

Lower Thames Crossing

9.40 Final Agreed Statement of Common Ground between (1) National Highways and (2) Meopham Parish Council (Clean version)

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Version	Date	Submitted at
1.0	18 July 2023	Deadline 1
2.0	05 December 2023	Deadline 8

Status of the Statement of Common Ground

This is the Final Agreed Statement of Common Ground between the Applicant and Meopham Parish Council.

Both parties have reached agreement on the position of all four matters. Of the four matters contained within, three matters are agreed, and one is not agreed, leaving no matters under discussion.

On behalf of the Applicant

Name	[REDACTED]
Position	[REDACTED]
Organisation	National Highways
Signature	[REDACTED]

On behalf of Meopham Parish Council

Name	[REDACTED]
Position	[REDACTED]
Organisation	Meopham Parish Council
Signature	[REDACTED]

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Statement of Common Ground

1.1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared in respect of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the proposed A122 Lower Thames Crossing (the Project) made by National Highways Limited (the Applicant) to the Secretary of State for Transport (Secretary of State) under section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 on 31 October 2022.

A request for a SoCG between the Applicant and Meopham Parish Council was made by the Examining Authority in the notification of Preliminary Meeting (Rule 6 Letter) [PD-013] to include matters related to:

- a. Woodlands, trees, and hedgerows
- b. Greenbelt effects
- c. Traffic modelling in relation to roads in the parish
- d. Traffic effects in relation to roads in the parish

1.1.2 The SoCG has been produced to confirm to the Examining Authority where agreement has been reached and where agreement has not been reached.

1.1.3 This final version of the SoCG has been submitted at Examination Deadline 8.

1.2 Principal Areas of Disagreement

1.2.1 On 19 December 2022, the Examining Authority made some early procedural decisions to assist the Applicant, potential Interested Parties and themselves to prepare for the Examination of the DCO application.

1.2.2 One of these procedural decisions was to use a tracker recording Principal Areas of Disagreement in Summary (PADS). This tracker is known as the PADS Tracker.

1.2.3 The PADS Tracker would provide a record of principal matters of disagreement emerging from the SoCG and should be updated alongside the SoCG as appropriate throughout the Examination with the expectation that a revised PADS Tracker should be submitted at every Examination deadline.

1.2.4 The Meopham Parish Council SoCG was a request set out in the notification of Preliminary Meeting (Rule 6 Letter) [PD-013] which came after the initial request from the ExA for PADS trackers. Given the small number of matters within this SoCG, Meopham Parish Council elected to not produce a PADS tracker, indicating to the Applicant that they were content that the SoCG adequately addressed their matters.

1.3 Terminology

- 1.3.1 In the matters table in Section 2 of this SoCG, “Matter Not Agreed” indicates agreement on the matter could not be reached following significant engagement and “Matter Agreed” indicates where the issue has now been resolved.

2 Matters

2.1 Final position on matters

- 2.1.1 Engagement activity between the Applicant and Meopham Parish Council has been summarised in Appendix A.
- 2.1.2 The outcomes of discussions to date are presented in Table 2.1 which details and presents the matters which have been agreed, not agreed, or are under discussion between (1) the Applicant and (2) Meopham Parish Council.
- 2.1.3 At Examination Deadline 1 there were three matters agreed, and one not agreed.
- 2.1.4 At Examination Deadline 8 there remain three matters agreed and one not agreed (there has been no change in the status of matters between versions).
- 2.1.5 This is the final version of the Statement of Common Ground between the Applicant and Meopham Parish Council.

Table 2.1 Final position on matters

Topic	Item No.	Meopham Parish Council	The Applicant's Response	Application Document Reference	Status
Need for the Project					
Business Case	2.1.1	Meopham Parish Council believe that the Project does not represent 'value for money' and that the business case has weakened since the COVID-19 pandemic due to the increase in homeworking resulting in less commuter journeys.	The Project is expected to deliver a range of benefits including congestion relief at the Dartford Crossing. The improved connectivity across the River Thames and reduced journey times would help local businesses to boost productivity, supporting sustainable local development and regional economic growth. The Project's Benefit Cost Ratio is positive, therefore demonstrating value for money. During 2020 and 2021, the travel restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in short-term changes to travel	Need for the Project [APP-494] Transport Assessment [REP4-148 to REP4-152] Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report Appendix D:	Matter Agreed

Topic	Item No.	Meopham Parish Council	The Applicant's Response	Application Document Reference	Status
			<p>patterns. However, the data collated in the first part of 2022 shows that usage of the Dartford Crossing has returned to at least 2019 levels, showing the demand has returned following the COVID-19 pandemic. Please refer to Section 5.7 of the Transport Assessment.</p> <p>For more information about the Scheme Objectives and economic benefits, see Need for the Project, and Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report Appendix D: Economic Appraisal Package: Economic Appraisal Report.</p> <p>Following a meeting with Meopham Parish Council on 5 June 2023 whereby the Applicant provided further clarity on matters of concern and gave direction to specific documents of the Application, Meopham Parish Council confirmed following its full Parish Council meeting that it was now content with the information provided by the Applicant.</p>	Economic Appraisal Package: Economic Appraisal Report [APP-526]	
Wider Network Impacts					
WNI approach Traffic modelling	2.1.2	Meopham Parish Council are concerned that the impacts on the surrounding roads such as the A227 have not been adequately modelled and fear the impact the crossing would have on the local communities served by these surrounding roads.	The Project's transport model is built in line with the Transport Analysis Guidance published by the Department for Transport. The model has been assessed by the Applicant's independent assessor and has been accepted as suitable for assessing the impact of the Lower Thames Crossing on the highway network. Please see the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report.	Transport Assessment [REP4-148 to REP4-152] Combined Modelling and Appraisal	Matter Not Agreed

Topic	Item No.	Meopham Parish Council	The Applicant's Response	Application Document Reference	Status
			<p>The Transport Assessment contains outputs and the analysis of both the construction and operational phases of the Project on the road network, including the A227 and other key roads within the parish.</p> <p>Section 7.6 of the Transport Assessment sets out locations which are forecast to see either beneficial or adverse impacts as a result of the Project once in operation. No adverse impacts on the A227 within the parish have been identified. Beneficial impacts on two A227 junctions at the southern end of Hook Green have been identified.</p>	Report [APP-518]	
Terrestrial biodiversity					
Assessment of likely significant effects Environmental Impacts	2.1.3	Meopham Parish Council are concerned how the Project will destroy and negatively impact ancient woodland, trees, hedgerows, and the wider Green Belt area. Meopham Parish Council believe this will have a devastating impact on wildlife and habitats, including protected species.	<p>Minimising the adverse impacts of the Project on the environment is one of the Scheme Objectives (see Need for the Project). At every step of the Project's lifecycle, consideration has been given and efforts have been made to reduce the environmental impacts, while still fulfilling the needs of the Project. The Applicant has followed the mitigation hierarchy of 'avoid, minimise, restore and compensate' to protect the environment in which the Project would be situated and in keeping with industry best practice.</p> <p>The Project is designed to maximise biodiversity value wherever possible. The biodiversity value generated by the Project is described in Environmental Statement (ES)</p>	<p>Need for the Project [APP-494] ES Chapter 8: Terrestrial Biodiversity [APP-146] ES Appendix 8.21: Biodiversity Metric Calculations [APP-417] ES Figure 2.4: Environmental</p>	Matter Agreed

Topic	Item No.	Meopham Parish Council	The Applicant's Response	Application Document Reference	Status
			<p>Chapter 8: Terrestrial Biodiversity and set out in detail in ES Appendix 8.21: Biodiversity Metric Calculations.</p> <p>ES Chapter 8: Terrestrial Biodiversity and ES Figure 2.4: Environmental Masterplan Sections 1 & 1A (1 of 10) and Section 2 (2 of 10) show the areas of woodland creation that are being provided south of the river to help offset the adverse effects.</p> <p>For Meopham, there are some indirect impacts from air quality on designated sites (but no physical loss of habitats). The environmental assessment is based on a realistic worst-case scenario (as required by the Infrastructure Planning Environmental Impact Assessment 2017 Regulations), and the Applicant would continue to work to further reduce impacts through the detailed design phase for the Project.</p> <p>The Project is located within the Green Belt and is considered to be inappropriate development as a whole. Linear nationally significant infrastructure projects often pass through designated Green Belt as recognised within the National Policy Statement for National Networks. The Applicant's view is that there are very special circumstances for the Project as the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.</p>	<p>Masterplan Sections 1 & 1A (1 of 10) [REP4-124] and Section 2 (2 of 10) [REP7-116]</p> <p>ES Appendix 5.6: Project Air Quality Action Plan [APP-350]</p> <p>Planning Statement Appendix E – Green Belt [APP-500]</p>	

Topic	Item No.	Meopham Parish Council	The Applicant's Response	Application Document Reference	Status
			<p>Planning Statement Appendix E – Green Belt provides an assessment of the Project against green belt planning policy and was submitted in support of the DCO application.</p> <p>Following a meeting with Meopham Parish Council on 5 June 2023 whereby the Applicant provided further clarity on matters of concern and gave direction to specific documents of the Application, Meopham Parish Council confirmed following its Parish Council meeting that it was now content with the information provided by the Applicant.</p>		
Population and human health					
Public transport Public Transport Provision	2.1.4	Meopham Parish Council are disappointed that there is insufficient provision for public transport as part of the Project.	<p>The Project would create opportunities for operators to develop new local and regional bus services, by providing new connectivity between Kent, Thurrock and Essex. Identification and development of these routes is the responsibility of the relevant operators. Local buses would not have to pay the road user charge for the Project, thereby reducing operating costs for operators.</p> <p>The forecast impact of the Project during construction and operation is set out in Chapters 8 and 7, respectively, of the Transport Assessment.</p> <p>Following a meeting with Meopham Parish Council on 5 June 2023 whereby the Applicant provided further clarity on matters of concern</p>	Transport Assessment [REP4-148 to REP4-152]	Matter Agreed

Topic	Item No.	Meopham Parish Council	The Applicant's Response	Application Document Reference	Status
			and gave direction to specific documents of the Application, Meopham Parish Council confirmed following its Parish Council meeting that it was now content with the information provided by the Applicant.		

Appendix A Engagement activity

Table A.1 Engagement activities between the Applicant and Meopham Parish Council

Date	Overview of Engagement Activities
04 May 2023	Email sent to Meopham Parish Council setting out proposed approach regarding draft SoCG following Rule 6 letter
09 May 2023	Email received from Meopham Parish Council agreeing with approach
05 June 2023	Meeting held with Meopham Parish Council to discuss next steps
22 June 2023	Email received from Meopham Parish Council agreeing draft SoCG status
04 July 2023	Email received from Meopham Parish Council agreeing draft SoCG status for submission for Examination Deadline 1.
30 October 2023	Email received from Meopham Parish Council to confirm matters and agreeing with approach that draft SoCG to be prepared as final version.

Appendix B Glossary

Term	Abbreviation	Explanation
Benefit Cost Ratio	BCR	The ratio of benefits to costs.
Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report	ComMA	The purpose of the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report is to inform decision makers and stakeholders on how the evidence underpinning the business case has been developed, from the initial identification of the underlying problem through the collection of data and the production of any supporting traffic models and forecast impacts of the Project on traffic to the eventual economic appraisal.
Development Consent Order	DCO	Means of obtaining permission for developments categorised as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008.
Development Consent Order application	DCO application	The Project Application Documents, collectively known as the 'DCO application'.
Environmental Impact Assessment	EIA	A process by which information about environmental effects of a proposed development is collected, assessed and used to inform decision making. For certain projects, EIA is a statutory requirement, reported in an Environmental Statement.
Environmental Masterplan		A package of information on existing and future environmental commitments and objectives, ongoing actions and risks to be managed, handed over to those responsible for future management and operation of the asset.
Environmental Statement	ES	A document produced to support an application for development consent that is subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which sets out the likely impacts on the environment arising from the proposed development.
National Highways		A UK government-owned company with responsibility for managing the motorways and major roads in England. Formerly known as Highways England.
Outline Traffic Management Plan for Construction	oTMPfC	Outlines the approach to carrying out temporary traffic management for the safe construction of the Project and the management measures to reduce the impact on local communities.
Statement of Common Ground	SoCG	A Statement of Common Ground is a written statement containing factual information about the matters agreed and matters not yet agreed between the parties to the SoCG.

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