



Meeting note

Project name	Lower Thames Crossing
File reference	TR010032
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	31 March 2022
Meeting with	National Highways
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.

Programme Update

National Highways (the 'Applicant') reminded the Inspectorate of the date for consultation activity being 12 May 2022 with the consultation period planned to run for a period of five and a half weeks.

What has happened since we last met?

The Applicant noted a debate in the House of Commons on 24 March whereby a number of local Members of Parliament (MPs) expressed views on the Proposed Development.

The discussion noted London Resort Company Holding's decision to withdraw the London Resort application for Development Consent. The Applicant will consider any implications for its application documentation.

Development of the Project's transport model (LTAM)

The Lower Thames Area Model (LTAM) was built using SATURN software; an industry recognised strategic modelling platform used for highway models. The Applicant explained that full technical details of model development will be laid out in the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report (ComMA) and a non-technical summary will be provided in the Non-Technical Traffic Forecasts Model.

The Applicant has do-nothing and do-minimum scenarios for 2030, 2037, 2045 and 2051. Growth is capped in line with DfT traffic forecasts, however local growth is adjusted in local authority areas close to the Project (by data gathered by the LPAs), to explicitly add detail of sites where they are under construction, have a planning application or permission. The Applicant explained that other road schemes (that would proceed whether the Project happens or not) are also included in the modelling, however, the core model does not account for freeport-related growth.

The Applicant explained how the transport model outputs inform teams working on the design, environmental and other aspects of the Project. The Applicant also reflected on discussions with the LPAs.

There was a discussion on the model validation process, and the potential implications of the pandemic on altering future demand and journey patterns.

Use of the traffic data to assess air quality impacts

The Applicant provided an overview of the use of traffic data to assess air quality impacts.

The Inspectorate asked for an update on discussions with Natural England regarding the assessment methodology in relation to air quality impacts on ecological receptors. The Applicant noted this request and explained that an update would follow on this matter at a later date.

Use of the traffic data to assess noise impacts

The Applicant provided an overview of the use of traffic data to assess noise impacts.

LTAM: Construction modelling

Construction modelling uses the do-minimum 2030 model as its basis. The Applicant explained that the Proposed Development is divided into 11 construction modelling phases.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to think about how the different phases of construction would be articulated in the Development Consent Order and how the distinction would be made between transport modelling construction phases and construction phases of the Project.

River usage assumptions

The Applicant explained that river usage was not well understood in the first application, and that the Inspectorate and stakeholders had commented on the need for additional clarity on the Project's proposals around river usage.

The Applicant clarified that its proposals had assumed use of the river alongside road to transport the construction materials, and that this was assessed in the traffic and environmental assessments. The Applicant explained that this narrative would be highlighted

in the re-submitted application, clearly setting out the Applicant's proposals and assumptions around use of the river to transport construction material.

The Applicant provided background information to river usage. The Applicant explained that parts of the Proposed Development are close to the river Thames, and that other parts are relatively difficult to access from the river due to the Project's linear nature. The Project only has a narrow river frontage so there is limited access. The Applicant explained that most of the excavated materials would be kept on site, minimising the need to transport materials off-site. The Applicant added that the greatest opportunity for river usage in its view would be around the import of construction materials.

The Applicant explained current river constraints. The Applicant noted that two existing river jetties on the north bank of river Thames are fully utilised and have no spare capacity. In addition, Thames Estuary, Marshes Ramsar Site and Milton Rifle Range constrain the use of the river to supply construction south of the river.

The Applicant explained current road constraints. The Applicant noted that existing road capacity issues (A1089/ASDA roundabout) limit the potential to deliver significant quantities of material from the Port of Tilbury to construction sites north of Tilbury Loop railway line.

The Applicant explained that the North Portal construction area is close to the Port of Tilbury and the recently built Construction Materials Aggregate Terminal has a road connection to the port. The Applicant explained that this is therefore well suited to sourcing construction materials delivered by river to the Port of Tilbury.

Port and river usage commitment

The Applicant is seeking to make proposals around river usage more transparent in the application documentation including a commitment designed with the intention of minimising the number and length of construction-related transport movements by road; and minimising the potential social and environmental impacts arising from construction-related import of materials associated with the Project.

The Applicant explained that the commitment would be contained in the outline Materials Handling Plan which would be secured by a Requirement in the DCO that related to the Environmental Management Plan.

There was a discussion on the re-use and transport of excavated material and the approach to setting out river transport assumptions within the Environmental Statement.

River usage in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Applicant explained that baseline conditions already include the use of the river by vessels associated with the operation of the Port of Tilbury.

The Applicant explained that any vessel movement required by the construction of the Proposed Development would be within the current operating regime of the Port of Tilbury and are therefore intended to be scoped out of the EIA. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to provide sufficient information within the Environmental Statement (ES) in relation

to this, to capture any other environmental effects associated with river use, aside from those on navigation, and provide reasoning as to why significant effects could be discounted.

The Applicant explained that if it does not include a detailed assessment of vessel movements within the ES, the ES will reflect its reasoning (in line with its preliminary view) that there would be no significant effects. This would be due to the low number of vessels involved, and in regard to carbon emissions, the use of road rather than shipping is likely to be the worst-case scenario.

