

TRANSCRIPT_OFH2_SESSION1_A47A11THICKTHORN_01032022

00:05

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing. Can I confirm with the inspectorates case team that the participants can see and hear me please? Yes can see and hear you fine. Thanks, Matthew. Thank you. Excellent. Thank you. Can I also confirm with the case team that the live streaming, the recording of the event have started. The recording of the event has started and the live stream is running. That's great. Thank you very much. Okay, it's just gone 10 o'clock, and I would like to welcome you all to this open floor hearing relating to the examination for the A 47 a 11 thick Thorn junction improvement scheme. My name is Matthew Shrigley. I am a chartered town planner and an inspector employed by the planning Inspectorate. I'm also the appointed examining authority for the examination. You may have already heard from the case manager Louise Haraway. For this project. The other members of the case team assisting with the hearing in the background our I believe Harpriya Kaur and Atilla Borsos. If you have any questions or queries during the course of the examination or hearing itself, the case team should be your first point of contact. And their contact details can be found at the top of any letter you've received from us or on the project page of the national infrastructure website. Should you need that?

01:52

Before I can consider the items on the broader agenda to this hearing. There are a few additional housekeeping matters for me to deal with, in accordance with those raised in the arrangements conference. As far as I'm aware, there have been no requests made for any special measures or arrangements to enable participation in the hearing today. Before I go any further Can I just double check with the inspectorates case team? That is correct. Yes, that is correct. Thank you very much. This event is being both live streamed and recorded. The digital recordings we make are retained and publish they form a public record that can contain personal information to which the general data protection regulations apply. The inspectorates practice is to retain and publish the recordings for a period of five years from the Secretary of State's decision on the development consent order. Consequently, if you participate in today's hearing, it is important that you understand that you will be recorded and therefore you consent to the retention and publication of the digital recording. The planning Inspectorate will only ever ask for information to be placed on the public record that is important and relevant to the planning decision. It will only be in the rarest of circumstances that we might ask you to provide personal information. Therefore, to avoid the need to add in the digital recordings, I asked that you try your best not to add any information to the public record that you would wish to be kept private or confidential. Finally, I repeat the requests made in the arrangements conference. So in order to minimise background noise. Can you make sure your mobile phones and other electrical devices are switched off and that you stay muted unless you are actually speaking? You may also see me use the mute function whilst we're recording during certain times people are invited to speak in order to minimise background noise. If you do need to raise something during the hearing,

please use the hand raise function on Ms teams or signal to me to speak at the appropriate time. And I will look to invite you in. Can I also remind parties that the chat function on teams will not be enabled or in use. Therefore please don't try to use that avenue for questions or comments as it won't be responded to. This is a virtual event and because of that you may see From time to time looking at my notes, I also have another screen to my right in front of me. With that in mind, I can assure all parties that even if I'm not looking at the screen, I will be listening to the proceedings at all times.

05:24

I'm also aware that the housekeeping points and going through can be a little bit repetitive for those involved in other infrastructure hearings. But please bear with me as these necessary announcements to make everyone aware of the purpose of the open floor hearing today is to allow relevant parties who have made requests to speak the opportunity to put forward their views on the application or really, the application follows the requests of some interested parties to do that. It is an opportunity for me to hear in person your comments on the application. And as you present your views, and may ask questions. But only if I need to. Please don't take the absence of any questions as an indication that your views don't count, it just simply may be the case that I have no questions to ask. Because there are only a small number of participants wishing to speak, I've not sought to allocate any specific timings. But I am aware there are requests in relation to appointments, so I'll come on to that shortly. But I would request that the contributions for those people speaking are made on the basis that they are to the point and as focused as possible avoiding repetition are reading directly from other examination documents, which can be taken as read, if I can consider if I do consider rather, the points you are raising are being repeated or issues are being introduced that are inappropriate to hear during the hearing, I do reserve the right to bring well to ask you to bring your contributions to a close. A digital transcript is also being taken of the hearing proceedings. And that will be placed on the National Infrastructure website. As soon as practicable following the close of the hearing alongside the digital recording.

07:57

It will be beneficial to the public record. If each time you speak you could state your name and if you were representing someone the name of the organisation, or person you represent. Please also bear in mind that the only official record of today's proceedings is the transcript. And the digital recording tweets, blogs and other similar communications arising out of this hearing will not be accepted as evidence in the examination. Okay, before I move to the relevant parties who wish to speak, are there any questions or comments on the management or conduct of the hearing at this point, just throwing it out there. No one has is raising anything so I'll take that as a no and move on.

09:03

In terms of the running time, I'm optimistic we can complete the hearing without the need for an adjournment. If that turns out to be unrealistic. I will intervene later on but we'll see how we go on as we move forward. If anybody does need a break, feel free to request that also. Okay, turning to the parties who wish to be heard. I've been provided a list of the names of the parties seeking to speak. So what I would like to do is dealing with the registered interested parties first when I read out your name could you please turn on your camera your microphone and introduce yourself confirming your name who you represent. And if you still want to speak alongside an indication of the broad term Heartbeat or topic areas you wish to raise. I have the name of Mr. Richard Hawker. I believe you may be speaking in

relation to the applicants case made for the scheme. Mr. Hawk, could you introduce yourself and please confirm if you still intend to speak and if those details are correct, as well as confirming the nature of the broad topic areas you intend to raise?

10:35

So, good morning. Morning. First of all, can I apologise for my late arrival of the of this hearing, it's entirely my fault for picking on the wrong email. But the My name is Richard Hawker. And I'm representing the Winston Valley Alliance. The topics I would like to raise are to do with carbon emissions in particular cumulative assessment of them the items on traffic, traffic modelling and accidents and also to do with back surveys.

11:23

Okay, thank you, Mr. Hawker, very much. I also have the name of a person who is not a registered interested party within the examination. But I believe is still wanting to speak the name of the person I have with me as Mr. Ian James. Before I asked you to speak, Mr. James, just as background, I just wish to acknowledge that well for all parties present today and also within the examination, that you have made a request to the examination authority to become an interested party under Section 102 A of the Planning Act 2008. As a procedural matter, in the examination, I wish to inform all parties that the request has been declined as the relevant trigger as listed under 102 B is not accepted as being met. Now, I won't go into more details about that provision. But the procedural decision of forming Mr. James's status, I believe has already been communicated to him. And also it will be available on the project page of the national infrastructure website as soon as practicable. Nonetheless, having said all of that, I am aware that you may wish to raise comments on the access provision associated from station Lane onto the A 11. Based on an additional submission made earlier in the examination period. I am minded under the hearing procedural rules to allow you to make contributions on that basis. Having explained that context, Mr. James, could you also now introduce yourself and confirm to me if you still intend to speak and also confirm the topic areas or topics you intend to raise?

13:46

Matthew Good morning, Ian James on the director of a local business tops town limited yet five minutes please if I can on that specific issue about the sideways strategy and your comments about registered interests or absolutely understood and noted no problems at all.

14:00

Thank you very much. Mr. James, I know you've just gone off the screen but I've been made aware that you may not be available from 11am onwards so on on that basis. What I would like to do is to seek to get you to make your contributions first. You did indicate about five or 10 minutes just now so I would like to go with that order. For that reason. For the avoidance of any doubt, I will allow the applicants team the opportunity to speak following the hearing of following hearing all relevant interested parties and the persons registered to speak if they desire to do so. I have the opportunity to do that will be at the end of the proceedings towards the close of the hearing agenda. I'm also aware that Norfolk County Council are attending today but have not sought to speak. Before I move on, could I just double check and confirm that I have the names of everyone who wishes to speak at today's hearing?

15:30

I'm seeing no further hands raised or anybody signalling to me otherwise. So I'll assume there is nobody else to speak and I'll move on.

15:50

Okay, thank you. Could I now turn to the first registered party to speak then please? That's Mr. Ian James. For the benefit of the recording. Could I remind you again, please to confirm your name on behalf of who you wish to speak, and then raise the points you wish to make. Mr. James, the floor is yours.

16:15

Matthew, thank you. Good morning. Yeah, Ian James, the director of tots town limited. We have a children's play venue, near heavysset. We're talking about one very small specific issue about the side road statue. The first project as we're saying, overall, we are big supporters product is absolutely what the region needs. My concern is regarding the vehicles exiting the 11 northbound Auto Station road heading towards heavysset and the safety risks associated with the changes. We opened our business in 2015. And from day one, there's a constant talking point by our customers of the challenges exiting the 11th into our road during the fast drive it is effectively a little more than a T junction. And he got vehicles going from 70 miles an hour having to stay under 30 miles an hour to safely exit the road. We regulate customers telling us how it's it's fast, it's a bit dicey and some people do drive past the turning so they don't feel they can turn off safely. My concern is that while the scheme is great, reducing the congestion only 11 effectively increases the average speed of traffic. So it keeps it much more closer to 70 rather than the slower speed to get with rush hour. I want to say is this is a change to the side road strategy for that particular Tony we need to make the scheme we have engaged with highways England as it was at the time and I'm very grateful for the support they've given us. For highways England view was a conducted traffic survey which showed there was very little traffic going on. They said there's been no accidents recorded. They recognised there was the cyber especially but that wasn't focused on our road, understandably. And there were options considered for entering our business part an option five included a new a brand new access road. And the outcome of those discussions was an acceleration lane for cars joining the A 11. Rather than leaving the 11. My concern all those things is if we stop the traffic survey, it was conducted in July 2020, still doing kind of part one of the lockdown, my business was still closed, I used to drive onto the site weekly for insurance checks, and the place was deserted. My business park is mostly offices, and there was just no one there. So I think the traffic survey showed about 35 ish vehicle movements a day. My business alone generates 45 to 60 vehicle movements a day, throughout the whole day. So whilst I recognise the intent by the traffic survey, I don't believe the data is in any way reliable. I'm aware that the latest plans show signage for drivers choose the right lane occurring at my junction. Again, appreciate that. But I know we all know that satnavs and people's local knowledge means people will be changing lanes earlier. And my concern is you've got a vote which is now going to average the speed increase. People are changing lanes. They're not focusing or thinking about cars which are turning off on the 11th. In terms of accident data, I recognise there's been no accidents. But I know there's lots of little near misses because my customers tell me regularly every day. And I think we should be looking at roads to avoid the accidents. Rather than waiting for the accident to happen to prove that there's a need for them to change. And in terms of the acceleration Lane onto the 11, which has been in latest bands. I appreciate the wheel behind it. But

actually I think there's an unnecessary spend of taxpayers money. I use that turning every day I'd quite happily sit there for 45 minutes and wait for a good gap in the traffic than chance my luck on a very short acceleration lane on a busy road. In terms of my request to you, Matthew as a couple of things. Firstly, let's just recognise the traffic survey. Yet it's a quiet side road for the traffic survey data from July 2020. I think is unreliable because of the COVID pandemic situation. So if we could put that to one side. Secondly, I asked you to review that acceleration lane. Is it actually a good spend of taxpayers money? And secondly, or 30 years? Can we look at the traffic and leaving the 11? On to station nine? I do have real fears that just saying living effectively as it is, is increasing the risk of people. So please, would you consider a proper exit slash deceleration lane for cars leaving the 11? If not, would you please review the cyber strategy? I think option five talks about a completely separate service road. And finally, if none of those options I recognised as a value for money, please consider the speed limit. Is there a way we can reduce the speed in it as they approach that junction? And that is it. All yours? Any questions, please? I can't he think we'll meet.

20:59

Thank you, Mr. James. Yes, I hear your views. I don't have any further questions in relation to that those points. I have heard those elements. But I don't have any actual questions. So what I'd now like to do is deal with the second person who wants to speak for me. I would like to invite Mr. Hawker to make your contributions. Please Mr. Hawker, if you if you there.

21:40

Thank you very much. So my name is Richard Hawker. I'm representing the Wensum Valley Alliance. I'll go straight into my queries. The major one is regarding carbon emissions. I'm speaking, because my colleague who's an expert on this as unfortunately unable to join the meeting, but this is Andrew Boswell who, from the the climate change. And his own company, which is a specialist company regarding climate change and carbon emissions. I feel that the the assessment of carbon emissions, particularly the cumulative assessment has hasn't been adequately addressed, both in this the scheme and the associated 47 schemes. In fact, this is a major problem in that all three schemes should really, I believe, have been assessed for cumulative carbon emissions, and they haven't been adequately done. So. So far. I don't know if the use aware of a letter that's been sent from the Department for Transport from the regarding requests from the Secretary of State in terms of cumulative assessment of climate impacts, regarding a similar application for junctions on the A 38 in Darby. I mean, I have you I have it in front of me, and I'd be happy to deposit this.

23:30

I am aware of that. Mr. Hawker. Yeah, I do acknowledge that that is the case.

23:38

Clearly that that is a very similar scheme. And it seems logical that the similar request and regarding climate change should be put forward for this scheme, and the other 247 schemes being examined at the same time. In addition, no doubt, you'll be aware that the International Panel for Climate change has recently issued a press release. Again, I can put that in the library with your permission. I read from a table very briefly, summary for policy makers of the IPCC working group to report climate change 2022. By buy this is by 195 Number governments, obviously, including us saying that urgent action is

required to deal with increasing risks. And I won't bore you with it. It's quite a long press release, but the input is of course, that unless we take action now on reducing in all respects, carbon emissions wherever we can, then the action loop is very bleak. And the government has mentioned this many, many times. And I feel this really is a crucial issue that that this scheme should address as well. There's no doubt that carbon emissions will increase from this. And that should be borne in mind in its assessment. And as I say, I can put that information on the to I'm not I know that Mr. Boswell has written back in October, regarding quite detailed assessment of what is needed on carbon cumulative carbon assessments. But I'm not sure that that has been addressed adequately. Can I move on to the topic of that? Note? Yes, we do. Yep. I noticed that. Rep. Seven, dash nine, which is on almost on the recent deadlines submission. There is a that survey report. This is dated December 2017. And I don't really understand why that is only now submitted at deadline seven, which is 2020 to one of the recommendations. But the from that bat survey is that if the planning application is to be submitted after December 2019, then the surveys need to be re revisited. Before decision, presumably before a decision was was made on this because obviously, things might change. And it is for over four years since that survey was as the report was issued, and clearly isn't nearly about five years since the data was extracted. So I draw your attention to that. So that I feel that that is something that really must be addressed before any decision is made on the road. Can I move to two traffic points on traffic? She's a I know. It's been a major point of correspondence between myself and the applicant. But again, in their response, most recent response, applicant is stated that they don't feel it necessary to deem it unnecessary to supply the the base data of traffic movements that are requested. I find this very disappointing and disturbing in fact, because in concert consistently deciding not to reveal things, I do not see how an independent assessment or examination of the justification for a lot of the scheme's details can be can be performed. I just don't feel this is in the spirit of cold examination process.

28:40

And again, I asked Can Can those figures be be made available so that the proper assessment, admittedly by a layman like myself can be looked at what a common sense basis if you like rather than the complicated algorithms that traffic modelling computer systems use?

29:00

If I could just clarify, Mr. Hawker. Are you referring to actual turning information?

29:10

I certainly am. Yes, yeah. And also, traffic counts. And it's not clear from the responses as to whether the details given and the traffic modelling is based is reporting actual count figures or predicted count figures based on selection of actual accounts. So are we talking about a survey results? Or are we talking about some details being put into a computer model and then churning back out? figures on which decisions are made regarding adequacy of roundabouts and so forth? We have little information on that.

30:04

In particular, I asked the question of the park and ride area of the park and ride system, which is to be expanded. And I asked why a specific slip road was not too considered to go from the 11th. North into this pocket ride scheme, because this would seem an ideal way to take off, didn't take pressure from

the roundabout, which, as I understand it is that the main driver behind this whole scheme, the roundabout is so stressed at present. Now, the figures have been given us the three engine 29 vehicles currently go to the park and ride, but it's been going to be expanded. So surely we expect that to increase. And although I can't find actual numbers on the 11 northbound hitting the roundabout, I assume it's around about 3000. Within this period, I think it's the peak period. That's is stated by the applicant to be an insignificant number, but really to it is over 10% I think in terms of taking pressure off the roundabout, that will be a very sensible move. And I encourage that to be looked at again. Another move to accidents obviously, associated with traffic. And in in particular I made mention of the the connection from county road to the A 47. And the A 47 Slip going to the A 11 south the need to close this has been one of the reasons one of the drivers for eliminating the existing footbridge and building a new one further, further east. And I appreciate that. This, they the requirements and the design, details of such junctions might have changed. And I did ask that specific question. I wasn't really given a specific answer. I assume that it's that on the basis of that it's a dangerous, considered now dangerous arrangement, then it should be altered. But looking at the accident statistics. I can see one accident in 2016. Noted I don't know whether it's serious or fatal award at the slip between the a 11. So a 47 and a 11. This isn't in table 4.15. That's not on this actual arrangement from kentley. Lane. This is this is on the at least shown on that the major snippet made maybe to do with a turn off into into station road. We don't know. Sorry, can't be late. So in my opinion, it's it's not proven that this particular arrangement has proved dangerous in the past. So in other words, why can it be not continued and the need for the new bridge voided? Also looking at the whole statistics of accidents for the area. I I'm a little bit confused because table 4.16 says the expected savings on serious accidents would be I think it's 2026 it goes from 2300 over 60 years if we do nothing do minimum to 2279 if something is done at the scheme. Now look again looking at the the table. There have been as I understand it open to correction. There have been 11 serious accidents in the area in four years. Now, pro rata the next 60 years one could expect maybe 15 times that many about 165 Maybe 200. I don't understand where the prediction of a roundabout 2300 Just come from. I think that concludes the points I'd like to make, sir.

35:10

Thank you, Mr. Hawker. If I could just clarify one element of what you were discussing just now. You were raising the issues in relation to the bridge, the footbridge being proposed and you are also raising accident safety issues in relation to the highway itself. Can I just double check whether you are distinguishing between those two sets of accident records with what you're saying?

35:43

What I'm saying is that one of the reasons why the bridge was proposed to be moved is that the and in fact, the new road is needed over the AE 11. To join to the B 11 772 is simply to allow access from the properties on Cantlie lane to actually get to the to the roundabout effectively. At the moment they can use to access it quite easily via a slip road, a slip road onto the slip road. That's deemed apparently not acceptable any longer. And as a result of that, this large overpass has been designed to go over the a level. Not only that, this the as a result of the the underpass. The footbridge has had to be moved. But perhaps that's that's not definitely a required lane. Perhaps the movement of the bridge is made necessary by other things. But I believe that the alteration of the slip road from the A 47 West to the 11 South means that a wider area is needed on the carriageway. And that's not provided by the existing footbridge. So it's one of the several reasons why the footbridge is proposed to be moved.

37:25

Okay, thank you. I think I understand the points in relation to the highway safety aspects then so you're detailing not just the footbridge, you're detailing the actual overpass structure as well the rationale for that.

37:46

That's right. My collection. Yes. My question over this was basically that this arrangement has worked very well to allow access from the properties on on county lane to get onto the roundabout with no problem at all. So why is there any need to alter that? That system and build yes and build this road? Right over the 11th to get to a headset that seems totally unnecessary. And I think that has this arraignment rearrangement has had the effect of being one reason why footbridge is proposed to be moved not the only one. But one reason I my point about the act, but the arrangement of the slip road is I asked the question, what were the criteria that changed on the design that made this necessary? The applicant didn't give me detail of that. So I must assume that it's deemed to be dangerous. And the results of actual accidents is shows that it actually hasn't been a dangerous area. My second point separately, this is separate point about accidents in general. That I don't understand figures that have been given. And the prediction of accidents in this whole area in the future. is two separate points. I'm sorry, I may have confused those. Four. No,

39:36

it's quite all right. Thank you for clarifying that. I don't have any further questions. Mr. Hawker. Is there anything else you wish to raise?

39:50

I don't think so. At this stage. Thank you very much.

39:54

Okay, thank you very much. You I will accept written summaries of the oral submissions made today, if the parties who have spoken wish to submit those. That brings me to the points on the agenda, is there any other any other points? Anyone else wishes to raise before I look to close the hearing?

40:37

So, the applicant Good morning. Yes. Good morning, sir. Would you like me very briefly to respond, sir. But as you've indicated, what we will do is probably wait for written summaries of particular Mr. hawkers responses and respond to him. I'm in writing again, on the points which is raised, we did take a good note of what he's said. A lot of it repeats issues that we've dealt with in responses to written reps already. So but, um, to the extent there are new issues there, we'll go to them. And we'll respond to them in due course, and I'm sure some of these issues will be raised in any event at the environmental matters. I sh later on this week. So if I turn first to Mr. James, I'm very grateful for the comments that he's made and for his attendance, and I've noted everything that you've said about his locus in these hearings, the the issues he raised were addressed, or in rep five, zero to zero, which was the applicants response to second written questions. And it was question TT 2.6. And equally, the county council agreed with the applicants approach, and the applicant commented on that in rep six, zero to

one. Having said that, we have obviously heard what Mr. Jones said today, so we will have a look still at what we can do. And if there is anything else that we can add, but the sideways strategy, so just to make clear, is fairly fixed. But there is anything that can be done, then the Applicant will consider that and bring that forward and response in due course. Turning to Mr. Hawker, and his submissions, again, I'm grateful for them. Carbon emissions have been addressed in each of his five written representations, and the applicant considers that it's responded to them. The applicant, of course, is aware of the secretary state's letter and respect to the a 38 scheme. The Applicant expected that was probably again, a matter that you will raise sir, and we will deal with that when when you raise it, it won't surprise you said that the applicant is preparing a general response on the issues raised in that letter. As to bats, the reason for submitting the bat survey by may deal with that very briefly is set out in the response to question bio 2.8. In rep 7007, it was submitted in order to outline the approach to assessing bats. So it was for the examinations information. The respect to traffic data, again, the app can rely on its responses to rep five, zero to one, and rep. 7007 retry responses to Mr. Hawker's written reps in respect of traffic. As to accident data. So again, that's a matter that the applicant has addressed in writing already. It is all set out in the case for the scheme, which document reference app one to five. But again, as I've mentioned, the fresh points were raised today. On to the extent they are fresh points when they're put into writing, so the applicant will will respond as best it's it's able. The overarching point, of course, sir, is that the design is in accordance with the MRB. And if I put it this way, selective quotes from what the applicant said isn't helpful, but actually, the whole needs to be considered and as Mr. Hawker rightly acknowledged, there are a host of reasons for the design of the scheme and to alight on one of them is perhaps the best way of holding our feet to the fire in terms of design. So that's all I proposed to say as I said, we will commit to responding to any points made in writing once we have the written summaries.

44:31

Mr. Fry grateful. Thank you. Thanks, sir. Okay, again, just to double check, is there anybody else who wishes to raise anything else before I move to close the hearing? I'll take that as a no thank you. On that basis, I'd like to thank you all very much. contributions, which have been heard and are detailed in the transcript. May I remind you that both the transcripts and the digital recording of the proceedings today will be made available as soon as practicable on the project page of the national infrastructure website. There is a compulsory acquisition hearing scheduled tomorrow morning at 10am with the relevant details available on the project page, and following that there will be a further issue specific hearing on Thursday, also starting at 10. Again with the details on the project page. The time is 10:47am. And this open floor hearing for the a 4711 thick the one junction improvement scheme has now closed. Thank you