

Appendix B - Comments on Local Impact Reports

The Examining Authority (ExA) issued Deadline 2 on the 13th February 2023 which required the submission of a Local Impact Report (LIR) from affected parties. The LIR for the Maldon district [REP2-068] highlighted the impact of the Project (the widening of the A12 including the Cadent Gas Main diversion) on the residents and businesses of, and visitors to, Maldon. The analysis below points to areas of common interest and views between Maldon District Council (MDC) and its neighbouring authorities, as well as Essex County Council (ECC), being the main authority for Essex.

1. Air Quality

1.1 MDC has raised concerns regarding:

- i) the impact of the construction phase of the Project on air quality at two air quality management area (AQMA) sites at Market Hill, Maldon and Danbury, Chelmsford on the A414;
- ii) the impacts of traffic originating from the Maldon district on the air quality of Hatfield Peverel as a result of the closure of Junction 20a and the proposed Junction 21.

1.2 As to (i), the construction phase at Hatfield Peverel may cause delays on the B1019 Maldon Road and motorists may seek an alternative route to connect to the strategic road network (SRN) at Junction 18, Sandon. This has been the assumption of National Highways: that when Junctions 20a and 20b close, traffic will find alternative routes to the SRN. The main routes to the SRN for Maldon district residents and businesses (HGVs, LGVs, vans, cars and motorbikes) are via the A414 or via the B1019. The A414 from Maldon and Heybridge runs through the Danbury AQMA and joins the A12 at Junction 18, whilst the A414 at Maldon commences at the Market Hill AQMA and continues onwards to Heybridge and onto the B1019 which runs through Hatfield Peverel to the Maldon Road junction and the Duke of Wellington (DoW) mini roundabout. If the Project causes delays, through construction on the B1019 Maldon district traffic will use the next suitable route via the A414 through both the Maldon AQMA and Danbury AQMA (Outline Construction Management Plan [APP-272]).

- 1.3 It is noted that the impacts of the Project on the air quality along the AQMA in Danbury, Chelmsford have not been raised as a concern by the neighbouring local authority or by ECC who defers to the respective Local Authorities.
- 1.4 As to (ii), MDC has raised concerns regarding the air quality in Hatfield Peverel, within the neighbouring Braintree district, during operation of the new Junction 21 as a result of traffic from the Maldon district queuing at the Duke of Wellington mini roundabout. These concerns do not appear to be shared by Braintree District Council (BDC), which states in its LIR [REP2-041] that the Council's air quality specialists have assessed the information provided in the Development Consent Order (DCO) and concluded the information submitted is adequate and follows the methodology set out in the relative guidance. ECC however, has requested through its LIR [REP2-055] that additional air monitoring should be carried out in several locations, one of which is the B1019/The Street in Hatfield Peverel. It is therefore considered that whilst ECC defer air quality issues to the relevant Local Authorities (LAs), it shares the concerns of MDC in relation to the effect of the Project on air quality at Hatfield Peverel (ECC LIR, paragraph 8.2.16) and wishes mitigation measures to be included to evaluate this possibility. MDC welcomes this support but feels that the Applicant and National Highways should reach an agreement within the DCO as to what would be the consequence of air quality levels exceeding modelled thresholds during construction and following the opening of the Project.
- 1.5 MDC notes there is an inconsistency in the approach to air quality monitoring within the LIR and Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) submitted by BDC. The consultant commissioned by BDC to assess the approach by the Applicant has taken towards the assessment of air quality during construction and operation states they consider the assessment provided by National Highways to be thorough, following the correct guidance and any exceedances in air pollution were considered not to be significant for the BDC area. With MDC's specific reference to the Maldon Road junction with the Duke of Wellington mini roundabout, BDC assume within their SoCG that more reliable air quality monitoring data will become available *'as the project progresses to reduce the uncertainties of the model input data'*, calling for a *'comprehensive construction management plan'* to *'be agreed and implemented to prevent and control air pollution'*.
- 1.6 MDC notes ECC's deferral of air quality issues to LAs but note as detailed in Appendix A of ECC's LIR and referred to in paragraph 4 above, ECC has requested air quality

monitoring relating to traffic monitoring at the B1019 The Street/Maldon Road (Duke of Wellington) junction, Hatfield Peverel (ECC LIR Appendix A [REP2-055]).

2 Landscape and Visual

- 2.1 The impact of the Project on the landscape of the parish of Wickham Bishops and the Blue Mills Nature Reserve as a result of tree and habitat loss are of significant concern to MDC, as detailed in section 6.9 of its LIR, and would be contrary to policies N1 and N2 within the Maldon District Local Development Plan 2017. The preferred Cadent Gas Main diversion corridor would run through a section of the Blue Mills Nature Reserve, where there are rare species of Black Poplar trees, one of which has been designated as a veteran tree in the Applicant's Arboricultural Report. The *Retained and Removed Vegetation Plans* [APP-035] show a large section of trees, hedges and vegetation to be removed (based on a worst-case scenario) within the parish of Wickham Bishops and the neighbouring parish of Witham in Braintree district.
- 2.2 ECC states (LIR paras 9.2.6 and 9.6.12) that it is important for veteran trees to be identified, and (LIR para 9.2.7) that candidate veteran trees, which are considered the veteran trees of the future, provide important habitats for mammals and invertebrates. ECC considers *'the impact of the loss of these trees particularly the category A and potential veteran trees in the local landscape is significant, both visually and environmentally. When considering that the England Trees Action Plan (2021-2024) aims to enhance tree stock, not knowing the actual impact of loss of irreplaceable habitat prior to consent has the potential to lead to the loss of more significant trees, impacting on the local environment'* (LIR para 9.2.8). This view supports the concerns raised by MDC in relation to the loss of trees and the negative impacts on habitats and visual amenity, particularly within Blue Mills Nature Reserve and the north-western parishes within the Maldon district. The Project will result in a permanent scar through the Blue Mills Nature Reserve within the Maldon district and as noted by ECC will result in a significant impact on the landscape within the Order Limits due to the loss of 10 category A trees, 50 category B, 34 category C and two category U trees in addition to the proposed loss of 380 other trees (ECC LIR para 9.2.9).

- 2.3 Comments submitted by BDC within their LIR [REP2-041] also highlight the significant number of trees proposed for removal and state this will have a significant effect on the landscape characters of the land adjacent to the Project. It is considered the impact of the Project would be such that some of these areas will still experience significant landscape changes 15 years after the completion of the Project. This emphasises the issues raised by MDC in its LIR at sections 6.3 and 6.9 in terms of trees loss, disturbance (and possible loss of) habitat for wildlife, and the legacy impact of the Cadent Gas Main diversion on a recommended Local Wildlife Site at Blue Mills Nature Reserve and the surrounding landscape of Wickham Bishops.

3 Traffic and Transport

- 3.1 Maldon district has a high level of car ownership at 89% which is higher than the regional or national average due to the lack of sustainable transport options. The impact of this heavy reliance on cars is significant, commuting from Maldon and Heybridge to the nearest SRN connections and National Rail Network connections plus traffic associated with the District's main employment site in Heybridge (HGVs, LGVs, vans and lorries) cause congestion in the Braintree district, most notably Hatfield Peverel, as a result of queueing traffic at the Duke of Wellington mini roundabout/Maldon Road junction on the Local Road Network (LRN).
- 3.2 MDC fears its existing and future housing and employment (economic) growth has not been adequately taken into consideration in the traffic modelling of the Project, which may result in a deterioration in the short-term of the current Level of Service D experienced at the Duke of Wellington mini roundabout. Future growth in the north of the District could be constrained because of the congestion at the Duke of Wellington mini roundabout/ Maldon Road junction. ECC notes (LIR para 8.3.23) that the modelling carried out by the Applicant *'indicates that the A12 widening scheme would result in a modest improvement to the overall operation of the Duke of Wellington junction in both the 2027 and 2042 future-year scenarios. This improvement is not observed on all arms of the junction, however; the Maldon Road arm in particular would experience higher delay and queues with the A12 scheme in place'*. ECC therefore supports the concerns of MDC and the need for monitoring of the current Level of Service D at the Duke of Wellington oW mini roundabout with the Maldon Road junction in the shorter term to ensure Maldon District residents, businesses and visitors are not disadvantaged by the Project. MDC remains particularly concerned that the closure of Junction 20a will encourage all modes of transport to turn right at the Duke of

Wellington mini roundabout / Maldon Road junction. MDC considers waiting times will increase at the Maldon Road junction where all queueing traffic at Maldon Road will turn right (and not left with Junction 20a operating). In light of this, ECC has suggested the design of Junction 21 should be amended to allow for a future Maldon Link Road to join the southern arm of Junction 21, allowing for traffic emanating from the Maldon district to avoid the Duke of Wellington mini roundabout and the Maldon Road junction to turn right. This would improve journey times for Maldon District residents, visitors and businesses and improve the quality of life for the residents of Hatfield Peverel.