



Meeting note

Project name	A12 Chelmsford to A120
File reference	TR010060
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate)
Date	8 July 2020
Meeting with	Highways England (the Applicant)
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Meeting objectives	Project 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.

Project update

The Applicant updated the Inspectorate on key events since the last project update meeting between the parties in May 2019.

The Applicant explained that to account for the examination of the emerging joint Local Plan for the North Essex Authorities¹ (NEA), the A12 Chelmsford to A120 scheme would be subject to two discrete Preferred Route Announcements (PRA). A PRA for the section of the scheme between junction 19 and 23 of the A12 was made in October 2019 and a six-week public consultation followed between 21 October 2019 and 1 December 2019. The PRA for the section of the scheme between junction 23 and 25 of the A12 was expected to be made in September 2020 and this was anticipated to contain some boundary refinement to the junction 19 to 23 section and reflect decisions by the NEA on the inclusion in/modification of the joint Local Plan of the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community.

The Applicant explained that the October 2019 and September 2020 PRAs would be combined, with the overall scheme comprising junction 19 (Boreham interchange) to junction 25 (Marks Tey interchange) of the A12 progressed as a single application for a Development Consent Order. Public consultation on the overall scheme would take place after the September 2020 PRA and following work to combine to the assessments undertaken.

¹ Braintree, Colchester and Tendring

The Applicant summarised the steps it had taken to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 in order to maintain its programme of engagement and environmental survey work. The Applicant was confident that any impact on its programme had been minimised to the extent that it still expected to submit its Scoping Report for the overall scheme to the Inspectorate in autumn 2020. The Scoping Report would explain the history of the overall scheme including why discrete PRAs had been pursued and how and why the PRAs would be combined and considered as a single scheme in the emerging application for a Development Consent Order.

The Applicant provided a topic-by-topic summary of its assessment to date, drawing attention to instances where consultation feedback had influenced scheme design. Examples of design changes that had arisen from consultation feedback included the realignment of the scheme close to the Rivenhall Long Mortuary Enclosure Scheduled Ancient Monument and realignment of the offline section at junction 22 offline in order to safeguard operations at Coleman's Quarry.

The Applicant expected to consult with relevant local authorities on its draft Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) for the overall scheme towards the end of 2020. Statutory consultation would follow in Q2 2021. The Applicant confirmed that it intended to take advantage of the Inspectorate's draft documents review service and had accounted for the time this would take in its programme. Construction of the scheme was scheduled to begin in summer/autumn 2023 with the scheme opening to traffic in 2027.

The Inspectorate asked for clarification on the status of the A120 Braintree to A12 scheme. The Applicant explained that an initial study report on the A120 scheme was prepared by Essex County Council. The study had been passed to Highways England, as network owner, and was currently under review. The Applicant understood that the consenting route for the A120 scheme was under consideration by Highways England and the Department for Transport. The Applicant would maintain regular contact with the A120 project team about programmes and the interrelationships of the two schemes.

The Inspectorate summarised practical arrangements for receipt of the Applicant's Scoping Report. The Applicant should provide the Inspectorate with at least two weeks' notice of submission of the Scoping Report. The GIS shape file should be provided by the Applicant at least 10 days before the Scoping Report was intended to be submitted.

The Inspectorate and the Applicant agreed that the project webpage for the A12 Chelmsford to A120 would go live on the National Infrastructure Planning website in conjunction with the September 2020 PRA and the consolidation of the two PRAs into the overall scheme to be progressed.