

**REPORT TO:** 3MG EXECUTIVE SUB BOARD  
**DATE:** 16 JULY 2007  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** STRATEGIC DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT  
**SUBJECT:** 3MG HIGHWAY WESTERN ACCESS  
**WARDS:** DITTON

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To inform the board of the progress made to date in providing highway access to the HBC Fields Site in connection with the 3MG project and to recommend approval of this route.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION:**

- (1) That the preliminary design for highway access to ‘Halton Fields’ from the A562 Speke Road / A5300 Knowsley Expressway junction as shown on Drawing No. 5013684/HW/AA/GA/017A be approved and that detailed design be progressed.**
- (2) That planning approval be sought for the development of the highway western access to 3MG as described above.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **3.1 Highway Infrastructure General**

3.1.1 The Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (now branded 3MG) Masterplan was published in October 2004 and set out the policy context and vision for the development of a rail freight interchange facility at Ditton and detailed the various associated projects and tasks that would need to be implemented within a phased delivery programme.

3.1.2 A key Component of the DSRFP Vision is *“The development of the road infrastructure within the DSRFP and connecting it to the strategic road network to provide efficient and effective connections between the commercial and operational interests within the site and mitigate any impacts of the scheme on local communities.”*

3.1.3 There is currently no direct road access into HBC Fields (sites 253 & 256 Halton UDP). Feasibility and preliminary design work has been carried out on the provision of highway access infrastructure to serve the site in accordance with the Masterplan.

- 3.1.4 In order to progress the scheme design and delivery in accordance with the overall 3MG project Plan and programme it is now necessary to formally approve the scheme layout in principle and to secure planning approval from the relevant planning authorities, HBC and Knowsley MBC. This will then enable
- Scheme detail design and technical approvals;
  - Acquisition of third party land required for implementation;
  - Application to be made for public sector funding support.

## 3.2 Highway Access to A562 / A5300

3.2.1 The Masterplan reiterated the Merseyside Freight Study in recognising the opportunity for creating a new link road to the strategic road network via the A5300 Knowsley Expressway, as a key advantage of the Ditton site. The development of 3MG is referred to specifically within Halton's Local Transport Plan which describes how *"careful land assembly and a spine road between the A562 / A5300 junction....would capitalise on existing rail and road infrastructure."*

3.2.2 Masterplan drawing - Plan 6 illustrates this highway access route which was described within the project listing as *"a road link and bridge to A562 / A5300 junction which crosses third party owned / occupied land and is within an adjoining Local planning Authority"* (KMBC).

3.2.3 A preliminary alignment design has been prepared as shown on the schematic layout Drawing No. 5013684/HW/AA/GA/017A. Key features of this scheme are:

- Connection to existing A562 Speke Road / A5300 Knowsley Expressway grade separated junction via Newstead Road;
- New roundabout junction and realignment of Newstead Road;
- Substantial highway embankments carrying a 7.3 metre wide carriageway across open farmland into Halton Fields site;
- Single span road bridge over railway lines.

3.2.4 Topographical surveys and intrusive ground investigation works have been carried out on the line of the proposed alignment.

3.2.5 More than 50% of the road infrastructure, including the junctions and rail overbridge, lies within Knowsley MBC and therefore both highway and planning approvals will be required from them for the development of this scheme.

3.2.6 Land to the north of the railway is owned by Cheshire County Council and is subject to an agricultural tenancy. The acquisition of this land either through negotiation or by CPO is necessary for the construction of the road and bridge infrastructure.

3.2.7 The cost of providing highway access to A562 / A5300 junction is estimated at £18.1M (including inflation and optimism bias, but excluding land acquisition).

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The development of the highway western access route is in accordance with current Council policies set out in the Urban Development Plan, the Local Transport Plan and the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park Masterplan.

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Resource Implications**

The estimated costs of the highway access infrastructure are described in the text above. In order to meet the critical timescales dictated by planned railway possessions, it is currently envisaged that the design and procurement of the bridge and link road to A562 / A5300 would be handled by Atkins consulting engineers and a contract tendered for its construction during Spring 2008.

### **5.2 Social Inclusion Implications**

The Masterplan states that the development of the rail freight park will deliver a number of significant and positive outcomes that will promote and improve social inclusion in the area:

- Creation of jobs, both directly in relation to the facility and indirectly at a local and sub regional level;
- Significant improvements to road and public transport routes for the benefit of residential and business communities;
- Stimulation of further property and business investment throughout Ditton and Widnes.

### **5.3 Sustainability Checklist**

- 5.3.1 In addition to the positive economic and social outcomes described above, provision of highway access to HBC fields allows the site to be fully developed, enabling the delivery of following environmental benefits:

- 26 hectares of additional land serviced for development
- 11 hectares of derelict land brought into productive use
- 50 hectares of contaminated land which is cleaned and remediated
- Significant environmental improvements through the creation of formal and informal environments

- 5.3.2 The highway infrastructure will be designed and built in accordance with current best practice ensuring a sustainable approach to delivery of the project at all stages.

### **5.4 Best Value**

- 5.4.1 The development of highway access to Halton Fields will follow Best Value principles in terms of the procurement of services and works

associated with scheme design. The design itself and the specification for the implementation of the schemes will be developed within a thorough cost effective approach.

5.4.2 The method of delivery of the schemes by the Council (as land-owner / developer), or by private developer will continue to be assessed at appropriate stages to ensure the most effective outcome. The wider benefits that might accrue from the provision of highway access to the 3MG sites will be considered throughout the scheme development process to maximise benefit for the community.

## 5.5 Legal Implications

5.5.1 With highway schemes of this magnitude and complexity there are inevitably a wide range of legal implications to its delivery. These are described below. The list is not exhaustive and other legal implications can be expected to arise as the development of the scheme proposals progresses:

5.5.2 There will be legal issues relating to the acquisition of land north of the railway line. This land is currently Owned by Cheshire County Council and leased to a private occupier as farmland. Whilst we would seek to purchase the land required and acquire rights through negotiation, a Compulsory Purchase Order will be drafted and made to ensure the availability of land required for the roads construction.

5.5.3 Part 1 of The Land Compensation Act 1973 will apply to properties adversely affected by the development of the roads. We should expect to receive and be prepared to manage claims from owners of properties in Halebank Road.

5.5.4 Agreements may be necessary to detail the conditions and management of public sector funding grants (NWDA and ERDF Transitional Fund) where the use of such funds falls outside the administrative boundaries of Halton.

5.5.5 Formal agreements will need to be in place to permit the development of the highway access and its construction within Knowsley MBC and as it passes over Network Rail land .

## **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 The key risks associated with the proposed action relate primarily to increasing project cost and programme overruns that may be attributed to a variety of factors during the development and delivery of this scheme. Again this list is not exhaustive and further risks can be expected to arise as the project develops:

6.2 Initial scheme costs have been estimated using current improvement scheme rates and typical unit costs. The base estimates have been factored up for inflation (assuming a delivery date of 2010) and to include a % qualitative risk (optimism bias) to arrive at a total scheme estimate. The inclusion of this factoring should serve to mitigate project cost escalation as the design and detailing of the scheme progresses and as unknown / unforeseen issues at this early stage of the project become evident. It is proposed to manage this during the scheme development stage through the adoption of risk assessment and management techniques and by thorough investigation and design procedures.

6.3 Other risks to increased cost that are outside the control of HBC include:

- Land purchase and compensation costs;
- Land Compensation Act Part 1 Claims;
- Costs associated with compliance with conditions imposed by planning authorities and Network Rail / train operating company;
- Unforeseen significant diversionary works costs.

We will seek to mitigate the effects of these through the adequate resourcing of the project and by appointment of agents and consultants where appropriate.

6.4 There are several factors that may influence adherence to the project programme (and consequently project cost) that lie outside the control of HBC:

- The availability of land required to implement the schemes – acquisition by negotiation or by CPO;
- The availability of railway possessions to construct the link road bridge (currently planned for December 2008);
- Time taken for planning approvals, technical approvals by Knowsley MBC and Network rail and the incorporation into the scheme of measures to comply with conditions;
- The processing and making of statutory orders in connection with the implementation of the scheme.

We will seek to mitigate the effects of these risk through careful project management and by continuous programme monitoring.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no equality and diversity issues in relation to the proposed course of action at the present time.

## 8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park – Master Plan	3MG Major Projects Dept. Municipal Building, Widnes	S. McDonald
Feasibility of Highway Access to 3MG Site Project Assessment Report and Technical Appraisal Report	Highways Capital Section Rutland House, Runcorn	N. Case
A5300 Link Option 1 Schematic Layout Drawing 5013684/HW/AA/GA/017A	Highways Capital Section Rutland House, Runcorn	N. Case