



# MetroWest+

## Portishead Branch Line (MetroWest Phase 1)

**Planning Inspectorate Reference: TR040011**

**Applicant: North Somerset District Council**

**9.57 ExA.CAS.D6.V1 – Applicant's response to Additional Submission of Andrea Gordon (AS-067)**

**Author: North Somerset District Council**

**Version: 1**

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Dear Mrs Gordon

I am responding to your email of 2<sup>nd</sup> March sent to the Planning Inspectorate.

Our 2017 consultation leaflet enclosed in our response of 1<sup>st</sup> March, stated our proposal is a temporary construction compound and a permanent maintenance compound. This proposed use has not changed since 2017 and in our response of 1<sup>st</sup> March we provided further explanation that:

1. *Access is required for the emergency services for fire engines and ambulances in the event of an accident or incident either in Pill tunnel or along the section of railway from the Avon Gorge to Pill tunnel.*
2. *The technical requirements for the railway in relation to the construction works and future maintenance of the railway to enable the re-introduction of scheduled passenger train services on the branch line, changed from the existing technical requirements for the maintenance of the existing Portbury Freight Line.*
3. *In order to undertake the necessary construction works, occasional HGV access is required to the section of railway from the northern end of Avon Gorge to Pill tunnel eastern portal.*
4. *There is no suitable highway access to the railway for over 5 kilometres from north of the Avon Gorge to Pill. This HGV access point will provide a vital point of access to the railway for maintenance purposes, although this access point will be an infrequently used access in respect of the frequency of HGV movements.*
5. *The width of Hayes Mays Lane is not sufficient to accommodate HGV's. Hedgerows and mature trees are in close proximity on both sides. It would therefore be necessary to remove the hedgerow and trees along one side to accommodate HGV's. This would be disruptive to the residents of Hart Close and would have adverse impacts on the landscape and ecology of the area. The alignment that we selected in late 2015 and consulted on in 2017 does not entail extensive removal of vegetation other than a small section of hedgerow at the northern end of Hayes Mays Lane and Chapel Pill Lane, in order to widen the access into the field to re-instate the former track down to the railway used in 2001.*

Given that maintenance vehicles, and emergency services vehicles will need to access the compound safely and in all weather conditions ~~on a permanent basis~~ and given the compound is at the bottom of a gradient, it is necessary for the access track to have a sealed tarmac surface, to ensure these vehicles can safely traverse the gradient. We also explained in our response of 1<sup>st</sup> March that:

*In respect of grasscrete, this is not a suitable material for the track because of the gradient of the field would cause the wheels of vehicles to spin particularly in wet whether traveling up the gradient.*

You refer to the previous use of this land in 1999/2000 when it was used to re-instate what is the current freight only railway, you refer to a planning appeal decision in 2002 that refused consent for the access track to be left as a permanent feature for use by the landowner and you state that you cannot see that anything has changed since 2002.

Our proposals differ significantly from the situation in 2002. The planning application to retain the access track as a permanent feature was made by the landowner for his benefit, and not for the public benefit of the safe operation of a railway. Our proposed change of use of the railway from freight only to freight and passenger trains, results in a need for permanent access to the compound for maintenance vehicles, and emergency services vehicles, which was not required in 2002 and we believe this constitutes special circumstances allowing for development in the green belt. Our proposals for the

railway will result in an intensification of the use of the railway which requires an increased maintenance and safety regime for railway assets. The compound will provide essential direct access to the section of railway between the northern end of the Avon Gorge and Pill, including Pill Tunnel.

With regard to the current occasional use of Hayes Mayes Lane, over the tunnel portal and the path down to the track, this access is very physically restricted and only provides a pedestrian access to the railway. Hayes Mayes Lane is very narrow, has trees and hedgerows on both sides and has a very rough unmade surface. It is not a suitable route for maintenance and vehicles, and emergency services vehicles.

With regard to your comment "It appears to be a conflict of interest when both the applicant and the approver are both North Somerset...". North Somerset Council Local Planning Authority are not determining our application for development consent, as the application requires a Development Consent order it is a matter for the Secretary of State to determine.

Finally, with regard to the Community Land Trust, we reiterate what we said to you in our response of 1<sup>st</sup> March:

*MetroWest is not supporting or facilitating the Community Land Trust's proposals. We have provided our plans to the CLT to allow the CLT to take in to account MetroWest's proposals when working up the CLT's scheme proposals. The Community Land Trust proposals will be a matter for the North Somerset Local Planning Authority to determine.*

All we have done is shared our plans with the CLT, just as we have shared our plans across the project with many other interested parties. It is not for MetroWest to comment on what Mr Stewart has said to the parish council. MetroWest is not endorsing, or providing, or determining anything in relation to the CLT proposals.

Regards

James

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