

Norfolk County Council in its capacity as the promoter of the Norwich Western Link

This written submission is made by Norfolk County Council (“NCC”) in its capacity as the promoter of the Norwich Western Link (“NWL”) road scheme. It aims to provide the Examining Authority with an update of the position and remaining outstanding issues since NCC’s Relevant Representation was submitted on 14 November 2022 [RR-065].

For background, the NWL is a proposed approximately 4-mile long dual-carriageway road to the west of Norwich connecting the A1067 Fakenham Road and the A47, with a dualled section of the A1067 to the existing A1270 roundabout and will be accompanied by a package of sustainable transport measures. Norfolk County Council’s Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy (“LTP4”) outlines that the NWL would provide a higher standard route between the western end of the Broadland Northway and the A47 and significantly improve travel between these two major roads. Traffic congestion, rat-running and delays to journeys are all significant issues on minor roads to the west of Norwich. Consequently, LTP4 recognises that the NWL is a “priority”.

In the Relevant Representation, NCC set out how the proposed Order limits and Order land required for the onshore export cable element of the Sheringham and Dudgeon Extension Projects DCO (“SDEP DCO”) overlap with part of the proposed alignment of, and proposed red line boundary for, the NWL.

The proposed Order limits and Order land required for the onshore export cable element of the Sheringham and Dudgeon Extension Projects DCO (“SDEP DCO”) overlap with part of the proposed alignment of, and proposed red line boundary for, the NWL (see Sheets 24 – 28 of the SDEP DCO Land Plans (REP2-003)).

See also, in particular, the Key Plan and Sheets 25 and 26 of the SDEP DCO Access to Works Plans (REP5-002) which indicate that Equinor requires access for construction and early works which will have an impact on the proposed NWL; and the entry in Schedule 5 to the draft SDEP DCO (REP6-003), which indicates that “approximately 100 metres of the Norwich Western Link Road as shown between points 25c and 25d on Sheet 25 of the Streets (to be temporarily stopped up) Plan” would be affected.

Equinor as promoter of SDEP DCO has engaged with NCC as promoter of the NWL to discuss how the interface between the two projects can be managed to facilitate the mutual co-existence of the two projects. Progress toward reaching agreement on a number of matters has been made and both parties have agreed in principle that a cooperation agreement should be developed and implemented between NCC and Equinor after the DCO examination.

However, the parties have not yet reached agreement on all of the substantive issues affecting the two projects and a formal cooperation agreement has not yet been entered into by the parties. It is also unlikely that the parties will be in a position to enter into a formal cooperation agreement before the end of the DCO examination on 17 July 2023.

Consequently, NCC is providing this written submission to update the Examining Authority that the issues it raised in its relevant representation remain outstanding. These issues are a need to provide mechanisms for:

- compatibility of scheme designs, strategy for managing overlapping work areas, and mechanisms for reciprocal design approvals and potential cost sharing;
- construction methodology, including access and timescales;
- strategy for communicating with landowners and occupiers affected by both projects;
- approach to the acquisition of land and rights over land, where land and rights are required for both projects in the same area;
- approach to the temporary stopping up of highways (including the NWL) and public rights of way; and
- potential for transfer of benefit to NCC of certain elements of the development to be authorised by the SDEP DCO.

If an appropriate agreement in relation to the above matters is not reached the SDEP DCO would risk prejudicing the timely and cost effective delivery of the NWL and the economic, social and environmental benefits that the NWL would deliver.

NCC remain of the view that its concerns are capable of being addressed via a suitably worded co-operation agreement and is confident, based on the good working relationship established, that such an agreement can be satisfactorily concluded before the Secretary of State is required to determine the SDEP DCO application.

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However, to protect its position in the eventuality that an agreement is not satisfactorily concluded by that time, Norfolk County Council has prepared a set of protective provisions appended to this Position Statement that, if included in the SDEP DCO, would address its concerns.

Notwithstanding the submission of this Position Statement, Norfolk County Council remains committed to agreeing the terms of a co-operation agreement with the Applicant and intends to continue to negotiate its terms during the reporting and determination periods of the SDEP DCO application.

7th July 2023

