



Preliminary Meeting Note (Part 1)

Application: A47 Blofield to North Burlingham

Reference: TR010040

Time and date: 10:00am on 8 June 2021

Venue: Microsoft Teams

This meeting note is not a full transcript of the Preliminary Meeting. It is a summary of the key points discussed.

The full video recording of the Preliminary Meeting Part 1 (PM1) is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed [here](#).

1. Welcome and Introduction

Alex Hutson welcomed those present and introduced himself as the single Examining Inspector appointed as the Examining Authority (ExA) to examine the A47 Blofield to North Burlingham application. The works the Proposed Development comprised of was briefly summarised.

The ExA explained that it would be examining the application made by Highways England ('the Applicant') before making a recommendation to the SoS who will decide whether an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), should be made.

The ExA introduced the members of the Planning Inspectorate's (the Inspectorate's) Case Team who were supporting the PM1: Deborah Allen (Case Manager), James Bunten (NSIP Officer) and Lily Robbins (NSIP Officer).

The ExA explained the Inspectorate's duties under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Further info relating to the GDPR can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's [Privacy Note](#).

The ExA explained the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting (PM), noting only the procedural aspects of the Examination were being discussed, and the Examination will commence after Part 2 of the PM, being held on 22 June 2021, closes.

The ExA invited the parties who had expressed their intention on speaking at the PM to introduce themselves. The Applicant, Norfolk County Council (NCC), Climate Emergency Planning and Policy (CEPP), John Randlesome (JR) and Richard Hawker (RH) introduced themselves/ their representatives.

The ExA requested any other attendees who wished to participate to introduce themselves. There were no further requests.

The ExA confirmed that all documents and submissions received and accepted during the Examination will be published on the project-specific page of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

2. The Virtual PM Process

The ExA set out its remarks in respect of the virtual PM process, which are explained further in [Annex B of the Rule 6 Letter](#) dated 27 April 2021 and the Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.6: Virtual examination events](#).

The ExA acknowledged that following receipt of the submissions for Procedural Deadline B (PDB) on 15 June 2021, it may consider Part 2 of the PM unnecessary and as such, will inform parties shortly after PDB that Part 2 will not be held virtually and will close the PM in writing on 22 June 2021.

No comments were made by any of the parties in attendance.

3. The Examination Process

The ExA set out its remarks in respect of the Examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008), explained further in [Annex B of the Rule 6 Letter](#) dated 27 April 2021 and the Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.4: The Examination](#).

The ExA confirmed that all events for the foreseeable future would be held virtually but that this would be reviewed on an ongoing basis in light of the current government advice at the relevant point in time. The Applicant was encouraged to engage with parties where possible despite the restrictions of the virtual event format.

No comments were made by any of the parties in attendance.

4. Initial Assessment of Principal Issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAPIs) (section 88 of the PA2008), which can be found in [Annex C of the Rule 6 letter](#) dated 27 April 2021, and asked for any observations on it.

NCC set out that although its Authority was content with majority of the IAPIs, it requested that 'transfers of assets' is added, should consent be granted and the scheme is constructed, to allow discussion on the matter during Examination. NCC noted transfer of assets is likely to be addressed through a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG).

The ExA highlighted that [question 1.14.5 of ExA Written Questions \(ExQ1\)](#) had been posed on the matter and advised the Applicant will likely respond as part of its response to ExQ1. The Applicant concurred.

CEPP requested that 'cumulative impacts of carbon emissions' was added as an issue underneath 'Climate Change'. The ExA explained that 'Cumulative and in-combination effects on, and with, other major projects and proposals' is included as an issue underneath 'Scope of Development and Environmental Impact Assessment' and will form part of the its overarching consideration of the application in respect of cumulative impacts but noted the request. The Applicant concluded it would respond in writing for PDB if decides to do so.

JR echoed the concerns set out in his submission dated 25 May 2021, which has been accepted by the ExA as an [Additional Submission](#) [AS-020]. The ExA advised JR should expand on those points as part of his Written Representation (WR) for and/ or request to be heard at a Compulsory Acquisition Hearing (CAH) if the matters had not been resolved once Examination started.

The Applicant acknowledged the submission and advised it would likely respond to it as part of its overarching response to the suite of Relevant Representations. The ExA concluded the Applicant should continue offline engagement with JR going forward.

RH noted the Government's policy of creating modal shift towards the use of public transport instead of private car travel and queried if the consent and operation of the scheme, potentially leading to a reduced service of a local little-used railway line, should be included within the IAPIs. The ExA noted the request but explained the matter could fall under the issue 'The need for the Proposed Development.' in addition to its consideration of relevant policy and SoCGs.

RH also queried if the cumulative effects on other parts of the A47, such as villages like Hockering, could be examined within the timetable. The ExA noted the request but explained that under 'Traffic and Transport' there was already the issue 'Operational effects on the surrounding road network, including the A47 / Brundall roundabout'. In addition to this, the ExA had posed various questions on operational effects to the Applicant in its [ExQ1](#).

The ExA acknowledged [RH's Relevant Representation](#) [RR-059] and advised if his concerns were not resolved, he could expand on them in writing as part of his WR during the Examination. The Applicant noted the comments.

No further comments were raised on the IAPIs. The ExA concluded that no Procedural Decisions would be made at the time and that parties can provide written comments on the IAPIs for PDB.

5. Procedural Decisions

The ExA explained the Procedural Decisions made under section 89(3) of the PA2008 were set out in [Annex E of the Rule 6 Letter](#) dated 27 April 2021.

The ExA acknowledged the list SoCGs set out Annex E and queried if the Applicant had any additional parties it anticipated entering into SoCGs with. The Applicant advised it would respond on the matter for PDB.

The ExA acknowledged that since the issue of the Rule 6 Letter, further [Additional Submissions](#) [AS-012 to AS-020] had been accepted. These were from: the Coal Authority, Transport Action Network, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Statutory Undertakers (including GTC Pipelines and Cadent Gas Limited), JR, the Applicant on behalf of the Norfolk Constabulary and the Applicant in respect of an updated Book of Reference.

The ExA asked for any further observations regarding Procedural Decisions. No further comments were made by any of the parties in attendance.

6. Examination Timetable

The ExA outlined the deadline (DL) criteria and dates set out in the draft Examination Timetable (dET) found at [Annex D of the Rule 6 Letter](#) dated 27 April 2021, clarified the purposes of Issue Specific Hearings (ISHs), CAHs, Open Floor Hearings (OFHs), Accompanied Site Inspections (ASIs) and Unaccompanied Site Inspections (USIs). Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found in the Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.5: The Examination: hearings and site inspections](#).

The ExA emphasised that all submissions should be made in accordance with the given DLs. Late submissions would only be accepted at the discretion of the ExA. It was also confirmed that the ExA may decide to complete the Examination at any time following the final DL/ event in the timetable. This could be prior to the end of the six-month period allocated for Examination. Interested Parties would be informed of this.

The ExA identified written requests to amend the dET had been received from the Applicant and NCC and welcomed their suggestions and comments from other parties in attendance.

The Applicant, as set out in its [response to Procedural Deadline A](#) [PDA-001], identified various DLs within the dET that, following hearings or previous DLs, left limited time to prepare and respond for the subsequent DL. For example, DL4: 7 September 2021 followed hearings scheduled 1 to 3 September 2021. The Applicant suggested DL4 is pushed back to provide more time to respond. The Applicant proposed similar requests for more time for DL7, 8, 9 and 10 and it was suggested that those DLs were all brought forward to provide additional time.

In addition, the Applicant requested the ExA provides early indication of the precise nature of any additional ISHs and the prompt publishing of hearings agendas. The ExA advised it would provide the statutory 21-day notice of scheduled hearings and the publication of agendas five days prior to each hearing, as per standard NSIP procedure, but explained matters requiring oral examination at hearings are usually derived from DL responses so early notice may not always be possible; however, the request was noted.

NCC highlighted that the group of hearings currently reserved for week commencing (w/c) 16 August 2021 may be problematic for its Authority as it speculated many of its team, and other advisory colleagues, could be on leave and may not be able to participate fully. The ExA noted NCC's concerns and highlighted there were further dates reserved in November for hearings, if required.

The ExA advised it may be difficult to withhold scheduling any hearings within the Summer holiday period, due to the statutory requirement to close the Examination within six months, but noted that the Examination was predominantly a written process. The Applicant raised its full support for keeping the proposed August hearings within the final timetable.

NCC echoed the Applicant's request for early notification of ISHs as it anticipated acquiring support from advisors and experts from other areas of the Authority to participate and 21-days' notice may hinder preparation for the hearings.

NCC acknowledged two other A47 NSIPs within its Authority's administrative boundary that are currently in the Pre-examination stage: A47 North Tuddenham to Easton and A47/A11 Thicket Junction, and noted the potential for their respective timetables to overlap and impact on its Authority's resources. The ExA noted the request but explained that any overlap of respective examinations may be difficult to avoid due to the times the various applications were submitted to the Inspectorate.

The ExA queried if NCC had any Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) in place. NCC confirmed it hadn't and historically had only done so on NSIPs post-consent to deal with the discharge of Requirements. It was agreed discussions in respect of proposed PPA would be taken forward offline with the Applicant.

The ExA asked for any further observations regarding the dET. No further comments were made by any of the parties in attendance.

The Examination Timetable will be confirmed in the 'Rule 8' letter published as soon as practicable following the start of the Examination.

7. Any Remaining Questions or Submissions Regarding Procedural Matters

The ExA asked if anyone present wished to raise any remaining questions or submissions regarding procedural matters not set out in the agenda and acknowledged no matters had been notified in advance under this agenda item. No comments were made by any of the parties in attendance.

8. Any Other Matters

The ExA asked if there were other relevant matters that anyone wishes to raise. Emma Brookes (EB) introduced herself as being an Affected Person and brought to the ExA's attention that information provided by the Applicant to date had been difficult to understand and that the property next to her's had recently been occupied by the Applicant, without any notification. EB requested that clearer, easier to understand information provided. The Applicant provided a brief explanation for this. The ExA requested the Applicant improves future communication with EB going forward.

The ExA asked the Applicant if it envisaged any changes to the application during the Examination or any possibility of additional land required. The Applicant confirmed it didn't at this stage.

In the interests of openness and impartiality, the ExA highlighted that it had some previous involvement with 'Create Consulting Engineers Ltd', who submitted a Relevant Representation on behalf of Burlingham Cottage Gardens Association. It had been for a previous role for a different organization, a number of years ago, did not involve this project and was a purely professional relationship.

The ExA asked if there were any final comments. No comments were made from the parties in attendance.

The ExA reminded attendees and viewers that comments on the matters discussed at PM1 should be submitted for PDB: 15 June 2021. The resumption of the PM (PM2), if required, would take place on Tuesday 22 June 2021 at 10.00am.

The ExA thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the PM1 at 11:33am.

The ExA, following consideration of the [comments and representations made at Procedural Deadline B](#), decided that there weren't any procedural matters which needed to be explored orally. As a result, in accordance with paragraph 7.5 of the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.6](#) (Virtual Events), the ExA formally closed the meeting through a [written Procedural Decision](#) sent to all Interested Parties on 22 June 2021 and PM2 was not held.