

Application by Highways England for an Order granting Development Consent for M54 to M6 Link Road

Case Reference: TR010054

Examining Authority's Record of Unaccompanied Site Inspections on Tuesday 16 March 2021 and Wednesday 17 March 2021

1. Background

- 1.1 The application has been made by Highways England (the Applicant).
- 1.2 As detailed in the letters of 29 January 2021 [PD-022] and 23 February 2021 [PD-024] the Examining Authority (ExA) confirmed its preference to undertake physical site inspections and identified those locations which it had identified it would wish to visit. These letters set out the ExA's Procedural Decisions to make arrangements through the Applicant to undertake these as Unaccompanied Site Inspections and made changes to the Examination Timetable to facilitate the events. Suitable arrangements were put in place to ensure authority to enter land was obtained for those areas which were in private ownership, and for the ExA to ensure it could view those other areas it considered necessary from public land.
- 1.3 The Site Inspections were to be undertaken to support our Examination of an application for development consent for the proposed road linking the M54, from junction 1, to the M6 at junction 11.
- 1.4 The Site Inspections were conducted on the 16 and 17 March 2021 and set out below is a record of the Inspections as undertaken.
- 1.5 We undertook the inspections on our own. We did not encounter any Interested Parties or other persons during our inspections with two exceptions. Firstly, Allow Ltd (Allow) had provided access to its land and identified a suggested route (this is provided at Appendix 1 below) part of that route included a gated location and we were met by a representative to provide access through the gate. We had a brief exchange to confirm who we were and to gain access. Secondly, at Molesley Old Hall we were met by a representative of the National Trust, where again we had a brief exchange to confirm who we were and facilitate our access to the land.
- 1.6 As part of the identified process for gathering information on the site we had previously requested the submission of 360° photography of the site and video footage of M6 Diesel. These were provided by the Applicant at Deadline 6A and comments have been requested for submission by **Deadline 7, 26 March 2021**. Such comments are to be restricted to identifying matters from the photographs or video that the parties would wish to draw to the ExA's attention as if on a Site Inspection but should avoid any commentary on matters related to the parties cases or the merits of the scheme.

2. Particulars of the Inspection on 16 March 2021

2.1 The purpose of the visit was for us as the ExA to view the site and specific locations in the context of the evidence that has been submitted into the Examination to date and to ensure a full and proper understanding of the effect of the proposals. We met at Hilton Park Services at approximately 10:20 hours and travelled from there to our first stop at approximately 10:30 hours; the day's visits were completed by approximately 13:30 hours. The weather was generally overcast, but dry and visibility was good. Due to social distancing restrictions we each drove our own cars and followed a previously agreed route to the various sites.

2.2 The details of the route and general commentary are provided in the following bullet points.

- We met and commenced the site visit at Hilton Park (northbound) Services.
- We stopped opposite M6 Diesel at approximately 10:30 and viewed the comings and goings and general activity on the site for around 15 minutes.
- We then drove to Hilton Lane and the Hilton Hall site where we parked our vehicles.
- Allow had provided us with a route around their land; a copy of this is provided at Appendix 1. We followed this route and part of the way round were met by a representative to facilitate access through a locked gate as described above.
- During this part of the visit to Hilton Hall and Allow's land we were able to view Hilton Hall, The Conservatory and Coach House and Stable Block, view the Hall back across the parkland, view the Lower Pool and Shrubbery woodland areas. Along this route we were also able to view The Shrubbery, Gardeners Cottage and The Bungalow, and understand their relationship with the proposed scheme. We also noted the relationship with Dark Lane (the fencing and some fly tipping, along with the dwellings on the northern side). The route took us past areas of land that had been the focus of discussions in respect of alternative landscaping proposals and the elements of the parkland setting for the listed hall. We also noted the location of the Portobello Tower and the pair of listed Gatepiers. We also noted a depression in the field when heading back towards the fishing ponds close to the Hall. Once back at the Hall we took the opportunity to walk around the Hall and its immediate environs.
- Once we had concluded at Hilton Hall we parked at the 'P2' marked on Allow's map on Dark Lane. From there we viewed land that is identified as part of the environmental mitigation proposals.
- We left the vehicles at this location and walked down in an easterly direction on Hilton Lane to the entrance to Shareshill 5 Public Right of Way (PRoW) and walked along the right of way to the point that it enters the field as this had been subject of comments and representations.

- Our next stop was at The Avenue where, having parked the vehicles, we walked to Junction 1 of the M54 and viewed the location of the junction improvements, the Hilton Cross Business Park and the area around Mann and Hummel. This included reviewing the amended location for the pedestrian access that is referred to in the Rule 17 letter [PD -027] which had been drawn to our attention before we reached this part of the site visit and the access arrangements across the proposed junction arrangements.
- Our final stop on this day was to go to the car park at Bushbury Hill (Northycote Farm and County Park) to view back towards the site from higher ground as had been suggested in representations.

3. Particulars of the Inspection on the 17 March 2021

- 3.1 As with the previous day the purpose of the visit was for us as ExA to view the site and specific locations in the context of the evidence that has been submitted into the Examination to date and to ensure a full and proper understanding of the effect of the proposals. We again met at Hilton Park Services at approximately 10:30 hours and travelled from there to our first stop at approximately 10:40 hours; the day's visits were completed by approximately 13:00 hours. The weather was generally overcast, but dry and visibility was good. Due to social distancing restrictions we each drove our own cars and followed a previously agreed route to the various sites.
- 3.2 The details of the route and general commentary are provided in the following bullet points.
- We met and commenced the site visit at Hilton Park (northbound) Services.
 - We drove to junction 11 of the M6 and parked in the layby on the A460 adjacent to PRow Saredon 13. We walked along the PRow to the existing underpass where the M6 (Toll) goes over the M6 and viewed the relationship to the new junction proposals. We also viewed adjacent land around the junction to understand the relationships with the proposed works.
 - We then moved on to Brookfield Farm. We parked our vehicles and walked around the farm. We walked Shareshill 1 PRow to the high point and parts of Shareshill 3 and Shareshill 4 PRows. We were able to view the surrounding land, the fishing lakes, the relationship with Junction 11, the woodland and landform down to Latherford Brook and the Fishing ponds east of Brookfield Farm.
 - We then drove to the area north of the M54 where an area of remnant ancient woodland has been identified where we parked up and viewed the area.
 - Finally, for this day we drove onto Old Moseley Hall where again we parked up and were provided access onto the site. We viewed the relationship with the proposed works and gained access to and walked through plots 3/7b, 3/7c, 3/7a up to 4/2 as identified on the Land Plans [REP6-004]. This allowed us to understand the

relationship with the proposed works and suggested compensation/mitigation measures.

4. **Conclusion**

- 4.1 We have now conducted various Site Inspections on both private and public locations that has enabled us to familiarise ourselves with the route of the proposed scheme, existing roads and the surrounding area, including the landscape and general landform and the proximity of the various settlements in its vicinity. We have walked along various existing routes for Non-Motorised Users including PRowS as brought to our attention and accessed various plots of private land as have arisen in the conduct of the examination.

Robert Jackson

Robert Jackson

Lead Member of the Panel of Examining Inspectors

Kenneth Stone

Kenneth Stone

Panel Member

Appendix 1 Route Proposed by Allow for 16th March Unaccompanied Site Inspection

(identified in blue)

