



## Meeting note

### File reference

#### Status

**Final**

#### Author

Rachel Gaffney

#### Date

08 December 2015

#### Meeting with

Highways England

#### Venue

Temple Quay House, Bristol

#### Attendees

Maire Neale – Project Manager (Highways England)

Graeme Steers – Consultant’s Design Team Leader (Halcrow-Hyder JV)

Isabelle Guyot – Communications and Stakeholder Engagement (Dialogue by Design (sub-consultant to HHJV))

Susannah Guest – Infrastructure Planning Lead (PINS)

Helen Lancaster – Senior EIA Advisor (PINS)

Rachel Gaffney – Assistant Case Officer (PINS)

#### Meeting objectives

Project inception meeting

#### Circulation

All Attendees

### **Scheme: A2 Bean & Ebbsfleet Junction Improvements**

#### **Developer: Highways England**

#### **Summary of key points discussed and advice given:**

The applicant was reminded of the Planning Inspectorate’s openness policy that any advice given will be recorded and published on the planning portal website under s51 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) (PA 2008) and that any advice given does not constitute legal advice upon which the applicants (or others) can rely.

Introductions were made by everyone present, and individual roles were explained.

The developer noted that this scheme is currently at an early stage and provided an overview of the activity to date. The developer then provided an outline of the indicative timetable with work on options selection scheduled for 2016. The preferred route announcement was scheduled for spring 2017 with likely submission at the end of 2018. Scheme construction was scheduled for spring 2020. The developer reviewed their assumptions in respect of the formal submission to decision process.

The developer’s approach to risk was discussed; the Planning Inspectorate noted that certain elements of the scheme had very tight timing assumptions. The Planning Inspectorate advised that assuming tight timetables could lead to complications later

on in the process particularly if any changes to the scheme were identified. It was also noted that there could be an overlap between the detailed design phase and the examination process. The Planning Inspectorate highlighted that there could be work associated with discharging any requirements in between receiving a decision and commencing some/the works.

The developer discussed the definition of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) in the Planning Act 2008 and noted the size thresholds therein in respect of the scheme as a whole. It was confirmed that the scheme is currently over the relevant size thresholds.

The Road Investment Strategy identifies this scheme as a whole as "A2 Bean to Ebbsfleet". The developer explained there is a need argument in respect of each of the junctions, but that they were considering both elements as part of one NSIP scheme. The developer considered that splitting the consenting regime between the two junctions would not be optimal. Evidence of the 'need' for the highway improvement had been formed from traffic flows accounting for new applications as well as existing developments. The developer outlined the other developments and proposed developments in proximity to their scheme; in particular it was noted the existing Bluewater Shopping Centre and the proposals for London Paramount and a Lower Thames Crossing.

The relationship between the Highways England scheme and proposals for London Paramount and associated highways works were discussed in detail. It was noted that currently the indicative red line boundaries for these two schemes overlapped. The respective timetables for the proposals was noted and the developer highlighted that as they would be a statutory consultee for the London Paramount scheme there has been and will continue to be regular meetings. The developer hoped to receive and review relevant transport survey data for the London Paramount scheme in due course.

It was noted that this situation could result in complexity or potential confusion with consultation activities between the two schemes. The potential to phase consultation was discussed.

The cumulative impacts of the scheme were also explored. The Planning Inspectorate advised that there are [newly up-dated] advice notes specifically relating to the cumulative impacts of a scheme. There are several possibilities and assumptions for the scheme including; 'do nothing' and 'do something'. Assumptions for the cumulative impacts need to be defined and will cover all the possible options; several scenarios may need to be accounted for.

The developer stated that surveys are currently underway. The developer confirmed that an EIA assessment will be undertaken. The Planning Inspectorate noted that the EIA regulations are being reviewed, updated regulations will be published in 2017, it was suggested that it would be useful for the developer to take these updated regulations into account.

The developer indicated that it would be unlikely to seek a Scoping Opinion from the Planning Inspectorate until a preferred route announcement has been made; a scoping request could be submitted in autumn 2017.

The developer recognised that there could be some issues associated with compulsory acquisition powers in relation to the scheme. Negotiations will need to take place in terms of acquiring this land from the various land owners. It was also recognised that air quality near the two junctions could be an issue and was currently being monitored.

In terms of funding for the scheme currently no discussions have taken place. However, there might be the potential to explore a s278 agreement with London Paramount scheme and some funding may be available through the Kent Strategic Transport Investment Programme (STIP).

The developer recognised the level of uncertainty associated with their scheme and its relationship with proposals in the area. It was agreed that this would likely be discussed in any future meetings.

### **Specific decisions / follow up required?**

- Suggestion for a regular telecon to be set up on a monthly basis, commencing after the stakeholder meetings in early February 2016.
- Suggestion for future face-to-face meetings to be arranged, commencing in May 2016.