



Meeting note

Project name	A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening
File reference	TR010060
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	19 May 2021
Meeting with	Highways England (the Applicant)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project update
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

Programme update

The Applicant advised that since January 2021 it had refined the scheme design and reduced the required land-take. It was now preparing for statutory consultation in June 2021 and engagement with stakeholders prior to this, including workshops with local authorities (LA) relating to the design changes, was ongoing. The Applicant confirmed that it had shared relevant technical information with the LAs and other key stakeholders at an appropriately early juncture.

The Inspectorate enquired about what the key design changes were. The Applicant responded that the changes mainly comprised minor localised amendments to the proposed infrastructure surrounding the carriageway including environmental mitigation. There had also been some reductions in areas previously identified for use as borrow pits. These changes had contributed to a refinement of the scheme boundary. There had also been some changes around Inworth Road and the Applicant was in discussions with the local highway authority (Essex County Council) about the scheme design at this location.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to establish as early in the process as possible whether any utilities diversions required to deliver the scheme could be considered Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in their own right.

Draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC)

The Inspectorate had reviewed the draft SoCC and observed that it was presented in a standard form, save for Annex A which established a timetable of in-person public information events that were proposed. Where any of the events established could not occur due to COVID-19 restrictions, Annex A set out that the Applicant would provide notice/communications to that effect on Highways England's website. The Inspectorate confirmed that the Applicant's approach was pragmatic within the current public health circumstances.

The Inspectorate queried whether the LAs had raised any concerns regarding the approach set out at Annex A of the draft SoCC. The Applicant confirmed that the LAs understood and supported the Applicant's approach in this respect, notwithstanding the fact that they believed in-person events would be welcomed by local communities. Braintree District Council in particular was stated to support the intention to hold public events if they could be conducted safely.

Submission timeline

The Applicant advised that it anticipated submitting its Development Consent Order (DCO) application in late March 2022 following statutory consultation between June and August 2021. It intended to submit a suite of draft application documents to the Inspectorate for review in January 2022.

The Inspectorate clarified that its review of any draft environmental documents would be focused on the project description chapter of the draft Environmental Statement and its relationship with the draft DCO, as well as the draft Habitats Regulations Assessment.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant agreed to provide the Inspectorate with a file-transfer link to its consultation material, in addition to sharing a link to where the documentation would be hosted on the Highways England project page.