

Weymouth Relief Road



Project Summary

Client: Dorset County Council

The Secretary of State has recently announced her decision to approve applications by Dorset County Council for Side Roads and Compulsory Purchase Orders that will enable the Weymouth Relief Road and a park and ride car park to be constructed. This follows a Public Inquiry that, unusually for a free-standing CPO inquiry, included significant evidence on the need for the proposals and alternatives to them. The proposals had earlier been granted planning permission without a public inquiry

Adams Hendry are pleased to have been the Planning and EIA advisers to Dorset County Council, as highway authority, since November 2005. When we were appointed, we carried out an audit of previous proposals and suggested significant amendments to reflect both the environmental sensitivities of the location (AONB and SSSI) and the decision-making criteria set out in

Government policy and the Statutory Development Plan. These included a re-alignment through the AONB (which encloses the urban area on the landward side) involving the partial removal of the bypassed section of A354 over the Ridgeway.

The County Council agreed with and implemented our suggestions, which followed a careful re-appraisal of the need for the scheme and ensured that it was firmly placed in the context of transport planning and conservation thinking and assessment methodology. We then helped the County Council, as highway authority, with consultations with key stakeholders, including the planning authority.

Assisted by Dorset Engineering Consultancy and specialist sub consultants we prepared a revised Environmental Statement that conformed with the EIA Regulations, to accompany a fresh planning application. The new ES included a careful exposition of the need for the scheme, and what the CPO Inquiry Inspector, Alan Gray, was later to

describe in his report as a 'painstaking' analysis of alternatives, including non-road building options and detailed options through the AONB.

Finally, Martin Hendry appeared at the Inquiry as expert witness for Dorset County Council on matters relating Need and Alternatives. We worked closely with Dorset's legal team led by Andrew Tait QC.

It remains to note that the term 'Weymouth Relief Road', which has historically been attached to the scheme, does not adequately describe what has now been fully consented. The road attracts media attention; but it is part of a package of transport proposals designed to resolve the longstanding transport problems of a sizeable urban area set in high quality designated landscapes and habitats. The mitigation package put together by the

County Council is substantial and innovative and fits spatial planning policies for the area. Its implementation requires powers of compulsory acquisition, hence the requirement for the Council to demonstrate to the CPO inquiry that the scheme is in the public interest and that the mitigation proposed is essential and properly planned.

This scheme exhibits, in microcosm, many of the complex technical, procedural, consultative and decision-making issues facing developers of proposals in sensitive environments. If you would like to discuss any of these issues, Martin Hendry or Philip Rowell would be delighted to talk to you (01962 877414).

More information can be found at :
<http://www.dorsetforyou.com/>