

Report for Item 7(f)(ii)

REASONS FOR A350 WESTBURY BYPASS REJECTION

Planning permission for the A350 Westbury Bypass was refused on 1st July 2009, with the main reasons being set out in the conclusions of the letter from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Overall conclusions

- 46. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's overall conclusions on the application in IR8.169-8.175. For the reasons given by the Inspector in IR8.169 he agrees that the strategic significance of the A350 has reduced. Although the Secretary of State accepts that the Council has produced evidence that overcomes what might otherwise be valid objections to the scheme, he considers this evidence cannot be viewed as demonstrating any positive benefits supporting the scheme (IR8.170).*
- 47. There are existing adverse traffic impacts in the town, and the Secretary of State understands fully the views of those living in the town who are most directly affected. However, objectively in absolute terms of traffic volumes, the proportion of HGVs and the accident rate are not exceptional for a Primary Route passing through a town. Traffic delays and journey time unreliability are primarily caused by problems elsewhere rather than on the length of the A350 that would be bypassed. Only slight improvements to air quality and noise would result. Whilst traffic conditions would be noticeably improved, the existing route would remain busy. All told, although there would be benefits, these would not be of a degree so as to warrant more than moderate harm being created elsewhere.*
- 48. The scheme would do little to encourage modal shift from cars, and might well encourage the reverse, nor of freight to rail notwithstanding Westbury's location at a junction of two main lines. There is no clear evidence of how the scheme would encourage sustainable economic development in the Westbury locality or more widely in West Wiltshire. It would increase climate change emissions and conflict with PPG13. There are significant technical concerns about the traffic modelling and cost – benefit appraisal. Evidence from the work done to date implies that the benefits of the scheme are highly sensitive to quite small increases in traffic, and this adds to concerns on the robustness of the traffic modelling and the errors that have been found in the cost benefit appraisal. Taking all relevant matters into account, the transport need for the proposal has not been adequately justified.*
- 49. The scheme would be very damaging to the landscape and tranquillity of the Wellhead Valley. There would be large adverse effects on the landscape of the proposed route as a whole and severe adverse impacts on views from particular locations. For this reason the Secretary of State considers that the scheme conflicts with development plan policies to safeguard the environment and, in*

consequence, the development plan as a whole despite the qualified support in principle in certain other development plan policies.

50. *Overall, the Secretary of State considers that there are no material considerations that would cause him to decide the application other than in accordance with the development plan.*