



Meeting note

Project name	Lower Thames Crossing
File reference	TR010032
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	12 December 2019
Meeting with	Highways England
Venue	Regus building, Temple Quay, Bristol
Meeting objectives	Project update
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

Consultation on draft Development Consent Order (DCO)

The Applicant provided an update on progress of the project, scheduled to be submitted to the Inspectorate by Q3 2020 and advised on the current programme. The Applicant outlined its intention to submit a suite of draft documents for the Inspectorate to review early in 2020. To enable the Inspectorate to provide focused feedback, the Applicant proposed to prepare a draft explanatory note regarding the status of the plans and documents submitted for review. In addition to submitting draft documents the Applicant would seek to prepare direct questions to the Inspectorate, focusing on specific or novel issues.

In response to the Inspectorate's query relating to the submission of the screening for Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) as part of any suite of documents for review, the Applicant replied that the HRA screening is currently being reviewed by Natural England (NE) and that whilst it may not be available at the same time, they did hope to share a draft with the Inspectorate at some point.

The Inspectorate said that all draft documents may be provided as pdf versions but it would assist to receive the draft DCO in Word format.

Examination planning

The parties discussed in general terms the management of events during an examination stage. The Inspectorate emphasised that an examination of a DCO application is led by the Examining Authority (ExA) who have the power to control the events.



The Inspectorate has already provided the Applicant with standard forms to become familiar with the requirements for scoping the proposed venues for various types of hearings during an examination of the application, as the Applicant is required to provide suitable facilities.

The discussion noted the potential for overlap of the Applicant's communication strategy leading up to an Examination and correspondence issued by the Inspectorate. It was agreed to review this matter at future Project Meetings.

Supplementary consultation update

The Applicant intends to hold further consultation to be launched in early 2020 and is currently finalising the programme for the consultation. The Applicant explained that it is intending to provide a focused set of consultation documents that outline the changes made to the proposed development, together with an easy-to-read guide to documents intended to summarise the overall concepts. The Applicant hoped that this would aid the accessibility for those who might have difficulty in accessing documentation of this scale. The role and status of the Applicant's proposed 'non-technical summary of the Consultation Report' was discussed.

Environmental issues

The Inspectorate asked the Applicant to provide an update on environmental issues, including the progress of discussions with NE. As noted above, the Applicant advised that the HRA report has been based on the Inspectorate's advice in Advice Note 10 and DMRB guidance, and is being reviewed by NE. Protected species licence applications are being progressed and the Applicant is hoping that Letters of No Impediment will be received from NE before the submission of the application.

The Applicant confirmed that it had been agreeing a modelling approach with the Environment Agency (EA) regarding climate change allowances. The Applicant confirmed that it would be submitting a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with the EA.

The Applicant explained that other environmental investigations were progressing as the design of the proposals developed, including modelling of air quality impacts and noise. A programme of ground investigation works was ongoing as well as historic and existing landfill investigations.

The Applicant confirmed that the proposals have been split into five smaller areas for the purpose of assessment. The Inspectorate asked if any areas of particular sensitivity have led the Applicant to adopting a specific approach to the EIA, and advised that it may not be appropriate to apply a uniform approach to the EIA across such a long linear proposed development. The Applicant confirmed that sensitive areas have been identified and detailed assessments are intended to be carried out where deemed necessary. The Applicant confirmed when asked that their approach to flood risk assessment and the use of climate change allowances would be clearly set out in the Environmental Statement (ES).

The Inspectorate asked if use of the Thames for transportation during construction and the construction of a wharf/ jetty were to form part of the proposals. The Applicant confirmed that this was under consideration but not yet known. The Inspectorate asked



for an update to the status of consultation between the Applicant and the Port Authorities and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO). The Applicant responded by stating that consultation with both parties is on-going.

The Inspectorate inquired whether fish surveys within the Thames has been considered. The Applicant responded by stating recent fish surveys have been undertaken (for Tilbury) and this existing information will be used within the ES instead of completing new fish surveys.

The Applicant advised that it had been engaging with the local traveller community with Thurrock Council. The Applicant asked whether the Inspectorate was aware of any specific challenges relating to representation of traveller communities within the framework of the Examination. The Inspectorate had had queries about whether a local authority officer could or should register on behalf of an individual or representative of a traveller community. The Inspectorate considered that getting assistance with registration seem to be an appropriate intervention.

Future engagement plan

The Applicant said that there is an option to arrange a site visit for the case team at the Inspectorate to see the main view points from the public land in the vicinity of the proposed development. The parties discussed the logistics and practicalities of such a visit to be arranged possibly in January 2020.

Specific decisions

The following actions were agreed:

- The Parties agreed to arrange the next meeting focusing on the draft application documents in the last week of February / first week of March 2020
- Site visit might be more practical in March 2020