



Meeting note

Project name	A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project
File reference	
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	9 October 2019
Meeting with	Highways England
Venue	Temple Quay House
Meeting objectives	Inception 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.

A66 - M6 junction 40 and A1(M) at Scotch Corner

Highways England introduced the project, explaining that the A66 between M6 junction 40 and A1(M) at Scotch Corner is 50 miles long, 18 miles of which is in single lane sections. The Applicant intends to dual the remaining sections of the road and improve junctions along the whole of the A66.

An estimated 20,000 vehicles use the road per day with a variety of strategic, local and tourism users. As well as cars and farming vehicles, the A66 is an important road for hauliers with approximately 25% of the vehicles travelling along it being HGV's.

Public consultations

The Applicant described that previously a non-statutory consultation for this corridor had been held in 2013. More recently, as a part of the current project, non-statutory consultation on potential routes were undertaken between May–July 2019.

The Inspectorate noted interest in non-motorised users (in respect of the National Network National Policy Statement position) and handling private means of access. The Applicant confirmed that meetings have been held with walking groups, farmers, equestrian groups and cyclists.

The Applicant expressed that it is actively engaging with landowners and stakeholders, holding regular meetings. The Applicant advised the Inspectorate that it has produced presentations for the local authorities to explain the process.

Environmental considerations

The Applicant provided a description of the environmental context for the scheme and explained there are no Air Quality Management Areas within the study area but it is located approximately 10km from a World Heritage site.

In relation to other heritage features, the Applicant stated that Historic England have been consulted regarding a number of scheduled monuments and the high-risk Roman fort which was identified within the study area. The Applicant asserted that more work would be done to understand the location of any likely archaeological finds and to explore ways to minimise the impact upon them.

The Applicant explained the approach taken to consult with Natural England (NE) and the Environment Agency (EA) regarding the necessary surveys to be carried out to inform the Option Selection process, such as a habitat survey and a river corridor survey. The Applicant explained that it is currently seeking agreement with relevant consultation bodies as to the level of survey effort that is required for a DCO application. The Inspectorate advised that consultation with Natural England should be undertaken, in order to agree the appropriate level of biodiversity survey effort required. The Inspectorate also advised the Applicant to discuss with Natural England how best to deal with any potential uncertainty that may exist in the survey data.

The Applicant expressed intent not only to minimise environmental impact but also to identify potential environmental opportunities for the scheme. The Inspectorate enquired as to whether environmental improvement was an objective of the scheme and advised the Applicant, that if it is, to be clear to that commitment and the potential opportunities that exist. The Inspectorate went on to highlight that the assessment should only include improvements that are appropriately secured e.g. improvements to road drainage. The Applicant responded that upon completion of the necessary surveys they would be better placed to know if they can commit to improvements identified.

Land requirements and options

The Applicant noted the indicative number of land plots in respect of the scheme. The Inspectorate asked if the Applicant anticipated any s53 access to land applications to be necessary. The Applicant responded that there was no current need for such powers and that open dialogue regarding access had been carried out to date.

Land owned by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) lies at the East end of the route. The Applicant advised the Inspectorate that the MoD are being proactively engaged with.

The Applicant considered options regarding the M6 junction 40 to Kemplay Bank roundabout, which experiences high volumes of traffic in peak hours (including an underpass or overpass) and presented the options for public opinion during consultations. With regards to a hospital located along the route, the Inspectorate enquired whether priority access would be provided for the site, to which the Applicant responded that that Design consideration will be given to the presence of the hospital which is in close proximity to the proposals.

The Applicant explained that two options are being explored pertaining to the Centre Parcs holiday village in the area, which sees a high volume of coach and car traffic, particularly during the weekends.

The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that site compounds, statutory undertaker diversions, construction requirements and mitigation land have not been identified at this stage. This information will be confirmed in Stage 3.

The Applicant stated that the land acquisition process is currently in the optioneering stage. Although the land required is mainly agricultural, the Applicant confirmed that there could be some residential and commercial properties. The Applicant informed the Inspectorate that a number of agricultural tenancies and agreements are in place.

Timeline and construction

The Applicant is currently in Stage 2, after completing non-statutory consultation. The Applicant anticipated moving to the next stage of the scheme, Preferred Route Announcement (PRA), by spring 2020.

The Inspectorate asked whether the Applicant had fully considered if this scheme is an NSIP and indeed if the DCO application would include multiple NSIPs due to the geographically dispersed nature of the project development. The Inspectorate queried whether there may be potential to bring forward individual elements of the scheme and asked if the applicant had considered if each element would qualify as a separate NSIP. The Applicant asserted that it viewed the scheme as one NSIP due to the strategic connection from the A1 and M6 and that although the packages of work will be phased, they will be treated as one scheme within which each element must be delivered.