

Preliminary Meeting Note

Summary of Key Points discussed and advice given

Application: West Midlands Interchange SRFI

Reference: TR050005

Time and date: 10am on 27 February 2019

Venue: Hayward Suite, Molineux Stadium, Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton, WV1 4QR

This meeting note is not a full transcript of the Preliminary Meeting. It is a summary of the key points discussed and responses given. An audio recording of the event is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website.

Item 1 - Welcome and Introduction

The meeting opened at 10.00

Paul Singleton (PS) introduced himself as the single appointed person comprising the Examining Authority (ExA) for the above application. He introduced the Inspectorate's case team, and made some administrative announcements concerning evacuation procedures for the venue.

He emphasised that the meeting would be recorded and published on the National Infrastructure Planning Website for a period of 5 years post decision and reminded participants not to provide any information that would prefer not become public in oral submissions.

PS reminded attendees of the proposal which comprises several elements; in summary:

An intermodal freight terminal with direct connections to the West Coast Main Line, capable of accommodating up to 10 trains per day and trains of up to 775m long, including container storage, Heavy Goods Vehicle ('HGV') parking, rail control building and staff facilities;

- Up to 743,200 square metres (gross internal area) of rail served warehousing and ancillary service buildings;
- New road infrastructure and works to the existing road infrastructure;
- Demolition of existing structures and earthworks to create development plots and landscape zones;
- Reconfiguring and burying of existing overhead power lines and pylons; And
- Strategic landscaping and open space, including alterations to public rights of way and the creation of new ecological enhancement areas and publicly accessible open areas.

PS encouraged those not familiar with the website to have a look at it as a very useful tool to finding the documentation relating to the project.

PS invited those present and intending to speak to introduce themselves:

Morag Thompson introduced herself as the lawyer advising the applicant, and introduced **John Rhodes**, also for the applicant.

John Eastwood introduced himself as a Penkridge Parish Councillor and raised concerns about the suitability of Penkridge Library as a venue for deposit of examination documents.

Paula Appleby and **Donna Gilmartin** from Stop West Midlands Interchange introduced themselves.

Paul Windmill introduced himself as speaking for the Staffordshire Branch of the CPRE and confirmed that they would want to attend some hearings during the examination.

Cllr Bob Cope introduced himself as representing 13 parish councils and as a District Councillor. He was hoping to make submissions on the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues.

Item 2 – the ExA’s remarks about the examination process

PS explained that his task was to report to the Secretary of State for Transport. The examination, which will be principally written, will last a maximum of 6 months. There will be a three-month period for the preparation of a report, and a three-month period for the Secretary of State to determine the application.

Although the process will be principally written, PS explained that he could decide to hold hearings in certain circumstances. He emphasised that any party was welcome to attend issue specific hearings, even if not expressly invited, and that participation (particularly in DCO hearings) was on a without-prejudice basis.

PS explained that he would hold one or more accompanied site inspections, and invited parties to submit suggested locations and features for the itinerary in line with the examination timetable.

Cllr Brian Cox asked how wide the area of the site visit would be.

PS gave the example of Shoal Hill as a location in the surrounding area of the site that he would be likely to visit. He requested relevant and important suggestions for site visit itinerary items in line with the examination timetable.

Cllr Bob Cope asked if PS would view the site from locations proposed by interested parties. PS confirmed that he would.

Item 3 – Initial Assessment of Principal Issues

PS introduced the initial assessment of principal issues set out in Annex B to his letter of 23 January 2019. He emphasised that this list was not exhaustive.

Cllr Bob Cope asked if issue 3, relating to employment growth, would include the principal of need. PS confirmed that the National Policy Statement sets out a national need, but also criteria against which the application must be assessed. **Cllr Cope** also asked if the serialisation of mineral reserves were a relevant issue. PS confirmed that it was likely to be a relevant issue.

Item 4 – Timetable for the examination

PS introduced the draft timetable for the examination set out in Annex C to his letter of 23 January 2019. He explained that there would be two Open Floor hearings on the 27 February, following the Preliminary Meeting, and an Issue Specific Hearing on the Draft DCO on the 28 February. He invited comments on the proposed timetable.

Morag Thompson asked that deadline 3 be moved backwards to allow the applicant time to respond to deadline 2 submissions.

PS noted that moving deadline 3 would impact upon the time available to consider submissions. He invited any further comments on deadline 3.

Russ James noted that the applicant has greater resources than residents and asked that the deadline not be moved.

John Rhodes asked if the topics given in the draft timetable for Issue Specific Hearings were provisional. PS confirmed that they were drawn very broadly and were subject to change.

Philip Sharp representing the Inland Waterways Association noted that he was not available for the week currently reserved for hearings at item 9.

PS explained that the process was principally written, and there were advantages to grouping the hearings. He noted that the examination was quite an intensive process.

Alison Blakeway representing Greensforge Sailing Club reiterated the issue raised by Inland Waterways. Her availability in the early part of the week was constrained.

PS asked what Ms Blakeway's role was in the club.

Alison Blakeway confirmed she was a member of the club with a professional planning background and would be making representations on behalf of the club.

Morag Thompson noted that responses to second questions were required 2 weeks following their publication, but that following deadlines would need consequential amendments if this were to be addressed.

PS noted that there may be some flexibility.

Item 5 – Procedural Decisions

PS noted that he had accepted some additional submissions outside of the timetable prior to the beginning of the examination. He also noted that he had requested a land and rights position statement, and certain Statements of Common Ground.

Mr Kelly noted that there was no statement of common ground requested between the applicant and Stop West Midlands Interchange.

PS noted that such a statement would be welcome.

John Rhodes confirmed that they were happy to have that discussion with any party.

Donna Gilmartin noted that past attempts at engagement with the applicant had been unsuccessful. She asked if there was to be a 'summing up' period at the end of the 6-month examination.

PS explained that there would not be. There would be the opportunity to comment on submissions in writing.

John Eastwood asked if there had been traffic studies undertaken in connection with the proposal.

PS confirmed that there had.

The meeting closed at 11.46.