



Our reference: A417 Missing Link

Your reference: TR010056

The Examining Authority
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Dear Examining Authority

A417 Missing Link Development Consent Order – Joint Councils Deadline 9 Submission

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), Cotswold District Council (CDC), and Tewkesbury Borough Council (TBC) 'the Joint Councils' are the three host authorities for the National Highways' (NH) A417 Missing Link DCO Scheme 'the Scheme'. Atkins is supporting the Joint Councils during the Examination process and submits this letter on their behalf.
- 1.2. This document is the Joint Councils Deadline 9 submission. The Joint Councils wish to provide the Examining Authority with a final update at close of Examination. Furthermore, GCC wishes to provide the Examining Authority with an update on progress made regarding recent discussions between GCC and NH in relation to the side letter and side agreement covering issues raised at the Examination.
- 1.3. References made in this letter to a specific host authority are intentional and should be taken to mean that the associated statement is made on behalf of that authority and not on behalf of all three authorities comprising the Joint Councils.
- 1.4. This letter is structured in the following way:
 - Section 2 – The Joint Councils position at the close of Examination
 - Section 3 – GCC and NH - Side Letter and Draft Side Agreement
 - Summary

2. The Joint Councils position at the close of Examination

- 2.1. The Joint Councils are strongly in favour of and support the proposal by National Highways to deliver the long-needed A417 Missing Link Scheme. The A417 is an essential strategic route relied upon for the movement of people and goods within and through Gloucestershire and the surrounding regions. The section of the A417 between Cowley and Crickley Hill is the only remaining single carriageway section of the A417, it has a very poor safety record and is a bottleneck for strategic traffic which causes extensive congestion and rat running in the area.
- 2.2. The Joint Councils contributions to the Examination and discussions with National Highways alongside the Examination process have sought to ensure that the Scheme to be granted Development Consent will deliver the best possible outcomes for communities in and visitors to the area, the local and regional economy, the Area of Outstanding Natural

Beauty, wider environmental considerations and the local highway network. In this pursuit the Joint Councils have participated throughout Examination and made representations on a range of matters at most deadlines. Discussions with NH have been positive, and the majority of concerns and comments raised by the Joint Councils specialists have been satisfactorily addressed by NH through clarifications and amendments to the draft DCO.

- 2.3. The Statement of Common Ground between NH and the Joint Councils, to be submitted by NH at Deadline 9, has enabled the applicant and host authorities to find resolutions and common ground in the overwhelming majority of cases. The signed copy of the Statement of Common Ground, submitted by National Highways at Deadline 9 demonstrates the progress that has been made. A small number of matters could not be resolved during the Examination process, and NH has made a commitment to continue engagement with the Joint Councils to resolve outstanding matters, where it is possible to do so, beyond examination and into the detailed design and construction stages of the project.
- 2.4. Overall, the Joint Councils consider the proposed Scheme design, the draft DCO and certified documents to be to of a suitable standard to provide assurances that the implementation of the Scheme can be carried out without unacceptable, unjustified adverse effects. The Joint Councils would support a recommendation for the granting of Development Consent, should the Examining Authority be minded to make such a recommendation. And the Joint Councils would encourage the Secretary of State to grant Development Consent without delay, to enable this scheme to be implemented and the highway safety improvements to be delivered.

3. GCC and National Highways - Side Letter and Draft Side Agreement

- 3.1. GCC, acting as the relevant local highway authority, has raised concerns during Examination around potential for impacts as a result of increases in traffic on Leckhampton Hill following implementation of the Scheme, and potential for safety concerns over the absence of highway lighting at the proposed Ullenwood Junction. NH's position that the Scheme as proposed is acceptable has been made clearly and is understood; however, GCC's concerns remain. The two parties are engaged in discussions outside of Examination to find resolutions to GCC's concerns on both matters in the form of a side letter.
- 3.2. The side letter, dated 8 April 2022, was sent from National Highways Project Director for the A417 Missing Link Scheme to GCC's Executive Director for Economy, Environment & Infrastructure. National Highways submitted a copy of the side letter at Deadline 8 in Appendix A of 8.33 Comments on Responses received by Deadline 7 and 7a [REP8-029].
- 3.3. The letter describes a series of commitments made by NH to GCC, and GCC can confirm that these commitments would address GCC's concerns on both matters.
- 3.4. A separate side agreement, setting out other agreed arrangements for the detailed design, construction, detrunking and asset handover stages of the Scheme is in preparation and positive discussions are ongoing between GCC and NH.

4. Summary

- 4.1. There is a longstanding need for the A417 Missing Link Scheme. This is well documented by National Highways in its application documents.
- 4.2. The Joint Councils, as the host authorities for the scheme, strongly support the delivery of the A417 Missing Link Scheme and throughout Examination have offered overriding support for the proposed Scheme to be granted Development Consent.
- 4.3. The Joint Councils have pushed National Highways to ensure it delivers the best possible outcomes, and we welcome the progress made by National Highways to address identified shortcomings, and the positive steps made to clarify and address the Joint Councils concerns. The signed Statement of Common Ground with the Joint Councils, as submitted at Deadline 9, demonstrates the results of this positive working relationship.

- 4.4. The Joint Councils will continue to work with National Highways after the close of Examination, including through the ongoing Statement of Common Ground discussions and in discussions between GCC and NH on the contents of the draft side agreement.
- 4.5. The Joint Councils consider that the Scheme, as proposed, is acceptable and would strongly support the Secretary of State for Transport in granting Development Consent for this Scheme.

Yours sincerely



For and on behalf of Atkins and the Joint Councils
Benjamin Noutch