. However, queuing problems do occur in the northbound direction on Bathwick Street in the weekend evening peak period and at other times due to over-capacity conditions at the A4 Cleveland Place junction. This queuing and slow moving traffic can extend back through the A36 Beckford Road/Bathwick Street junction and along Sydney Place. As such, this exit blocking can affect the operation of this junction; notably the Sydney Place approach but also the capacity of the right turning movement from Beckford Road to Bathwick Street. Northbound A36 traffic approaching Sydney Place and routing to Warminster Road is able to avoid any congestion around the Beckford Road/Bathwick Street junction by using Sydney Road.

Speed problems do occur along the length of Warminster Road bounding the MOD site. The speed limit here is 30mph, but surveys undertaken by the Council reveal that actual 85th percentile speeds are often in excess of this.

Traffic generation work undertaken indicates that re-development of the Warminster Road site for residential use will not significantly change the overall level of two-way

traffic when compared with current usage which would be removed when the MOD use ceases. As such, the offsite highway works identified as necessary in this Statement reflect this fact. However, these also recognise that the traffic movement patterns in the weekday peak periods will be different, whilst pedestrian activity within and around the site is also likely to be increased with residential development in this location.

1.2.2 Walking and Cycling

There are no safety issues with walking and cycling in the vicinity of the site other than an identified need to assist pedestrians crossing the A36 where the footpath link at the western end of St Christopher's Close joins this road, However, a key aspiration is a cycle/pedestrian link through the site providing a direct connection to the National Cycle Route along the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath. This would provide a quieter, safer route for cyclists routing between this section of Warminster Road and the City Centre via Sydney Place.

1.2.3 Public Transport

The site is served by a number of bus services operating along the A36 Warminster Road, with an existing bus stop in each direction located just east of the junction with Minster Way. These comprise local Service 4 to Bathampton and the longer distance Wiltshire Council supported Services 264/265 to Warminster via Bradford-on-Avon. The Council's Public Transport team consider that some patronage is likely to be generated by the existing MOD site; but that these services nevertheless have significant core markets that would not be affected by its closure and proposed change of use. The aforementioned bus stops on the MOD site frontage do require improvement; but these are already earmarked for provision of Real Time Information (RTI), raised kerbs and new shelters as part of the approved Bath Package funding from Government.

1.3 Local Area Transport Improvements

1.3.1 Highway Works

Access Junctions

The present access arrangements to the MOD site comprise a separate entrance and exit point onto Warminster Road. The current barrier controlled entrance is located at the western end of the site frontage; just west of the Minster Way junction. The exit from the site is located east of the Minster Way junction on the crown of a bend in this section of Warminster Road. This affords good visibility in both directions for vehicles emerging from the site; which are required to 'give-way'.

The number of dwellings assessed for construction on the site is circa 140 units; at an assumed density of 40 dwellings/ha. For this level of development a single permanent point of vehicular access is considered adequate. The residential road design guidance currently adopted by Council allows up to 300 dwellings for cul-de-sac layouts. However, to avoid problems created by a temporary total blockage of this single access the layout must incorporate a secondary point of access for emergency purposes.

The access arrangements considered necessary are as follows:

- A primary access achieved via a new roundabout junction with the A36 Warminster Road (H1). This should be sited just east of the existing exit from the MOD site; which will ensure that the required sight stopping distance (SSD) to the give-way lines on the two A36 approaches can be achieved, notably in the westbound direction. The choice of a roundabout has been influenced by existing excess speed problems along this length of Warminster Road; whilst this form of junction would also ease exit movements from the site. Although in a 30mph speed limit area a mini-roundabout is considered less likely to achieve the desired speed reduction effect. As such a small 'normal' roundabout with a kerbed central island and meeting the entry path deflection requirements in TD16/07 'Geometric Design of Roundabouts' is the preferred primary access solution; and
- A secondary emergency vehicular access onto Warminster Road. It is envisaged that this could be provided where the existing entrance to the site is now (H2). If proposed as such the existing 'ghost island' right turn lane on the A36 at this entrance would need to be replaced with 'hatched' markings; in order to avoid drivers confusing this as a permanent access. Removable bollards should be used to ensure that regular use is confined to pedestrian and cyclists. The width of this access must be sufficient to allow two-way passage of vehicles for a distance 15-20m back from its junction with the A36; thereafter it could be narrowed to a single lane width before connection to the internal road layout. This width of this single lane section between kerbs should be sufficient to allow the passage of a fire appliance (3.7m minimum).

The internal arrangement of roads should ensure that vehicles within the site can access both the main access and the secondary emergency linkage should circumstances dictate.

Other Junctions

A need for additional highway works to other junctions in the vicinity of the site is not envisaged; particularly as the net increase in traffic resulting from the closure of the MOD site and subsequent residential re-development is expected to be marginal. The A36 Beckford Road / Bathwick Street (H3) and A36 Beckford Road / Sydney Road (H4) junctions have both been improved in recent years with the introduction of traffic signals. Both these installations incorporate controlled crossing facilities for pedestrians where none existed previously. Notwithstanding the above, the operation of these two junctions should be considered in any Transport Assessment prepared to support a planning application for re-development of the site; namely because the pattern of traffic generation in the weekday peak periods will be different.

1.3.2 Pedestrian/Cycle Improvements

The following linkages and improvements for pedestrians and cyclists are deemed necessary in developing the layout of the site:

- The creation of a new pedestrian/cyclist link through the site linking the A36 with the National Cycle Route along the Avon and Kennet Canal towpath (P1). The design of this linkage will need to consider how westbound cyclists on the A36 are to access this link safely. A new bridge would be needed over the canal with access to/from the towpath suitable for cyclists and the disabled. As such

the structure may need to span the towpath as well and utilise a ramped access to it. It should be noted that land on the north side of the canal needed for the construction of this bridge is in the control of the British Waterways Board (BWB); so early discussion with this body will be needed to determine the best means of securing this link;

- Improvements to the existing footpath along the eastern perimeter of the site (P2); linking the A36 with an existing footbridge over the canal. A linkage with the pedestrian footway/footpath network within the proposed site would need to be provided so rerouting this path to a new alignment along this eastern edge may be desirable and allow a higher standard of improvement to be achieved. Mindful of the above desire to create a pedestrian/cyclist linkage between the A36 and the Avon and Kennet towpath consideration could be given to using an alignment here and examining potential alterations to this existing bridging point;
- A pedestrian access/link on the western boundary to the site to the adjacent primary school in Darlington Road (P3). This would be best achieved by using the existing path linking to the eastern end of Darlington Road. However the Council's adopted highway records show that the section between The Cottage and the MOD site boundary is not adopted highway. As such, the potential developer would need to liaise with the owner of this land to ascertain whether a right-of-way for pedestrians and cyclists can be maintained. It is noted that access over this land is also currently necessary to access the field gate to pasture land forming part of the MOD site. As such, the MOD may have existing access rights over this land;
- In the event that the above is not achievable; the provision of a direct gated access into the primary school site where the boundary with the MOD site is common (P4). This will clearly require discussion with the school and a footpath link within the school site from this gate to the existing paved area; and
- Installation of new pedestrian refuge islands on the A36 Warminster Road where the footpath links from Minster Way (P5) and St Christopher's Close (P6) join this road. The first of these would assist pedestrian access to the footpath link along the eastern side of the site; whilst the second addresses a local desire to assist crossing movements in a location currently perceived as hazardous.

1.3.3 Public Transport

As previously stated in this Concept Statement the commercial viability of bus services operating past this site along Warminster Road is not likely to be affected by this change of use. Furthermore the bus stops just east of the Minster Way junction will be upgraded anyway using Bath Package funding. Accessibility to these bus stops from all parts of the site is considered acceptable; and there is no expectation that buses would need to turn into and out of the site. This deviation from route into what will be a relatively small development is unlikely to be supported by the bus operators anyway.

When Real Time Information (RTI) along this route is operational the VIX automatic vehicle location system will be fitted to buses operating Service 4; in order to

maintain consistency with the use of this system in Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset (the Greater Bristol Bus Network authorities). However, Services 264/265 operate Wiltshire's TRAPEZE RTI system, so a contribution would be sought with a view to further equipping these services with VIX equipment so that the stop displays outside the site provide predictions for these services as well as Service 4.

1.4 Wider Highway Improvements

A specific requirement for improvement works to junctions remote from the site has not been identified. As stated previously in this Concept Statement the traffic generation work carried out for a re-development scenario of 140 dwellings suggests that the net change in traffic from that currently accessing the MOD site would be marginal.