



Preliminary Meeting Note

Application: A417 Missing Link

Reference: TR010056

Time and date: 10am, 2 November 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. A recording of the event is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed via the following link: [Recording of the Preliminary Meeting](#).

1. Welcome and introduction

Ken Stone welcomed those present and introduced himself as the lead member and David Wallis as member of the Panel of Examining Inspectors, together the Examining Authority (ExA), to examine the A417 Missing Link application. The ExA explained that the appointment was made by delegation from the Secretary of State (SoS) on 16 August 2021¹.

The ExA explained that it would be examining the application made by National Highways, formerly Highways England (the Applicant)², before making a recommendation to the SoS who would decide whether an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), should be made.

The ExA invited those wishing to speak on the agenda items to introduce themselves. The Applicant, Joint Councils (Gloucestershire County Council, Cotswold District Council, and Tewkesbury Borough Council), Historic England and Tim Knox introduced themselves/ their representatives.

2. General Data Protection Regulation

The ExA explained the Planning Inspectorate's duties under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Further information relating to the GDPR can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's [Privacy Note](#).

¹ The date of the appointment was incorrectly stated to be 16 June 2021 during the Preliminary Meeting.

² The Applicant has confirmed that the name change was effective as of 20 August 2021 (please see the Applicant's submission [[AS-034](#)] for further details).

3. Virtual Preliminary Meeting process

The ExA explained the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting (PM), and that the PM would focus only on matters of Examination procedure. The ExA advised that questions, discussions and representations about the merits of the application and the Proposed Development were for the Examination itself.

The ExA explained the process for conducting the virtual PM. The ExA explained that parties could comment in writing on matters raised at PM Part 1 by Procedural Deadline B (Wednesday 10 November 2021). All submissions, whether made orally at the PM or in writing at Procedural Deadline B, would be given equal consideration.

The ExA confirmed that the PM would re-open for Part 2 on Tuesday 16 November 2021 to consider any written submissions received at Procedural Deadline B. However, the ExA confirmed that it may close the PM in writing should Part 2 of the PM be deemed unnecessary.

The ExA sought comments from participants on the virtual PM process. No comments were made.

Further information relating to virtual Examination events can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.6](#).

4. Examination process

The ExA briefly explained the Examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) and explained that the Examination would commence after the PM had closed.

The ExA explained that information regarding Examination procedure, the Examination timetable, Relevant Representations and Examination documents could be found on the Planning Inspectorate's [National Infrastructure Planning website](#).

The ExA confirmed that the [project webpage of the National Infrastructure Planning website](#) would be used to communicate with parties and to provide access to documents throughout the Examination.

The ExA sought comments from participants on the Examination process. No comments were made.

Further information about the Examination process can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.4](#).

5. Initial Assessment of Principal Issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (section 88 of the PA2008), which can be found in [Annex C of the Rule 6 letter of 30 September 2021](#), and asked for any observations on them.

Tim Knox requested that the ExA consider the implications of COVID-19, the closure of the Honda factory in Swindon, and the inclement weather conditions in

the local area under the Traffic and Transport item. Mr Knox also requested that matters relating to the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) should be considered under the Landscape and Visual item.

The ExA noted the points raised by Mr Knox, and advised that any submissions relating to the merits of the scheme should be submitted at the appropriate Examination Deadline. The ExA invited comments from the Applicant on the points made by Mr Knox. No comments were made by the Applicant.

6. Examination timetable

The ExA noted requests, already received in writing, to amend the draft Examination Timetable contained in [Annex D of the Rule 6 letter](#), and also welcomed further suggestions from the parties in attendance.

The Joint Councils and the Applicant re-iterated the requests they had made in writing to Procedural Deadline A. The Applicant also advised that it anticipated no issues with the timeframe for issuing its notification of January hearings (if required), should its proposed amendments be accepted by the ExA. Historic England confirmed that it supported the suggested amendments to the Examination Timetable made by the Joint Councils and the Applicant.

All comments received were noted by the ExA, and considerations will be reflected in the Rule 8 letter which is due to be published as soon as practicable after the Examination commences. The final Examination Timetable will also be contained in the Rule 8 letter.

7. Hearings and site inspections

The ExA noted the possibility of conducting Examination hearings as blended events, comprising in-person events with a virtual element to accommodate those wishing to attend remotely. The ExA advised that it would need to revert to holding fully virtual events if public health concerns were to arise.

The ExA advised that it had already undertaken an Unaccompanied Site Inspection (USI) on 14 September 2021, the note of which has been published on the [project webpage of the National Infrastructure Planning website](#). The ExA advised that it may undertake further USIs if necessary, and that it hoped to undertake an Accompanied Site Inspection (ASI) subject to any COVID-19 restrictions in force at the time. The ExA also reserved the right to undertake virtual site inspections if necessary.

The ExA sought comments from participants on the arrangements for hearings and site inspections. No comments were made.

Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found in the Planning Inspectorate's [Advice Note 8.5](#).

8. Procedural Decisions

The ExA clarified the Procedural Decisions made under section 89(3) of the PA2008. Procedural Decisions can be found in [Annex E of the Rule 6 letter](#).

The ExA advised that, since the publication of the Rule 6 letter, several representations had been received from local residents outside the Relevant Representation period. The ExA had decided to accept these as Additional Submissions given that the Examination had not yet commenced. The ExA clarified that these parties had not been afforded Interested Party status in the Examination, although their comments would be considered.

The ExA advised that it would not accept further representations from non-Interested Parties unless there was exceptional justification, and requested that all participants in the Examination abide by the appropriate Deadlines for submission of material to ensure a fair and efficient Examination.

The ExA invited comments from participants on the Procedural Decisions which had been made.

Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council sought clarification regarding the procedure for making submissions to the Examination. It was established that the ability of the Parish Council to engage in the Examination would depend on its status in the Examination, which would need to be confirmed offline. The Applicant commented that it did not object to Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council participating in the Examination.

9. Any other matters

The ExA invited comments from participants on any other matters.

The Environment Agency enquired as to how relevant policies and guidance which were updated or changed during the Examination would be accounted for. The ExA advised that any relevant matters would be addressed during the Examination if they were to arise.

The ExA invited any concluding remarks from the Applicant. No comments were made.