



A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road Bridge B002 – Hazel Grove/Buxton Railway Bridge

Planning Statement (Incorporating the requirements of
a Design and Access Statement)

September 2015



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL



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1 Introduction

1. Three planning applications for the development of the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road (A6MARR) were submitted in November 2013, including an application to Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) (application number: DC/053678). Planning permission was granted by SMBC in June 2014 and work commenced on the development in February 2015.
2. SMBC, Cheshire East Council and Manchester City Council (the applicant(s)) are currently pursuing a number of design changes across the scheme. The changes relating to the elements of the proposed road that fall within SMBC's jurisdiction were discussed with the planning department during a pre-application meeting on Thursday 23rd July 2015. One of the changes relates to the proposed bridge B002 – Hazel Grove/Buxton Railway Bridge and it was advised that full planning permission must be secured for the changes required to the approved design.
3. This full planning application relates to bridge B002 and is accompanied by the following documents:
 - Cover Letter
 - Completed planning application forms;
 - Completed ownership certificates;
 - Location Plan (Drawing number A6MARR-1-M-20-002-DR-101);
 - General Arrangement Plan (Drawing number A6MARR-1-M-20-002-DR-164) including block plan sections and elevations;
 - Environmental Appraisal of Design Changes; and
 - This Planning Statement (incorporating the requirements of a Design an Access Statement).

The Planning Statement

4. This document introduces the proposed development and sets out the planning policy context relating to it. A planning appraisal outlining the key planning issues relating to the proposed development is provided in this document.
5. This document also incorporates a section outlining the design and access factors that have been considered in designing the proposed development and meets the requirements of a Design and Access Statement.

The Applicant(s)

6. The A6MARR is supported by a partnership of three Local Government Authorities namely: Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (Lead Authority); Manchester City Council and Cheshire East Council. These Local Authorities are the applicant(s) and have agreed to work together to develop and implement the A6MARR as an element of the wider South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy. AECOM are the agent acting on behalf of the applicant(s) for this application.

2 The Proposed Development

7. The proposed development represents a change to the design of the bridge that was approved as part of the planning permission for the A6MARR (refer to A6MARR-0-W-20-000-SC-001-P2 - Structures Finishes (schedule) submitted as part of pre-construction planning conditions discharge in February 2015). The following changes are proposed to the approved structure:
 - Bridge length is to be increased - new bridge span is approximately 44.3m; to accommodate:
 - Provision for a 3.0m access track to pass beneath the structure on the east side of the A6MARR carriageway, as requested by Network Rail to facilitate possible future closure of uncontrolled pedestrian crossing on safety grounds,
 - Bridge deck is to be supported on a cill beam at each abutment which is supported by piles.
 - A permanent bearings inspection gallery walkway to be provided at each abutment, as requested by Network Rail, and
 - A reinforced slope (1:1 gradient) with concrete facing to be constructed in front of each abutment.
8. The proposed changes address the issues identified (refer to section on “Background and Need” below), and offer benefits in terms of de-risking the programme for Network Rail technical approvals and for construction works to be undertaken during Network Rail possession, and should also offer improved aesthetics by providing a more open aspect and half height abutments.

Background and need

9. The applicant has worked closely with Network Rail throughout the development of the original planning design for this structure and subsequently in the development and detail of the design to arrive at the design that is the subject of this application. Throughout this period of technical design development and Network Rail liaison a number of issues have been identified which have influenced the design. These are summarised below:
 - Requirement to accommodate provision for a three metre wide access track beneath the bridge on the east side of the A6MARR carriageway, as requested by Network Rail. This is for a possible future footpath (FP75) diversion (not part of the current A6MARR scheme), which would allow Network Rail to close the nearby uncontrolled pedestrian crossing as part of a national drive to eliminate them,
 - Effects of ground conditions (poor ground) which necessitated an increase in the retained height for track support between piles in the previous design,
 - To address Network Rail concerns regarding increased retaining wall height for track support between supporting piles, and thereby de-risking the Network Rail technical approvals process and programme,

- To de-risk the Network Rail possession programme for bridge construction/installation, and
 - To accommodate other Network Rail requests, including provision of a permanent bearings inspection gallery at each abutment.
10. It was therefore concluded that the structure design would need to be altered to increase the span and introduce the cill beam arrangement supported on piles rather than retaining walls between piles.

3 Design and Access

11. The sections below cover the requirements of a design and access statement.

Site Description and Setting

12. Figure 1 below provides an aerial view of the application site and its surroundings.

Figure 1: Context map indicating application site and its surroundings



13. The application site is approximately 320m south of the realigned A6/A6MARR at-grade interchange. The current A6 is less than 50m north of the rail crossing. The Hazel Grove to Buxton railway line runs roughly west to east and is a twin track non electrified line providing a commuter route between Buxton and Manchester. The railway track level is approximately 111.5m above ordnance datum which is roughly the same as the general ground level either side of the rail boundary. There are no services to be accommodated beneath the crossing other than lighting and communication ducting as required for the A6MARR.
14. The Buxton Line is a railway line in Northern England, connecting Manchester Piccadilly, Hazel Grove in Cheshire, and Buxton in Derbyshire. Passenger services on the line are currently

operated by Northern Rail. There is one service per hour. National Grid reference for the application site is E393334, N385654.

- The application site and its surroundings are relatively flat. There are four residential properties in close vicinity to the application site as well as farm buildings and the former Simpson Sausage Factory to the immediate northwest. Otherwise the surrounding area is open farm land to the north and to the south as far as Norbury Brook Valley.

Design

- Drawing number A6MARR-1-M-20-002-DR-164 provides further details relating to the design of the proposed bridge. The table below provides details on the final dimensions and finishes to be applied to the proposed bridge:

Table 1: Bridge B002 finishes schedule

Element		Materials	Finishes	
			Concrete	Steel
Substructure (Incl wing walls) & Foundations		- 2.3m steel encased concrete bored piles socketed into bedrock. – Reinforced concrete cill beams - Reinforced earth soil (1:1 slope) below cill beam - Stabilised rock slope.	- <u>Buried unformed surfaces:</u> - Finish Class: U1 - <u>Buried/Hidden formed surfaces:</u> - Finish Class: F1	
Superstructure	Articulation	- Single span, simply supported half through standard NR I-beams with ladder deck.		
	Skew	- 17 Deg.		
	Deck Type/Form	Standard Network Rail "E-Type" bridge deck with composite steel cross girders and reinforced concrete deck slab	- <u>Exposed formed faces:</u> - Finish Class: F3 - <u>Exposed unformed faces:</u> - Finish Class: U3 - All exposed concrete area shall be finished with a 25mm x 25mm chamfer unless noted otherwise. - <u>Area of Deck to be waterproofed (Surfaces to be grit blasted):</u> - Finish Class: U4	
	Span Length	- Square span: 42.382m - Skew span: 44.318m		
	Deck Width	- Deck is 10750 wide (square).		

Element		Materials	Finishes	
			Concrete	Steel
	Type of Beams	- Steel plate girder.		Weathering steel finish
	Parapets	- Steel plate girders (as per E type deck).		
Headroom		- 6.60m. (min)		
Stats		- Signalling and telecom cables alongside track.		
Other		- Waterproofing to be spray applied to the bridge deck, extending over reinforced concrete upstand that protects web of main girder and down rear face of cill beam. - Two coats of bitumen paint on all buried concrete surfaces which is not to be applied to areas which are to be treated with waterproofing.		

- In terms of the access track provision proposed as part of the design change, it will be 3.0m wide and will be left unfinished as the track construction is not currently part of the A6MARR scheme construction.

Access

- The proposed bridge is required to enable the A6MARR to pass under the railway line. A pedestrian and cycle route for the whole length of the relief road (including retrofitting it to the 4 kilometre section of the existing A555) was approved as part of the planning permission for the A6MARR and will be positioned along the north west side of the A6MARR beneath the proposed bridge. Provision for a future access track is proposed to be located on the south eastern side of the A6MARR beneath the structure and planning approval for this is sought through this planning application. This is to accommodate possible future diversion of footpath FP75, which would enable closure of the existing uncontrolled pedestrian crossing of the railway line to the south east.

4 Planning Policy Context

20. The planning application falls to be determined by the LPA in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ('PCPA 2004'). SMBC is required to determine the planning application in accordance with the Development Plan and other material considerations, including national planning policy.
21. This section sets out a summary of the planning policy context, including the Development Plan, plus relevant policies of the emerging Development Plan and other national and local policies that will be material considerations in the planning decision.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

22. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27th March 2012. The NPPF supersedes all previous planning policy statements, planning policy guidance and mineral planning guidance in England. It aims to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, as well as protecting the environment and promoting sustainable growth. National policy guidance is also given in Circulars and White Papers and other Central Government Publications.
23. The NPPF is divided into a series of themes relating to delivering sustainable development. The key points on how the proposed development relates to each of the themes set out in the NPPF are highlighted below:

Building a strong, competitive economy

24. The NPPF highlights that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country's inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future. The NPPF also sets out the importance of supporting existing business sectors.

Promoting sustainable transport

25. The NPPF sets out the need to deliver a transport system throughout the country that is balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes. As part of the proposed development, new and existing footpaths/cycle links will be provided / upgraded, linking the new development to neighbouring villages and the wider green infrastructure in the area.

Requiring good design

26. The NPPF emphasises the importance of delivering good design as part of new development, which contributes positively to making places better for people. The NPPF goes on to set out the need to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development.

Protecting Green Belt land

27. The NPPF highlights that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- Purpose 1: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
 - Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another
 - Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
 - Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
 - Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land
28. Paragraph 87 of the NPPF highlights that *'inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.'* Furthermore, paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that *'When considering planning applications, LPAs should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.'*

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

29. The NPPF highlights that the planning system should conserve and enhance the natural and local environment. More specifically, the NPPF highlights that the planning system should contribute and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
 - recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
 - minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
 - remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014)

30. The NPPF is supplemented by National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the final version being available on line from 06 March 2014. It replaces a long list of government circulars, guidance documents, ministerial letters etc. As a result, the Government advises that over 7,000 pages of documents are condensed into 41 categories ranging from 'Advertisements' to 'Water

supply'. Guidance set out in the NPPG has been taken into consideration in preparing the information submitted as part of this application.

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Development Plan

31. The development plan for Stockport for the purposes of determining this planning application currently consist of the Stockport Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (March 2011) and the Stockport Unitary Development Plan (May 2006) – policies which still apply from 1st April 2011 onwards (post Core Strategy adoption).

Stockport Core Strategy DPD (2011)

32. The Core Strategy was adopted in March 2011 following the Examination in Public. The Core Strategy is part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the Borough and provides the overall spatial strategy for the LDF. It sets down why change is needed; what should be done; and where, when and how it is going to happen, including the provision of supporting infrastructure. The Core Strategy covers the period from its adoption to 2026.
33. Core Policy CS1 (Overarching principles: sustainable development - addressing inequalities and climate change) highlights that the Core Strategy will have regard to enabling social progress which recognises the needs of everyone, protecting the environment, ensuring the prudent use of natural resources and maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment. The policy goes on to highlight that there is a need to ensure that the future development of the Borough is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, alongside protecting the environment and ensuring the prudent use of natural resources.
34. Core Policy CS8 (Safeguarding and improving the environment) outlines the need for development that is designed and landscaped to a high standard and which makes a positive contribution to a sustainable, attractive, safe and accessible built and natural environment. Development will be expected to make a positive contribution to the protection and enhancement of the borough's natural environment, biodiversity and geodiversity. Sites, areas, networks and individual features of identified ecological, biological, geological or other environmental benefit or value will be safeguarded.
35. Development Management Policy SIE-3 (Protecting, safeguarding and enhancing the environment) highlights that in terms of protecting the natural environment, planning applications should identify mitigation measures that keep disturbance to a minimum and provide alternative habitats to sustain at least the current level of population as well as setting out a long-term management plan for the site.
36. Core Policy CS10 (An effective and sustainable transport network) explains that in order to facilitate the removal of through traffic from several District Centres and Local Centres in the Borough, including Heald Green, Bramhall and Hazel Grove, and to improve access to Manchester Airport, the Council proposes to construct the SEMMMS A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road from the A6 at Hazel Grove to the M56 at Manchester Airport, which will also incorporate a new shared footway and cycle path adjacent to the new road and retrofitted next to the existing A555.

Stockport Unitary development Plan (Saved Policies) (2006)

37. Policy GBA1.2 (Control of Development in Green Belt) highlights that forms of development other than new buildings, including changes in the use of land, will not be permitted unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.
38. Policy ST2.2 (Protection for Major Road Schemes) sets out that the Council will protect the lines of highway schemes as shown on the Proposals Map, which includes the route of the A6MARR. At such a time as the schemes are developed to an extent that their alignments have been formally agreed, the Council will protect those alignments as long as they are to be developed in line with the other policies within the plan.

5 Planning Appraisal

39. Following the review of the Development Plan and other main planning policy material considerations, the following main policy themes have been identified.

- Theme 1: Green Belt
- Theme 2: Environmental impact

Theme 1: Green Belt

40. The application site is located entirely within the Green Belt. Therefore, national and local planning policy set out above relating to the Green Belt is pertinent to the determination of this application. As set out above, the NPPF highlights that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. A discussion of how the proposed development relates to the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in the NPPF is set out below.

- *Purpose 1: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas* – While the proposed development is located within Green Belt, it is not considered that it will lead to unrestricted sprawl of the built up area located towards the north of the site.
- *Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another* – It is considered that the proposed development will not lead to the merging of any nearby settlements into one another. Therefore, this purpose is not at risk.
- *Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment* – It is accepted that the proposed development would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt due to its scale.
- *Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns* – It is considered that the proposed development will not impact upon the setting and special character of any historic towns.
- *Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land* – Due to the nature of the proposed development, it is considered that this purpose is not of relevance.

41. As highlighted above in relation to Purpose 3, it is accepted that the proposed development would be harmful to openness and would not safeguard existing areas of the countryside located within the application site. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The ‘very special circumstances’ that exist in relation to the proposed development are explored below.

42. The design of bridge B002 has been amended since planning permission was originally granted by SMBC for the A6MARR in order to deal with issues raised by Network Rail relating to the provision for an access track to facilitate proposed future closure of footpath (FP75) and un-

controlled pedestrian crossing as part of a national drive to eliminate them, to provide permanent bearings inspection gallery at each abutment, to mitigate effects of poor ground on the design, and to de-risk the Network Rail technical approvals and passion programme for construction. Furthermore, the application site is the only location for the proposed development of bridge B002 given that there are no alternative locations outside of the Green Belt where the bridge could be located. The proposed development will ensure that the Hazel Grove to Buxton railway line can continue to run in its present location and journey times will be maintained.

43. In summary, the very special circumstance demonstrated by the proposed development are as follows:
- The revised design of bridge B002 is essential in order to meet the requirements of Network Rail in relation to the safe operation and maintenance of the Hazel Grove to Buxton railway line (including facilitating the proposed future closure of an un-controlled pedestrian crossing), and to mitigate the effects of poor ground, which necessitated an increase in retained height of railway track support in the previous structure design.
 - There are no alternative locations (outside of the Green Belt) where the proposed development could be located given the need for the Hazel Grove to Buxton railway line to be maintained.
44. Although the proposed development represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt, this is clearly outweighed by these very special circumstances.

Theme 2: Environmental impact

45. The 'Environmental Appraisal of Design Changes' submitted as part of this planning application has considered landscape and visual impacts, ecology, heritage and noise and vibration and focusses on the following aspects:
- Identifies changes compared to the original design
 - Identifies if the changes would create a departure from the conclusions drawn in relation to residual impacts described in the Environmental Statement (ES) prepared by Mouchel in 2013 and which accompanied the original planning application for the A6MARR.
 - Identifies any modifications are necessary to any mitigation measures e.g. proposed ecological fencing etc.
46. The key findings from the appraisal are as follows:
- Ecology – Whilst there will be additional affects to that identified in the ES, it is considered that the current design will not alter the overall ecological assessment of the scheme. The mitigation strategy for (including fencing) for badger and breeding birds will not be altered.
 - Landscape character – Given the minor changes proposed to the design of B002 it is considered that there will be no change to the impacts as assessed in the ES (October 2013) i.e. the resulting effect at the year of opening will be moderate / large adverse reducing to moderate adverse in the Design Year.

- Visual impacts – Given the minor changes proposed to the design of B002 it is considered that there will be no change at any of the receptors to the impacts as assessed in the ES (October 2013).
 - Noise and Archaeology – There is known archaeology to the north of the bridge and there will be an archaeological watching brief in this area. However the design changes should not have any additional effect, therefore no additional mitigation over and above that already in place is required. It is considered that there will be no significant change to the construction methods in this area and there is no requirement for a noise barrier at this location, as such there will be no further effect in terms of noise and vibration.
47. Given the planning policy support outlined within this statement, the planning application is commended to SMBC.

6 Summary

48. This cover letter has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the proposed development of bridge B002. The proposed development has been appraised against national and local planning policy, and found to be consistent with both the provisions of the development plan and other material considerations, including those outlined in the NPPF. The key points set out within this letter are summarised below:
- The proposed design changes are required in order to accommodate requests from Network Rail in relation to access requirements to facilitate future closure of an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing, to make provision for permanent bearings inspection gallery, to mitigate effects of poor ground, and to de-risk the Network Rail possession for bridge construction.
 - Although the proposed development represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt, this is clearly outweighed by very special circumstances.
 - The environmental appraisal submitted with this application highlights that the change to the approved design of bridge B002 would not create a departure from the conclusions drawn in relation to residual impacts described in the ES submitted in 2013 alongside the original planning application for the A6AMRR.
49. I hope that the information submitted is acceptable to you and that the application will be validated at the earliest convenience. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require anything further or have any questions.

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