



Meeting note

File reference

Status

Final

Author

Callan Burchell

Date

20 April 2016

Meeting with

Highways England (HE)

Venue

Temple Quay House, Bristol

Attendees**Highways England (HE)**

Wole Odetola – Highways England

Julie Crawford – Highways England

Aaron Douglas – Highways England

Gemma Nixon – Amey

Yasmin Esmail – Amey

Tony Wallis – Amey

Andy Heap – Amey

Mehmey Ahmet – AECOM

Richard Quantick – AECOM

Tom Bennett

The Planning Inspectorate

Susannah Guest – Infrastructure Planning Lead

David Price – EIA Manager

Callan Burchell – Assistant Case Officer

Meeting**objectives**

A47 Programme Update

Circulation

All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The developer 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.

Programme Update

Highways England (HE) described the background and context of the A47 programme of works, outlining scheme objectives, stakeholder engagement and tentative timetables for the individual elements.

HE explained the current constraints on the 150 mile stretch of the A47 from its junction with the A1 through to Great Yarmouth with the route passing through multiple urban areas. HE indicated the levels of growth expected at urban centres such as Peterborough. HE outlined that the existing route is 47% dual carriageway and 53% single carriageway.

HE suggested that specific constraints and challenges would be discussed further when outlining each of the proposed projects. HE continued that each project would also have its own specific objectives. For example in respect of congestion relief, unlocking capacity, improving network resilience, improving safety and/or improving environmental capital.

HE noted that the planned improvements to the A47 had varying histories but had been formally identified within the Road Investment Strategy, published in December 2014.

The six potential projects were named as:

- A47 Wansford to Sutton (dualling)
- A47/A141 Guyhirn Junction (junction improvements)
- A47 North Tuddenham to Easton (dualling)
- A47/ A11 Thickthorn junction improvements
- A47 Blofield to North Burlingham (dualling)
- A47/A12 junction enhancements

HE explained that the 'options phase' is currently being undertaken for each project and that traffic modelling and consideration of environmental constraints are influencing the design and options for each project in the programme.

HE informed the Inspectorate that non-statutory engagement has been taking place, to various degrees, in respect of each project of the programme. HE explained that further non-statutory consultation has or is being arranged. HE explained that they would not be procuring the consultants until the later stages of the schemes.

HE proceeded to provide a brief introduction to all six projects currently part of the A47 programme.

A47 Wansford to Sutton

HE informed the Inspectorate of key aspects of this section of the A47, outlining the environmental sensitivities and potential route options for this project.

HE described the features and designations of this section of the A47, noting the proximity to the River Nene, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). HE also indicated proximity to residential properties and a pumping and fuelling station.

HE explained to the Inspectorate that there are currently several route options for this section of the A47 programme and these included offline and online options. HE informed the Inspectorate that engagement with Peterborough City Council is arranged to discuss the projected route options.

A47/A141 Guyhirn Junction

HE described the key aspects of this section of the A47, noting in particular the significant levels of development expected in the vicinity. HE explained about the potential impact on a local bridge and surrounding watercourses.

HE explained that there are environmental designations in this vicinity including a SSSI, Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar. Within this location there is also priority habitat identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

There was a discussion about the likelihood of the scheme triggering the relevant thresholds in the Planning Act or whether it was more likely to be progressed through the Highways Act route.

HE explained that the works would be in proximity to a sensitive watercourse and that this would be a consideration for the scheme development. The Inspectorate highlighted the Water Framework Directive requirements and brought a recent court judgment to HE's attention. Information on the recent judgment can be found at the end of this meeting note.

HE explained that they are considering a variety of route options for this section of the A47. HE informed the Inspectorate that they were hoping to meet with Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council in due course.

A47 North Tuddenham to Easton

HE described the key aspects for this section of the A47 to the Inspectorate, which included proposals to dual about 8km of the route.

HE explained some of the features of this section of the route including proximity to numerous listed buildings, including 2 churches fronting on the existing A47, and environmental designations including Hockering Wood SSSI in the Wesome Valley.

Regional Food Hub – a specific Local Development Order (LDO) application has been submitted to Broadland District Council, for a site to the West of Easton adjacent to the A47; they expect to determine this application early in 2017. The next local plan for Broadland is later in 2019. Broadland District Council is currently at the very start of the process for the local plan; the finalised local plan is c2019/20.

HE made the Inspectorate aware that they have knowledge of other relevant proposed schemes in the proximity of this section of the A47.

There was a general discussion regarding how non-committed projects could be taken into consideration when determining options. The Inspectorate stressed that HE must be clear in their need argument for their specific project and the objectives for that scheme. It was agreed that this matter would be discussed during future meetings.

A47/ A11 Junction

HE described the key aspects for this section of the A47 to the Inspectorate. HE outlined the current congestion levels at this section of the A47 and the conflicting turning manoeuvres at the junction in respect of uses such as Park and Ride.

HE described the features and designations of this section of the scheme including its close proximity to the village of Cringleford, a Scheduled Ancient Monument and an existing railway line. HE also noted the permitted residential development in the area.

HE made the Inspectorate aware that they are currently considering four route options for this section of the scheme which include two offline and two online options.

HE noted that part of the need argument for this project would be associated with unlocking capacity in the area and there was discussion about how this might be assessed.

A47 Blofield to North Burlingham

HE explained the background and context of this section of the A47 to the Inspectorate, where the project objective would be to dual 4km of the route in the interests of capacity, safety and resilience due to limited diversionary routes existing.

HE informed the Inspectorate that a previous scheme for this section of the A47 had been well-progressed but had stalled due to funding considerations. HE highlighted that whilst options had previously been considered; they may no longer be suitable and accord with more up-dated guidelines and engineering standards. HE explained to the Inspectorate that they have also been considering new route options.

HE highlighted that there are currently several route options for this section of the A47 including several online and offline options.

The Blofield stretch of A47 is above average in terms of number of collisions therefore is below the national average for safety. The stretch is also currently operating at above capacity.

HE described the features and designations in this locality including residential areas, seasonal industries and utility infrastructure.

A47/A12 junction enhancements

HE noted that the junction enhancements could relate to the following junctions and roundabouts: Vauxhall, Gapton, Harfreys, Bridge Road and James Paget Hospital.

HE outlined the context of this section of the A47 scheme highlighting the lack of alternative routes during construction and the concerns surrounding construction during the increase in tourism-based traffic during peak seasonal periods.

HE suggested that these junction enhancements would be unlikely to trigger the relevant thresholds of the Planning Act regime, but all felt it was beneficial to understand all of the proposed projects along this stretch of the Strategic Road Network.

Link

Water Framework Directive – Relevant case

<http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2015-07/cp150074en.pdf>

Follow up / Actions required

- Arrangements for future meetings or teleconference

