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To: All Interested Parties

Our Ref: TR010034

Date: 24 March 2022

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Dear Sir / Madam

## **The Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 – Rules 13(4) and 14**

### **Application by National Highways (formerly Highways England) for an Order Granting Development Consent for the A57 Link Roads**

I write to advise you of procedural decisions made by the Examining Authority (ExA) about the place and arrangements for the hearings scheduled for 5 to 7 April 2022, that were notified in my letter of 2 March 2022:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/document/TR010034-001113>

That letter said that the hearings would be held at a physical venue and that parties would be able to attend in person at the physical venue, or by using Microsoft Teams, or by telephone.

Parties wishing to make an oral submission were required to pre-register for the hearings by Wednesday 23 March 2022. They were asked to set out whether they preferred to attend using Microsoft Teams, by telephone, or in person at the physical venue. People wanting to attend in person at the physical venue were asked to set out any reasons why they couldn't attend using Microsoft Teams and / or by telephone.

The letter noted that the COVID-19 situation could change before the hearings are held and that if public health concerns resulted in the ExA deciding not to hold the hearings at the physical venue, then it would only hold the hearings using Microsoft Teams and by telephone. It said that reasonable notice would be provided to Interested Parties if the ExA decided that any of the hearings were no longer required, or if they would not be held at the physical venue.

### **The ExA has now reviewed the requests to make an oral submission and the COVID-19 situation.**

Apart from the Applicant, 11 different parties pre-registered for the hearings. Of those, seven parties wished to attend using Microsoft Teams or by telephone, two wished to attend in person at the physical venue, and two did not express a preference. Neither of the two parties wanting to attend in person at the physical

venue gave any reason why they couldn't attend using Microsoft Teams or by telephone.

The number of cases of COVID-19 has increased markedly since 2 March 2022.

Although, in principle, the ExA would prefer to hold the hearings in person at the physical venue it notes that very few parties have confirmed that they wish to take that option and that all parties appear to be able to attend using Microsoft Teams or by telephone. Given the low attendance in person at the physical venue, there may be times when the ExA and the Applicant would be the only parties in attendance in person, which the ExA feels would not be appropriate.

The ExA is concerned about the potential for COVID-19 to be transmitted at the hearings.

**Based on the above, and having considered fairness and public health, the ExA has decided that that the hearings scheduled for 5 to 7 April 2022, as notified in my letter of 2 March 2022, will only be held using Microsoft Teams, with attendance also being possible by telephone. The ExA has decided that these hearings will not be held at a physical venue and that therefore it will not be possible to attend the hearings in person at a physical venue.**

Otherwise, the hearings scheduled for 5 to 7 April 2022 will be as notified in my letter of 2 March 2022. You will still be able to access a public livestream on the National Infrastructure Planning website if you wish to observe the hearings. A recording of each hearing will still be published on that website as soon as is practicable. The National Infrastructure Planning website can be found at the following link:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/north-west/a57-link-roads-previously-known-as-trans-pennine-upgrade-programme>

The agendas for the hearings will be published to the National Infrastructure Planning website on **Monday, 28 March 2022**. The agendas will provide more detail on the matters to be covered at hearing and will set out which parties will be invited to make an oral submission.

Please contact the Case Team using the contact details at the top of this letter if you have any questions about this letter or require any assistance in attending or observing the hearings.

In the meantime, we look forward to continuing to work with all parties on the examination of this application.

Yours faithfully

*Stuart Cowperthwaite*

**Stuart Cowperthwaite, Lead Member of the Examining Authority**

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