

West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan Examination

Dorset County Council Technical note on A354 Rodwell and Wyke Regis Relief Route – the Western Route

Arising in Matter 7



West Dorset District Council and
Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

Note regarding the A354 Rodwell and Wyke Regis Relief Road or “The Western Route”

Prepared by Sue McGowan and Richard Dodson: Dorset County Council
2 December 2014

Relevant Headline Chronology

1998 : Dorset County Council paper to explain the proposed draft modifications to the list of major county road schemes contained within the Deposit Dorset County Structure Plan.

Feb 2001 :Policy for scheme contained in Adopted structure plan CSP28 (Transportation Policy X)

Jan 2003 West Dorset LP deposit contains policy (to be in general conformity with SP)

May 2003 Weymouth LP deposit contains policy (to be in general conformity with SP)

Mar 2004 revised deposit West Dorset LP contains policy (to be in general conformity with SP)

Structure Plan Review: Ove Arup Report informing Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Joint Committee recommendation 19 March 2004, recommendation to delete policy

July 2004 Replacement Structure plan review recommends deletion –
(accepted Cabinet 8 Sept 2004)

Nov 2004 Replacement Structure Plan review - abandoned

Dec 2005 Weymouth LP adopted containing policy (Public Inquiry was before SP recommendation for deletion)

June 2006 Draft RSS published – did not contain scheme

July 2006 West Dorset LP adopted deleting policy (Public Inquiry was after SP recommendation for deletion and after the review was abandoned)

Jan 2007 list of SP saved policies sent to RA / GoSW not containing policy

6 July 2010 RSS Revoked

[Note As the RSS and Structure Plans are now revoked they have therefore no weight / status]

Detail

A reservation policy to safeguard the future construction of an A354 Portland Road Relief Road (Western Route) is contained in the Adopted 2001 Dorset County Structure Plan as a long term proposition.

Although it was recognised that the route would be environmentally sensitive (Page 92, paragraph 8.80) because of its proximity to the Fleet and that Government funding for it was unlikely to be available in the foreseeable future.

Both the Weymouth and Portland Deposit Local Plan 2003 and the West Dorset Revised deposit Local plan 2004 contained, in accordance with paragraph 6.1 of PPG 12 a similar policy – so that the local plans were in conformity with the structure plan.

It was noted that Planning Guidance Note 12 (PPG12) paragraph 5.17 states that “Authorities shouldonly include proposals in plans which are firm, with a reasonable degree of certainty of proceeding within the plan period”. PPS 12 replaced PPG12 but maintains this stance and reiterates in paragraph 2.2.8: “It is important that proposals are realistic and are likely to be implemented during the plan period”.

The plan periods in these cases was up to 2011.

The Structure Plan Review carried out in 2004 proposed the deletion of the A354 Portland Road Relief Road.

This was accepted by Dorset County Council Cabinet subject to the proposal that further sub-regional work be carried out in relation to the Dorchester / Weymouth /Portland corridor.

As a consequence of the reassessment of the Adopted Structure Plan Schemes in 1998, and the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Joint Committee recommendation 19 March 2004, the Deposit structure plan, cspr3 July 2004, did not therefore contain a proposal for an A354 Portland Road Relief Road identifying at paragraph 3.72 that on line improvements would be pursued.

The West Dorset Local Plan inspector correctly noted that although the scheme was included in the Structure Plan, following a review of strategic road schemes it was not carried forward into the draft Replacement Structure Plan. The Deposit Structure Plan was however abandoned pending its evolution into the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RSS however did not contain a policy for the Western Route in any of the tables, and it too has now been abandoned.

Dorset’s third and current Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2011 – 2026 (reference CD/COM4) was adopted in April 2011 and covers the period to 2026. The key evidence base in respect of Weymouth and Portland is the Buro Happold Weymouth & Portland Transport Study carried out in 2008 – 2010 (reference CD/COM5). This study did not identify a need for the scheme and consequently the scheme does not appear in the LTP. The LTP was reported to the County Council’s Cabinet at its meeting of 6 April 2011. Appendix E2 of the report provides clarification of status of major road schemes not included in the LTP. This identifies A354 Portland Road Relief Road as a scheme that will not be delivered within the current plan period due to environmental and funding constraints.

The Buro Happold Weymouth & Portland Transport Study also provided the key transport evidence, which must be in conformity with the LTP. In Weymouth and Portland Council's Core Strategy Options consultation, Option TR11, proposing that the land safeguarding for the A354 Portland Road Relief Road (Western Route) be removed from the development plan and the road proposal deleted, says of the scheme:

- The proposal is however vulnerable to serious environmental constraints based on proximity to Chesil Beach and the Fleet lagoon (a Special Protection Area, RAMSAR site and Special Area of Conservation) and impact of the setting of the AONB and Heritage (Jurassic) Coast, and that:
- It is unlikely that funding for the road could be secured given the potential negative environmental impacts, and the fact that Weymouth and Portland have been the benefactors of substantial income from the Regional Funding Allocation in recent history

The West Dorset & Weymouth plan (currently undergoing examination) does not therefore continue to reserve the route corridor. Notwithstanding the historic decisions Officers opinion suggest this for various reasons.

- it is extremely unlikely that the scheme would get planning permission because of its very close proximity to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and the Fleet SPA (Special Protection Area).
- there is unlikely to be funding available in the foreseeable future to construct this road.
- As planning policy, although it was a long term proposal PPG 12 and latterly PPS 12 (Development plans) 'allowed' for schemes to be in Local Plans if there was a likelihood of delivery after the end of the plan period. These PPGs were replaced by the NPPF. The NPPF #41 allows for critical infrastructure to widen travel choice to be protected. But also critically requires it to be deliverable # 182.
- Changes in design criteria over time meaning that any land identified may not be future proof
- Blight

It should also be noted that in relation to the West Dorset & Weymouth plan future the 2010 Harbour Revision Order was taken into account as this set out growth aspirations at the port. The EIA into the proposals (non technical summary) clearly states inter alia

- The increase in the number of berths proposed as part of the harbour development will lead to an increase in cargo traffic through the Port and accompanying increases in heavy good vehicles (HGV) movements.....

..Whilst the development of the Port will increase flows to the Port the effects are significantly dispersed in different time periods throughout the day and over a wide geographical area. The traffic associated with journey to work operations can be mitigated through a Travel Plan which could deliver genuine and long term traffic reductions onto the Island associated with Port activity.

This was predicated on a development profile where 80% of the new cargo activity occurs after 2030.

Nevertheless the Western Route is identified as an aspiration in the current Dorset County Council Local Transport Plan. The Plan makes clear that the schemes included in this category will not commence before 2026. Should circumstances change so that there is a reasonable prospect that the scheme can be delivered within environmental and funding constraints, Dorset County Council would start from first principles, using our powers of compulsory purchase as appropriate.

At this time however no scheme exists.

Cross reference with Portland Harbour Authority Matter Statement (Matters 5, 6, 7, 10)
Sandie Wilson 7 November 2014