

Lower Thames Crossing DCO - CAH 3 Representation Orsett Golf Club – Reg. Identification No. 20033823

Orsett Golf Club is a well-respected 125-year-old golf club that will be significantly affected by construction of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC). The Club has a full membership and also supplies recreation facilities for the local community to enjoy. Circa 21,000 rounds of golf are played at the course annually, both by members and visitors – many of whom live locally. In addition, the course clubhouse is also used for social events and, on average, is used at least twice a week for events such as wakes, weddings, birthday parties, anniversary dinners, Sunday lunches, 'fish nights' and weekly quiz nights. On many occasions the hall will be booked for something like a wake or a wedding where 99% of attendees are non-members.

The building of a six-lane motorway very close to the course will reduce the environmental quality, amenity and enjoyment of the course for users and therefore risks both the reputation of the golf club and value of the course. The extent of the impact is highlighted in the DCO Application Environmental Statement, which identifies a 'Moderate Adverse' visual impact (*which in the Club's opinion, is an underestimate*) and a 'Major Adverse' increase in noise of over 5dB(A) over the majority of the course, with the balance subject to a 'Moderate Adverse' noise impact (over 3 to under 4.9dB(A)).

Amendments to the original route has moved the planned road closer to the course and the decision to no longer lay the road in a cutting will not only add to the noise and visual impact but has necessitated the movement of the large gas main that runs along the Brentwood Road that will require the gas authority to undertake large land movements causing disruption and damage to the wooded boundary and (potentially) to the 9th Hole Championship tee where land and rights will be permanently acquired and NH is also seeking the temporary possession of land. NH is further seeking permanent rights to place bat boxes on the course and obtain access to those boxes.

The Club has no in principle objections to the DCO and acknowledges National Highways' (NH) view that the LTC is needed to reduce traffic congestion and pollution. The Club also welcomes NH's stated intention to lessen the impact of the motorway on those affected along the route. However, the Club feels strongly that NH could assist it in mitigating some of the damage the chosen route of the LTC will have on the course in order to achieve a proper balance between the public interest and the club's private loss and objects to the acquisition of land at rights at the course until an agreement is reached over those mitigation measures.

Screen Planting

The road will be clearly visible and constantly heard along the southern boundary of the course, and the Club wishes to reduce the impact of this with screening. The Club is aware that NH has set itself a target of planting a million trees to offset the carbon effects of the LTC project and believes NH's agreement to fund tree planting and fencing to provide screening for the course, and replace tress lost through acquisition would be consistent with this objective.

To help improve the visual impact and reduce noise, the Club feels large, mature tree transplanting that hides the motorway is not the answer and favors the less expensive option

of planting a leylandii hedge (conifer) and then planting more native trees in front of the hedge close to the southern boundary on the 9th hole that will eventually hide most of the leylandii hedge. This will help give all year-round screening. The native trees the Club plans to use are already successful on the course, so that good survival rates can be expected. An irrigation system will also need to be installed (by in-house staff) to ensure the trees flourish.

Rabbit Fence

The Club is pleased that NH intends to purchase land surrounding the golf course for planting in order to further offset the carbon impacts of the Lower Thames Crossing and wholly supports this initiative. However, such land is a breeding place for rabbits and rabbits can inflict terrible damage to a golf course.

The Club therefore further requests that to keep rabbits off the course, it is agreed that on the boundary between the land to be used for planting and the course, an appropriate and reliable rabbit fence is erected and maintained by NH.

Bat Boxes

The Club is aware that NH wishes it to accommodate bat-boxes on the course in various positions and maintain them for a set number of years. The Club is happy to accept the principle of this proposal, subject to detailed agreement on how the bat boxes will be installed and maintained.

Summary

The Club is looking for NH to enter into an agreement to fund screening, planting, irrigation, and rabbit fencing and considers that such an agreement will help reduce a future compensation claim. An agreement of the type that is being proposed could also set out parameters for how NH and the Club will interface with each other during construction of the Lower Thames Crossing, to minimise any losses that might be incurred during that period.

Heads of Terms

The club and NH have met on a number of occasions to discuss the various mitigation measures the Club is seeking and, on the whole, the Club has been encouraged by NH's engagement and its apparent willingness to undertake those measures. However, progress with progressing any kind of formal agreement between the parties has been very slow. In an effort to pick up the pace draft HOTS were sent to NH on 23 June 2023, but there has been no response to that draft to date.

Since CAH2 when I initially raised the Clubs concern to the EXA some further progress has been made and on the 4th of October a 'golf course specialist' appointed by NH made a visit to the course, principally to consider the extent of tree planting. His report is awaited. NH has also confirmed its valuation of the land it intends to acquire permanently.

NH says that its aim is to have an agreed position on all matters prior to the end of examination. This is welcomed and all the Club is trying to achieve is a greater degree of certainty that NH will commit to what it says it intends to do. However, to achieve this progress with the HOTS and a documented agreement needs to be accelerated. The Club wishes to bring this matter to the Examination's attention and enlist its assistance in ensuring an agreement is reached between the parties that achieves the proper balance between the public interest and the

club's private loss. Alternatively, if NH does not progress an agreement in a timely matter the Club requests that the EXA requires the undertaking of the necessary mitigation works (the principle of which is agreed between the parties) in the DCO.

CAH3 – 17 October 2023

At CAH 3, Leading Counsel for NH confirmed that it was agreed early screen planting and installation of rabbit fencing should be undertaken to mitigate the harm the LTC will cause to the gold club. It was also confirmed that a written agreement is required to cover the installation and management of bat boxes.

The EXA requested that HOT's covering thee matters be agreed by Deadline 7, on 17th November 2023.

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On behalf of Orsett Golf Club