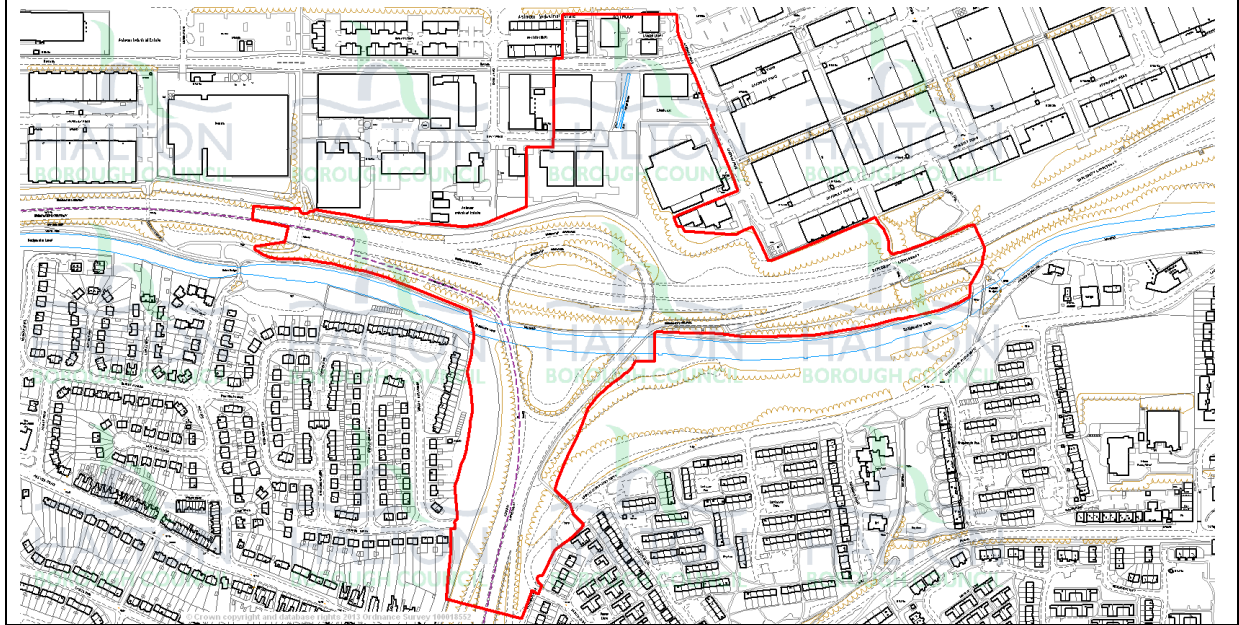


<b>APPLICATION NO:</b>	13/00328/FUL
<b>LOCATION:</b>	Bridgewater Junction, Runcorn
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Proposed highways and related works at Bridgewater Junction arising from the Mersey Gateway Bridge Project
<b>WARD:</b>	Halton Castle
<b>PARISH:</b>	N/A
<b>CASE OFFICER:</b>	Liz Beard
<b>AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):</b>	Merseylink Consortium
<b>DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION:</b>	Unallocated (Expressways) Action Area (Castlefields & Norton Priory) Bridgewater Canal Open Space
<b>DEPARTURE REPRESENTATIONS:</b>	No 3
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Approve subject to conditions

**SITE MAP**



**1. APPLICATION SITE**

**1.1 The Site and Surroundings**

The application site covers an area of 16.10 hectares

The surrounding area comprises of the Central Expressway and Daresbury Expressway, with the Bridgewater Canal running below the junction from east to west. Astmoor Industrial estate is located to the north of the site, with a landscaped area to the south.

The nearest adjacent properties are located on Brookfield Avenue, to the west of Bridgewater Junction, Castlefield Avenue and Warrington Road to the east.

This junction forms part of the overall Mersey Gateway Project, and provides direct access onto the Project from the Daresbury and Bridgewater Expressways.

## 1.2 Planning History

There is extensive planning history for the Mersey Gateway Project, however, there are only two permissions that cover the Bridgewater Junction area;

- Application no.08/00200/FUL: Proposed works to the existing highway network, specifically the Central Expressway, Lodge Lane Junction, Weston Link Junction and the M56 Junction. Approved with conditions 20<sup>th</sup> December 2010.
- Application no.12/00003/FULEIA: Proposed works to the existing highway network/specifically parts of Central Expressway, Lodge Lane Junction and Weston Link Junction arising from provision of the Mersey Gateway Bridge and new works to tie in the New Bridge to the north of Bridgewater Junction. Approved with conditions 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2013.

## 1.3 Background

The Mersey Gateway Scheme will form a second road crossing across the River Mersey with the following specific strategic objectives;

- To relieve the congested SJB, thereby removing the constraint on local and regional development and better provide for local transport needs;
- To apply minimum toll and road user charges to both the Mersey Gateway Bridge and the SJB consistent with the level required to satisfy the affordability constraints;
- To improve accessibility in order to maximise local development and regional economic growth opportunities;
- To improve local air quality and enhance the general urban environment;
- To improve public transport links across the River Mersey;
- To encourage the increased use of cycling and walking; and
- To restore effective network resilience for road transport across the River Mersey.

This application at Bridgewater Junction forms part of the wider Mersey Gateway Scheme.

## **2. THE APPLICATION**

### 2.1 Proposal Description

The proposed junction is a two level interchange, with the east west movements (Daresbury Expressway & Bridgewater Expressway) located at

the lower level, running adjacent to the Bridgewater Canal. The higher level will be where the new road from the Mersey Gateway Bridge links into the Central Expressway.

The lower level will take the form of a gyratory that will include twin roundabout dumb bell junction.

## 2.2 Documentation

The planning application is supported by a Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, Health Impact Assessment, Not Environmentally Worse Than (NEWT) Assessment, Noise Assessment, Air Quality Assessment, Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), Transport Assessment, Landscape Plans and associated layout plans.

## 2.3 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011

The applicant submitted a screening request, under The Town and Country (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011, prior to the submission of this application, on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

The Council assessed the proposal in terms of the characteristics of the development, location of the development and the characteristics of the potential impacts, under the EIA Regulations 2011. It has also been looked at in terms of whether the change in junction design will mean that the development as a whole will have a significant adverse effect on the environment.

The Council concluded that the proposed junction improvements, are not likely to have significant effects on the environment, are not in an environmentally sensitive area and are not of more than local importance and therefore does not require an Environmental Statement under the terms of the EIA Regulations 2011.

## **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

### 3.1 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 to set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

Paragraph 196 states that the planning system is plan led. Applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per the requirements of legislation, but that the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions. Paragraph 197 states that in assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 14 states that this presumption in favour of sustainable development means that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF; or specific policies within the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.

### 3.2 Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005)

The site is located within an area shown as open space, Action Area (Castlefields and Norton Priory), covering part of the Bridgewater Canal and Highways Land. The actual Expressways are not allocated as specific land uses on the UDP. The following policies are of relevance to this proposal;

BE1	General Requirements for Development
BE2	Quality of Design
H3	Provision of Recreational Greenspace
TP6	Cycling Provision as part of New Development
TP7	Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development
GE29	Canals and Rivers

### 3.3 Halton Core Strategy (2013)

The following policies, contained within the Core Strategy are of relevance to this proposal;

CS1	Halton's Spatial Strategy
CS2	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CS7	Infrastructure Provision
CS16	Mersey Gateway Project
CS18	High Quality Design
CS19	Sustainable Development and Climate Change
CS21	Green Infrastructure
CS22	Health and Well-Being
CS23	Managing Pollution and Risk.

### 3.4 Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPDs)

There are no SPDs of relevance to this application.

## **4. CONSULTATIONS**

4.1 HBC Highways– Have provided comments that the Highway Authority agree with the conclusion of the Transport Assessment, which states that “the proposed signal controlled dumbbell roundabouts will operate safely and efficiently with the 2030 forecast traffic flow”; provided that, as stated, “the proposed dumbbell roundabouts will be operated using MOVA control

strategy to automatically respond to variable traffic demands.” It is worth noting that the traffic flows tested are considered to represent a robust analysis, as the addition of slips to Halton Lea, which was made in the 2012 Updated Reference Design Application, will give rise to a reduction in traffic through this junction compared with the flows used in the Traffic Assessment calculations. The Highway Authority recommend approval of the application, subject to conditions being applied in relation to the following;

- Construction management and workplace travel plan as previous applications.
- Detailed design submission for approval by the Highway Authority as Technical Approval Authority, including signage details, signage, street lighting, barriers, road markings, final long/cross section details (with any departures from standard) and construction details.
- Details of structures to be demolished/reused.
- Strategy for signage, speed limits.
- Staged plans for the implementation of public rights of way, bridleway and cycleway diversions and details of final scheme provision.

4.2 HBC Open Spaces – Have not raised any issues, in relation to the application, and provide the following comments.

- Tree cover will be lost to facilitate this development, however, there are considerable areas of replacement tree planting proposed that should mitigate the loss.
- More detail is required for the sustainable urban drainage system, e.g the size, depth, steepness of banks etc. of the proposed ponds, swales and ditches need to be made as they will be situated in the public domain and could pose a health and safety risk. This would be required prior to the commencement.
- The proposed areas of amenity grass and species rich grassland, situated north of the dumb bell road layout design, may be difficult to establish and sustain in the long term due to the shading effect of the new roadway structure. The species rich grassland would find the conditions beneath a bridge, very difficult to thrive in. The areas affected by the shading effect of the structure could become void of vegetation.
- Has a bat survey been carried out that includes the bridges that are proposed for removal.

4.3 Environment Agency – No comments provided.

4.4 HBC Environmental Health – No objections in principle, however, comments have been provided requesting further justification in relation to the noise receptors and some updated information in relation to the air quality assessment.

4.5 United Utilities – No comments provided.

4.6 HBC Contaminated Land Officer – There isn't much in the way associated with this section of the scheme. However, the information in the Environmental

Statement, for the overall scheme, picked up that there were a couple of areas of existing embankment fill, which is to be removed, which has some asbestos contamination. The Contamination Management Plan for the overall scheme would cover this. There are no further site investigations required, which are specific to this application.

4.7 The Mersey Gateway Team- The scheme is fully supported by the Team. The Merseylink Consortium have positively identified ways of reducing environmental and construction impacts to the local community and the overall approved scheme, which is demonstrated in this submission.

4.8 The Bridgewater Canal Company Limited-Have provided the following comments;

- Construction work in the vicinity of Bridgewater Canal will need to comply with the Protective Provisions set out in the agreement between Peel Group Companies and HBC.
- Notice will be required for the diversion periods proposed for the towpath and footpath diversion routes during the construction period.
- In relation to permanent footways and cycleways (existing and proposed) the Bridgewater Canal Company (BWCC) would request that additional signage to the canal and towpath is provided in the specifications.
- In relation to the proposed hub/compound, if this is to be used, they would require prior notification of the position and use of this compound given its proximity to the canal wall to safeguard the canal's structural integrity. There should be a standoff from the canal edge as set out in the agreement.
- It is noted that the proposed trees to the south of the canal will need to be positioned away from the canal to prevent any damage to the canal wall. Written approval will be required for the planting and maintenance schedule of these landscaped areas prior to the commencement of the landscape works.
- They would like to see that the eradication of the Japanese Knotweed is dealt with in an authorised manner to minimise the risk of contamination of neighbouring land.
- It is requested that all construction methods, movements and location of temporary structures around the Bridgewater Canal are approved in writing by BWCC Engineers prior to the commencement of the works.
- Once the Contractor is appointed and prior to the construction we would propose that a co-ordination group should be established.

4.9 The comments raised are considered within the report.

4.10 A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was also submitted with the application. Merseylink carried out extensive pre-application consultation, which is encouraged by the Government and outlined in the NPPF (paragraphs 188-195) and the Localism Act 2011.

4.11 The methods used included two public exhibitions, one in Runcorn and one in Widnes, which covered information on the Mersey Gateway Project as a whole, as well as a specific area of the exhibition to highlight the changes

proposed at Bridgewater Junction. In the SCI it states that 400 people attended the exhibitions, which were publicised by way of news releases in the papers and on radio stations, an e-newsletter, the Mersey Gateway website, a leaflet drop to 3000 to addresses within the vicinity of the junction, further leaflets distributed throughout the Borough, as well as posters. There were additional flyers distributed on the days of the exhibitions. The SCI provides the detail on the above, and on the 12 responses received.

4.12 It is considered that the consultation carried out by Merseylink fulfils the requirements recommended by the Government through NPPF and the Localism Act 2011.

## **5. REPRESENTATIONS**

5.1 There were 775 neighbour consultations sent out and there have been 3 letters of representation received, which raise the following issues;

- Concern over the damage to the local wildlife and the environment.
- Concern over charging a toll for both Bridges, and the impact it could have on the community.
- Application boundary marked in red is incorrect. It was thought that the proposed CPO for the land at the back of Brookfield Avenue would change.
- Concerns over how the Project will impact both on health and finance, including length of construction and the impacts, and how will residents be compensated for any fall in property values, sound proofing, insurance due to an increase in pollution and general disruption into their daily lives.

The comments raised in relation to tolls, fall in property values, sound proofing and insurance are not material planning considerations. However, the letters from the residents have all been copied to the Mersey Gateway Project Team, and a response has been provided individually to all the residents in relation to all the issues, regardless of whether they are a planning matter. The comments that relate to planning issues are discussed within the assessment part of the report.

As detailed above Merseylink carried out pre-application consultation, which is detailed in the Statement of Community Involvement. There were 12 representations received where comments were provided, of these 10 were supportive/positive, 1 was neutral and 1 was negative.

The supportive comments related to the welcome in noise reduction, the reduced level of construction traffic, and the plan represents an improvement.

The negative comments related to the proposal being nearer to homes, more traffic, don't want it, concern over graffiti, and there was a comment about the overall scheme that it should be free and no tolls.

There was also a detailed email response received, which commented on the detail of the roundabout and the changes, with some suggestions.

It is reported in the SCI that Peel Holdings and the Housing Trust also wrote in with letters of support.

Merseylink conclude in their statement that;

‘It is considered that through its consultation strategy, Merseylink made local residents, businesses and stakeholders aware of the proposed changes to the Consented Scheme for the Mersey Gateway Project at Bridgewater Junction; and of its forthcoming planning application. We consider that any persons affected by the proposals that wished to comment were given every opportunity to provide feedback.

The relatively small number of people that did respond largely supported the proposals. However, what is notable is the absence of any significant opposition (only one respondent objected).

In conclusion, we consider that our proposals do not require any further amendment prior to submission of the planning application.’

## **6. ASSESSMENT**

### **6.1 Assessment against Planning Policy**

The Expressways are not specifically allocated as a land use on the UDP Proposals Map. However, the red line boundary for the planning application includes land allocated as Action Area (Castlefields and Norton Priory), open space and land covering part of the Bridgewater Canal.

Since the further applications were approved in May 2012, the only change in planning policy is that the Core Strategy (Halton’s Local Plan) has been formally adopted. There is a specific policy that relates to the Mersey Gateway (Policy CS16 Mersey Gateway Project) which states that;

#### ‘a) Delivering the Mersey Gateway Project

The land and infrastructure necessary for the successful implementation of the Mersey Gateway Project will be safeguarded. Any proposals that would impact negatively or prevent the successful implementation of the Mersey Gateway Project and associated infrastructure will not be permitted

As part of the Mersey Gateway Project, associated works will be supported and safeguarded including those related to the road network, road junctions, and the M56 with a focus on its junctions in Halton.’

The policy then looks at b) Sustainable Transport Opportunities, and c) Regeneration and Development Opportunities, it then goes on to state; ‘d) Environmental Impacts



Negative environmental impacts caused by the construction of the Mersey Gateway will be mitigated where appropriate, and opportunities to enhance the natural environment sought...'

In relation to National Planning Policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is of relevance. The key theme running through NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should then run through the plan-making process and be carried through when making a decision. The introduction of NPPF, does not change the decision making process in that the development should still accord with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. NPPF is a material consideration in relation to this development.

Whilst the proposed application, specifically relates to works to the Bridgewater Junction, these are required as part of the overall Mersey Gateway Project. There have been a number of planning applications approved, in relation to the Project as a whole, therefore the principle in planning policy terms has been established. The adoption of the Core Strategy, which includes Policy CS16: The Mersey Gateway Project reiterates the importance of the scheme with the opening paragraph (paragraph 19.1) of the policy highlighting that 'The Mersey Gateway is 'more than just a new bridge', but the 'catalyst' that will connect communities and lead to regeneration and investment throughout Halton, the Liverpool City Region, Cheshire and the North West.' This report therefore focuses on the detail and design of the proposal as opposed to the planning policy.

## 6.2 Design, Character and Amenity

The applicant has provided a Design & Access Statement and Planning Statement to support the application, which looks at the design, character and amenity of the proposal. There is an additional assessment provided, called the Not Environmentally Worse Than (NEWT) assessment, which looks at the change in design proposal, from the previously approved design against the headings in the Environmental Statement, and the potential impacts are assessed accordingly.

The proposed junction is designed as a two-level interchange, which is the same as the consented schemes. The east-west movements (Daresbury Expressway) will be at the lower level, with the new road linking the Mersey Gateway Bridge into the Central Expressway at the higher level.

The revised scheme, the subject of this application, replaces the lower level gyratory roundabout with a signalised twin-roundabout dumbbell junction. The proposed design includes signals for the whole roundabout, whereas the consented scheme did not require any signals. However, it is still considered that the proposed design will allow for the movement of traffic with equal or improved efficiency, which is outlined in the Traffic Assessment, and discussed further in paragraph 6.3 below.

The proposed design permits the reduction of the upper level of the junction (the Bridge Road), so it is a maximum height of 4 metres, because only one carriageway needs to be crossed with the dumbbell roundabout arrangement, which is further north than the consented scheme roundabout. This then removes the requirement for the abutment on the north bank of the canal, as per the consented scheme and the reduction in the earthworks required.

The existing bridges over the Bridgewater Canal will be retained, with this revised scheme. These will form the slip roads for the signalised dumbbell roundabout.

The revised design has integrated the Astmoor and Bridgewater viaducts into a single continuous four span structure (475m long), with varying span lengths. This structure will be 11m-14m in height over the Daresbury Expressway and Bridgewater Canal.

The deck of the viaduct will comprise W-beams with an insitu concrete slab, Piers will be formed with columns 2m long by 3.5m wide to support each span of the deck.

The north end of the Bridgewater Viaduct will be a pier shared with the Astmoor Viaduct and the south end support will be a reinforced concrete abutment wall with wing walls. The abutment will be on a foundation of spread footings with reinforced earth fill.

The changes to the proposed scheme, compared with the consented scheme (approved in May 2012), as outlined in the Design & Access Statement, include:

- a reduction in the height of the deck,
- reduction in the fill volume of 1 large roundabout (610,000m<sup>3</sup>), to a fill volume for 2 smaller dumbbell roundabouts (180,000m<sup>3</sup>), this equates to a reduction in 430,000m<sup>3</sup>, approximately 70%.
- the removal from the design of a 5m high retaining wall adjacent to the canal and retaining wall to the northeast adjacent to the industrial buildings,
- the removal from the design of 2 new bridges over the Bridgewater Canal allowing for the retention of the existing bridges,
- the relocation of attenuation pond no.5 from the north east of the dumbbell roundabout to directly north of this roundabout under the new road.
- the retention, following the completion of works of a larger area of open space between the Central Expressway and the rear of Brookfield Avenue.

Due to there being a reduction in the amount of earthworks required, and there no longer a requirement for high retaining walls, there is more potential for the area around the Bridgewater Canal to be opened up. No details of this have been provided, within this application, as the detailed design of this, in connection with the overall landscaping scheme are still being worked up. These will be included as part of the landscape submission when looking at discharging conditions.

The Bridgewater Canal Company Limited have been consulted in relation to the planning application, with their comments provided in paragraph 4.8. They have been fully briefed by Merseylink, in relation to the proposal, and have no objections, but their comments are relevant to liaising with them prior to carrying out any work. There are separate provisions, in relation to Third Parties, who are involved in the scheme, outlined in the River Mersey (Mersey Gateway Bridge) Order 2011. These will also be reflected in the Project Agreement, which is outside the remit of the planning application. However, in relation to the provision of the actual details for footpaths, cycleways, removal of Japanese Knotweed etc. will be have to be submitted to discharge any planning conditions.

Bridgewater Junction sits in a natural depression and the revised scheme does not change from this. There is substantial tree cover, within this area, and this will be supplemented to provide additional screening. The woodland and woodland edge will ensure that the junction is integrated into the surrounding area and mitigate the visual impact from the surrounding residential and industrial areas.

There is also substantial tree planting, which already exists along the Central Expressway on the approach to the Bridgewater Junction. There will be further woodland and woodland edge planting to supplement the existing tree planting, which reinforces the ethos of the existing concept of the expressway planting. There will be more formal amenity tree and shrub planting to create a suitable gateway to the Bridge structure itself. This screen planting, on the approach, will restrict the views of the Bridge from the Central Expressway, however, on reaching the viaduct the views will open out so road users can view the Bridge and the wider estuary. It is recommended that a condition relating to detailed landscaping is submitted, prior to commencement, worded the same as the existing planning permissions, for continuity.

HBC Open Spaces provided comments that the amenity grassland and species rich grassland may be difficult to establish under the new road structure, due to the shading effects. This can be conditioned as part of the overall landscape scheme, for the details to be provided prior to commencement along with a condition to ensure that any landscaping that dies within 5 yrs is replaced, which is considered a suitable establishment period in planning terms.

An attenuation pond is shown to the north of the junction, which will provide a dual function of providing sustainable drainage and potential for a wetland habitat, with the woodland edge planting provided to integrate the pond into the wider landscape. There is no detail provided, which was also raised by HBC Open Spaces in their comments, however, a condition can be added to ensure that the details will be submitted prior to construction.

There is no requirement for a bat survey as the existing bridges will be retained.

It is considered that the design of the proposed junction is in line with the ethos as set out in the Design and Access Statement, that supported the further planning applications. The use of the existing canal bridges and reduction in the earthworks required, in turn reduces the construction time to provide for a more sustainable solution and design. The proposal is not any nearer to the adjoining residents, and continues to work within the existing highways areas as per the approved scheme. The abutment will now not be required to the north of the Bridgewater Canal, which will enable the area to be opened up, with the potential to provide an environment that will link into the existing Green Infrastructure Network (Core Strategy Policy CS21: Green Infrastructure) and attract people to use it and therefore reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour. It will also enable the integration of the Astmoor and Bridgewater viaducts to provide a continuous smoother span. The proposal is considered acceptable in design, character and amenity terms.

### 6.3 Highways

A transport assessment was provided as part of the application, this has since been revised to incorporate some updated information following discussion with the Highways Engineers. To summarise from the Transport Assessment (TA):

- The Bridgewater junction will be provided by two traffic controlled dumbbell roundabouts.
- Predicted traffic flows for the Design Year of 2030 will be those traffic flows forecast for use in the 2009 Public Inquiry.
- There are examples of dumbbell roundabouts with and without traffic signal control facilities around the UK.
- The proposed dumbbell roundabouts will be operated using the MOVA control strategy to automatically respond to variable traffic demands.
- TRANSYT12 predicts that the proposed signal controlled dumbbell roundabouts will operate safely and efficiently with the 2030 forecast traffic flow.

The Highways Authority recommend approval of the application. Whilst there are some minor amendments to be made to the layout, in response to the updated Transport Assessment, these can be dealt with as part of the detailed design process.

The Highways Authority agree with the conclusion of the TA, which states *‘..the proposed signal controlled dumbbell roundabouts will operate safely and efficiently with the 2030 forecast traffic flow..’*, provided that, as stated *‘...the proposed dumbbell roundabouts will be operated using MOVA control strategy to automatically respond to variable traffic demands.’*

The traffic flows tested are considered to represent a robust analysis, as the addition of slip roads to Halton Lea, which was made in the updated reference design applications , approved in May 2012, will give rise to a reduction in traffic through this junction compared with the flow data used in the TA calculations.

The proposal is therefore acceptable in highway terms subject to the following conditions;

- Construction management and workplace travel plan as previous applications.
- Detail design submission for approval by the Highways Authority as Technical Approval Authority, including signal details, signage, street lighting, barriers, road markings, final long/cross section details (with any departures from standard) and construction details.
- Details of structures to be demolished/reused.
- Strategy for signage and speed limits.
- Staged plans for the implementation of public rights of way, bridleway and cycleway diversions and details of the final scheme provision.

The details above are already contained on the approved applications, and it is recommended for continuity that these are included on this application.

#### 6.4 Pedestrian and Cyclists

The pedestrian and cycle routes are shown as part of this scheme. There are conditions on the approved permissions that require details of any proposed temporary diversions to be provided prior to commencement. Although there has also been a plan showing where the pedestrian and cycleways are to be diverted, for continuity it is recommended that conditions are still requested, prior to commencement. It is recommended by the Highways Authority that staged details for the implementation of the public rights of way, bridleway and cycleway diversions, and details of the final scheme provision. These can be provided through the appropriate conditions.

The Council have highlighted that they would like to enhance the cycle access north from Halton Road, to the west of the Central Expressway, and for the northerly route to be via the residential roads of Harrow Drive, Northwood Road and Stanmore Road to the canal footbridge to the west of Bridgewater Junction. There is then further access north through Astmoor Industrial Estate. This proposal will allow for this aspiration to continue.

#### 6.5 Open Space and Green Infrastructure

There is an area of informal open space, adjacent to Brookfield Avenue and adjacent to the Bridgewater Canal embankment. This will be retained and enhanced once the construction works have finished. However, the area will not be available during the construction works for health and safety reasons, where the construction period has been reduced from 18 months to 12 months, with this revised design, therefore the timescale for when it will be unavailable has been reduced.

With the proposed changes to this scheme, from the approved schemes, there will be less earthworks required, and therefore more opportunity to provide more open areas. This in turn links into the wider Green Infrastructure

Network, which complies with Policy CS21: Green Infrastructure of the Core Strategy.

## 6.6 Ecology

There has been a comment received following the consultation where a resident has raised concern that the proposal would damage the local wildlife and environment. There was no requirement for any ecological reports to be submitted with this application, as there are no areas of ecological importance within the red line boundary of the planning application. A bat survey was not required as the two bridges that span the Bridgewater Canal are to be retained.

Although there are no areas of ecological importance a condition is required to ensure that any clearance of vegetation is carried out, outside the bird nesting season.

## 6.7 Air Quality and Noise

An Air Quality Assessment and a Noise Assessment were provided with the planning application. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has no objections in principle but has provided comments in relation to further justification.

In relation to the noise modelling, there is no concern over the alignment and layout of the proposed scheme, compared with the previously approved scheme. However, there needs to be further justification for the noise receptors that have been chosen. The applicant has stated that *'The changes to the Bridgewater Junction may affect road traffic noise levels. Therefore, noise modelling has been undertaken, which includes all receptors surrounding the junction. The noise maps for the junction include all receptors within about 1 mile of the junction.'*

In relation to the air quality Environmental Health have looked at the air quality data for Brookfield Avenue and The Calvers, and accept that there has been a significant data loss for Brookfield Avenue. The data for The Calvers is comparable to the figures used in the modelling verification and given the levels are not close to the AQ objective for NO<sub>2</sub> then they are happy for the applicant to use these figures. It should not make a difference to the conclusions.

The deposited dust measures also contain a high proportion of missing values, but do provide some useful information about the baseline dust deposition conditions within the project area. While this data could be presented in the air quality assessment, which accompanies this application, it is consistent with the baseline conditions assumed to be present and would not alter any aspect of the assessment or the reported conclusions. Environmental Health accept this approach and that the deposited dust measurements are consistent with the baseline conditions.

The proposal is acceptable from a noise and air quality point of view and there are no significant impacts highlighted with this revised scheme. It is recommended that the same conditions are used on this scheme as with the previously proposed scheme as these adequately address the mitigation of any impacts identified. These can be addressed in the Construction and Operational Code of Practice (COPE) & the Construction and Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs).

## 6.8 Health Impacts

A Health Impact Assessment was provided as part of the planning application package. This is a new requirement, since the adoption of the Core Strategy, because the development exceeds more than 2 hectares in area (Policy CS22 Health & Well-Being). Although this was not a requirement for the previous applications, the health impacts were looked at as part of the Environmental Statement.

A resident asked the question about the health impacts for residents and the impact of the construction works on their daily lives. These are the types of issues that the Health Impact Assessment considered and are discussed below. The Environmental Statement formed the baseline for the assessment, and a further assessment 'Not Environmentally Worse Than' (NEWT) Assessment was carried out. The Health Impact Assessment included this information within the assessment, with the outcome highlighted below.

The Further Applications Environmental Assessment (FAES) 2011 identified measures to mitigate any significant impacts in relation to health and well-being. This health impact assessment looked at these in relation to the revised proposal at Bridgewater Junction.

In terms of air quality the FAES 2011 established that during the construction period the significant effects are limited to 200m, of the construction site, but would be of low significance after mitigation measures such as damping down of surfaces were applied. The proposed scheme does not require as large a volume of earthworks, and therefore the construction period is envisaged as being reduced from 18 months to 12 months. This in turn means that there will be less truck movements and a reduction in noise, dust and fumes over that period, a reduction in the amount of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and a reduction in the period required for traffic management.

During the operation phase of the development both the consented scheme and the scheme which is the subject of this application, will lead to an increased amount of traffic than the existing situation, as outlined in the FAES 2011. However, in relation to air quality this increase is not anticipated to have a significant effect on air quality in this area. Air quality will be monitored and managed throughout construction through an Environmental Management Plan, which will be conditioned accordingly. The Council's Environmental Health Officer is happy with this approach.

In relation to noise, it states in the FAES 2011 that there would be a moderate negative impact on residential areas close to the junction during construction (temporary) and operation (permanent). This would be the same for both the consented scheme and the revised scheme.

The hours of working can be controlled to provide mitigation during the construction phase of this junction. There will also be a noise and vibration plan, which is provided as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which will be conditioned accordingly, as per the approved applications. There will also be requirements as part of the Construction Design & Management Regulations, which are applicable to all construction sites.

There will be a requirement for noise barriers to be provided, as part of the overall scheme, as highlighted in the FAES 2011. These will be conditioned accordingly and will form part of the detailed landscaping scheme, where the information will have to be submitted prior to the commencement of the development.

The accessibility of services is also looked at within the health impact assessment. These can currently be accessed by foot, cycle or by bus, as well as by car. The access to these facilities are unlikely to be significantly affected once the junction is operational. However, there may be some effect on the accessibility during the construction phase due to the re-routing of the public rights of way and footpaths, but this would relate more to the recreational use and not necessarily on other local facilities.

Open space is a positive impact into the health and well-being by acting as both a barrier for residents in relation to noise and visual intrusions, as well as improving physical and mental health if the space is used. The open space at Brookfield Avenue will not be available during the construction period (12 months), for health and safety reasons. However, this is retained and will be improved once the scheme is operational.

Community safety risks are limited in the area, as the Expressways and Junction are not pedestrian areas. The areas that could be perceived as having potential for anti-social behaviour include the canal towpaths and the open space areas. The revised scheme reduced the amount of earthworks required and need for the retaining wall that was designed in the approved scheme, therefore this leave the potential for more open areas to be provided. This will hopefully invite more people to use it, reduce the perception of anti-social behaviour and fear of crime.

The construction area will be fenced off for the duration of the construction works and there will be appropriate security in place.

Employment was also looked at as part of the health impact assessment. The unemployment rates in the Halton Castle area are higher than the Borough average. There are a number of construction jobs that will be created as part



of this scheme and the residents in this area are well located and hopefully will benefit from some of these.

The proposed changes to the design and the layout of the junction have been assessed to identify any potential health impacts and mitigation measures that may be different from the consented scheme. The report concludes that;

'It is not anticipated that there will be a significant impact on health and wellbeing as a result of junction re-alignments (under the Consented Scheme or current proposals). However, the new proposals compare favourably to the Consented Scheme by:

- Retaining a greater level of open space between Central Expressway and Brookfield Avenue;
- Retaining a buffer of green space between the canal and the roundabout(s); contributing to a more attractive canal route for walking and cycling;
- Reducing the length of time of construction impacts; reducing potential noise, dust, fumes.

A package of mitigation and enhancement measures are outlined in the Planning Statement. These are still considered adequate to mitigate the effects of the proposed changes to the junction.'

The health impacts have been assessed, between this scheme and the previously approved scheme. It is considered that the revised scheme will not have any further significant impacts on the residents or workers in the area, and that with the appropriate conditions in place will ensure that there is adequate mitigation.

## **6.9 Contamination**

There is not much contamination within this area. However, there is known to be some asbestos contamination within the existing embankment fill, which will need to be removed as part of this proposal. This will require to be disposed of within the normal procedures and may require a waste permit from the Environment Agency.

A Contamination Management Plan is required for the overall Mersey Gateway Project, through the Construction and Operational Code of Practice (COPE) & the Construction and Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs). It is also a requirement for this proposal. Therefore for continuity there will be the same condition added to the decision notice in relation to the COPE & CEMP.

There will not be a requirement for further site investigations to be carried out.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

The principle of the development has already been established and this report focusses on the changes in relation to and comparison with what has already been approved. In summary the benefits of this proposal, in relation to the approved scheme are:

- Only one carriageway needs to be crossed which is further north than the roundabout. This allows the mainline to be lowered.
- There is a reduction in the amount of earthworks required, which reduced the truck movements by 50,000, over the life of the project.
- The existing canal bridges will be retained.
- The retaining walls adjacent to the Bridgewater Canal and industrial buildings at Astmoor will not be required.
- The area around the Bridgewater Canal can be opened up to provide a more useable space.
- Construction period in this area will be reduced by 6 months to a period of 12 months.

It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable and recommended for approval subject to the appropriate conditions.

## 8. **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve subject to conditions.

## 9. **CONDITIONS**

It should be noted that although there has been additional detail provided, with this application, which may warrant the significant reduction in the number of conditions in comparison with the previously approved scheme, it is considered that the same conditions (where relevant\*) should be applied to this proposal, as with the approved schemes, for continuity.

1. Standard 3 year permission (BE1)
2. Condition specifying amended plans (BE1)
3. Final design to be submitted prior to commencement (BE1)
4. Details of the phasing to be submitted prior to commencement
5. Construction Methods Report
6. Materials condition, requiring the submission and approval of the materials to be used prior to commencement (BE2)
7. Details of how fits in with the Construction and Operation Code of Practice for Environmental Management (COPE) and the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
8. Construction Transport Management Plan
9. Landscaping Details to be provided prior to commencement, including details of the noise attenuation scheme.
10. Replacement planting within 5 yrs any landscaping is destroyed, removed, uprooted or dies.
11. Details of street furniture, traffic signalling and lighting.
12. Permanent and Temporary Highway and Footpath Access.

13. Alternative routes for existing greenway, cycle networks and footways/footpaths.
14. Details of drainage.
15. Any clearance of vegetation needs to be carried out outside the bird nesting season.
16. Details of construction compounds.
17. Within one year of development being opened to traffic any land which has been used as a temporary compound shall be restored in accordance with a scheme to be submitted and approved.
18. Wheel Cleaning Facilities
19. Signage strategy.

\*Although the previous permissions, applicable to Bridgewater Junction, contained conditions in relation to contaminated land, archaeology, emergency access at Rothbury Close, landscaping adjacent to Betchworth Crescent, Junction 12 on the M56 and a Great Crested Newt Survey these are not considered necessary or appropriate for this application.

## **10. SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT**

As required by:

- Paragraph 186 – 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework;
- The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No.2) Order 2012; and
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2012.

This statement confirms that the local planning authority has worked proactively with the applicant to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of Halton.