

Ministerial Briefing Note
Thursday, 26 January 2006

A55 Broughton Interchange Proposal

An Officer meeting between Flintshire County Council, Assembly's Highways Directorate and Highways Agency took place on Monday, 23 January 2006.

The meeting considered the context of Broughton in light of its current role as a significant employment and economic centre in the region. Its strategic importance was recognised in the North East Wales / West Cheshire Sub-Regional Strategy and within the Wales Spatial Plan.

The key role of Broughton was recognised and its accessibility to the strategic highway network was recognised of being of significant importance.

The Highways Directorate were "pro-development" but also recognised that the ideal location for Aerospace and associated economic development to access the A55 was at the proposed Broughton interchange as opposed to the Warren Hall junction. Their concerns at present were that they would require the submission of a full traffic impact assessment, detailing the links, traffic generation and movement of all the related developments within the area. It was felt that this could be done relatively easily by updating the Veryards report prepared in February 2004.

Had the earlier retail extension application which included the new intersection been progressed rather than withdrawn by the applicants then the likelihood is that this would have received a favourable response.

The distance between a new Broughton interchange and the Warren Hall interchange was still an issue for the Highways Directorate although it was within the tolerable limits. The Highways Directorate considered that in any event all options would need to be considered as there is every likelihood that the Warren Hall side roads Orders would be the subject of a public inquiry.

One option which they would like to be considered would be for a Broughton interchange with a link road to Warren Hall running along the south side of the A55. A further option would be for both intersections to be "three legged" to allow for access but lessen any risk of traffic weaving between the two junctions.

It was agreed that the developers be requested to submit an updated traffic impact assessment. It was also agreed that a meeting was required between the developers, WDA, Flintshire County Council, Assembly's Highways Directorate and the Highways Agency in order that matters could be clarified, options considered and progress to be made. This would allow the whole package to be considered as opposed to the Broughton junction proposal in isolation.

FCC will be setting up a meeting of relevant representatives as soon as possible.

The Case for a new Broughton Interchange

1. Purpose

To present a case in support of a proposal for significant private sector investment in providing a new interchange onto the A55 at Broughton which has emerged as a major strategic site in the North East Wales, North West Cheshire and Merseyside sub-region.

2. Background

- There are increasing concerns that traffic issues in Broughton are not simply a local problem. Whilst the current configuration of junctions to the west and east of Broughton from the A55 force traffic to use the A5104 (Main Road) through Broughton's residential centre, this is having a serious impact on accessibility to Aerospace and its expanding adjacent employment park.
- Much of the traffic generated is not local, but results from the need for access to/from British Aerospace, Hawarden Industrial Park and Broughton Retail Park and is a consequence of Broughton's strategic position on a major east-west corridor.
- Whilst a partial solution lies in the completion of the Warren Bank Interchange (to serve the Warren Hall Business Park development) it will not offer any relief for traffic heading to the east of Broughton (i.e., to access Airbus, the Shopping Park and Saltney) from areas west of Broughton served by the A55 (e.g., Mold, Connah's Quay, Deeside, Holywell).
- Flintshire is currently considering a proposal for a new link onto the A55 which would address existing and long term access issues. This would be entirely funded by the private sector and is an opportunity which is unlikely to occur again in the future.

3. The Role of Broughton

- Broughton area is a strategic location in a sub-regional context, offering a highly sustainable mix of functions:
 - Major centre for high quality employment
 - Airbus UK
 - Warren Hall Business Park
 - Chester Aerospace Park
 - Manor Lane/Hawarden Park Industrial Estate
 - Important centre for provision of retailing services

- Key location for potential planned housing growth of 6-800 homes (10% of sub-regional strategic requirement from Flintshire);
- The potential for good accessibility and linkages promoting growth and social inclusion.
- The barriers to achieving the full benefits of this 'sustainable mix' are inadequate accessibility to the A55 corridor and the resultant congestion this will generate.
- Far from having a local functional significance, Broughton's high tech manufacturing role places it in the International market arena and coupled with its other employment and support infrastructure, place Broughton in an important sub-regional context as a strategic location.

4. The Spatial-Strategic Context

- This status is confirmed in a number of ways:
 - a. The significance of recent major developments in the Broughton Area e.g., Airbus expansion of wing manufacturing (A380, A350?); construction of Broughton Shopping Park serving a regional catchment; redevelopment of Hawarden Industrial Estate at Manor Lane; planning permission for Warren Hall Business Park (a major development in WDA portfolio).
 - b. Recognition in the **Wales Spatial Plan** of the role of N.E. Wales as an economic driver for Wales and specifically Broughton's strategic position within the "**Dee Triangle**" (Deeside, Chester, Wrexham) referred to in the WSP. "Improving accessibility" is a key WSP theme, with the A55 corridor (amongst others) providing an opportunity to deliver this goal. Indeed, one of the Area Actions is "increasing the transport capacity enhancements on the east-west corridor in the North East, will be delivered through the Trunk Road Forward Programme". The construction of a full interchange at Broughton through a private sector scheme provides an opportunity to contribute to this goal.
 - c. Confirmation of the critical role of the A55 in terms of providing opportunities for strategic development sites in accessible locations (including Broughton), is provided by the **West Cheshire/North East Wales Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy** due to be launched for consultation on 12th December 2005. Produced to inform development of the WSP, the strategy makes specific reference to the increasing recognition of the "*prowess of Broughton as a centre of excellence for aerospace and related activities*". The strategy particularly emphasises the need for effective transport systems to maintain the

"good performance" of the area; the need to improve the business infrastructure (particularly transport links), especially with regard to important traffic generators; maintain, for the Aerospace Sector, access to large and growing markets and key customers.

- Far from being locally significant, Broughton has a clear and important role sub-regionally, and with the growth potential it clearly has, the increases in traffic generation that are likely make it essential to have adequate infrastructure in place.

5. Key Opportunities to Realise

- Airbus is already a major provider of high quality manufacturing jobs and exciting developments arising from new Airbus projects have the potential to reinforce Airbus's role, and that of Broughton as a strategic centre of excellence.
- The A55 corridor and the link with Broughton and Chester is recognised as sub-regionally important providing a real expression of the A55 original vision as the "Road to Opportunity".
- Warren Hall Business Park when developed will enhance this view of the Chester – Broughton corridor and increase the strategic significance of Broughton as a focus for growth.

6. Facilitating Sustainable Growth

- Having established the spatial and strategic significance of Broughton, the emerging UDP provides the context with which to facilitate the growth potential identified.
- The plan identifies several potential developments in and around Broughton:
 - 9.9 ha of land alongside the A55 and Broughton interchange for residential development;
 - 2.1 ha of land north of the shopping park for non-retail commercial uses;
 - 15.5 ha of land north west of Broughton for the expansion of Chester Aerospace Park;
 - 20.7 ha of land to extend the Hawarden Park/Manor Lane/Industrial Estate;

- Warren Hall Business Park to the south west already has planning consent;
 - Further significant housing allocations in nearby Penyffordd/Penymynydd to support this strategic location for growth;
 - Substantial brownfield residential development already permitted in Saltney.
- All of these sites are likely to have implications, to varying degrees, on traffic generation along the A55 corridor and the accessibility of Broughton.

7. Sustainable Benefits

- Recognition that the current traffic problems are the local symptom of a strategic cause – that being the importance of Broughton’s mix of functionality and opportunity in a sub-regional context.
- With the likely growth and development of this strategic location, taking the opportunity to solve a problem before it is realised, rather than follow the ‘Deeside Industrial Park Model’.
- Facilitating the long term integration of the community with this important strategic employment and retailing location.
- Providing an early opportunity to implement important WSP and cross-border strategy recommendations in relation to an important regional location and the need for transport infrastructure and accessibility to support growth.
- Allowing the community to experience and understand the local benefits that can accrue from the realisation of the aims and objectives of spatial plans and strategies.
- Take the opportunity to gain strategic and community benefits through a privately funded improvement, at no cost to the public purse.

8. Conclusion

It is considered that the current proposal presents an unique opportunity for major private sector investment in the transport infrastructure in the sub-region. The proposal should not be considered as a local issue but one which reflects and contributes to the sustained economic importance of the sub-region.