



Meeting note

Project name	A47 North Tuddenham to Easton
File reference	TR010038
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	22 January 2021
Meeting with	Highways England
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.

Introduction to the scheme

Highways England (the Applicant) provided an overview of the scheme which would comprise the offline dualling of a single-carriageway section of the A47 between North Tuddenham and Easton in Norfolk, including two new junctions at Berrys Lane/Wood Lane and Blind Lane/Norwich Road. The scheme would be located within the administrative area of five parish councils, three district councils (Broadland District Council, South Norfolk Council and Breckland Council) and one county council (Norfolk County Council). The scheme would aim to enable regional development and growth in Norwich and the surrounding area, improve safety and journey times and enhance cycling and walking routes.

The Applicant explained that the Berrys Lane/Wood Lane junction was the largest junction proposed in the scheme. It was a feature of the scheme that had attracted significant interest in the local area due to a possible interface with Norfolk County Council's Norwich Western Link (NWL) scheme. The Applicant confirmed that it would be seeking a degree of flexibility within its Development Consent Order (DCO) to allow for the construction of a stub which would, at some point in the future, connect to the NWL scheme at the Berrys Lane/Wood Lane junction.

The Inspectorate requested clarification about the Applicant's approach to any Compulsory Acquisition powers it would be seeking in the land required to deliver the stub connection ie the acquisition of land to deliver works not falling within the definitions of 'associated' or 'integral' development. The Applicant confirmed that it was finalising how it would seek to provide the flexibility required in its DCO to deliver the

works, and that its Statement of Reasons would provide justification for its approach to the acquisition of any land required to deliver the stub connection.

Stakeholder engagement and design updates

The Applicant confirmed that statutory consultation on the scheme had been undertaken between 26 February and 30 April 2020. It had carefully considered all of the consultation responses received (circa 400) and used the feedback to refine its proposed design.

The Applicant advised that its engagement with parish councils had been extensive, comprising both direct engagement and engagement through a local liaison group which met approximately every six weeks. It had also been engaging with an MP-led task force which was most predominantly focussed on areas south of the scheme. The Applicant stated that most discussions had been focussed on the local road network and its connections to the Applicant's scheme.

The Applicant stated that it had been difficult to achieve a consensus among all five affected parish councils. The Inspectorate queried whether there was a particular topic that was dividing opinion. The Applicant responded that the junction at Berrys Lane/Wood Lane had been a particular feature of interest. The Applicant confirmed that its Consultation Report would provide full details of the discussions that had been held with parish councils.

The Applicant advised that it had altered the proposed layout of the southern side of the Berrys Lane/Wood Lane junction following discussions with the local liaison group. The reconfiguration would enable more of the existing A47 to be utilised in line with the Applicant's commitment to re-use the existing road where possible. The Applicant also confirmed that it had taken steps to prevent rat-running through Honingham following feedback from Honingham Parish Council.

The Applicant confirmed that it had reconfigured the proposed layout of the Blind Lane/Norwich Road junction following feedback from statutory consultation. This had included alterations to reduce the impact on St. Andrew's Church following feedback from Historic England. These alterations included a new walking/cycling underpass at Honingham linking to St Andrew's church, and a new walking/cycling over bridge linking Easton and Lower Easton. The Inspectorate queried whether all the proposed changes remained within the red line boundary (RLB) presented in the Applicant's Scoping Report. The Applicant explained that some minor changes to the RLB had been required to accommodate the reconfiguration, but they were not of such a degree as to present any new or different likely significant effects.

The Inspectorate requested an overview of the scheme's handling of affected utilities. The Applicant responded that there were four directly affected key statutory undertakers with proposed works to include the diversion of a National Grid gas main. The Applicant advised that it was confident that the gas main diversion would not constitute a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project in its own right.

The Applicant confirmed that engagement was ongoing in respect of other major infrastructure development interfacing with the Applicant's scheme, including the Food Enterprise Park, NWL, Ørsted's Hornsea project, Equinor, Norfolk Boreas and Norfolk

Vanguard. In the course of engagement the Applicant would seek to ensure that designs, construction traffic, and cumulative risk to the local community would be managed holistically.

The Applicant also summarised its engagement with the Environment Agency and the Lead Local Flood Authority regarding flood modelling and environmental mitigation.

DCO submission

The Applicant stated that it intended to submit the application in spring 2021.

The Inspectorate acknowledged that the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges advises that a discrete chapter dealing with traffic and transport does not need to be included in the Environmental Statement (ES); instead the traffic and transport assessment is absorbed into other relevant chapters. This approach can make the traffic and transport assessment difficult for the Inspectorate to review in isolation, and the Inspectorate therefore requested for the Applicant to include signposting within its application to establish where the traffic and transport assessment could be found within the ES.

The Applicant confirmed that it would provide the Inspectorate with relevant programme updates during the approach to submission. The Inspectorate extended an offer to review focused areas of the Applicant's draft application documentation prior to submission. Both parties would consider the value in convening of a further project update before the application was submitted.

Any other business

The Applicant queried whether it should assume that all Preliminary Meetings and hearings would be held on a virtual basis for the duration of 2021. The Inspectorate confirmed that whilst events would be virtual by default for the foreseeable future, the process would remain flexible so that, should public health controls allow, the option of holding physical 'in person' events during Examinations could be engaged. The Applicant was directed to the Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.6: Virtual examination events](#) for further information about virtual procedures.