

M & R HOSIER – REP: 20020373 - COMMENTS ON OEMP ANNEX A4 – ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS [REP7-024]

Overview

We were under the impression that the Applicant's brief was not to significantly modify the topography within the WHS, although this document does not mention this under the key commitments. However, it is not possible to create a deep cutting, with level sides, rolling tops and a graded portal entrance within a dry valley without greatly altering the topography and character of the landscape. We fail to see how the designs shown differ from those outside the WHS with no strict criteria.

Contrary to the intention of the document, we believe that for a true assessment of the design, all the key potential aspects at each location need to be included. In this way, the design can be assessed for its full impact on sustaining the OUV of the WHS and respecting and responding to the historic landscape etc. It is only with all these details that the true assessment of the Scheme can be made.

Existing vegetation

The existing vegetation along the PRoW has been omitted, although within reports, it states that vegetation will remain in situ unless there is a reason for it to be removed. The vegetation provides biodiversity to the area and breaks up the presence of the road within the WHS.

The visual does not show the location of where the grass mowings will be composted, yet if the Scheme is to use this management option, it needs to be built into the design.

Fencing

Where are the fences along the PRoW and farm boundaries? These features are necessary for preventing trespass into private land and managing the dogs on the PRoW to ensure that farm livestock or nesting birds (encouraged by the creation of the chalk grassland) are not disturbed. What measures will be incorporated into the fencing to stop people from breaching the fence to gain access to the tunnel? As far as we are aware, it will only be the fencing along the PRoW and the rails along the cutting carriageway that will prevent access. The Applicant seems to be oblivious of the fact that the WHS is already perceived by many to be open access land and from our own experience, PRoW users take no notice of any fences or signage that is erected.

As raised at the Issue Specific Hearing 9, there is the real concern that those intent on committing suicide will have relatively unimpeded access to reaching the cutting walls. We have had experience of suicides on our byway.

In addition, the fencing does not seem to have taken into account the large population of deer that reside within this area. Deer were not assessed within the Environmental Statement, so perhaps the Applicant had no idea of the numbers or their movements. By remodelling the topography, there is the potential for deer to venture into the area near the cutting, as the road will not be so visible to them. There is the possibility that if deer are chased within the area that they will fail to see the fencing and the road until it is too late. This will result in them clearing the fence or getting impaled on the angled railings.

Location of visualisations

We have asked for a visualisation to be produced of the western portal, to be taken looking down from the current A303, (or future PRow) in the area where the current ground level has been built up and where the western portal emerges from the tunnel. This view has not been provided. Instead the visualisations for the portal have been taken from the opposite side of the carriageway, from our private land. Therefore, this does not represent a view that will be available to users of the PRow.

To conclude, we continue to struggle to see how a modern expressway, with concrete walls and surrounding parapet, will integrate into the cultural landscape. We believe that this surface carriageway although set in a deep cutting, will be seen and heard in the surrounding area both in close proximity and from a distance. As such, it interferes with the inter-visibility between monuments heritage assets and their relationship within the WHS. Therefore, we do not concede that this will provide users of the PRow with the positive experience of the WHS intended by the Applicant.

Western Portal Approach and Western Portal

Under Vision, 4.2.6 (a) Respecting and Responding to the Historic Landscape

There seems to be a poor representation of the contours of the landscape. The location of the current A303, (or future PRow), is also not well depicted within the drawing. The vast difference in height between the PRow on a higher level, with the natural ground level of the portal is not readily apparent. From the height of the PRow and its close proximity to the portal, there would be a view not only of the sidewalls, but probably of the carriageway as well.

This in our opinion, is not *“elegant and impacts positively on the user experience within the WHS”* as stated.

Under the heading “vision”, point 4.2.10 (c) Deliver a high quality user experience.

“The Scheme design should include architectural detailing and choice of materials to enhance the user experience and become a new point of reference while travelling along the A303, whilst being safe and easy to navigate”.

Under heading Key Principles A

P-PWS04 The tunnel to be designed to enhance the user experience and become a new point of reference when travelling along the A303.

However, as stated at Issue Specific Hearing 9, Culture, Landscape and Visual, the tunnel Scheme removes the quick and tantalising views as one drives through the WHS to the everyday users of the A303. These are unquantifiable values, but from looking at the drawing for portals and bridges, you could be driving down any road in the UK.

The Scheme does not provide an enriching experience as one drives through the tunnel. There are no landscape features to denote you are within the WHS, and no brief glimpses of monuments that encourage casual drivers to stop and visit the area.

We did ask for a drawing for the PRoW on the line of the A303 in the location of the western portal, but the Applicant has not provided one. We made this request, as from this location we believe there will be clear views of traffic emerging from the portal.

Under Key Principals B, P-PWS02

We do not think the sidewalls and parapet of the cutting are in harmony with the surroundings or in keeping with the WHS. How will “*earthy tones*” on manmade structures blend into the existing chalk grassland with livestock and rolling arable fields with crops? There are no long linear manmade concrete structures within the WHS other than the existing A303, so we do not see the road in a cutting to be an improvement on the current setting.

Green Bridge 4

As already noted, there is nothing about this bridge that would indicate you were within the WHS with its views of Scheduled monuments and linear features, within chalk grassland and rolling agricultural settings. This bridge could be anywhere in the UK. It does not inspire anyone to visit the WHS as there are no tantalising views to draw you in.

Under Key Principles A

P-PWS02 “...colours to be in keeping with the surrounding landscape, and to echo local materials. The design should adopt an earthy tone to create spaces which are warm and natural in appearance.”

Under Key Principles B

P-PWS03 “The surface finish of the western cutting retaining walls (within the WHS) to be in keeping with the character of the surrounding landscape”

We are not of the opinion that the views of the bridge as depicted are either in keeping with the landscape or echo local materials. The visualisation shows a large expanse of manmade walling with a most peculiar textured finish unlike anything we have ever seen reflected in the local natural environment.

Are the retaining walls within the WHS different to any of the sections of sidewalls proposed outside of the WHS?

For thoughts on fencing, see Wester Portal above.

We still remain concerned the lighting under the bridge will be updated in the future to a level where it will spill within the landscape.

PRoW on the line of the old A303

It is interesting that the Applicant has chosen to view the western portal from the Winterbourne Stoke Clump.

We are unsure about the depiction of the drawing, as the mouth of the western portal seems to be shown in the middle of the length of cutting rather than at the far end by Normanton Gorse Wood?

We note the fencing along the PRow, is similar to what we have currently, which people cut or climb over for access, especially if the Applicant chooses to omit barbed wire.