



Meeting note

File reference

Status

Final

Author

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Date

29 August 2017

Meeting with

Highways England

Venue

Temple Quay House, Bristol

Attendees**The Planning Inspectorate**

Gareth Leigh (Infrastructure Planning Lead)

Robert Ranger (Case Manager)

Alison Down (EIA and Land Rights Advisor)

Katherine King (EIA and Land Rights Advisor)

Kate Mignano (Case Officer)

Highways England

John Pingstone

Guy Lewis

Dave Masters

Aaron Douglas

Giles Hewson

Paul Kendal

Jacob Lister

Meeting**objectives**

Project Update Meeting

Circulation

All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised on its openness policy, explaining that any advice given would be recorded and placed on the Planning Inspectorate website under section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

Program Introduction

Highways England (HE) introduced a program of six proposed Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) along the A47 corridor from Peterborough to Great Yarmouth, as identified in the Road Investment Strategy 2014 (RIS). It was explained that the A47 is close to capacity now; to enable growth and the free flow of traffic

across the network, essential works are necessary. These proposed works will include improvements to junctions, the conversion from single to dual carriageways and the construction of new offline sections of dual carriageway. HE confirmed each project is required individually and therefore not reliant on the other projects gaining development consent. Non-statutory consultation on different options took place for all six projects from 13 March – 21 April 2017. Following the non-statutory consultation, Preferred Route Announcements have been made for each project.

HE gave a presentation which detailed the individual design aspects and progress to date of each of the Proposed Developments.

Individual Project Introductions

A47 Wansford to Sutton Dualling

Three different options were consulted on; the chosen preferred option is to convert 1.6 miles of existing single to dual carriageway, slightly offline from the existing A47. The preferred option is slightly different to the original three consulted on and was amended following feedback received at consultation. HE considers the Proposed Development to be an NSIP due to the amount of land take required.

Key Issues

Compulsory Acquisition is expected to be required as part of the application. HE confirmed they are in negotiation with all 10 potentially affected land owners and stated that one of the plots of land has a residential property. The Inspectorate advised HE to ensure all negotiations are documented and encouraged negotiation with land owners.

There are a number of environmental factors within the vicinity of the site that are being considered including Scheduled Monuments, Country Wildlife Sites (CWS), a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the River Nene and a Noise Important Area (NIA) near the disused train station at Sutton. HE confirmed a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will be submitted as part of the application and an early intrusive Archaeological Survey is anticipated.

HE considers transport management will be required during construction as some closures would be necessary. The land occupied by the existing A47 that does not form part of the project will be retained as cycling routes / footpaths. HE stated there will be diversions required for some statutory undertaker apparatus and confirmed negotiations with those affected are ongoing.

A47 / A141 Guyhirn Junction Improvement

This is a junction improvement to the east of Peterborough. Statutory consultation is anticipated between March and April 2018.

HE explained that during the initial development phase alternative options were considered, but as they did not meet the objectives, they were not progressed. A single option was consulted on during non-statutory consultation. The proposed option is to enlarge the roundabout with the addition of an eastbound lane. The proposed works will include widening of the bridge over the River Nene. HE considers the project to be an NSIP due to the likely significant environmental effects.

Some Compulsory Acquisition is expected as part of the application. It was confirmed that the majority of the land take is in the ownership of the Environment Agency, notably a surge chamber under the existing road and pumping station in the vicinity of the site may be affected.

HE is currently assessing the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development and may screen the project out of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) process. Work has been brought forward to progress this. HE concluded if the project is not deemed to have likely significant environmental effects it would not be an NSIP and therefore would not progress under the PA2008. The Inspectorate advised HE that it would be prudent to conclude this work before seeking a Scoping Opinion under the powers of the PA2008. Should a Scoping Opinion be sought, this would require HE to determine that the Proposed Development was EIA development.

Key Issues

HE is currently assessing the likely significant environmental effects and the scheme may not be EIA development. Work has been brought forward to progress this. HE concluded if the project is not deemed to have likely significant environmental effects it would not be an NSIP and therefore would not progress under the PA2008. The Inspectorate advised HE to conclude this work before seeking a Scoping Opinion under the powers of the PA2008.

There are a number of environmental constraints within the vicinity of the site including an SSSI, Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA). Freshwater ecology has been identified as an important factor. A NIA lies south of the site and a number of Listed Buildings are in close proximity.

Some stopping up of footpaths will form part of the application, if submitted. Alternative footpaths will be provided and improvements made to the existing routes. HE considers local residential properties may be affected by visual and noise impacts. These effects are being considered as part of the design development.

A47 North Tuddenham to Easton Dualling

The current section of the A47 between North Tuddenham and Easton is single carriageway which acts as a bottleneck.

Four options were consulted on. The preferred route option is for 5 mile long offline dual carriageway with a new bridge over the River Tud. HE considers the project to be an NSIP due to the amount of land take required. There are 35 potentially affected landowners.

Key issues

There is possible unexploded ordinance (UXO) in the vicinity of the site due to previous military activities in the area.

The number of side road accesses require to be maintained meant a wholly online option problematic so the proposed option is mainly offline whilst following the route of the existing A47 as closely as possible.

There may be interactions with proposed Norwich Western Link road which may join the scheme somewhere north of Honningham.

Furthermore, there may also be possible interaction with the routes of underground cables for proposed offshore wind farms. HE are in negotiation with the affected developers.

There is also a proposal for a food hub and housing development to the south east of the scheme which HE will be considering in their assessments.

A47 / A11 Thickthorn Junction Improvement

HE explained that during the initial development phase alternative options were considered, but as they did not meet the objectives and therefore were not progressed. A single option was consulted on during non-statutory consultation.

The proposed option is to provide free flow slip roads connecting the A47 east to the A11 south of the Thickthorn grade separated junction, which will take a large proportion of traffic away from the junction. HE considers the project to be an NSIP due to the amount of land take required.

Some Compulsory Acquisition is expected as part of the application. It was confirmed that the majority of the land take is in the ownership of five affected landowners.

Key Issues

Land adjacent to the proposed site has been given planning permission for a large housing development. HE explained the proposed NSIP works would be required to consider this new development and there is potential for works to be carried out to be funded by the housing developer. The Inspectorate advised HE that all works included in the Development Consent Order (DCO) need to be justified in the application documents as being required to deliver the component of the scheme which has classified it as an NSIP.

Plans are being refined for the Cantley Lane Link (separate to this NSIP). These plans will be consulted on prior to statutory consultation.

HE explained the land required for the proposal is mostly agricultural. There are two schedule one Tumuli mounds close to the site, listed buildings, scheduled monuments and a CWS.

A47 Blofield to North Burlington Dualling

Four different options were consulted on; the chosen preferred option is to construct a new dual carriageway, slightly to the south of the existing A47 linking together the two existing sections of dual carriageway. HE considers the project to be an NSIP due to the amount of land take required.

Some Compulsory Acquisition is expected as part of the application. It was confirmed that there are ten affected land owners and the majority of the land is in the ownership of Norfolk County Council.

Key Issues

There is a gas pipeline that will need to be diverted as part of the proposed works. The Inspectorate advised HE to consider if this would constitute an NSIP in its own right and to ensure the statutory process is complied with in relation to all NSIPs within the proposed DCO.

There are NIAs along the proposed route, HE propose to use low noise surfacing to help reduce noise and may amend the design to include further noise barriers if further assessments show this to be beneficial.

There are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the vicinity of the site. HE confirmed initial assessments show there will be no significant changes, to air quality.

Ecological survey work is ongoing.

A47 Great Yarmouth Junctions Improvement

A single option was consulted on consisting of improvements to the Vauxhall and Gapton roundabouts. HE considers the project to be an NSIP due to the likely significant environmental effects. No land take will be required for the application. The proposed works include enlarging and elongating the Vauxhall roundabout and widening of the Network Rail bridge. HE is in discussion with Network Rail regarding intrusive survey work.

The proposals also include improvements to the train station access near Vauxhall junction and Gapton roundabout. The proposed works at Gapton roundabout are mainly around signalisation improvements.

Key Issues

HE is currently assessing the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development and may screen the project out of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) process. Work has been brought forward to progress this. HE concluded if the project is not deemed to have likely significant environmental effects it would not be an NSIP and therefore would not progress under the PA2008. The Inspectorate advised HE that it would be prudent to conclude this work before seeking a Scoping Opinion under the powers of the PA2008. Should a Scoping Opinion be sought, this would require HE to determine that the Proposed Development was EIA development.

General update

Stakeholder Engagement

HE explained the stakeholder engagement to date for all six projects included contact with local MPs, The A47 alliance, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, as well as City, County, District, Borough and Parish Councils. HE is in negotiation with statutory bodies and directly affected land owners.

DCO Submission Plans

HE have considered options of packaging DCO submissions (ie. Including more than one NSIP in the DCO) and weighed up the potential efficiencies with the risks. Currently HE intends to submit six individual DCO applications, on similar timeframes. However two of these applications may be screened out of the PA2008 process. HE stated there is a strategy in place to limit confusion between the different schemes, the Inspectorate noted that it would work with HE in ensuring that the Planning Inspectorate website was also as clear as possible. Going forward, HE will discuss this strategy with the Inspectorate and provide clear information for the individual project pages on the Planning Inspectorate website.

Scoping

HE confirmed Scoping Reports are currently being prepared for all six projects and are expected to be submitted in October / November 2017. The reports have been formatted consistently. The Inspectorate advised HE to consider the implications for statutory bodies, when deciding to scope all six projects at the same time. It was discussed at the meeting that it may be possible to scope 4 projects at the same time and submit the final two later in the year.

The Inspectorate informed HE that Scoping Opinions are adapting to be more efficient and advised HE to look at recently adopted Scoping Opinions on the Planning Inspectorate website as they are produced, the first likely to be towards the end of September. The Inspectorate advised HE to be clear in their Scoping Report on the topics being scoped in and out, explaining why. If it is not sufficiently clear, the Inspectorate will assume that topics have been scoped in and comment accordingly.

HE anticipate a decision in January 2018 whether the A47 / A141 Guyhirn Junction Improvement and A47 Great Yarmouth Junctions Improvement projects will proceed as NSIP applications. The Inspectorate advised HE to consider the implications of the EIA Regulations and explained that once a project begins the PA2008 process, the only way to remove it could be to formally withdraw the application.

S53 applications

HE confirmed that s53 applications may be required for two of the six applications to access the land for surveying purposes. The Inspectorate encouraged HE to continue negotiations with affected land owners and to document all negotiations. The Inspectorate informed HE that s53 applications do not have a statutory timescale and to ensure all necessary information is included in any application. If the Inspectorate has to request further information, this will extend the time taken to make a decision.

Timescales

The following dates are anticipated submissions for each project and subject to change;

Scoping - October / November 2017
Development of preferred schemes – Autumn / Winter 2017
Statutory consultation – Spring 2018
Submission of DCO applications – Autumn / Winter 2018
Start of proposed works – Spring 2020

Follow up required

HE to submit project information to enable Webpage set up for each proposed NSIP