



Meeting note

Project name	Oxfordshire SRF1
File reference	TR050008
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	20 July 2021
Meeting with	Oxfordshire Rail freight Ltd
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
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.

Project Update

The scoping process has now been concluded. Discussions remain ongoing with the key local authorities both at the county and district level on a range of fronts including Planning Performance Agreements and general organisational matters. Some discussions had also taken place regarding the content such as the transport and access strategies and early work around the Transport Assessment and the scoping that is required to be undertaken and the approach to modelling. The transport working group had been created and has been running for several months.

Engagement had begun with the Parish councils. This had included providing briefing notes to the relevant members. This will be further progressed now that the scoping opinion has been provided. Within the next 2-3 weeks the Applicant anticipates beginning conversations regarding the Statement of Community Consultation to ensure that the councils are happy with the consultation strategy to be undertaken.

Regular meetings are ongoing with Network Rail and an engagement programme has been created to discuss the requirements and agreements regarding particular aspects of the work that need to be undertaken by each of the parties. The Applicant explained that a good working relationship is held between the two parties. Issues that were raised by Network Rail at Scoping have been discussed or are the subject of future conversations that are due to be held.

Programme

The Applicant anticipates undertaking a non-statutory consultation between December 2021 and January 2022. This will include consultation on draft documents and early-stage versions of the Environmental Statement Chapters as they stand at that particular time. The stage 2 statutory consultation is anticipated to be undertaken around June/July 2022.

The applicant outlined plans to submit draft documentation to The Inspectorate at around the same time as undertaking the Statutory Consultation. The Inspectorate advised that if sending draft versions of documents to be reviewed it is best to send versions that have already received consultation comments. The Inspectorate explained that it will not do a full review of the Development Consent Order so advised the Applicant to indicate any specific drafting for the Inspectorate to review and to highlight any novel issues.

The Applicant confirmed an anticipated submission date of Q4 2022.

Scoping Opinion

The Applicant wished to raise several points regarding the Scoping Opinion that had been issued by the Inspectorate.

In the Scoping Opinion the Inspectorate refused to scope out risks of major accidents and disasters. The Inspectorate explained that given a lack of detail was provided on the nature of operations, and in light of safety concerns raised in consultation responses (such as the presence of a bomb storage site in close proximity to the main site) the Inspectorate was unable to scope out this aspect. The Inspectorate directed the Applicant towards the IEMA (2020) Major Accidents and Disasters in EIA: An IEMA Primer, as an example of how to undertake a proportionate assessment.

The Applicant raised concerns of how to assess the potential cumulative effects arising from projects that are in the early stages of planning. The Inspectorate advised that producing a Scoping Report is generally considered to constitute the milestone by which a project should be considered for cumulative effects. Advice Note seventeen¹ (AN17) which has been published on the National Infrastructure Planning website provides more information on the Cumulative effects assessment relevant to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. In line with this, a tiered approach is endorsed which assigns a level of certainty to the information available. The Inspectorate advised that AN17 is guidance geared towards other NSIPs rather than projects that are on the Local Authority's list of projects, however the Applicant was advised that if there is a possibility of a cumulative impact it would need to be considered.

The Inspectorate advised that without the detail provided by another project a meaningful assessment cannot be undertaken. The Applicant outlined that they would deal with possible projects on a sensitivity basis. If the project proposed in the surrounding area was to gain status the Applicant would ensure that assessments are carried out on a sensitivity basis and this would apply to assessing all effects in all

¹ <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Advice-note-17V4.pdf>

disciplines not just focused upon specific matters, such as transport. The Inspectorate advised that the Applicant would need to be clear on which schemes have been included in the transport modelling and other assessments and which have not.

The Applicant is currently considering if any other elements of the project could be an NSIP. The Applicant advised that they could submit a draft report outlining the current thoughts on what constituted an NSIP and what is considered as Associated development. The Inspectorate although happy to review, advised that it cannot comment at draft document stage on the principle of whether certain elements of the project are NSIPs or Associated Development. The Inspectorate advised the Applicant to be clear in the consultation as to their position in relation to which elements are deemed to be NSIPs and which elements are considered to be Associated Development. The Applicant further stated that they do not anticipate going out to consultation without a clear understanding of this.

Digital Environmental Statement

The Inspectorate advised that digital Environmental Impact Assessments are part of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG's) wider digital agenda and confirmed that the Inspectorate is open to receiving digital submissions from Applicants.

The Applicant confirmed that it would submit its Environmental Statement using the conventional approach but is seeking to use more digital aspects within the consultation that will be undertaken.

Submission

The Inspectorate confirmed that hard copies of the application documents are no longer required upon submission. It was advised that if an application is submitted and subsequently accepted to proceed to Examination, an Examining Authority may ask for certain hard copies of documents to be produced and provided to them.

The Inspectorate advised that towards the end of pre-app a shared site would be created, and the Applicant and Inspectorate case team would then be able to practice using the site by sending draft documents.

The Inspectorate explained that an application should be submitted through a shared site, not via USBs. Once documents have been uploaded by the Applicant the Inspectorate should be informed and no changes should then be made by the Applicant.

Specific decisions/ follow-up required?

The following actions were agreed:

- The Planning Inspectorate to send through dates for the next meeting to be held in November 2021.
- The Inspectorate to update the Project page to reflect a new submission date of Q4 2022.