



Warrington MSA, M62 Junction 11

Summary Proof of Evidence of Greg Jones

Client: Extra MSA Group

Appeal Ref: APP/M0655/W/21/3288180

Date: 21 February 2022

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i-Transport Ref: GJ/dc/ITM12377-018 R

Date: 21 February 2022

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## Quality Management

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## Contents

<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SECTION 2</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>5</b>

## SECTION 1 Summary

### 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 My evidence relates to transport and highways matters relevant to Extra MSA Group's outline planning application proposals for:

***'Erection of a Motorway Service Area including Facilities Building, up to 100 bedroom Hotel, service yard, Fuel Filling Station, Electric Charging Station, parking facilities for each category of vehicle, access and internal circulation roads, structured and natural landscaping with outside amenity space/picnic space and dog walking zone, pedestrian and cycle links, boundary fencing, surface water drainage areas, ecological mitigation, pumping station(s), substation(s), retaining structures and associated infrastructure and earthworks.'***

### 1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 There was a significant amount of transport work undertaken ahead of, and following, the planning application submission. That work has been subject to detailed scrutiny by both the Local Highway Authority (Warrington Borough Council) and National Highways.
- 1.2.2 There are no transport or highways objections to the Proposed Development from either highway authority and both have subsequently entered into comprehensive Statements of Common Ground with the Appellant.
- 1.2.3 Despite the fact that neither of the two highway authorities were offering objections, the Council refused the application in its Decision Notice dated 17 June 2021. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 the Council's Development Management Committee resolved that the Council did not wish to continue to defend the appeal. This means that the reason for refusal given by the Council on its June 2021 Decision Notice has now been overturned by the Council, which now endorses the approach and conclusions set out in the officer reports to the Council's Development Management Committees of 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022.
- 1.2.4 There have however been objections by Rule 6 and other interested parties relating to the highway public safety 'need' for a Motorway Service Area (MSA) in the proposed location and my evidence addresses the matters raised by objectors.

### 1.3 Public Safety Need

- 1.3.1 The approach to determining 'need' for an MSA on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) is set out in Department for Transport (DfT) Circular 02/2013. The 'need' for an MSA is established whenever any stretch of the SRN has a gap of more than 28 miles or 30 minutes driving time between MSAs. As paragraph B8 of the Circular makes explicit, once such a gap is shown to exist, it is not necessary to have regard to other considerations in determining whether a need exists (i.e. the existence of a gap is in and of itself conclusive evidence of need for planning purposes).
- 1.3.2 A 'need' either exists or it does not. Need is established solely in terms of the presence or otherwise of a gap on the relevant parts of the SRN. Other matters such as traffic flows, route choice and the presence or otherwise of Service Areas which do not meet the requirements of an MSA (set out in Circular 02/2013) are not relevant to the determination of 'need' and are not factors which should be taken into account.
- 1.3.3 Motorists are not uniform; there are many different user groups and people will choose alternative routes based upon their own preferences and for a variety of reasons depending on the circumstances at the time of their journey. Some people will choose the most direct route in terms of mileage; others the fastest route in terms of estimated duration; and others the most scenic route. Some motorists will seek to maximise the proportion of their route that is motorway (e.g. drivers of commercial vehicles and those towing caravans). The choices people make about the routes they choose will also change depending on the time of day they are travelling and as a consequence of perceived or actual congestion.
- 1.3.4 It is for these reasons, I believe, why the Circular correctly states that route choice and traffic flows are not part of the weighting process. The foundational principle behind Annex B of the Circular is to create a suitable and resilient network of MSAs at reliable intervals to take account of all of these variables. It is not right to try to second guess what motorists may or may not do, and far too simplistic to assume – as some objectors do - that motorists will always follow one setting on their in-vehicle or on-phone satellite navigation tool. The existing Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) flows on the M62 are c.113,700 and c.109,900 vehicles per day, east and west of M62 J11 respectively. The Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) proportion varies from 14.2% to 14.5%. It is, in my opinion, entirely logical that fatigued drivers in need of a rest and welfare facilities will be amongst this significant number of motorists passing the Appeal site daily.

- 1.3.5 The application of policy tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Circular 02/2013 clearly and unequivocally demonstrates that a 'need' exists for a new MSA located on the M62 to the north east of Warrington. Such a need was originally identified by National Highways in its' (then Highways Agency) 2010 report titled, '*Spatial Planning Framework: Review of Strategic Road Network Service Areas.*'
- 1.3.6 The gaps in MSA provision relied upon by the Appellant are returned by application of the current Circular (02/2013) and National Highways agrees these are genuine gaps on the SRN.
- 1.3.7 National Highways also agrees that no existing MSAs meet the need identified by these service provision gaps and that the identified gaps would be met by the appeal proposals.
- 1.3.8 National Highways is supportive of a new MSA in the location proposed and invites the Inspector to afford very significant weight to the need for, and resultant highway safety benefits of the Proposed Development.
- 1.3.9 Meeting the identified need is a matter for urgent resolution. I do not subscribe to the view taken by some objectors that just because the need originally identified by National Highways in 2010 has not been met in the intervening period there is no urgency to meet that need now. To the contrary, there is a pressing and urgent need to rectify the situation at the earliest opportunity. The Appeal proposals represent a clear opportunity to meet the identified need and rectify a long-standing deficiency in the network of MSAs on the SRN.
- 1.3.10 The Appeal proposals can also positively contribute towards meeting demand for lorry parking facilities in the North West of England, which is a matter of increasing national importance and urgency.
- 1.4 **Means of Access**
- 1.4.1 The test set out in the NPPF is whether '***safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.***'
- 1.4.2 Vehicular access to the site is proposed via a direct signal-controlled connection to the M62 Motorway Junction 11. The improvement scheme will also provide signal-controlled crossing facilities for pedestrians. No departures from standard are needed. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit of the proposed works has been conducted to the satisfaction of both highway authorities.
- 1.4.3 Means of access to the site is agreed with both National Highways and the Local Highway Authority. Planning conditions requiring the preparation and submission of a detailed scheme for means of access are agreed.

## 1.5 **Traffic Impacts**

- 1.5.1 It is agreed with both highway authorities that the proposed introduction of traffic signal control at M62 J11 delivers sufficient capacity to cater for the re-assignment of traffic and new trips associated with the MSA.
- 1.5.2 A cumulative assessment of the in-combination effects of HS2 construction traffic has been undertaken and it is concluded that the proposed works to M62 J11 are similarly capable of accommodating those demands.
- 1.5.3 The Transport Assessment submitted with the planning application presented merge/diverge and weaving assessments and all of this information is agreed with both highway authorities.
- 1.5.4 The proposals will not have a severe impact on the safety and operation of the local and strategic road networks and this is agreed with both highway authorities.

## SECTION 2      Conclusions

2.1      Against this background, my judgement is that the appeal scheme is acceptable for the following reasons:

- The Proposed Development meets defined (and agreed) policy gaps and will meet a very significant public safety need.
- The Proposed Development meets the requirements to be signed as an MSA.
- Safe and suitable access for all users can be provided.
- The Proposed Development will not result in severe traffic impacts.
- The opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up.
- The NPPF sets a purposely high bar for preventing development from coming forward for transport reasons.

2.2      As such, I conclude that there are no sound transport or highways reasons to preclude the development from proceeding.

