



Meeting Note

File reference	TR010010
Status	Final
Author	Janet Wilson

Meeting with	Northumberland County Council
Meeting date	30 4 12
Attendees (Planning Inspectorate)	Janet Wilson Kath Haddrell
Attendees (non Planning Inspectorate)	Mike Scott – Head of Sustainable Transport Sue Birnie – Senior Planning Officer Neil Masson – Solicitor Ian Selby – Lawyer - Property John Price – Land Acquisition Gary Mills - Project Manager
Location	Northumberland County Council Offices - Morpeth

Meeting purpose	To introduce to The Planning Inspectorate to the project and for National Infrastructure (NI) staff to outline the application process to the project team
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Summary of key points discussed and advice given	<p>The Planning Inspectorate outlined that a meeting note would be taken with the key points summarised and that the project team should not share any confidential information. All advice is placed on The Planning Inspectorate's website.</p> <p>Northumberland County Council (NCC) gave an overview of the project. The road will be the completion of a "box" comprising of the A1, A189 and A19 with the Morpeth bypass forming the northern section of the box, connecting the end of the Pegswood bypass to the A1 north west of Morpeth.</p> <p>NCC outlined the history of the project in that the scheme had been the result of extensive discussions with DfT and the Highways Agency and a planning application had been made last September. It was at the point that consultation responses were returned from the Highways Agency that it was pointed out to NCC that this could be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).</p> <p>NCC have taken legal advice and concluded that it does constitute an NSIP and will in due course withdraw the planning application.</p>
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Press notices are being prepared to advise the public what the situation is and these will be ready in the week commencing 7/5/12.

It was agreed that the public relations aspect of this should be carefully managed as the general public at large appears to understand that the project is already consented and new consultation could lead to confusion.

The strategic link road will provide five main functions:

- To provide a more effective transport solution strategically and a high speed (60mph) link to the A1
- To provide for better transport options locally
- To act as a relief road
- To open up development in the northern part of the town
- To reduce traffic through Morpeth

One of the redevelopment sites is HCA funded (a former hospital site) and others are identified in the emerging Development Plan.

The solution will provide effective links to the A1 with a new grade separated junction. This will also include alterations of the half junction at the A697 where vehicles currently have to turn north and then come off the slip road and turn south to access Morpeth effectively.

The solution will also provide a cycle, pedestrian and equestrian facility with the pedestrian/cycle/equestrian path separated from the carriageway, landscaping and SUDS drainage options will be pursued.

The bypass will also reduce the pressure on Telford Bridge, which is an historic bridge. However as it is the principal crossing in the town the ability to close it for repairs is limited. The construction of the bypass will allow these repairs in the future.

Historically a similar scheme had been consented some six years ago but that consent has now expired.

The Planning Inspectorate outlined the stages of the process and explained which elements were statutory and which were driven by the developer. The Planning Inspectorate also outlined the function of the Local Impact Report (LIR) and the need to ensure that the roles were clear given that NCC were both developer and responsible for the LIR.

The project team have no previous experience of NSIP work other than as a consultee for the Blyth proposal. They were

keen to learn as much about the process as possible. They were concerned about the issue of consulting on options particularly as the history of this scheme had been played out locally over a number of years. The Planning Inspectorate advised that they were not in a unique position. The Heysham–M6 Link Road in Lancaster was also the subject of a previous consent but changes to the project brought them within the remit of the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008) and thus having to submit a DCO application.

We discussed the need to ensure that consultation under S42 was clear and that the public could identify why the project had changed and how the route it was to be dealt with was different from before. NCC advised that a number of discrete aspects did still have options attached to them (such as the method of crossing at Fulbeck Lane Bridge) and that these would be made clear in the consultation.

The issue of NCC being both applicant and local authority was discussed. They would be responsible for the LIR and that one part off the council would be responding to another as developer. It would be prudent to ensure that these responsibilities were clear to participants. Sue Birnie would be leading on the LIR aspect and Gary Mills as project manager.

NCC were directed to a range of advice which would assist them, amongst others particular aspects highlighted are those relating to Consultation reports, (Advice Note 14) EIA scoping (Advice Note 7) Drafting the DCO (Advice Note 13) pre submission (Advice Note 16) Local Impact Reports (Advice Note 1) Submitting the application (Advice Note 6) Working with Public Bodies (Advice Note 11 Annex C in particular) Section 51 advice can be given if queries arise from NCCs reading of these documents and NI team happy to address these in due course.

Legal considerations - NCC were advised on the importance of the drafting of the DCO and the need to invest time (and expertise) on this matter. There were examples of DCOs which could be looked to for guidance but The Planning Inspectorate is not in a position to commend any one in particular to them. The closest in subject matter term would be that relating to the Lancaster scheme. NCC asked about the issues which would normally be dealt with by a Section 106 agreement as they were unable to enter into a S106 with themselves. It was not clear at this stage whether any aspects would need to be dealt with in this way however we agreed to take further advice on this matter and come back to NCC on this point.

The issue of whether any Compulsory Acquisition would be involved was discussed. At this stage NCC would be looking to reach agreement with landowners but there will be the

	<p>need for CP matters to be included in the DCO.</p> <p>NCC clarified that there was not any special category land involved in the forthcoming application.</p> <p>EIA and consultation – NCC advised that scoping had already been carried out however some of the survey information was now more than two years old and this was something they were looking at again. The Planning Inspectorate alerted NCC to the fact that a further scoping could also serve to clarify the situation with regard to consultees and that the project team would need to ensure that they have worked through the prescribed list carefully and interpreted it correctly. For instance ensuring that they had the correct interpretation of A, B C and D authorities for the purposes of consultation and to ensure that any of the smaller statutory consultees were not overlooked. It was advised that a number of developers had needed to revisit and that this had caused them delays. It would be wise to ensure that this aspect was absolutely correct early on.</p> <p>SOCG – The issue of statements of common ground was discussed. NCC asked how they would identify whether one was needed. The Planning Inspectorate advised that the consultation process and written submissions would be needed to work out where statements of common ground may be needed however it was best at this stage to identify where any differences with statutory consultees existed at this stage and concentrate on clarifying matters of agreement and difference with these bodies. NCC advised that this might relate to both the Environment and Highway Agencies and ecological matters.</p> <p>The project timetable at this stage was not exact. NCC want to be in a position to apply within the next six months but they understand that there is a steep learning curve and a lot of material to cover before they will be ready to make an application. NCC will review their programme in response to advice and guidance and then confirm what their arrangements are.</p>
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Specific decisions/ follow up required?	<p>NCC to forward copy of press release once available NCC to populate basic case information and forward to NI NCC to begin to consider their strategy for the preparation of the DCO and the advice needed to undertake this.</p> <p>NI staff to prepare new case details for publication on the web NI to circulate meeting note for agreement in advance of publication NI to advise NCC on the issue with regard to 106 terms vis a vis them being both promoter and responsible for LIR. NI to provide electronic links to DCO example.</p>
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Circulation List	G Mills for onward circulation at NCC