

From: Bartholomew Wren [REDACTED]@tmbc.gov.uk>
Sent: 05 April 2023 13:57
To: Lower Thames Crossing <LowerThamesCrossing@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: Gudrun Andrews [REDACTED]@tmbc.gov.uk>
Subject: Lower Thames Crossing DCO Examination Timetable - Request for delay

Dear Eleanor

National Highways have shared with us their response to the procedural decision letter issued by ExA on 21 March. I attach the letter for ease of reference and note that this has yet to be published on the LTC page of your website. It is clear from the response issued that National Highways don't consider it necessary to extend the pre-Examination period – “the Applicant does not agree with the position set out by Thurrock Council regarding the need for a delay to the Examination and considers that it is not appropriate to grant the request as this would have an unacceptable impact on other Interested Parties and the local community.” TMBC does not agree with this conclusion as explained below.

The letter dated 21 March states that “*Following receipt of responses from the Applicant, the ExA will consider whether, and to what extent, to seek comments from Interested Parties*”. I appreciate that I have contacted you previously regarding TMBC's position but wish to express again that TMBC remains concerned about the resource implications of engaging with the LTC DCO Examination. We are in the process of negotiating the terms of our PPA and similar to Thurrock Council we have concern regarding the scope of work and related costs which can be recharged to National Highways. A PPA was not offered to TMBC following our change in status to a host authority earlier in 2022, this had to be requested from National Highways following collaboration with neighbouring authorities. Without additional resource the Council does not have sufficient officer capacity within the planning policy team to support our engagement, whilst maintaining the delivery of our statutory services. We are shortly to commence recruitment for a principal officer in the policy team who will be leaving to join National Highways in May, this is placing further pressure upon our planning policy team at this time.

Furthermore, we are in the process of preparing our Local Plan transport modelling which will include an LTC sensitivity test, the output for which is not anticipated until June. The wider network impacts study which has been commissioned by KCC, to more fully define a package of local highway mitigation is also ongoing. As such a 3-month delay to the examination would assist TMBC in allowing us time to resolve our PPA and staff resourcing issues, as well as to complete the preparation of evidence which could inform the detail of our Local Impact Report and ongoing engagement with the examination process.

I would be grateful if the ExA could take our circumstances into consideration in reaching a decision to extend the pre-examination period.

Kind regards

Bartholomew Wren [REDACTED]
Principal Planning Officer
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

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