

Meeting note

Project name	Lower Thames Crossing (LTC)
File reference	TR010032
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	8 July 2021
Meeting with	Highways England (the Applicant)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
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.

Additional consultees

The Applicant sought feedback from the Inspectorate in relation to a document it had produced setting out its approach to potential consultees identified in the Inspectorate's section 51 advice dated 26 November 2020, and consultees identified following the Applicant's review of Ofgem registers. The Inspectorate responded that the section 51 advice was not intended as a prescriptive list and understood the Applicant's explanations for the bodies/organisations discussed.

The Inspectorate had identified Southfleet Parish Council (SPC) as being within the Development Consent Order (DCO) boundary, however the Applicant had not. The Inspectorate advised that this is likely to be due to differing shapefile resolution or filtering criteria used between different types of geographic information system (GIS) as the boundary of SPC was shown as adjacent to the provided application boundary on The Inspectorate's system. The Inspectorate also clarified certain other bodies that it had identified on a precautionary basis.

The Inspectorate queried whether the contents of the document would be included in the Consultation Report. The Applicant confirmed that it would.

Consultation materials

The Applicant presented feedback it had received from local authorities (LA) in respect of its consultation materials ahead of the planned community impacts consultation. Feedback was stated to be generally positive, including that relating to the quality of the material, although it was noted that some authorities had raised the quantity of information that people may be presented with.

The Applicant indicated that some LAs were concerned that there may not be sufficient time to adequately consider consultation responses if the DCO application were intended to be submitted in 2021; however, the Applicant confirmed that the submission timeline would be kept under review and adjusted if required in order to secure a robust DCO application. The Applicant summarised the concerns of a LA in respect of the delay in receipt of printed consultation materials that would arrive one week after the beginning of consultation. The Applicant considered that people would still have a reasonable length of time to respond to the materials.

The Applicant stated that Thurrock Council had queried how the changes in the consultation report corresponded with the information in the '*You said, we did*' (YSWD) document. The Applicant had clarified with Thurrock that the consultation report presented the most significant changes, whereas the YSWD document was intended to present a more holistic and detailed picture of changes made. The Applicant confirmed that the YSWD document presented changes made following the statutory consultation, supplementary, design refinement consultations as well as ongoing design refinement, and also incorporated matters raised following consultations that had not led to changes. The Inspectorate reiterated the importance of a clear feedback loop.

The Applicant presented an example of one of its ward summaries, stating that Havering in particular had found them to be useful. Several recommendations had been made by Thurrock Council, such as the suggestion to present all impacts within a ward; however, the Applicant clarified that it had needed to be mindful of presenting information in a clear way. The Applicant also demonstrated its interactive GIS map tool and also that it would be providing updated flythroughs for both construction and operation phases as well as photo visualisations of key viewpoints.

The Inspectorate queried whether reading a summary document of ward-level impacts would enable people to adequately respond to the consultation. The Applicant considered that the summary document, along with the more detailed material, would enable people to provide a more granular response if desired.

The Inspectorate queried how the consultation material presented the DCO application submission timeline. The Applicant stated that the consultation material would be clear that the DCO application submission would be targeted for 2021.

Stakeholder engagement

The Applicant provided an update in respect of its engagement with Kent County Council (KCC). Key themes under discussion included wider network impacts, construction and traffic, maintenance, impacts on Shorne Woods, air quality, biodiversity, cultural heritage, and climate. The Applicant indicated that there were some matters under discussion in respect of aspects of the transport modelling such as the provision of local connections, and KCC had indicated that it wanted additional information regarding who was responsible for maintaining various assets. The Applicant explained how it was working to resolve or agree most matters.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant was dealing with wider LA issues such as local plan housing allocations and traffic modelling within the scope of the LTC project alone, or whether they were also being escalated to strategic level. The Applicant responded that it was engaging with other Highways England projects and teams about these issues, and that Highways England was directly engaging with the Department for

Transport. The Applicant was confident that its traffic modelling scenarios were appropriate, however it confirmed that it had offered to prepare an alternative scenario for Gravesham and Medway to assist with their local plan work; these would not form part of the DCO application.