



## Meeting note

<b>File reference</b>	A303 Stonehenge
<b>Status</b>	<b>FINAL</b>
<b>Author</b>	Robert Ranger
<b>Date</b>	27 September 2017
<b>Meeting with</b>	Highways England
<b>Venue</b>	Temple Quay House
<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Highways England (HE)</b> Steve Finnie - AmW Esther Gordon-Smith - HE Steve McQuade - AmW Will Spencer - HE <b>The Planning Inspectorate</b> Richard Kent – Senior EIA and Land Rights Advisor Gareth Leigh – Infrastructure Planning Lead Richard Price – Case Manager Robert Ranger – Case Manager
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Inception meeting for A303 Stonehenge – Amesbury to Berwick Down
<b>Circulation</b>	All

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

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) explained the duties placed upon it under section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). A note of the meeting would be taken recording the key points discussed and any advice issued by the Inspectorate. The note would be published on the Inspectorate's website. Any advice issued by the Planning Inspectorate would not constitute legal advice upon which the Applicant, or others, could rely.

HE briefly described the Proposed Development. The A303 is the most direct route to the South West, but suffers from congestion and delays. The main driver of the Proposed Development is to promote economic growth. The scheme includes a bypass to Winterbourne Stoke.

The Proposed Development follows many studies that have taken place in the past. HE has considered 60 historic routes, which were refined to 8 corridors, and then to 2 route options. The options were principally distinguished by passing north or south of Winterbourne Stoke. Consultation on these options took place in January 2017, and a

preferred route passing to the north of Winterbourne Stoke was announced in September 2017.

HE explained that the proposal includes a twin-bore dual carriageway tunnel, approximately 2.9km in length with a 300m open-cut or canopy tunnel at the western end, with portals that are not visible from the stones at Stonehenge. A control building may or may not be located within the World Heritage Site but will in any case be sensitively designed and considered as part of the environmental assessment process. The Proposed Development will cross the Till valley on a viaduct, and include grade-separated junctions with the A345 and A360. The resulting road will be a 70mph high quality dual carriageway. The existing A303 will be detrunked, and left in/left out junctions at the eastern end of the Proposed Development will be closed. The Countess Roundabout will probably be crossed with a flyover. Access from the A303 to Winterbourne Stoke will be via the Longbarrow Roundabout. There will be no lighting within the World Heritage Site. The Proposed Development will also include improvements to the diversion route (B3085/ A360).

In response to a question from the Inspectorate, HE confirmed that the diversion route improvements will be included in the draft DCO, and will be within the order limits. There is little or no proposed road widening on the diversion route, which may also be used for high loads.

The Proposed Development is one of three projects on the A303 corridor within the Road Investment Strategy 1 (RIS) which have a total value of between one and two billion pounds. There are eight proposed schemes in the A303 corridor overall.

HE briefly outlined some of the challenges facing the Proposed Development, including the sensitivity of the World Heritage Site and the need for flexibility in the DCO to allow for the degree of commercial flexibility expected within a Design, Build, Finance, Maintain (DBFM) procurement. The Proposed Development also has a large amount of stakeholder interest

HE went on to describe some of the constraints to which the Proposed Development is subject, which (in addition to the environmental constraints specified below), include a petroleum pipeline, archaeology, listed buildings, electrical cables, Ministry of Defence land, a high water table, and national trust land held inalienably.

HE described some of the environmental complexity of the Proposed Development, including Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Salisbury, Noise Important Areas, (of which there are two in Winterbourne Stoke and three in Amesbury) and flood plains associated with both the rivers Avon and Till.

In response to a question from the Inspectorate, HE confirmed that there were no vents or similar above ground tunnel structures proposed. The siting of the control building will take account of safety issues, but HE are exploring taking as much infrastructure out of the immediate area as possible.

HE explained that the northern route was chosen as a result of consultation as it has lesser adverse impacts. The option was also modified to avoid the winter solstice alignment from Stonehenge.

HE outlined some of their key stakeholders. The Inspectorate asked how HE was engaging with UNESCO. HE explained that they were engaging with UNESCO via the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and via the UNESCO's advisors, at the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Discussions are challenging, but ongoing. HE believe that some of the concerns raised by ICOMOS have been addressed by the preferred route announcement. HE also believe that the Proposed Development has overall support from key technical consultees such as the National Trust, Historic England, English Heritage and others.

HE explained that their non-statutory consultation in January attracted 9243 responses. HE wrote to 17,000 addresses and held ten exhibitions, including one in London. The Inspectorate asked if there had been any international responses, and HE confirmed that there had.

HE briefly outlined some of the powers they will be seeking in the DCO, including Compulsory Acquisition of land, potentially including National Trust land.

HE propose to submit a request for a scoping opinion in mid-October 2017, to conduct statutory consultation early in the new year, and submit an application for a DCO in autumn 2018.

HE asked if it was possible to schedule a meeting during the consideration of the scoping request, to address any possible concerns and feed into the production of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), which would be being produced in parallel. The Inspectorate explained that this was not possible or appropriate during the formal scoping process. The Inspectorate advised that, whilst it was important not to confuse consultees, it might be possible to approach them and ask that responses to the scoping consultation be copied to HE, although it must be clear that it is the Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) to whom scoping consultation responses must be sent).

HE explained that they proposed to carry a common format across the Scoping Report, PEIR and Environmental Statement, which the Inspectorate (without prejudice to any comments that may be made as part of the scoping opinion) generally agreed sounded like a sensible approach.

HE asked whether the Inspectorate had any advice on cumulative impact assessment; for example, whether the two other RIS schemes, which are likely to be complete before this scheme, should be considered in the 'do minimum' scenario. The Inspectorate advised that the guidance in Advice note seventeen was likely to be helpful, and that it was important to set out and justify the approach to cumulative impact assessment in the Environmental Statement.

The Inspectorate asked if a strategic traffic model was being developed for the A303 corridor. HE confirmed that it was, but that it was coarse compared to the local model, which is more detailed.

The Inspectorate asked if any likely significant effects on European designated sites and water bodies under the Water Framework Directive were anticipated, particularly in reference to the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC). HE explained that this was still being considered.

The Inspectorate asked about the DBFM model. HE confirmed that it had been used before but required a degree of commercial flexibility. HE anticipates that the DCO will be constrained, and identified a tension between that and the desired flexibility.

HE asked if the application could be submitted entirely electronically, perhaps on a tablet device. The Inspectorate advised that two hard copies of an application are normally requested, along with a number of electronic copies. Most local residents and other Interested Parties to an examination now access documents electronically, and the Inspectorate prefers to work electronically, and so designing documents such that they can easily be downloaded and read on a computer monitor is good practice.

HE asked if the Inspectorate could undertake outreach activities to help local authorities and others understand the Planning Act 2008 process. The Inspectorate agreed that attendance at tripartite events and similar was possible, but that any specific requests for outreach activity would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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

HE will produce a contact plan and a programme for the submission and review of draft documents.