

A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Scheme – Submission for The Crown Estate as an Interested Party (Nov 2022)

1. Background and Context

WSP (formally Wood Group) have been instructed to make the following submission on behalf of The Crown Estate (“TCE”) who has a significant land interest at Feering, near Braintree.

TCE own land at Feering which forms part of the Croxton Estate and extends to around 80ha. It straddles the existing and proposed route of the A12 from the edge of Feering to the east of the A12 generally south of Prested Hall. It is in agricultural uses and includes the fields immediately to the south of the Inworth Road west of the A12, land between London Road, Inworth Road and the A12 and land north of the London Road as far as New Lane (See Appendix A).

Some 55ha, generally located between the edge of Feering and the A12, is allocated in the adopted Braintree Local Plan Part 2 under Strategic Policy LPP21 (BLP, July 2022). This is a residential led mixed use scheme for about 835 new homes, up to 4ha of commercial uses and community facilities. The permitted Phase 1 is already under construction for a further 165 homes.

TCE’s adjoining land, which is referred to in the supporting text to Policy LP21, sits outside of the allocation boundary. However, this land is required by the Council to be utilised for recreation, open space and/or biodiversity net gain associated with strategic growth at Feering. This is part of a comprehensive masterplanning approach set out in the BLP.

An indicative masterplan for the LPP21 site is attached at Appendix B as context to these comments (the version submitted for Local Plan Examination). WSP has been instructed to prepare a comprehensive planning application for LPP21 aiming for submission toward the end of 2023. The pre-application process is underway, and a planning performance agreement is in the process of being finalised. Time limited species surveys were commenced last year and are substantially complete. It is anticipated that construction could commence from 2025 onwards, which would coincide with National Highways (NH) A12 construction programme.

A series of discussions have taken place with the NH team regarding the design of the A12 and planned growth at Feering. TCE is supportive, in principle, of the A12 proposals and specifically the provision of a new ‘all-moves’ Junction at Feering (Proposed J24). However, TCE has requested clarifications on or improvements to the A12 proposals to ensure that

planned growth and infrastructure are aligned. These discussions have indicated that the comments and requested changes set out below could be resolved by either amending the draft DCO design, design refinement as the scheme progresses and/or entering suitable land agreements.

While significant progress has been made, at the time of drafting this submission several matters still need to be resolved. Although it is acknowledged that both sides are trying to work towards an agreed position.

However, until the scheme is amended (or solutions are agreed) significant issues remain. These relate broadly to the extent, timing and use of permanent and temporary land take and impact on the design and deliverability of the strategic allocation at Feering under Policy LPP21.

2. Summary of Scheme Comments and Requested Changes

1. Prested Hall Revised Access and Northern London Road Development Access to LPP21 (General Arrangement - Sheet 15, National Highways owned Parcel 15/1c)

The A12 DCO scheme has been amended and a new access for Prested Hall is now proposed on to the London Road where the south bound A12 off slip embankment currently exists. This new link and overbridge would also provide alternative access to retained TCE land east of the A12.

The new Prested Hall access road and junction on to London Road potentially compromise our ability to provide the northern development access required to serve LPP21. The submitted DCO does not take account of the planned growth, the associated access strategy or the highway improvements required by Policy LPP21 itself.

Such policy requirements include a new link road connection running south from London Road to the Inworth Road. This development funded infrastructure has the benefit of bypassing Gore Pit junction, improving connectivity and is an important local benefit aimed at creating a more resilient network.

Delivery of the new Inworth Road link by TCE could be complicated further by ancillary works, such as the location of a new crossing facility on the London Road, and the Prested Hall access road being partly in a cutting. The DCO design therefore interferes with the delivery of LPP21.

If the DCO cannot be amended, it will be necessary to confirm that the A12 scheme can be subsequently amended as part of the development management process to enable delivery of LPP21. A preliminary northern access design will need to be agreed with NH and Essex County Council to demonstrate technical feasibility. A design is currently being

prepared by WSP for TCE, and engagement has taken place with officers at Braintree District Council, ECC and NH. It is also essential that any A12 works in this location are adopted as public highway and appropriate agreements are put in place to ensure delivery of LPP21 is not frustrated.

Both parties are working to progress such matters and agree an alternative design/access solution for this part of the London Road to facilitate LPP21 and avoid abortive highway works where practicable.

2. Land take along London Road and southwest of New Lane (TCE Parcels 15/8g, 15/8h, 15/8i, 15/8j)

The DCO boundary extends into Crown land for a strip of circa. 500m along the London Road. This land take appears excessive and more than the 3-4m needed for proposed pedestrian and cycle mitigation measures or to accommodate utility diversions. It is considered that there is scope to accommodate utilities within the footpath/cycleway corridor and this should be explored as part of the detailed design process. We are therefore working with NH to ensure that the DCO minimises impact on the developable area of LPP21 in this location.

The land being required also extends for the full extent of the London Road frontage creating potential problems in achieving future access requirements, providing service connections in London Road itself and for the conveyance of future surface water and services on to TCE land east of London Road as part of a strategic drainage strategy. More detail is therefore required to ensure the delivery and planning of LPP21 is not frustrated.

The level of permanent and temporary (with permanent rights) land take should be reduced to the minimum necessary to accommodate improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities along the London Road frontage. Any land required must also become adopted highway to ensure the delivery of access and services to LPP21 is not frustrated.

More detail on the timing of the works will be required in due course and a suitable agreement will be required to ensure the LPP21 site can be delivered. Agreement will need to be reached with both highways' authorities demonstrating that the required access to LPP21 and the creation of the Inworth Link Road are not compromised. WSP are currently progressing such advanced design work on behalf of TCE.

3. Land take adjacent to the old A12 and severance of The Crown Estate development site LPP21 (TCE Parcels 14/5c, 14/12a, 15/7a, 15/8a, 15/8b, 15/8c)

The DCO boundary west of the old A12 and towards Threshelfords Business Park includes an area of land proposed for permanent and temporary land take. This includes engineering works to accommodate a new permanent PRoW route and a temporary 'access road' from Inworth Road (not identified as a haul route in the submitted DCO). This impacts on the developable area of LPP21 and in locations that are required for development purposes. The timing of temporary works could also impact delivery of the site if not completed in a timely fashion.

The acquisition of land across the centre of the site to Threshelfords severs the central parcel of LPP21 and could prevent comprehensive masterplanning and delivery of the site, delivery of the Inworth Road Link and necessary drainage and service infrastructure at the right time. It is considered that some of the land being permanently required could be reduced at the detailed design stage.

TCE are therefore working with NH to refine the DCO design and to further minimise permanent land take. Both parties are also working towards an agreement that secures the rights necessary to implement LPP21, minimises land take and ensures temporary land take will not prevent timely delivery of LPP21.

4. Access to retained land east of the proposed A12 route at Feering via Prested Hall Link (General Arrangement - Sheet 15)

Plans show a new field access off the proposed Prested Hall access road, via a turning head at the base of a ramp. As currently designed the link does connect to the boundary with the retained TCE land.

Confirmation is required that access will be available from the turning head to the DCO boundary to allow access to the retained field and is to a suitable standard. The requested detail is to be developed at the detailed design stage and both parties are working to secure such an agreement.

5. Extent of land take east of the proposed A12 route at Feering (TCE Parcels 14/5d, 14/5e, 14/5f, 14/7b, 15/8d, 15/8e, 18/8f)

The extent of permanent land take in this area has been reduced which is welcomed. Land agreements are being progressed.

6. Land take along the Domsey Brook north and south of Inworth Road (Parcels 14/5a, 14/5b, 14/6a, 14/7a)

The A12 plans currently include sections of the Domsey Brook as permanent and temporary land take immediately north and south of the Inworth Road, which could interfere with our ability to make future drainage outfalls into the watercourse. It is considered that the main issue is the timing of and control over these works, and therefore the parties are working to secure the necessary agreements.

Appendix A - The Crown Estate – Croxton Estate Boundary (Phase 1 Sold/UC)



Appendix B - LPP21 Concept Masterplan - Local Plan Examination Version 2021

