



Note of Preliminary Meeting (Part 1)

Application: A1 in Northumberland – Morpeth to Ellingham

Reference: TR010059

Time and date: 10:00am on 15 December 2020

Venue: Microsoft Teams

This meeting note is not a full transcript of the Preliminary Meeting. It is a summary of the key points discussed.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Kevin Gleeson welcomed those present and introduced himself as the lead member and Andre Pinto as member of the Panel of Examining Inspectors, together the Examining Authority (ExA), to examine the A1 in Northumberland – Morpeth to Ellingham application.

The ExA explained that the appointment was made by delegation from the Secretary of State (SoS) for the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 5 August 2020.

The ExA explained that it would be examining the application made by Highways England ('the Applicant') before making a recommendation to the SoS for Transport 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 explained the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting (PM) and noted that the Examination would commence after the PM had closed.

The ExA confirmed that all documents and submissions received and accepted during the Examination would be published on the project-specific page of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

The ExA invited those wishing to speak on the agenda items to introduce themselves. The Applicant, Northumberland County Council (NCC), Brockthorpe Consultancy, George F White LLP and Mark Hawes introduced themselves/ their representatives.

2. Audio recording

The full audio recording of Part 1 of the PM is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed [here](#) (session 1) and [here](#) (session 2).

3. General Data Protection Regulation

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

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

4. Examination Process

The ExA briefly explained the Examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008).

The ExA confirmed that all events for the foreseeable future would be held virtually but that this would be reviewed on an ongoing basis. The Applicant was encouraged to engage with parties where possible despite the restrictions of the virtual event format.

Further information on the Examination process can be found in the [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 19 November 2020 and asked for any observations on them.

NCC broadly agreed with the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues but wanted to ensure that the following issues would be addressed:

- traffic management issues, particularly during the construction phase and with particular reference to the potentially increased use of the A697 and subsequent impact on local communities;
- the extent of the works proposed on the de-trunked A1, with particular reference to cycle links on the Felton to Morpeth section of the route; and
- adequate examination of the active travel agenda.

The Applicant commented that the items specified were already being considered as they had been submitted in written form previously. The various topics set out in Annex C were acceptable to the Applicant.

The ExA invited any further written submissions on the matters proposed in the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues by 22 December 2020 at the latest.

6. 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 need for Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) was outlined by the ExA. It was noted that the Applicant was intending to prepare SoCGs with NCC, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. The ExA confirmed that it also wished to see SoCGs prepared with the Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and affected statutory undertakers.

The ExA confirmed that the [ExA's first written questions](#) had been published alongside the Rule 6 letter and prior to the start of the Examination in order to provide parties with additional time to consider them. The ExA stated that responses should not be submitted until the start of the Examination.

The ExA confirmed that the Applicant had submitted several items of correspondence on 14 September 2020 in response to a [procedural decision of 5 August 2020](#). On 16 September

2020 the ExA accepted these as additional submissions which have now been published (AS-001 to AS-010).

Additional submissions can be viewed in the [Examination Library](#).

Since the Rule 6 letter was issued, further additional submissions from energy undertakers were accepted and published (AS-011 to AS-016). At Procedural Deadline A, the Applicant issued a covering letter, noise and vibration reassessment, and details of proposed changes to the application. These documents were subsequently published (PDA-001 to PDA-003). The Applicant also issued a revision to the document outlining the proposed changes to the application on 14 December 2020. The ExA was in the process of considering the procedural implications of this document.

The ExA invited the Applicant to comment on the proposed changes. The Applicant confirmed that the purpose of the submission was to give prior notice of the intention to amend the application in the interests of transparency. The changes resulted from the continuing refinement of the design, and related to the following points:

- earthworks;
- stability of slopes in the River Coquet valley, requiring piling and the temporary acquisition of additional land; and
- extension of the access to the northern bank of the River Coquet.

The ExA confirmed that correspondence relating to the PM had also been received from NCC ([PDA-004](#)) and George F White LLP ([PDA-005](#)).

The ExA asked for any further observations regarding procedural decisions or the acceptance of any of the aforementioned documents. No further comments were made by any of the parties in attendance.

It was confirmed that comments on additional submissions from Procedural Deadline A should be submitted at Deadline 1 (12 January 2021), and comments on procedural matters relating to the determination of the application should be submitted at Procedural Deadline B (22 December 2020).

7. Examination Timetable

The ExA advised that all submissions should be made in accordance with the given deadlines. Late submissions would only be accepted at the discretion of the ExA. It was also confirmed that the ExA may decide to complete the Examination at any time following the final deadline/event in the timetable. This could be prior to the end of the six-month period allocated for Examination. Interested Parties would be informed of this.

The ExA noted requests, already received in writing, to amend the draft Examination Timetable contained in [Annex D](#) of Rule 6 letter and also welcomed further suggestions from the parties in attendance. The requests already received comprised a response to Procedural Deadline A from the Applicant ([PDA-001](#)) and a response to Procedural Deadline A from NCC (PDA-004).

The Applicant confirmed that it was not concerned with the date of Deadline 1, but rather with the amount of time between Deadlines 1, 2 and 3. It was proposed that each deadline should be separated by a period of at least three weeks rather than a fortnight.

NCC echoed the Applicant's comments regarding the pace at which the deadlines were due to occur, but was chiefly concerned with the date of Deadline 1 not providing sufficient time to

complete the Local Impact Report. NCC also stated that the lack of progress made with the Applicant in relation to the SoCG would impact its ability to meet the deadlines.

All comments received were duly noted by the ExA and considerations were to be reflected in the Rule 8 letter.

The Examination Timetable will also be contained in the Rule 8 letter which is due to be published as soon as practicable after the Examination commences.

8. Hearings and Site Inspections

The ExA clarified the purpose of:

- Open Floor Hearings (OFH);
- Accompanied Site Inspections (ASI); and
- Unaccompanied Site Inspections.

Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found in our [Advice Note 8.5](#)

The ExA confirmed that ASIs had been timetabled for the week commencing 29 March 2021 in the hope that the current COVID-19 restrictions had been lifted by this point. Any Interested Parties intending to participate in an ASI would need to make a submission to this effect by Deadline 1, including their reasoning as to why an ASI would be required in their chosen location.

The ExA advised that the timetable assumed that all hearings would be held virtually, however this could be subject to change. Advance notice of any changes would be given.

Although it had not received any requests for an OFH, the ExA proposed two virtual OFHs on 22 February 2021 at 10:00am and 6:30pm.

The ExA confirmed that:

- a Compulsory Acquisition Hearing was scheduled for 24 February 2021;
- an Issue Specific Hearing on the draft Development Consent Order was scheduled for 23 February 2021; and
- an Issue Specific Hearing on other environmental matters was scheduled for 25 February 2021, with 26 February 2021, if required, as an additional date and 2 March 2021 as a reserve date for any further Issue Specific Hearing if required.

All requests to be heard at the aforementioned hearings were to be received by Deadline 1.

The ExA sought comments on the arrangements for the above events. No further comments were made by any of the parties in attendance.

9. Any other matters

The ExA confirmed that it had not been previously notified of any further matters for discussion, and no further points were raised by any of the participants.



Note of Preliminary Meeting (Part 2)

Application: A1 in Northumberland – Morpeth to Ellingham

Reference: TR010059

Time and date: 10:00am on 5 January 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.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Kevin Gleeson welcomed those present and re-introduced himself as the lead member and Andre Pinto as member of the Panel of Examining Inspectors, together the Examining Authority (ExA), to examine the A1 in Northumberland – Morpeth to Ellingham application.

The ExA provided a brief summary of the previous introductory remarks, and advised that further information regarding the project could be accessed on the project's [National Infrastructure Planning webpage](#).

The ExA invited the Applicant to introduce themselves/ their representatives which they did. No other party attending indicated that they wished to speak.

2. Audio recording

The full recording of Part 2 of the Preliminary Meeting (PM) is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed [here](#).

3. General Data Protection Regulation

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

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

4. The ExA's remarks about written submissions concerning the procedures and conduct of the Examination received by Procedural Deadline B

The ExA confirmed that it had received one response from the Applicant and two responses from Interest Parties addressing matters raised orally in Part 1 of the PM. The responses are available to view on the project's [National Infrastructure Planning webpage](#).

The ExA invited the Applicant to comment on the two submissions made by Interested Parties. The Applicant noted the comments, and confirmed that it would address them in due course.

The ExA invited other comments from the participants, however no further points were raised.

5. Procedural decisions made by the ExA

The ExA confirmed that it had received documents from the Applicant at Procedural Deadline A which included a request for changes to the application. The ExA confirmed that it had accepted the documents, and these are available to view in the [Examination Library](#) (PDA001 to PDA-003).

The ExA also confirmed that it had received responses from Natural England and West End Anglers Club to the Applicant's request for changes to the application. These were accepted as additional submissions and are available to view in the Examination Library ([AS-019](#) and [AS-020](#)).

The Applicant confirmed that it would address these responses through formal submissions in due course.

6. Any other matters

The ExA confirmed that it had not been made aware of any further matters for discussion, and invited any final comments. No further points were raised.

The ExA noted that the Examination would commence on 6 January 2021 following the closure of the PM.

It was confirmed that the Rule 8 letter would be published shortly, and that the ExA looked forward to receiving submissions at Deadline 1 (12 January 2021).