

Meeting note

Project name	Lower Thames Crossing
File reference	TR010032
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	2 December 2021
Meeting with	National Highways
Venue	Microsoft Teams
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.

What has happened since we last met

The Applicant explained the continued engagement with Port of Tilbury and Thurrock Council around the Tilbury Freeport proposals. Brief mention was made of the potential construction programmes for each development as well as to any indicative programme for delivery of the proposed Tilbury Link Road under Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3).

The Applicant provided an update on work it is progressing to explore the relationships between Lower Thames Crossing and other large/developments of national significance within the surrounding area. The Applicant is looking to articulate how it would seek to manage any inter-relationships arising in a bespoke document. The Inspectorate considered this could be a useful document and asked whether (and how) it would be connected to other documents such as, for example, Statements of Common Ground. The Applicant confirmed it intended to share the document with the respective project teams of any projects identified in the document.

Programme update

The Applicant is reviewing responses from the recent Community Impact Consultation and preparing for the next steps which it anticipates would include a further round of consultation in 2022. The Applicant is engaging and consulting with landowners over a range of minor modifications arising from the Community Impacts Consultation.

The Inspectorate questioned whether the Applicant would return to the community with revised figures on air quality. The Applicant noted that ammonia emissions are to be considered carefully.

Before the close of the year, the Applicant provided a brief update on some elements of the scheme that would likely form future agenda items going into 2022.

Thames Freeport

The Applicant provided background regarding the land requirement overlap between Lower Thames Crossing and the Thames Freeport proposals. The Applicant reported that there is an established indicative solution which LTC and the Port of Tilbury are working through in consultation with Thurrock Council and other stakeholders which focuses on the construction phase, sequencing of works and use of land for the Freeport.

The physical design of the scheme is also evolving, including modified design of flood protection works around the north portal to enable more tunnel excavation materials to be kept on site. Ongoing discussions with the Port and Thurrock Council are underway. The Inspectorate questioned whether the location of spoil remained an important challenge. The Applicant noted that modifications had meant that identifying locations for spoil was not as significant as it was, however, the challenge is that the spoil would need to be stockpiled temporarily until its intended location becomes available.

Revised mitigation proposals are to be shared with Natural England and Historic England.

Views of local authorities on engagement

The Applicant has restructured how issues are identified, triaged, and documented and shared with Local Authorities. The Applicant is working with Local Authorities on documents and information to be shared prior to submission.

The Inspectorate noted that matters that have not yet been agreed should be included in the Statements of Common Ground.

Traffic modelling of other projects (London Resort and Thames Freeport)

The Applicant noted guidance on WebTAG – the Department of Transport’s guidance on how to assess the impacts of transport proposals/projects. There remain challenges from multiple Local Authorities around concerns of impact on the local road network and applicability of mitigation measures. There is a contention as to whether the core model should be addressing a more growth focused set of proposals. The Applicant will be conducting ‘offline’ sensitivity testing as information becomes available in regard to capacity of road network.

Air quality impacts of nitrogen on ecological sites

There are ongoing discussions between the Applicant and Natural England in respect of the mitigation strategy and how to present the information in the application. After receiving comments from Natural England, National Highways agreed to include an ammonia component in the calculation of nitrogen emissions, although the methodology to undertake the modelling needs to be discussed. A more comprehensive discussion on this topic is proposed for early January 2022 with the Inspectorate.