

A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Project

Deadline 1 submission

30 January 2023

Initial Assessment of Principal Issues and proposed hearings

As confirmed at the preliminary hearing, Essex County Council (ECC) concurs with the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues and has direct interests in many of the aspects. As a major highway scheme, we consider that significant consideration should be given to the traffic and transport aspects of the scheme in particular. We request that issue specific hearings are held on the following aspects:

- Junction 19, the B1137 and Junction 21
- Junction 24
- The sections of the A12 which are to be de-trunked
- The scheme's construction impacts
- The approach to monitoring and evaluation

Examination timetable

ECC has reviewed and noted the examination timetable. As outlined at the preliminary hearing, we respectfully request that in due course the Planning Inspectorate give consideration to the examination timetable for the Lower Thames Crossing project (for which the DCO application was accepted for examination on 28 November 2022) and avoid clashes in deadlines and hearings between the two examinations where possible.

Request for hard copy plans to be made available at future hearings

As requested at the preliminary hearing, we suggest it would be helpful if the Applicant can make certain plans and documents available for reference and inspection at future hearings for use by all attendees.

A number of the documents are of very large file size and can be difficult to access electronically. We have since engaged with National Highways and requested that as a minimum they make the following documents available, and we understand they are considering this request:

- the General Arrangement Plans (ideally at bigger than A3 size)
- the Works Plans and Temporary Works Plans
- the latest draft of the DCO
- the Case for the Scheme

Accompanied site visits

ECC has reviewed the Applicant's list of locations for the accompanied site visits. We would like to request that the following locations are also visited:

Location	Reasoning
Main Road, Boreham	Traffic through the village of Boreham is expected to increase significantly
Duke of Wellington junction	This is a key route for Maldon traffic to/from the A12
Rivenhall End – Henry Dixon Road underpass and A12 northbound footway (accessible via steps from Henry Dixon Road)	To view the Henry Dixon Road underpass, which is proposed to be transferred to ECC, and view a section of the A12 which is to be de-trunked
Braxted Road / Braxted Park Road	This will be a key route between Tiptree and the A12 which is forecast to become significantly busier
Messing village	Traffic through the village of Messing is expected to increase significantly
Rettendon Common	ECC suggest this a good local example of where a trunk road has been de-trunked previously
Copdock, Suffolk	For comparison, ECC suggest this is a poor local example of where a trunk road (in this case the A12) has been de-trunked previously and a future position that ECC wishes to avoid.

We appreciate that visiting the locations above will take additional time, particularly Copdock which is approximately 20 miles from Marks Tey, but we do consider it will provide the Examining Authority with additional useful context. ECC is happy to arrange minibus transport to Rettendon Common and Copdock if this would be useful.

ECC representation at the open floor hearing 1

For reference, a copy of the oral representation made by Mr Billy Parr on behalf of ECC at the open floor hearing 1 is appended to this letter.

Attendance at future hearings

As a host authority ECC is likely to wish to make representations at the majority of the hearings, and if possible would like to reserve the right to speak at each hearing. We can confirm our attendance in advance of each hearing.

Appendix 1 – ECC oral representation at open floor hearing 1 by Mr Billy Parr

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. I'll start by saying a little about ECC's role in the project, and then outline some of the key outstanding issues for us.

As a host authority Essex County Council has a significant interest in the A12 widening project.

The stretch of the A12 in question between Junction 19 and 25, about 15 miles, is wholly within the administrative boundary of ECC.

Passes through four Districts – Chelmsford, Braintree, Maldon (small part), Colchester.

Seven Parish Councils – Boreham, HP, Witham, Rivenhall, Kelvedon, Feering and Marks Tey.

A number of other Parish Councils will be impacted as a result of the scheme.

As a Local Authority ECC is one of the largest in the country, and our role as County Council includes:

- the local highway and transport authority, which includes responsibility for over 5,000 miles of roads, 4,000 miles of PRow and 1,500 structures
- the lead local flood authority
- the local education authority
- planning authority for applications relating to minerals and waste

We have been engaging with National Highways and stakeholders on this project for some time.

For the most part these discussions have been constructive and co-operative.

To be clear, we support the principle and need for the scheme.

But, fundamentally, we do consider that some substantive changes to the scheme are required in order to make it acceptable to ECC.

These changes are required to mitigate negative impacts of the scheme as currently designed, will have on some communities, and perhaps to take advantage of some opportunities presented by scheme.

National Highways have made some changes to the scheme in response to things that we in our role as LHA have asked for, but most of these changes we think have been quite modest.

I'd like to make the somewhat obvious point that the Strategic Road Network (that which National Highways is responsible for) is dependent on the local highway network that Local Highway Authorities (like ECC) are responsible for.

With perhaps no exceptions, no journeys start and end on the SRN – with the SRN being accessed and egressed via the local network.

That means that the interface between the SRN and the local highway network is important.

That interface occurs at SRN junctions, and in our view it is essential that junctions work both from an SRN and a local highway network perspective.

We consider currently that that is not the case for all of the junctions planned as part of this scheme.

Our 'aims' for this project are to maximise the benefits of the scheme and to minimise the disbenefits to Essex communities, businesses and visitors.

A big part of this involves seeking to ensure that the impacts of the scheme on the local highway and transport networks are acceptable and adverse impacts are mitigated.

I'm not intending to go into any detail here, as we will make our position clear as we go through the examination, but key outstanding issues for us are:

- The approach to de-trunking – we think there is a much better alternative
- The arrangement and impacts of the proposed junctions, not least of which are Junctions 24 and Junction 21 (both new junctions)
- The impacts on the B1137 particularly through Boreham
- We would like to suggest some amendments to some of the provisions within the draft DCO, to best cover our interests
- The need for post-opening monitoring of the scheme impacts, coupled with a commitment from National Highways to address any issues
- The construction impacts and how these will be managed, noting that road works will be familiar to regular users of the A12

I'll finish by saying that we look forward to playing a full and active part in the examination, and to continuing to engage with National Highways and other interested parties in an effort to make the scheme as good as it can be. Thank you.

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council

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