



Preliminary Meeting Note

Application: A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Scheme
Reference: TR010060
Time and date: 12 January 2023 10:00
Venue: Witham Public Hall

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

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/eastern/a12-chelmsford-to-a120-widening-scheme/>

1. Welcome and Introduction

Adrian Hunter welcomed those present and introduced himself as panel lead and introduced Max Wiltshire and Jon Gorst and confirmed that together, they constituted the Examining Authority (ExA).

The ExA confirmed that their appointment was made by delegation from the Secretary of State (SoS) for the Department of Transport on 6 October 2022.

The ExA explained that it would be examining the application made by National Highways ('the Applicant') before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport who will decide whether or not to make an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project.

The ExA explained the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting (PM) and noted that the Examination will commence after the PM closes.

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

The ExA confirmed that a full audio recording of the Preliminary Meeting would be published on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed [here](#). In addition, the ExA undertook an unaccompanied site inspection of the route of the proposed scheme on the day before the Preliminary Meeting and a note of which can be found [here](#).

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

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

2. The ExA's Remarks about the Examination Process

The ExA briefly explained the examination process as established by the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008).

Further information on the process can be found in the [Advice Note 8.4](#).

Reuben Taylor KC, counsel for the Applicant, confirmed that they had submitted their response to the ExA's Rule 6 letter on 3 January 2023 [PDA-001] and had nothing further to add on this item.

Billy Parr (Essex County Council) confirmed they were happy with the arrangements as set out in the Rule 6 letter. They requested that, in considering the timetable, the ExA take account of the potential overlap between a number of different projects and referred specifically to the Lower Thames Crossing NSIP.

3. Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (IAPI)

The ExA explained the purpose of the IAPI (s88 PA2008), which can be found in [Annex B of the Rule 6](#) letter of 12 December 2022 and asked for any observations on them.

The Applicant referred to their letter of 3 January 2023 [PDA-001] where, in Schedule 2, they had provided a list of the issues cross-referenced to where those issues were dealt with in the Environmental Statement or in supporting application documents.

Essex County Council confirmed they had reviewed the IAPI and that they were content with it. They also confirmed that, amongst other things, their main focus was on traffic and transport issues, draft DCO, de-trunking issues, air quality, and flood risk.

Jackie Longman from Maldon District Council confirmed they agreed with most of the IAPI. In relation to Principal Issue 6, the gas pipeline diversion, she considered that the operation and future maintenance of the pipeline, as well as temporary or permanent access to the land should be considered by the Examining Authority.

Andrew Harding on behalf of Messing-Cum-Inworth Parish Council confirmed that they had no comments on the IAPI.

Linda Reed on behalf of Boreham Parish Council confirmed that they had no comments on the IAPI. She confirmed that their principal issue was in relation to traffic and transport issues affecting Boreham.

Ian Mahoney raised an issue in relation to conformity with specific plans. The ExA welcomed his participation but advised that the issue should be brought up in the Open Floor Hearings in the afternoon.

Katherine Evans on behalf of Feering Parish Council raised the issue of funding, and whether the issue of designated funds will be addressed. She requested that this be added to the IAPI.

4. Draft Examination Timetable

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 ExA confirmed that they had undertaken an Unaccompanied Site Visit on 11 January 2023 and that a note of the visit would be published on the website as soon as possible.

The Applicant elaborated on its suggested timetable amendments contained in its Response to the Rule 6 Letter [PDA-001].

The Applicant referred to the ExA's request for the submission of an NPS tracker. Mr Taylor confirmed that they were happy to provide one but sought clarification on exactly what format it should take. The ExA agreed to review their request and provide further clarification in the Rule 8 letter.

Essex County Council raised topics they wish to be covered in an Issue Specific Hearing (ISH), including discussions on key junctions, detrunking and construction. Essex County Council also referred the ExA to the forthcoming examination of the Lower Thames Crossing and queried whether consideration could be had to avoiding potential overlap with Hearings and Deadlines.

Mr Humphreys, a solicitor on behalf of Messing and Inworth Action Group Limited questioned how the hearings would be conducted and in particular whether it would be on a geographic basis or on a thematic approach. The ExA confirmed that it was likely to be on both.

Will Thomas, a solicitor for Parker Strategic Land raised whether there could be a hearing into land acquisition given the permanent acquisition of their client's land.

Mr Taylor confirmed that National Highways support the ideas proposed on Issue Specific Hearings.

Maldon District Council and Feering Parish Council both highlighted that Deadline 5 of the Draft Examination Timetable fell on a Bank Holiday, which was part of the celebrations for the King's Coronation.

Jackie Longman identified that within Maldon District Council there are local elections to be held in early May and that significant numbers of staff would be involved in supporting these, so asked the ExA to consider this when reviewing the Draft Timetable.

All comments received were noted by the ExA and will be considered when drafting the Final Examination Timetable.

5. Procedural Decisions

The ExA clarified the Procedural Decisions made under section 89(3) of the PA2008 and asked for any observations.

The Procedural Decisions can be found in Annex F of the Rule 6 Letter.

Mr Humphreys on behalf of Messing and Inworth Action Group Limited requested to have a Statement of Common Ground with the Applicant, and with Messing-Cum-Inworth Parish Council. Mr Humphreys also confirmed that their suggested site visit's locations are in the statement they provided.

Mr Taylor on behalf of National Highways confirmed that it would be proceeding with Statements of Common Ground with Messing and Inworth Action Group Limited and Messing-Cum-Inworth Parish Council.

Mr Parr from Essex County Council explained that the Council is working to prepare a Local Impact Report (LIR) and a Statement of Common Ground. Mr Parr also suggested that having hard copies of the application documents at future events would be helpful. In relation to site visits, Mr Parr also identified some locations, along with examples of de-trunking to be looked at by the ExA. The ExA requested that details are submitted in writing, along with a justification to support their inclusion within any future ASI.

Will Thomas on behalf of Parker Strategic Land confirmed they would send the Applicant a redacted copy of their land agreement to support their case that a Statement of Common Ground should be prepared with them.

Following submissions from Witham Town Council, the Applicant confirmed they would prepare a Statement of Common Ground with Witham Town Council.