



Meeting note

Project	Lower Thames Crossing
File reference	TR010032
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	24 June 2021
Meeting with	Highways England (the Applicant)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project update meeting
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.

Carbon Update

The Applicant outlined some of the measures that will be incorporated to help meet its targets, which included lower carbon concrete, reusing excavated material and vegetation and renewable electricity for construction and operation. The Inspectorate noted various factors which may affect how the scheme's carbon emissions are predicted, such as future advancements in the steel and concrete industries and further electrification of passenger and heavy goods vehicles. The Applicant explained it was using information that was available at the time when preparing its model.

The Applicant stated it understood the relationships to the current High Court challenges on RIS2 and on the National Networks National Policy Statement.

The Inspectorate queried whether the proposed toll charging regime would influence the number of road users and thus the likely carbon emissions. The Applicant briefly outlined that it was proposing to have the same price structure as the Dartford Tunnel whilst residents of Thurrock and Gravesham will be afforded a reduced charge. The Inspectorate noted it would be helpful if charging could be returned to at a future meeting.

The Inspectorate drew the Applicant's attention to the conclusion of the recent challenge on the A38 Derby Junctions scheme and its possible relevance to the ways

in which Highways England assess a scheme's cumulative impacts on carbon emissions.

The Applicant explained that its carbon commitments would be collated in the 'Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments' document that will form part of the application suite. The Inspectorate emphasised the importance of securing commitments through the Development Consent Order (DCO) and advised the Applicant to fully understand how the scheme will meet the policy tests in relation to carbon to reduce any risk of changes to the design after submission.

Wider Network Impacts and DCO Handling

The Applicant explained that large sections of the surrounding road network were currently operating at full capacity and set out how it had been exploring both the beneficial and adverse impacts as a result of implementing the scheme. The Applicant illustrated what it considered were the minor, moderate and major beneficial, and adverse, effects and briefly set out how it was engaging with stakeholders to understand better the challenges in respect of adverse effects identified.

The Applicant noted whilst the withdrawn application included an 'Outline Monitoring Strategy' (OMS) to ensure a traffic impact monitoring scheme is produced, following subsequent engagement with the relevant road authorities, a number of locations had been identified as potentially suitable for intervention in the future. The Applicant set out the initial areas identified for intervention and went on to outline the structure and purpose of its 'Management and Modelling Plan' (MMP), which had superseded the OMS.

Ongoing progression of the MMP was noted with the relevant road authorities and the Department for Transport. This led to discussion on the scheme's objectives in respect of what improvements the local authorities may want the final design to include. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to make local authorities fully aware of the improvements it can't deliver within the scheme, but to provide clarity about other mechanisms available for seeking improvements elsewhere. The Applicant noted a draft of the MMP will be included in the forthcoming consultation document suite.

The Applicant provided a brief overview of the evolution of the scheme from the Proposed Route Announcement to its current design, highlighting that the design taken through its Scoping exercise had included the works to implement the Tilbury Link Road (TLR). Since its removal from the design, Highways England has corporately announced that the TLR had formed part of its Road Investment Strategy 3 pipeline.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Applicant provided an update on engagement with three core stakeholders: the Environment Agency (EA), the Kent Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit and the Port of Tilbury (PoT). The Applicant provided an overview of the key issues that were being progressed with each stakeholder and identified any actions it had arising from engagement.

The Applicant highlighted some the issues that would likely need resolution through Examination, such as proposed Protective Provisions with the EA. The Inspectorate, whilst acknowledging the positive engagement, queried if the Kent AONB Unit would

object in principle to any route entering the AONB. The Applicant explained that the Kent AONB Unit would likely uphold its objection to road widening within the AONB.

The Applicant set out the rate of engagement with each stakeholder via catch-up calls, monthly meetings and SOCG focus workshops with ad hoc technical meetings scheduled when required. The Applicant offered to provide similar updates for other core stakeholders at future meetings. The Inspectorate noted the approach and requested that the issues that were yet to be agreed with the core stakeholders could be explored further in future meetings when there was a focus on risk.

AOB

The Inspectorate stated that it had held a meeting with some of the relevant local authorities and provided an overview of the issues that were raised. Most notably the timescales afforded between the latest consultation and resubmission of the application. The Inspectorate emphasised the importance of clearly setting out where responses to consultation have been regarded and led to any changes.

The Inspectorate queried if the Applicant would be including a 'you said, we did' style document within the forthcoming consultation suite of documents. The Applicant confirmed it would be.

The potential to hold a tripartite meeting with the Applicant and relevant local authorities was discussed.