



Meeting note

Project	A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening
File reference	TR010060
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	2 November 2021
Meeting with	National Highways (formerly Highways England) (the Applicant)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Supplementary Consultation 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 Update

The Applicant briefly provided an overview of the continued pre-application work conducted since the previous project update meeting, which included: preparation of its Supplementary Consultation exercise (SUP-CON) material; ongoing reporting on the Statutory Consultation response and feedback; continued production of its application document suite; ongoing statutory body engagement; and ongoing progression of its design and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The Applicant explained that it was still working towards its anticipated submission date of March 2022 but noted the scale/ nature of response to SUP-CON may affect the delivery for this timescale, noting responses may result in further changes to the design.

Supplementary Consultation

The Applicant set out the period in which SUP-CON will run: Tuesday 9 November to Sunday 19 December 2021, a total of five weeks and five days. The Applicant plans to conduct SUP-CON using a mix of digital and physical events and whilst there will be a virtual event space and three online drop sessions hosted digitally, the exercise will

also include three drop-in events located to target affected parties where 'Category 1' changes are proposed.

The Applicant explained that although SUP-CON will focus on proposed changes (broken down by their scale and impact under Categories 1, 2 and 3) and is targeted at affected parties including landowners and relevant statutory bodies and undertakers, it will be circulating its brochure to the same distribution area undertaken for its Statutory Consultation exercise. The brochure will provide narrative on why further consultation is being conducted, an update since the previous consultation and an overview of the responses received.

The Applicant outlined a flavour of the changes for each category and the scope of the proposed changes, which comprised of a handful of Category 1 changes, 12 or so Category 2 changes and over 100 smaller Category 3 changes constituting a collection of minor design, land category and Order limit amendments undertaken to refine and strengthen the application.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant had liaised with the relevant local authorities in respect of the changes identified at SUP-CON. The Applicant confirmed it had been taking them through the design journey via regular meetings. The Inspectorate enquired as to whether the Category 1 changes, due to their scale, had impacted the application documents already drafted. The Applicant noted its EIA team are awaiting any further changes which may result from SUP-CON feedback and will update the relevant assessments accordingly.

The Inspectorate noted the Applicant had previously highlighted that proposed works to Cadent Gas Limited's (CGL) onsite apparatus may constitute Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) in their own right and queried if this was still a possibility. The Applicant confirmed that corridor options will be consulted on at SUP-CON; the Applicant considers that the proposed works to CGL's apparatus will likely create 'likely significant effects' that will meet the threshold to be deemed standalone NSIPs. Dialogue with CGL on the matter was ongoing.

The Inspectorate noted that new areas of land take and changes to the Proposed Development have occurred since adoption of the Inspectorate's Scoping Opinion in December 2020. The Applicant was advised that the Environmental Statement (ES) should include a robust justification of the extent of the baseline data collection and scope of the impact assessments in this regard, to give confidence that the likely significant effects have been fully assessed.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant anticipated some/ all of the corridor options from SUP-CON would remain at the point at which the DCO application was submitted. The Applicant confirmed it hoped to narrow down the options prior to submission but that it may have to bring some options through. If the DCO application does contain options, the Inspectorate emphasised that the ES (and Habitats Regulations Assessment) should clearly explain the assessment approach including whether all options have been assessed or whether one represents a worse case.

Draft Documents

The Applicant acknowledged that its current programme timetabled completion of a full draft application document suite by 7 January 2022 and that it anticipated a meeting in late November to discuss the suite to be shared for feedback with the

Inspectorate as part of the draft document review service offered to applicants. The Applicant noted it would update the Inspectorate promptly to changes to its programme in respect of delivering draft documents.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant was aware of the scope of documents that could be reviewed. The Applicant acknowledged internal guidance on the matter and that it understood that certain documents interrelate with others and the benefit of sharing interrelated documents as part of the same tranche to aid readability.

AOB

The Inspectorate acknowledged that its [Advice Note Six: Preparation and submission of application documents](#) had been updated to state that any external hyperlink included in application documents will be redacted when published; the information should either be quoted with the relevant excerpt or appended in full. A core document list can also be prepared as part of the application, which can be referred to throughout the application when references to such documents are required.

The Applicant provided a brief update on progress of a Planning Performance Agreement that is being offered to Essex County Council for the pre-application stage.

The Applicant stated that it proposed to provide the Inspectorate with a notification at the start of SUP-CON which will include links to the consultation material on its website once it goes live.