

NCC/JD/1

THE HIGHWAYS ACT 1980

AND

THE ACQUISITION OF LAND ACT 1981

THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (A614/A6097 JUNCTIONS IMPROVEMENT SCHEME)
(SIDE ROADS) ORDER 2022

THE NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (A614/A6097 JUNCTIONS IMPROVEMENT SCHEME)
COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2022

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

OF

JOELLE DAVIES, BA (Hons), MSc

OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ON BEHALF OF THE ACQUIRING AUTHORITY

SEPTEMBER 2023

1. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1.1. My name is Joelle Davies and I am the project sponsor for the A614/A6097 Junction Improvement Scheme. I am the Group Manager for Growth, Infrastructure and Development at Nottinghamshire County Council (“NCC”). I have a BA (Hons) in Geography and Cities, a MSc in Urban and Regional Planning and have been a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute until this year.
- 1.2. Nottinghamshire County Council is the local highway authority for the County of Nottinghamshire and is responsible for maintaining and repairing the highway including roads such as the A614 and the A6097.
- 1.3. My role at the County Council includes being the Council’s lead for Economic Growth and Regeneration, with new road and rail infrastructure being identified as a key enabler for economic growth within the county.

2. INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SCHEME

- 2.1. Since my arrival at NCC in October 2021, I have been the project sponsor. The project sponsor is the person responsible for the overall success of the project including appointing the project manager and team, defining success criteria, and ensuring the successful delivery of the project. The Transport Programme Delivery, Investment and Growth team have been the lead team at NCC and their manager reports directly to me.

3. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 3.1. This Proof of Evidence focuses on matters relating to the strategic development and funding for the Scheme under consideration, for which NCC is seeking to acquire the Order land compulsorily.

4. BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE SCHEME

- 4.1. Traffic congestion at the junctions along the A614/A6097 has been a concern for many years and has been a longstanding priority for NCC. A number of local campaign groups have been seeking improvements, particularly for the Ollerton Roundabout for many decades. A campaign group called Ollerton Village Residents Association (“OVRA”) was formed over 30 years ago to help preserve and protect the historic core of the village. The group has long campaigned for action at the Ollerton Roundabout. Further detail on network conditions and other issues can be found in the Evidence of Thomas Boylan [NCC/TB/1].

- 4.2. In 2007 NCC looked into the feasibility of making improvements to the Ollerton Roundabout to address the congestion issues and held public consultation events where two options were presented. The options included a traffic signal-controlled junction and an option to enlarge the existing conventional roundabout. Approval was sought in April 2008 to reprioritise the North Nottinghamshire Local Transport Plan (“LTP”) programme of significant schemes such that the Ollerton roundabout was accelerated in priority. However, the global financial crisis of 2008/09 followed, and this impacted on local and national funding streams such that the Ollerton Roundabout project was paused until an alternative funding solution could be identified.

- 4.3. The A616 Ollerton Road approach to the roundabout was widened by NCC in 2011 as an interim and low-cost measure to help ease rat running through Old Ollerton. The widening scheme did initially help ease the rat running problem through Old Ollerton but by 2017 residents were still concerned about the issue so OVRA initiated a Facebook campaign to ‘Fix Ollerton Roundabout’.

Banners were placed at a number of locations near the roundabout encouraging motorists to take action by supporting the campaign.

4.4. NCC and Newark and Sherwood District Council then identified the Housing Infrastructure Fund (“**HiF**”) as a potential funding source for the Ollerton Scheme and submitted a business case in 2017, but the business case was unsuccessful.

4.5. In July 2017, the DfT published the Transport Investment Strategy “Moving Britain Ahead” [**Core Document “CD” 12.19**]. This identified the need for an integrated network to connect communities to drive growth across the whole country. Keys goals of this strategy are to:

- Create a more reliable, less congested and better connected transport network that works for users, who rely on it.
- Build a stronger, more balanced economy by enhancing productivity and responding to local growth.
- Enhance our global competitiveness by making Britain a more attractive place to trade and invest.
- Support the creation of new housing.

4.6. As part of the Transport Investment Strategy, the Government committed to creating a Major Road Network (“**MRN**”), which identified important national routes such as the A614 and A6097 which were below the level of the Strategic Road Network (“**SRN**”) which are roads managed by National Highways.

- 4.7. In the 2018 Autumn Budget [CD12.24] , the Government announced that the National Roads Fund had a budget of £28.8 billion between 2020 and 2025. This fund was expected to be spent primarily on the SRN but £3.5 billion was made available for local roads such as the A614 and A6097 through the delivery of MRN and Large Local Major (“LLM”) schemes. This funding announcement presented an opportunity for NCC to make the necessary improvements to Ollerton Roundabout and to also look to the wider A614/A6097 corridor as a whole. Details on Scheme development can be found in the Evidence of Thomas Boylan [NCC/TB/1].
- 4.8. In December 2018, the Department for Transport (“DfT”) published the Investment Planning Guidance for MRN and LLM programmes [CD12.28] which stated that Sub-National Transport Bodies (“STBs”) were required to submit up to 10 MRN and up to 3 LLM schemes to the DfT. Midlands Connect selected the A614/A6097 corridor as one of their chosen MRN schemes. The scheme includes junction improvements along the A614 and A6097 in order to increase traffic capacity whilst also reducing journey time delays. Four of the junctions are within the District of Newark and Sherwood whilst the Kirk Hill junction is in the Rushcliffe Borough but the whole A614 and A6097 route also extends into the Bassetlaw District and Borough of Gedling where there are committed and allocated development sites located in close proximity to the scheme.
- 4.9. The Council’s ‘Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031’ [CD13.2] sets out an ambitious future for Nottinghamshire which is stronger, more prosperous and greener. The A614/A6097 scheme supports the delivery of Ambition 7 (Attracting Investment in infrastructure, the economy and green growth) and Ambition 8 (Improving transport and digital connections). The investment in large scale infrastructure projects such as the A614/A6097 scheme will improve local and regional connectivity and reduce congestion which are all key priorities for the Council. Improving the reliability of

journey times and increasing junction capacity on this key corridor is expected to help attract inward investment and facilitate economic growth in the area.

4.10. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (“**NPPF**” - 2021) [**CD12.21**] is the Government’s overarching planning policy guidance and outlines a focus on building a strong and competitive economy. The NPPF highlights the important role of transport in facilitating development and contributing to wider economic growth and sustainability. The NPPF has a focus on the support of sustainable travel, enabling a reduction in congestion. Improving access to training and jobs, and helping businesses to move goods more efficiently, is also central to Nottinghamshire’s economic recovery and levelling up agenda.

4.11. Nottinghamshire County Council submitted an Outline Business Case (“**OBC**”) [**CD14.1**] to the DfT for the A614/A6097 MRN corridor in December 2020 which outlined five key objectives for the Scheme:

- **Reduce congestion** – a number of intersections along the corridor currently suffer from congestion, particularly at peak travel periods.
- **Support economic growth and housing delivery** – the Scheme will increase capacity on the highway network which in turn can accommodate new and additional trips arising from significant housing and employment sites that are to be constructed in future years.
- **Support the Strategic Road Network** – The Scheme will add resilience to the route which will support the SRN during major works or serious incidents on the M1, A1 and A46.
- **Reduce journey time delays and variability** – improving journey time reliability will improve economic efficiency for businesses.

- **Support all other road users** – The Scheme will improve crossing facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians (Kirk Hill junction). At present there is no positive provision at the Ollerton and Lowdham junctions.

4.12. The OBC submission had a total scheme cost of £28.6m. The economic appraisal work produced for the business case calculated that the package had a Benefit Cost Ratio (“**BCR**”) of 3.08 and therefore, at the time, was classed as a scheme that provided a high value for money rating. The DfT define a BCR of between 2 and 4 as a scheme that provides a ‘high’ value for money.

4.13. The OBC package consisted of six junction upgrades along the A614 and A6097 in order to increase traffic capacity so that both future residential and employment traffic could be accommodated on the highway network whilst also reducing journey time delays. The junction improvements consisted of the following proposals:

- Ollerton roundabout – enlargement of existing roundabout;
- Mickledale Lane, Bilsthorpe – the OBC scheme was for the installation of traffic signals. However, the scheme was subsequently amended at the planning stage to construct a new roundabout and link road;
- White Post roundabout – maintenance and road safety improvements at existing roundabout;
- Warren Hill – geometric improvements at A6097/A614 intersection;
- Lowdham roundabout – enlargement of existing roundabout; and
- Kirk Hill, East Bridgford – enlargement of existing signalised junction.

- 4.14. Planning applications for the six schemes were submitted to the Local Planning Authority at the end of February 2022, with planning permissions granted for each junction on 27th September 2022 with none of the permissions challenged and are now legally secure. The Council made the Compulsory Purchase Order (“**CPO**”) and Side Roads Order (“**SRO**”) for the scheme on 28th September 2022. The six-week period for objections to the orders ended on 18th November 2022 with only four objections received.
- 4.15. Following the securing of planning permission, the Council commissioned a refresh of the costing exercise for the works package. The inflationary pressures felt within the construction sector and economy in general resulted in a significant increase to the total works package cost. Following confirmation from the DfT that it was unable to increase its funding contribution of £24.339m to meet the shortfall, officers were tasked with reappraising the A614/A6097 scheme in light of these cost increases. The main driver of this exercise was to ensure that any scheme package still provided a high value for money rating (i.e. BCR of 2 or greater) whilst still delivering all the desired scheme objectives as set out in the OBC. After reviewing the options, it was considered that including all six junctions within the DfT proposal would not achieve the DfT’s BCR requirements and could therefore jeopardise securing central government funding at the Full Business Case (“**FBC**”) stage.
- 4.16. After detailed consideration and in consultation with the relevant Cabinet members, it was proposed to omit the Mickledale Lane junction from the DfT funded package, as this would bring the scheme back within the DfT’s BCR requirements. The inclusion of the Mickledale Lane scheme had a detrimental impact on journey times for the A614 main flow of traffic because a delay was being introduced where none previously exists, this in turn had a detrimental impact on the BCR. A report was taken to Cabinet on 22nd June 2023 [**CD11.9.1**] which approved that the County Council

would drop the Mickledale Lane junction from the DfT funded package and the Council would increase its financial contribution by £5.8m to meet any shortfall [CD11.9]. As a result, the Council's total financial to the Scheme would be £8.4m, the Council had previously committed £2.549 as per the OBC.

5. SCHEME FUNDING

- 5.1. The scheme costs for the A614/A6097 works package were reviewed and refreshed earlier this year by Gleeds who are an independent property and construction consultancy to factor in changes to design as part of the planning process and to also take account of the existing inflationary pressures across the construction and civil engineering sectors.
- 5.2. The total scheme cost for the five-scheme package is now £34,440,981 and a breakdown is presented in Table 1. This estimate includes a risk contingency, with a significant amount set aside for inflation and is based on inflation forecasts within the construction industry.

Table 1: Revised scheme cost breakdown

Item	Cost
Construction costs	£21,124,710
Statutory undertaker diversion works	£3,289,699
Land	£1,174,681
Fees	£4,684,186
Risk	£4,167,705
Total	£34,440,981

- 5.3. The increase in scheme costs since the OBC submission back in December 2020 has resulted in the County Council's financial contribution being increased by £5.8m taking the Council's total contribution to a value of £8.4m as shown in Table 2. The approval to increase the County Council's financial contribution was approved by Cabinet on 22nd June 2023 [CD11.9].

5.4. The DfT granted Programme Entry for the Scheme in June 2021 and will provide a maximum capped funding contribution of £23.339m and this will be paid as capital grant under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. Whilst the funding commitment was for a six junction package, the DfT confirmed in April 2023 [CD14.7] that the removal of the Mickledale Lane junction from the Scheme package did not impact on the financial sum available because ‘the department envisages no large-scale change to the overall BCR or Value for Money (“VFM”), therefore we are content for Nottinghamshire County Council to move forward on that basis as outlined in your letter’ [CD14.7].

The DfT made a funding contribution of £1,500,000 in July 2022 for development work on the Scheme to assist in the production of the FBC and awarded a further £1,104,387 on 15 August 2023 for the 2023/24 Financial Year as per Award of Section 31 Grant for Financial Year 2023/24 letter [CD14.6]. Nottinghamshire County Council are required to accept responsibility for meeting costs over and above the reported business case submissions which are standard terms of conditions for the DfT’s Major Road Network Schemes Programme.

5.5. The County Council has also secured third-party contributions through Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy (“CIL”) totalling £1.746m. Harworth Group Plc (the promoter of the Thoresby Colliery redevelopment site in Edwinstowe) has already paid a financial contribution of £1.198m. This contribution is based on an agreed proportion of the cost of the Ollerton Roundabout element of the works package.

Table 2: Funding source for the A614/A6097 MRN project

Funding Source	Total
Nottinghamshire County Council	£8,354,692
Developer Contributions	£1,746,293
DfT	£24,339,996
Total	£34,440,981

5.6. The Council is fully committed to delivering the Scheme, having expended considerable resources to date in obtaining the necessary Statutory approvals required to authorise and deliver the Scheme. The Project Team have already commenced work on the FBC submission and whilst this will still need approval next year from the DfT, the project has got all the funding approvals in place that it can have at this stage in its development and the Team do not envisage any impediments preventing progress at this late stage in the process.

6. SUMMARY

6.1. The A614/A6097 package of improvements is a key priority for NCC and helps support the Council's 'Nottinghamshire Plan 2021-2031' [CD13.2] by improving transport connections within the County, reducing congestion and will also help attract inward investment to the area.

6.2. The Scheme is affordable and NCC re-confirmed its financial commitment to the project by agreeing to increase its financial contribution in June 2023. The DfT granted Programme Entry in June 2021 and will provide a maximum capped funding contribution of £23.3m with third party contributions from S106/CIL totalling £1.7m. NCC are also required to accept responsibility for meeting costs over and above any values approved at the business case stage which are standard terms of conditions for the DfT's Major Road Network Schemes programme.

7. STATEMENT OF TRUTH

7.1. I confirm that I am able to give evidence in light of my relevant experience as summarised above. I can confirm that the evidence I prepared is in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution and that the opinions given are my true professional opinions.

Date: 4 September 2023