



**A380 South Devon Link Road (Kingskerswell Bypass)**

**Public Inquiry**

**Proof of Evidence**

**Agriculture**

**Volume 1: Summary**

by

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This Proof of Evidence is presented in the following documents:

Volume 1	Summary	DCC/SUM/11
Volume 2	Text	DCC/P/11
Volume 3	Appendices	DCC/A/11

## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3 IMPACT OF THE SCHEME</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4 OBJECTIONS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>6</b>

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1.1 My qualifications, experience and the structure of my evidence are set out in my main Proof of Evidence. This summary is prepared with the aim of briefly setting out the main issues discussed in my Proof, but my main Proof is the full substance of my evidence.

1.1.2 RAC was retained by Parsons Brinckerhoff (of behalf of Devon County Council) in 2002 to undertake an agricultural impact assessment of the A380 Kingskerswell Bypass, in accordance with the guidance published in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Volume 11, Section 3, Part 6 and we prepared the agricultural sections of the Land Use chapter of the Environmental Statement (ES).

1.1.3 In preparing this evidence I have given consideration to the guidance published in the DMRB and report on the implications of the Scheme in terms of:

- a) the quality and quantity of agricultural land that would be taken;  
and
- b) the impact on the various agricultural holdings affected in terms of land loss, severance and viability.

1.1.4 The quality of the agricultural land affected has been determined by field survey.

- 1.1.5 All the occupiers of land potentially affected have been interviewed to identify the boundaries of farm holdings and the nature and the scale of agricultural operations undertaken; and the means of access used. Consideration has been given to the potential impact of the construction and operation of the Scheme on farming enterprises and this has informed various design and mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the Scheme's design.

## **2 DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES**

- 2.1.1 Land use policies for development involving agricultural land are set out in the national Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): "*Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*", (**CD 4.21**).
- 2.1.2 Paragraph 28 states that the best and most versatile agricultural land (in Grades 1, 2 and 3a subgrade 3a) should be taken into account alongside other sustainability considerations when determining planning applications and that where possible local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land (grades 3b, 4 and 5) in preference to that of a higher quality, except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations.
- 2.1.3 There is no guidance in PPS7 in respect of the effect of development on individual farm units.
- 2.1.4 The protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land is echoed in the Regional Policy Guidance 10 (RPG10) (**CD 3.4**); the emerging

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West (**CD 3.15**); the Devon County Structure Plan Third Alteration (**CD 3.2**); the Teignbridge Local Plan (**CD 3.5A**); and the Torbay Local Plan (**CD 3.8**), where this is consistent with other sustainability considerations.

### **3 IMPACT OF THE SCHEME**

- 3.1.1 The extent and distribution of the agricultural land affected has been surveyed and classified according to the agricultural land classification system and is shown in **Volume 3, Figure 1 (DCC/A/11)**.
- 3.1.2 There is no Grade 1 land within the study area. Half the agricultural land surveyed that would be affected by the Scheme is of lower quality in subgrade 3b (36%) and Grade 4 (14%) and half is classified as 'best and most versatile land' in subgrade 3a (44%) and Grade 2 (6%).
- 3.1.3 In total 18.7ha of best and most versatile agricultural land would be permanently removed (2.1ha in Grade 2 and 16.6ha in subgrade 3a). A further 19.1ha of lower quality land in subgrade 3b (13.8ha) and Grade 4 (5.3ha) would also be removed.
- 3.1.4 Some 20 agricultural and equestrian holdings would be affected by the Scheme but only five are assessed as being viable agricultural holdings. The impact on these viable holdings has been assessed and for each the significance of impact is assessed as variously Minor Adverse or Neutral.

## **4 OBJECTIONS**

- 4.1.1 There are currently three objections to the Scheme that deal with agricultural issues and I have provided comments on each.
- 4.1.2 In each case I do not consider the construction of the Scheme will render land unfarmable, or that viable agricultural holdings will be rendered unviable.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

The conclusions made in my main Proof of Evidence are that:

- 5.1.1 The construction of the proposed A380 South Devon Link Road (Kingskerswell Bypass) would affect a total of 59.9ha of land, of which 48.4ha is agricultural land.
- 5.1.2 The Scheme would result in the permanent loss of 18.7ha of land classified as best and most versatile, with 2.1ha in Grade 2 and 16.6ha in subgrade 3a; 13.8ha of lower quality agricultural land in subgrade 3b and 5.3ha in Grade 4 would also be lost.
- 5.1.3 A further 3.1ha of land (including 0.5ha of higher quality land) would be affected during the construction process, but would be restored following completion of the works.
- 5.1.4 Defra was consulted as a statutory consultee during the planning application process and raised no objection to the scheme.

- 5.1.5 Appropriate soil handling techniques throughout the period of the earthworks, allied to a managed aftercare period, should ensure that all the land temporarily affected would be restored to at least existing agricultural land classification.
- 5.1.6 Any proposed new road through open countryside would affect the agricultural occupiers along the route to a greater or lesser degree in terms of land loss or severance. The chosen route has been designed to minimize land acquisition as far as is practical and includes appropriate access arrangements.
- 5.1.7 Twenty agricultural or equestrian holdings that would be affected by the Scheme have been identified. Only five of these are considered to be commercially viable units (i.e. capable of generating an income sufficient to reward unpaid labour and provide a return on capital invested) and the impact of the construction of the Scheme on these is assessed as Minor Adverse or Neutral. No viable agricultural holdings would be rendered non-viable as a result of the Scheme.