



## Meeting note

<b>Project name</b>	Lower Thames Crossing (LTC)
<b>File reference</b>	TR010032
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	The Planning Inspectorate
<b>Date</b>	10 August 2021
<b>Meeting with</b>	Highways England (the Applicant)
<b>Venue</b>	Microsoft Teams
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Project update
<b>Circulation</b>	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.

### Update since previous meeting

The Applicant noted that it was considering a request from some local authorities for further time to allow them to complete internal governance processes for concluding their final responses to the Consultation.

The Applicant explained its approach to 'risk' within the project and how this was directing the Applicant in sharing and engaging on information. The approach to risk was assisting the Applicant in identifying strategic issues that it wanted to engage further on before submission.

The Applicant outlined that it was building a programme and sequencing of information sharing, but highlighted that not all information could be shared or views sought on it in advance of submission due to the timings involved. The Applicant was working on ensuring a degree of clarity for stakeholders about which documents in the application suite were likely to change since the first acceptance process and would seek to provide an indication of the magnitude of those changes.

The discussion noted recent developments including the judgement on National Highways' A303 Stonehenge project, the Transport De-carbonisation Plan, the review of the Energy National Policy Statements Suite, and the ministerial statement on the National Networks National Policy Statement.

The Inspectorate highlighted a potential risk of baseline data changes in local plans, if used for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), in relation to assumed growth

captured by traffic modelling and assumptions. The Applicant advised that developments identified in local plans would need to be of reasonable maturity (at consenting stage) for them to be captured in traffic modelling. However, projects at earlier stages of maturity could still be considered in a cumulative impact assessment, which would have a different set of criteria for inclusion in comparison to the traffic modelling. It would also consider how to describe interactions with other projects seeking Development Consent within the application documents.

The Inspectorate queried the sensitivity of the traffic model to potentially forthcoming changes in criteria, and any subsequent effects of this risk. The Applicant explained that there were a number of different matters to be considered in the context of traffic modelling methodology. It highlighted the standardised mechanisms for road scheme assessments, which focused on capacity of the network and scheme, and traffic impacts. It was aware of the need to clearly explain the capacity and probability assumptions made within the traffic modelling work and to identify as far as possible the sensitivity of the modelling to changes, particularly considering the scale and geographical extent of the project. The Inspectorate advised of a potential risk due to the area of coverage and number of LPAs involved. This increased the probability of baseline data changes, and the importance of clearly setting out the assumptions (and any sensitivities) on which assessments are based. It also highlighted the potential of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) being designated within the order limits.

The Inspectorate queried the difference of opinion on air quality assessment methodology between the Applicant and Natural England (NE). The Applicant confirmed full technical information was being prepared to inform discussions with NE.

### **Traffic Modelling Update**

The Applicant outlined that it was intending on releasing Traffic Cordon Model information to respective local authorities, and that they were/had been advised of the likely release date.