### Key Issues –
The Weymouth Relief Road (WRR) project involved the use of environmental impact assessment as an iterative process to determine both the principle and the detail of the proposals for which consent was sought.

Effective consultation, careful analysis and the development of a comprehensive and effective environmental mitigation strategy enabled issues associated with the location of the proposals through designated sites of importance to be overcome. These were critical issues resulting from the alignment of the proposals through an AONB, SSSI, ancient woodland and sites of archaeological importance (amongst others).

The project required a clear definition of the need and a robust demonstration that there was no better alternative to meeting the need. This demonstration was subsequently described by an Inspector as a painstaking analysis.

Full planning permission granted April 2007. Compulsory Purchase Order and Side Roads Order were confirmed by Secretary of State (following an inquiry) September 2008. Scheme now constructed.

### Purpose of the project
Adams Hendry Consulting Ltd were appointed by Dorset County Council to produce the Environmental Statement of the proposals. The proposals are key elements in the highway authority’s strategy for transport in the A354 Dorchester to Weymouth corridor. The strategy addresses the accessibility problems and needs of the area in the context of national and regional policies for transport, the environment and sustainable development.

### Description of the project
A single carriageway road, with crawler lane along part, linking the A354 Manor Roundabout near Radipole to the A354 at the top of the Ridgeway Hill. The proposals also include improvements to the existing single carriageway Littlemoor Road between Preston and Littlemoor, the provision of a Park and Ride facility, new pedestrian, cycle and equestrian facilities and the removal of the existing A354 from the hairpin bend to the top of the Ridgeway Hill.
Lessons learnt

The WRR project highlighted the fact that the EIA process has to very clearly identify what the need is for the proposals which are being considered. This is required to enable the decision maker to be satisfied that alternatives to the proposals have been adequately considered, but also so that judgements relating to the significance of impacts can be correctly considered and analysed.

The WRR project also highlighted that, if used correctly, the EIA process significantly assists in the achievement of sustainable development. As a result of the early stages of the EIA process the emerging proposals were altered and amended to reduce adverse environmental implications and improve environmental, social and economic benefits. Physical consequences of this process resulted in the scheme being re-aligned through the AONB, the repositioning and down sizing of junctions and the removal and restoration of the bypassed section of the A354 through the AONB.

Lessons learnt cont. -

The WRR project also demonstrated the importance of consultation with key stakeholders in the preparation of acceptable mitigation and offsetting measures. As a result of such consultation and the early findings of the EIA process, an Ecological Mitigation Area, covering some 30 hectares within the Lorton / Lodmoor Valley, formed a key element of the proposals.

The promotion of these proposals also demonstrated the importance of the ES in the decision making process. The ES (and the assessment it reported) was a key building block from which relevant evidence at the subsequent CPO / SRO inquiry was produced. More often than not, the answers to questions raised were already available within the ES.

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