

DD31

A453 Widening M1 Junction 24 to A52 Nottingham

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE ENVIRONMENT

BY

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1. Personal Introduction

1.1 My name is Anthony Walsham Brown. I am an Associate of David Tyldesley & Associates, a Planning, Landscape and Ecological Consultancy Practice based in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire. I hold a Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Town Planning and a Master of Arts Degree in Landscape Design. I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute for more than 20 years.

1.2 I have 25 years experience in planning and landscape architecture, comprising 5 years in local government and the past 20 years in the private sector. I have been project Landscape Architect on 15 major trunk road schemes; on a further 5 schemes I have been the environmental specialist on the Highways Agency's multi-disciplinary teams. Since March 2006 I have been the Environmental Co-ordinator, leading the environmental team in the environmental impact assessment of the A453 Widening scheme and submission of the Environmental Statement. I have visited the location of the Published Scheme on numerous occasions and I am familiar with the study area. I have attended the consultations and exhibitions held for the scheme.

2. Scope of the Evidence

2.1 My evidence describes the context of the scheme, its landscape setting and character, and provides information on the assessment carried out in respect of landscape and visual impact. I also describe the general environmental mitigation to be provided in conjunction with the scheme and the reasons for including the mitigation.

3. Context of the Scheme

3.1 Generally the rural section of the A453 between the M1 motorway and Clifton passes through a gently undulating, open agricultural landscape where communication routes, in particular the trunk road itself where it is on embankment over the River Soar floodplain, and the Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station with associated infrastructure, are dominant features. Wooded hills, small blocks of woodland and small scale villages dot the landscape and limit views except from Mill Hill where there are broad south-easterly views. The A453 passes through some pleasant Green Belt (east of the river Soar) countryside with some distinctive features and natural

qualities, but overall in my opinion the landscape quality of the A453 corridor is 'ordinary'.

3.2 The eastern end of the scheme passes through the built up area of Clifton, dominated by housing, roads and other typical urban infrastructure, although areas of open space, planted mounds and mature vegetation provide some relief and screening from the road. In my opinion the urban townscape is also, overall, of ordinary quality, although the historic Clifton Village Green area is an important open space with some distinctive qualities.

3.3 The value placed on landscape differs from quality and depends upon the role the landscape plays and how it is viewed and appreciated, as well as its quality. The landscape within the road corridor is not sensitive to the further changes proposed as the landscape has already undergone considerable transformation. The proposed widening is characteristic of the area particularly as it is predominantly on-line, whereas the wider area is more sensitive to change which would affect distinctive features or traditional landscape character.

3.4 The offline section has been subject to a more detailed Historic Landscape Character Assessment, which concludes that the historic legibility and historic landscape character of the area immediately south-east of the existing A453, known as Modern Modified Field Patterns, through which the offline route would pass, is 'low'. The historic landscape character value of the Clifton Pasture and Barton Moor area to the south-east of the offline route is considered 'high'. Overall, in my opinion the value and sensitivity along the entire route is 'low' in that it is of low or medium importance and rarity, at the local scale.

4. Environmental Impact of Scheme

4.1 An assessment of likely significant environmental effects has been undertaken in accordance with the Highways Agency's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. This assessment is not undertaken for its own sake, but has influenced the alignment and design of the scheme to ensure measures included to mitigate environmental effects are focussed on avoiding or reducing the more significant effects. This demonstrates that the Highways Agency has a clear idea of how it is intending to use the land to be acquired for essential mitigation.

- 4.2 During construction there will inevitably be some significant landscape and townscape impacts. Removal of roadside vegetation will have significant landscape impact and will open up views, affecting the character of the landscape and townscape. Overall, in my opinion, impacts during construction on landscape and townscape will be ‘moderate adverse’. There will also inevitably be significant visual impact during construction to a number of residential properties lying close to the road, both in the rural and urban sections. In my opinion, overall, visual impacts during construction will also be ‘moderate adverse’.
- 4.3 Immediately following road opening, landscape mitigation measures will not be effective with the exception of ground modelling, for example within the West Leake Junction. The magnitude of all landscape and townscape impacts throughout the scheme is predicted to be ‘*minor*’ and overall significance of effect ‘*slight adverse*’ in the opening year, compared to the ‘do-minimum’ situation without the road. In the design year 2027 (Year 15) some mitigation measures will have matured to reduce some landscape effects, but in my opinion overall significance of landscape and townscape effects would remain slight adverse.
- 4.4 There will be moderate or substantial adverse visual impact to a number of properties lying close to the road in both the rural and urban sections in the year of road opening. In the design year, 15 years after road opening, mitigation planting will have matured to screen out some adverse impacts, but moderate or substantial adverse effects will continue at a number of properties. To these properties the widening of the A453 would cause substantial deterioration to existing views and would constitute a major dominant feature in the view. The erection of tall boundary fencing could reduce visual impacts from ground floor windows and gardens, but may introduce other adverse landscape and visual effects.
- 4.5 There are a number of Public Rights of Way in the study area. As the A453 is already a significant feature of the landscape affecting all the PROWs identified, in my opinion impacts are likely to be slight adverse at worst, generally due to the increased physical prominence of the road as a result of widening. However, impacts are predicted to reduce as integration and screen planting replaces vegetation removed during construction of the road. Mr. Howarth’s Proof of Evidence on Highway Design [DD21; DD22] will show that the scheme will benefit non-motorised users.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 In conclusion, in my professional opinion the Environmental Statement [DD05], my Proof of Evidence on Environmental issues, and other environmental proofs presented to this Inquiry on air quality [DD27], noise [DD29] and planning policies and plans [DD24; DD25] demonstrate that, taking account of proposed mitigation measures, there would be no unacceptable adverse environmental effects of the A453 Widening scheme.