

Rossendale Local Plan Examination
POSITION UPDATE –
AGREED WITH HIGHWAYS ENGLAND

8 October 2019



1 This paper is being produced in response to the Inspector's request for an up to date Position Statement, as agreed between the Council and Highways England, to clarify whether it will be necessary to safeguard land within the proposed allocation sites at H72 and H73 to facilitate future Highways England's schemes.

2 The following sections discuss in turn the requirements from Highways England in relation to these sites that it has commented on.

3 It should be clarified that no future highways schemes have been developed, nor any funding identified. Any decision to progress a future project involving road widening or junction improvements (which could be inter-linked) would first need to be subject to further study work and cost benefit analysis to determine whether it represented a viable solution. Such a project would most likely fall into the category of a named project within a future Road Investment Strategy (RIS) period from RIS 4 (2030 to 2035) onwards, unless alternative arrangements through for example future Growth Deal arrangements can be secured, possibly with Greater Manchester, and with the agreement of Highways England and the Department for Transport. Schemes would require additional third party land.

H72 – Land at Edenfield

4. Highways England have expressed a desire to widen the A56 in the future, probably towards the early 2030s in their letter to the Council, dated 25 January 2019, which provided an update response to the Regulation 19 Draft of the Local Plan. Highways England notes:

"RBC's Local Plan Highway Capacity Study refers to there being a future need (towards the end of the Local Plan period) to widen the adjoining section of the A56 to three lanes in each direction. This future network requirement is also something which Highways England is aware could be needed towards the early 2030s. Highways England has no proposals to take forward such a scheme at this time, but of course has the right to do so in the future. In theory, as a scheme could be completed within only 10 years of any future dwellings being occupied, RBC and any future developer(s) of the H72 site may wish to consider this when planning the permanent internal layout and landscaping of a 'new' development. In conclusion then, Highways

England is now satisfied in principle that the emerging Rossendale Local Plan site allocation H72 could be developed for housing without adverse impact upon the A56 trunk road, provided that a careful approach is taken to its planning and construction”.

5. The Highway Capacity Study indeed refers to this aspiration and makes reference to Rossendale Borough Council’s response to the Highways England consultation document ‘*Shaping the Future of England’s Strategic Roads: Moving Britain Ahead*’ (December 2017). This alludes to the desire of Highways England to ensure the efficient operation of the Trunk Road network in the future and the potential upgrade of roads (such as the A56) to Expressway standard.

6. In its response to this consultation document, Rossendale Borough Council referred to the emerging Highway Capacity Study, which was at that time unpublished, albeit initial findings had been shared with Highways England and Lancashire County Council.

7. The Council’s response referred to the analysis undertaken for the Highway Capacity had identified three overarching themes relevant to the future resilience and growth of Rossendale:

- The A56 provides the most important strategic link for travel between the north-south of the borough as well as providing direct access to key existing and future employment areas.
- It represents the only directly appropriate main route connecting external authorities to the north and south of Rossendale, such as Greater Manchester (2.8million) and East Lancashire (circa 450,000)
- Is used for both longer distance strategic journeys and short hop-on-hop-off journeys.

8. The analysis identifies forecast operational issues to be expected on the junctions associated with the A56 as well as the A56 mainline itself. The analysis demonstrates that operational concerns relating to journey time reliability/unreliability and capacity are likely to be experienced irrespective of the Rossendale Local Plan proposals. On the basis of the operational analysis results and the qualitative review of the importance of the A56 to the Rossendale economy and livelihood of its residents, it is considered that there is a good case for why the A56 be considered for further investment. The Council concluded that studies should be undertaken relating to either an upgrading of its classification to Expressway or, as a minimum, further bespoke interventions to assist with and improve the transport user experience for residents and businesses, and to assist the future growth and prosperity of Rossendale.

9. This position was made known to all three land owners at a meeting with the Council and Highways England in December 2018. It was acknowledged that this could be accommodated within the proposed scheme, given a wide buffer had been expected between the existing road and the proposed new housing. However, it is now noted that the developers have concerns about planning for such a road widening scheme, for which no known funding has been earmarked. As a result comments have been expressed, for example by Pegasus Planning, on behalf of Taylor Wimpey, that land could be used on the western side of the existing A56 to accommodate the lane widening. However Highways

England consider this would be technically less appropriate, as it would involve realignment of the entire section of the A56 westward and therefore present more difficulty in tying into the alignment of the existing sections of road at either end.

10. Highways England has commented that the indicative layout within the master plan drawing would be unlikely to cause instability to the A56 provided that the development layout, earthworks (e.g. land regrading), site drainage and construction operations are suitably designed, planned for and executed. That way, it is possible that the risk of geotechnical problems within the site can be engineered-out.

11. Highways England would therefore require any development to:

- a) Be based upon a comprehensive site ground investigation survey and geotechnical assessment incorporating new ground investigation and borehole surveys.
- b) Submit plans for all earthworks and drainage in the vicinity of the A56 boundary upon a full assessment under the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges standard HD22/08 'Managing Geotechnical Risk'.
- c) Avoid loading land adjoining the A56, for example with excavated material.
- d) Demonstrate that the natural form of the slopes within the site along the A56 boundary around the head of Great Hey Clough and along the boundary with the adjoining A56 embankments either remain undisturbed or their stability is improved.
- e) Demonstrate how both the culverts of the Great Hey Clough watercourse and unnamed brook to the south west of the site (which pass under the A56), together with our A56 embankment toe-drainage apparatus, will be protected from damage and blocking-up during construction (Highways England would be happy to provide RBC and any subsequent planning applicant involving this land with copies of our drainage and 'as-built' records for this section of the A56).
- f) Avoid the use of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) within the site along the boundary with the A56, as indicated in the masterplan. Given the properties of the existing ground material (referred to above as likely to be found in this area) are such that ground stability is significantly reduced by increasing pore pressure, Highways England does not support the use of SUDS within a zone where it could adversely influence the stability of the A56 cutting slopes. Indeed, we would advise that any intention employ SUDS within the wider site should be approached carefully.

12. By way of summary, it is noted that Highways England has no proposals to take forward such a scheme to widen the adjoining section of the A56 to three lanes in each direction at this time, but emphasises that of course it has the right to do so in the future. In theory, as a scheme could be completed within only 10 years of any future dwellings being occupied, RBC and any future developer(s) of the H72 site may wish to consider this when planning the permanent internal layout and landscaping of a 'new' development.

13. A site specific policy (HS3) has been drafted for H72. It is proposed to amend this Policy on two matters. It should make specific reference to the need to be mindful of the potential widening of the A56 in the overall layout. In addition there will also be a need to make reference to SUDS, and the possibility of employing a different approach, and avoiding the western boundary of the proposed allocation, where load bearing could be an issue.

H73 – Edenwood Mill, Edenfield

14. Lancashire County Council's initial comments proposed that land may need to be safeguarded on the southern side of M66 junction '0' to potentially accommodate future south facing slip roads for the junction. This falls within the boundary of land allocated for new housing, allocation H73. This has been raised in Lancashire County Council's response rather than a requirement set out by Highways England.

15. The Highway Capacity Study (para 4.2.8) clarifies that this junction can accommodate the full build out of the Local Plan and as a result Mott's work does not consider this any further.

16. Recent discussions with Highways England have advised that should the Council be minded to safeguard land at the M66 Edenfield junction for potential future improvement schemes "*this is considered a prudent measure to ensure that the SRN (Strategic Road Network) can continue to support the economic growth aspirations of the local plan. Although we have no programmed schemes at this junction, we are aware of current congestion issues along the M66 during peak periods which will be exacerbated by future growth*".

17. However, the benefits associated with any junction improvements to facilitate a south-facing slip road may not justify the costs associated with such a scheme. Traffic going south towards Manchester currently accesses the M66 at Junction 1 (Ramsbottom) and this is considered adequate at the current time, and likely in the lifetime of this Plan.

18. Should it be necessary or desirable in the future to widen the A56 it may then be necessary or appropriate to consider improvements to Junction 0 at this time. However whether any cost benefit analysis would suggest this as being appropriate is still open to question. Any junction modifications will require land (not just within this allocation) that cannot necessarily be delivered. The proximity to Stubbins school, for example, could be an obstacle.

19. The following diagram identifies the site, showing the location of the roundabout and Junction 0 of the M66 and its relationship to the proposed allocation, known as H73.



20. Edenwood Mill had been identified as a potential allocation given its planning history and keen developer interest. This application did include land to the south of the former Mill, which had been used as car parking, and this land is to be included within the site allocation; this will require a change to the Policies Map. Land to the west has been identified later. This land has also been to assist access to the larger parcel of land, however it is noted that LCC Highways could have concerns about access via Wood Lane. The land to the west could also be used to facilitate an additional south-facing junction, or for widening the M66. No details of any known road scheme / junction improvements are available at the current time.

21 Highways England and Rossendale Borough Council agree that:

- 1 The delivery of the Local Plan to 2024 is noted to be accommodated successfully by the A56, however some capacity upgrade may be required prior to 2034. This is to accommodate future traffic growth and proposed Local Plan development before the end of the plan period.
- 2 Rossendale Borough Council's Highway Capacity Study has indicated that towards the end of the plan period it may be necessary to consider increasing capacity on the A56, and a potential solution could be to widen the existing A56 from the A682 (Rawtenstall Spur) / A56 South Bound Merge to Junction 0 of the M66.
- 3 As a result Highways England have advised that the Council may wish to be mindful of this possibility and the potential impacts in the future, particularly for developments identified in the Local Plan. Wording has been provided (see paragraph 11).
- 4 Funding approaches would need to be considered at a later date, and the identified capacity upgrades in the Rossendale Highway Capacity Study would need to be considered alongside any other options/approaches identified by Highways England, Lancashire County Council etc. in future studies.
- 5 The design, scheme preparation and procurement of the works would be carried out entirely by Highways England in the same manner as their own schemes. The works will lie within the existing SRN or highway land acquired under legal processes within allocation H72 and potentially H73 as well.