



Meeting note

Project name	Lower Thames Crossing
File reference	TR010032
Status	FINAL
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	25 August 2022
Meeting with	National Highways
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.

Programme Update

The Applicant confirmed that they are aiming for a submission date in mid-October 2022.

Tripartite meeting and site tour

The final logistics for the tripartite meeting on Thursday 22 September 2022 meeting are being discussed currently with a site visit planned for Wednesday 21 September 2022.

The Inspectorate advised it will start thinking about an Agenda for the meeting now to allow time for circulation and review.

Engagement

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant is putting together a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with the Port of London Authority. The Applicant advised they are, but they are not yet in agreement regarding the protective provisions. The authority had concerns regarding a conflict between the potential future development and protective protections for the river.

SSSI designation

There is a proposal to assign an undefined area of largely undeveloped land in the region of Tilbury SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) status in relation to invertebrates. The Applicant has shared survey data with Natural England and that has assisted in its determination process around the designation of the land. However, the SSSI designation has not yet been officially assigned.

The Inspectorate queried whether the programme relies on any required actions by Natural England which may cause delays. The Applicant stated that they are in agreement with Natural England as to the designation of the site and therefore they do not envisage any disagreement or delays. The project design is complimentary to the designation of the land, so if the designation is officially confirmed in the future, no amendments will need to be made.

The Inspectorate advised the Applicant that they should take the time to provide visibility surrounding the SSSI designation within the relevant application documents.

The Inspectorate queried whether the Applicant will be providing a SoCG with Natural England as this could be used to provide visibility to the potential designation of the land. The Applicant confirmed that they will be providing a SoCG with Natural England.

Design Journey of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC)

The Applicant described how it has been having detailed conversations with stakeholders for many years. The Applicant advised they are in the “Preliminary Design” stage which has been the culmination of much consultation and feedback. The Inspectorate queried which document is secured in the DCO, which the Applicant confirmed would be the Design principles.

The Applicant stated that the design now has over 200 design principles (up from 176 in DCO1) including Overarching design principles, Location specific design principles, and Structure specific design principles.

The Applicant stated that the design is highly led by land characteristics, being developed as a result of internal multi-disciplinary workshops and site visits. The Applicant also informed the Inspectorate that they have been conducting weekly stakeholder engagement meetings.

The Inspectorate highlighted the importance of the Applicant making sure that this is clear to someone not familiar with the project. The Applicant advised that the contractors are responding well to the design principles set out.

The Applicant explained that the National Highways Design Review Panel (NHDRP) is an independent, multidisciplinary design review panel administered by Design Council Cabi. The Applicant stated that section G (design evolution) of the Project Design Report details how they have responded to NHDRP comments. The Applicant explained that Part D of the Project Design Report is highly illustrated in order to effectively visualise and explain the

scheme to stakeholders. Furthermore, the section is couched in non-technical language where possible.

The Applicant provided a recap of the design milestones reached and consultations undertaken to date. The Applicant will be writing to some landowners to advise them on some local land changes. The Applicant has received a joint request for provision of the control plans, provision of the environmental assessments (three others) from Thurrock and Havering Councils.

Any Other Business (AOB)

The Applicant advised that the documents are still going through governance and are therefore still to be reviewed, which is why the Applicant does not feel sharing documents at this stage is appropriate. The documents will be ready at submission and therefore, sharing the documents with the Local Authorities in advance may not be representative of the final submission.

The Applicant advised that a full version of the previous submission (December 2020) has been shared in the past, which includes an Environmental Statement (ES) that has not seen expansive changes.

The Inspectorate queried how comments/feedback on the previous ES have been incorporated into the current version of the ES and how this has been communicated on a local level. The Applicant stated that communication of any changes has taken place through consultation and Statements of Common Ground (SoCG).

The Inspectorate advised that a disparity between what the Applicant and Local Authorities believe should be shared ahead of Acceptance and Examination otherwise it may negatively impact engagement throughout Examination.