



## Meeting note

<b>File reference</b>	A12 Chelmsford to A120
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	Louise Evans
<b>Date</b>	20 June 2017
<b>Meeting with</b>	Highways England
<b>Venue</b>	Temple Quay House
<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Highways England</b> – Ian Fletcher, Cheryl White, Michael Thomson, John Pingstone, Lorraine Bennetts, Jennifer Goddard  <b>The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate)</b> – Gareth Leigh, David Price, Richard Price, Louise Evans
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Inception Meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	All

### 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 Inspectorate's website under section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (the PA2008).

### The Proposed Development

The Applicant is proposing to widen the A12 between junctions 19 (Boreham interchange) and 25 (Marks Tey interchange). The scheme is in the Government's Road Investment Strategy for the 2015/16- 2019/20 Road Period (RIS1). Its proposal would be fully funded by the Department for Transport.

A number of studies have been undertaken which recognise the need to provide improvements to the A12 to ease congestion and improve safety, resilience and reliability.

Non-statutory consultation on the Proposed Development began earlier in 2017 on four potential options:

- Option 1 – Widening the existing road on its existing alignment
- Option 2 – As Option 1 but with two bypasses
- Option 3 – As Option 2 but with only the first of the two bypasses
- Option 4 – As Option 2 but with only the second of the two bypasses

907 responses to the consultation were received, with 824 expressing a preference for 1 of the 4 options, or specifically expressing no preference. Option 2 gained the most support with 49% and Option 1 being the 2<sup>nd</sup> most supported with 28%.

The Inspectorate advised that the preferred route corridor could be widened after it had been announced and before the Scoping Report were submitted, but that this could produce a less precise scoping response from them.

## **Planning**

The Proposed Development would be in a built-up area, with close proximity to dwellings and the Great Eastern Mainline (GEML). The options for the scheme have been designed in order to avoid impacts to the GEML where possible.

A planning proposal for the A120 has been brought forward by Essex County Council. Essex County Council is targeting the inclusion of the proposal in Road Investment Strategy 2 period. The A12 proposal has taken into account the A120 scheme insofar as it does not prejudice the A120 options.

A Garden Community has also been proposed by a consortium of local councils (Essex, Braintree, Colchester and Chelmsford) for up to 24,000 dwellings across an areas of Braintree District and Colchester Borough and covered by two local plans. Initial funding has been provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Applicant stated that little account had been taken of the Garden Community proposal in preparing the A12 scheme in accordance with WebTAG Guidance and PINS Advice Note 17, given that it is at an early stage and only 2500 dwellings are proposed in the plan period of emerging local plans to 2033. The Garden Community developers may prefer the A12 route to be moved south between J24 and J25 in order to avoid constraining their development.

## **Environmental**

The site for the Proposed Development is not within the Metropolitan Green Belt, and there are no national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty (AoNB) within 5 kilometres of the study area. The closest AoNB is Dedham Vale which is 8km away from the study area, and the Applicant considers this to be outside of the zone of influence.

The Proposed Development crosses an area of high archaeological potential. There are 50 listed buildings within 300 metres of the study area: one Grade I; five Grade II\*; 44 Grade II. There are also four conservation areas and over 340 other cultural heritage assets within 300 metres of the site. Within 1km there are an additional five scheduled monuments; four registered parks; eight Grade I listed buildings; and 32 Grade II listed buildings.

There are no special areas of conservation (SAC) designated for bats within 30km of the Proposed Development. There are three Ramsar and European sites within 20km, and five Sites of Special Scientific Interest within 5km of the Proposed Development, including the Marks Tey Brickpit within 2km.

The Applicant is currently undertaking screening for its Habitat Regulations Assessment, and will consult with Natural England in due course. The Applicant is in the process of undertaking species surveys for great crested newts, bats, dormice and

badgers. There are no air quality management areas (AQMA) directly affected by the Proposed Development but AQMAs in Eight Ash Green and Chelmsford potentially may be affected.

The Applicant will start Water Framework Directive Assessments soon, and is aware that the Inspectorate is in the process of developing an Advice Note relating to the Water Framework Directive. The Inspectorate advised that this would be published imminently.

The Inspectorate advised that following the introduction of the new Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 its Screening and Scoping Advice Note is also being updated in order to refine the existing content. However the precise timescales for the publication of this advice are not set and the Inspectorate advised that Applicants should not wait for its publication.

## **Consultation**

The Applicant confirmed that it held a non-statutory consultation between 23 January and 3 March 2017 in order to consult on the four potential options for the Proposed Development. The consultation was complimented by 7 public information events at key locations along the proposed scheme. The purpose of these events was to allow stakeholders the opportunity to view the proposals and speak directly to the project's technical experts.

The Applicant has also had discussions with the four local planning authorities Chelmsford City Council; Braintree District Council; Colchester Borough Council; and Maldon District Council. Essex County Council is also engaged. All authorities are supportive of the Proposed Development, but are concerned that the Garden Community is taken into account in the application.

The Applicant has held environmental forums and technical/ topic-specific working groups with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England, all of whom responded to the Applicant's recent consultation. The Applicant has also had contact with non-statutory consultees, including the National Farmers Union, Essex Wildlife Trust and the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

## **Property Interests**

There is Crown Land near J24; the Applicant has made the Crown Estate aware, and has engaged with them, and will continue to do so as the work to inform the application for the Proposed Development progresses.

The Applicant has made contact with some landowners at the consultation events held earlier this year, via telephone calls and through a landowner surgery that took place during the consultation period. Some landowners have not allowed access to the Applicant to carry out surveys. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to keep a record of its attempts to obtain voluntary access as this will be important information in support of any s53 application (if required).

The Applicant stated that the Proposed Development has the potential to affect businesses within the local area, including a quarry. It was also noted that there are planning applications for several housing developments within the local area which

have already been granted and will need to be considered in the context of the Proposed Development.

There is a Methodist church on the edge of the study area, and as such the Proposed Development could have an impact on the graveyard. However, this is considered to be unlikely.

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

The Applicant advised that the preferred route announcement is anticipated for summer 2017 and it is likely that a scoping request to the Inspectorate will be made afterwards. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant of the need to provide a shapefile in advance of the scoping request. The Inspectorate also advised that if necessary a meeting/ teleconference in advance of the scoping request would be useful. It was agreed that the next face-to-face meeting should take place following the issue of the Scoping Opinion.

The Applicant confirmed its intention to submit the application in the summer of 2018, and if development consent is granted to start construction work in March 2020.