



Meeting note

Project name	A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet
File reference	TR010044
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	7 December 2020
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.

Programme update

Highways England (the Applicant) confirmed that it anticipated submitting its application in late January 2021. The Inspectorate stated that it would update the project page on the National Infrastructure Planning website to reflect this.

The Inspectorate explained that a letter would be issued to the Applicant (the 'Applicant warm-up letter') about a month before the anticipated submission date. That letter would cover the logistics for the submission of the application and consolidate the pre-submission actions required by the Applicant.

Project update

The Applicant provided an update regarding its stakeholder engagement programme. It confirmed it had been running technical workshops with local authorities since 2018. In November 2020 it had provided briefings to the local authorities in respect of the Articles and Requirements in the draft Development Consent Order (dDCO) and the Environmental Management Plan (EMP). Further transport-focused workshops were scheduled for early 2021 to work with Local Authorities to better understand the information that would be presented in the application. The workshops would cover topics including the construction phase impact assessment, in addition to the previous workshops on the traffic forecast model, Local Model Validation Report (LMVR) and the Transport Assessment (TA). The Applicant confirmed that the programme of workshops would be completed in good time to inform the Examination, including Local Impact Reports.

The Inspectorate enquired whether an outline Construction Environmental Management Plan would be included with the application. The Applicant confirmed that a first iteration Environmental Management Plan comprising outline plans would be provided with the application, and that the Explanatory Memorandum attached to the dDCO would explain how the EMP would be progressed iteratively. The Inspectorate also queried whether any Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) would be submitted with the application. The Applicant advised that whilst draft SoCGs were already being developed, it did not intend to submit them as evidence until the Examination when the documents would be appropriately mature.

The Applicant provided an update on the proposed gas pipeline diversion forming part of its scheme. It confirmed that drafting within its dDCO would account for the diversion constituting a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) in its own right. A targeted consultation exercise associated with the proposed gas pipeline diversion had commenced on 11 November 2020 and was due to conclude on 18 December 2020.

The Applicant shared its proposed approach to presenting utility diversion works in the plans accompanying its application. To assist readability, the Applicant proposed for the Works Plans to include additional sheets which separated out the utility diversion works. The Inspectorate agreed that in the circumstances of the application, the approach would optimise readability and understanding of the utility diversions proposed.

The Applicant provided the Inspectorate with an update regarding how it intended to account for the scheme's interference with Brook Cottages within the application.

Application submission

The Applicant summarised the structure of the forthcoming application. It confirmed that it intended to use Microsoft Teams to submit the application and sought feedback from the Inspectorate in respect of that approach. The Inspectorate advised that submission via Microsoft Teams was acceptable. The Applicant's attention was drawn to guidance published on the National Infrastructure Planning website regarding acceptable file naming conventions and file size limits. The Inspectorate also advised that, if the application was accepted for examination, the Applicant should be prepared to receive a request from the appointed Examining Authority for certain plans and drawings to be provided at a significantly reduced file size. This would be to enable those plans to be shared without issue in a Microsoft Teams environment during virtual Examination events.

Separately, the Inspectorate explained that it was currently testing a website-based portal for the submission of evidence during Examinations. If no significant problems were encountered during the testing it would be likely that the portal function would be used during the examination of the Applicant's scheme.

Next steps

The Inspectorate drew attention to the advice issued to Highways England in respect of the recently withdrawn application for the Lower Thames Crossing. The Applicant confirmed that it had considered the relevance of the published advice in the context of its own application.

It was agreed that the next project update meeting would be scheduled for early January 2021 ahead of the submission of the application in late January 2021.