



Meeting note

Project name	M5 J10 Improvements Scheme
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	21 May 2021
Meeting with	Gloucestershire County Council (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.

Scheme overview

The proposed scheme would comprise works to the Strategic Road Network (SRN) in the form of improvements to Junction 10 of the M5 (J10M5), and works to the local road network in the form of the widening of the A4019 and the creation of a new link road connecting the A4019 and B4634 all to the west of Cheltenham. The Applicant explained that the works to J10M5 would exceed 15ha and the scheme therefore qualified for determination under s22 of the PA2008.

Programme update

The Applicant advised that the Preferred Route Announcement (PRA) was scheduled for 16 June 2021. A leaflet would be produced comprising the need for the scheme, a summary of the options consultation, responses to the consultation, and the influence of the consultation on the preferred route. Other press materials to be published included a press notice, website updates, stage 2 options consultation report, stage overview assessment report, and a notification of development.

The Inspectorate enquired as to the scale of compulsory acquisition anticipated across the scheme. The Applicant explained the characteristics of each of the 3 elements of the project and noted that the preferred option for the works to J10M5 would be to acquire the properties at Withybridge Gardens to enable construction of the scheme. In respect of the other elements of the scheme, the Applicant advised that a significant proportion of the affected land was owned by the local authority.

The Applicant stated that impacted landowners were engaged during the non-statutory consultation in October 2020, and that it was continuing to consult with landowners and statutory organisations. It expected that the Statement of Community Consultation would be published in Autumn 2021 followed by statutory consultation in late 2021/early 2022. The Applicant advised that it would begin preparing for statutory consultation after the PRA.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant anticipated any options-related issues subsisting after the PRA. The Applicant responded that although some minor deviation from the proposed design was to be expected, it did not anticipate any significant issues going forward.

The Inspectorate enquired about the role of Highways England (HE) in the project. The Applicant established that the project would incorporate works to the SRN which is owned, operated and maintained by HE. The Applicant would establish an agreement with HE to construct the works within the red line boundary, and then return the SRN to HE post-construction. The Applicant added that it met regularly with HE, and that the HE website currently displayed some basic information about the project.

Environmental progress

The Applicant advised that its environmental survey work is at an advanced stage, particularly in respect of ecology and habitats. The Inspectorate noted that the Applicant had prepared bat survey work, and queried whether bats were associated with a particular Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Applicant responded that the Forest of Dean SAC was noted for the presence of bats, although it had also surveyed individual buildings. The SAC was stated to be some distance from the scheme, however the Applicant anticipated the potential for interaction between the scheme and bat migration corridors. The Applicant advised that appropriate mitigation would be incorporated into the lighting design.

The Applicant stated that it is undertaking a geophysical assessment for buried archaeology and trenching evaluation work is due to commence shortly. In respect of any other survey work required, the Inspectorate ran through the likely timescales implications associated with submitting an authorisation request under section 53 of the PA2008 in the event that rights of entry were required.

Additionally, a draft Flood Risk Assessment had been produced, and work had begun on an updated Water Framework Directive assessment. Flood modelling had also been undertaken by the Applicant in view of the low lying nature of the affected land and the potential flood risk. The Inspectorate queried whether there would be a requirement for land-take in flood compensation areas. The Applicant responded that this would be the case, and that discussions were ongoing with the Environment Agency in this regard. The Applicant stated that it has engaged with the Environment Agency and Natural England during the data gathering and design development process.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant was undertaking a noise and air quality baseline assessment, and if so whether the impact of COVID-19 was being accounted for. The Applicant responded that it had undertaken surveys in 2019 to establish a baseline, and that air quality and noise modelling was currently being undertaken having been delayed due to COVID-19. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to be mindful of

variations in air quality and noise due to the effects of COVID-19 on traffic levels, and to clearly establish the basis of the information it was providing. The Applicant confirmed that it had taken into account the reduced road volumes.

The Applicant advised that its Scoping Report was undergoing a final review before an anticipated submission in mid-July 2021 and that a draft Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR) was in production. The Inspectorate advised it would need to create a webpage for the scheme on the National Infrastructure Planning website in advance of the Scoping Report being submitted. It also advised that it would require a geographic information system (GIS) shapefile at least 10 days in advance of a scoping request. The shapefile must comply with the requirements of the Inspectorate's Advice Note 7.

Submission timeline

The Applicant expected to submit its Development Consent Order application in late 2022, with start of works (construction) targeted for early 2024.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required

The following actions were agreed:

- The Applicant agreed to provide the Inspectorate with further clarity about whether borrow pits would be included in the scheme after the meeting.
- The Applicant advised that it would consider how it wished to engage with the Inspectorate going forward.