



## Meeting note

<b>File reference</b>	A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet
<b>Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Author</b>	Kate Mignano
<b>Date</b>	27 June 2017
<b>Meeting with</b>	<b>Highways England</b>
<b>Venue</b>	Rivergate Office, Bristol
<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Highways England</b> Anne-Marie Rogers Natalie Webb John Pingstone Ted Alistair Frost Fay Phil Emerson <b>The Planning Inspectorate</b> Gareth Leigh Richard Price Emma Cottam Lucy Hicks Kate Mignano
<b>Meeting objectives</b>	Project Update Meeting
<b>Circulation</b>	All attendees

### Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The Planning Inspectorate advised on its openness policy, explaining that any advice given would be recorded and placed on the Planning Inspectorate website under section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

### Project Update

Highways England (HE) gave an overview of the project design and development to date. Initially there were 40 potential options identified which have been considered and narrowed down to three which were consulted on.

The objectives of the scheme were described as enabling economic growth, improving safety and shortening journey times, improve routes for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

HE explained the need for the project to support growth identified in the Local Plan, improving safety and alternative access to local roads. The Black Cat round about is at capacity and is regularly congested. Other planned major developments in the area were discussed including two housing developments.

HE stated that the technology aspect of the 'Expressway' standard which is a requirement in the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) is yet to be defined, however work is progressing and clarity on this is expected shortly.

Funding has been secured through RIS one, for the planning and development stages. Further funding will be released through RIS two for the construction phase of the project.

The works for each option would include grade separated junctions at all junctions, a new section of dual carriageway between the Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet, construction of a new viaduct over the River Great Ouse and new railway bridge over the East Coast Mainline, local road and footpath diversions and de-trunking of the existing A428.

HE explained there is productive agriculture in the area, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and ancient woodland. HE have met with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and given presentations about the proposed scheme.

## **Consultation**

Highways England (HE) gave an update on the engagement to date with consultees, including the Technical Working Group, parish councils and the three host authorities; Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire County Council.

Non-statutory consultation took place 6 March – 23 April 2017. 3500 leaflets were distributed at council offices, libraries and shops in the vicinity of the site. There were six local exhibitions with one land owner specific event. HE reported that over 2000 people attended, and they received over 4000 responses after the public events. HE stated that members of the public were generally in support of the scheme

Three options for the Black Cat roundabout were consulted upon including a single layer dumbbell design, a double grade separated roundabout and triple grade separated roundabout. Three options were consulted upon for a new dual carriageway offline from the existing A428, between Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet.

HE confirmed the orange route which is the option closest to the existing A428 route was the public's preferred option as was the triple grade separated roundabout option for the existing Black Cat roundabout.

HE discussed the responses received in relation to each route and noted in particular for the pink and purple route options, noise, landscape and visual impacts potentially affecting Abbotsley and Eltisley. For the orange route option, responses received focussed on landscape and visual impacts after passing over the East Coast Mainline. Residents near the Black Cat junction had a preference for the junction to be lowered, rather than a three-tier junction above ground level. HE confirmed that the responses

are being considered and further development of the options was being developed as a result of the responses received, including diverting public rights of way and the addition of footbridges.

The Inspectorate advised HE to explain in the Consultation Report how the scheme has developed in response to the consultation undertaken.

HE confirmed consultation with statutory bodies, land owners, parish councils and other stakeholders is ongoing and documented. The Inspectorate encouraged HE to engage with Royal Mail during pre-application in relation to its statutory duties.

HE is currently developing the draft Statement of Community Consultation. The Inspectorate offered to look at any drafts and would provide comments.

Statutory Consultation is expected to begin Autumn 2017.

### **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

HE confirmed Screening had been completed and EIA is required for the scheme. As the Preferred Route Announcement is not expected until August 2017, Scoping will include all three route options and is expected to be submitted July 2017. HE asked for advice to best describe the development in terms of the red line boundary for the purpose of Scoping. The topic chapters would clearly set out the receptors, potential impacts and survey methodologies associated with each route. It was confirmed that the assessment methodology will be based on best practice and the EIA topic Heat and Radiation will be scoped out of the Environmental Statement.

HE asked if the Inspectorate could provide any advice on Scoping prior to a Preferred Route Announcement being made. The Inspectorate agreed to provide this after the meeting.

HE confirmed a Habitat Regulations Assessment will form part of the application.

The Inspectorate asked for an update on ongoing survey work. HE confirmed there are County Wildlife Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the area. There are no Air Quality Management Area's (AQMA) or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the vicinity of the site.

There are abandoned medieval settlements in the area as well as ancient woodland. Archaeological surveys are currently being undertaken and will possibly include invasive surveys.

There are 118 Heritage sites, 11 Scheduled Monuments, 6 Important Noise Areas and 5 Water Framework Directive routes in the site and surrounding area. The Inspectorate confirmed it is producing an Advice Note for the Water Framework Directive which will be published imminently.

Great crested newt, water vole, otter, bat, badger and grass snake surveys are underway.

The Inspectorate asked if HE were anticipating the need to seek powers under section 52 or 53 of the Planning Act 2008. HE confirmed they have a good working relationship with land owners and are not anticipating issues negotiating with land owners for more intrusive survey work.

## **Anticipated Timeframe**

August 2017 - Preferred Route Announcement

July 2017 - Scoping

Autumn 2017 - Statutory Consultation

August 2018 - Submission of the Application

## **Follow up Required**

The Inspectorate agreed to provide advice regarding Scoping prior to a Preferred Route Announcement.

The Inspectorate agreed to provide advice on how HE could describe the development in terms of the red line boundary for the purpose of Scoping.