



Inception Meeting note

Project name	Heathrow West
Case reference	TR020004
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	21 July 2026
Meeting with	Meeting with Heathrow West Limited
Venue	Microsoft Teams
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 (PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

The Inspectorate explained that the publication of the inception meeting note could be delayed by up to 6 months, or until a formal scoping request had been submitted.

1. The proposed development

- **Detailed description of the proposed development**

The applicant, Heathrow West Limited (HWL), is a company that forms part of the Arora Group, provided a summary of its company background, along with its proposal to expand Heathrow Airport.

The applicant acknowledges there is another project in pre-application (Heathrow Airport's Limited, (HAL)) and as the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) currently allows for multiple promoters to submit applications to expand Heathrow Airport, they wish to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO).

The project is a new, stand-alone scheme, with its previous proposal having been paused in 2020, however the applicant will draw upon the work and engagement they have carried out in previous years.

The key components of the scheme are:

- A 2,400m third runway and associated infrastructure.

Key benefit identified by the applicant includes its avoidance of the relocation of the M25 and other major assets that are located west of the M25, such as lakes, a railhead and substation.

- A new terminal 6 (T6) building and a satellite connected to Terminal 5 (T5) via a new inter-terminal plaza.

The plaza contains an expanded transport hub and will provide for commercial opportunities. This provides for an integrated T5 and T6 campus which is believed to minimise land-take.

- Surface access improvements including realigned roads, new car parks and enhanced travel routes.

The surface access enhancements intend to provide for access to strengthen connectivity to public transport and to maintain local access to communities. Some of the improvement and alignment works would be sequenced to minimise disruption to surrounding communities. There is also replacement parking provision that will be maintained to support airport operations. Part of the scheme would also to enhance walking and cycling connectivity.

- a realignment of four rivers to enable construction, and to look at long-term flood resilience.

As part of the scheme, the applicant will provide a comprehensive flood and drainage strategy that will form part of the design and will also work closely with the Environment Agency (EA).

- Green infrastructure providing landscape and recreational enhancements, including a Western Green infrastructure buffer.

The applicant intends to embed green infrastructures within their masterplan, which they believe would minimise land take and impacts on the surrounding community, whilst ensuring environmental enhancement is designed into the scheme.

- **Consenting programme and introduction to the pre-application programme document**

The Inspectorate noted that the programme document had been submitted before the publication of the recent guidance and discussed whether this may affect the applicant's anticipated submission of the DCO application in November 2027. The applicant confirmed that November 2027 remains the target submission date. It was agreed by the Inspectorate that an updated programme document reflecting the recent guidance would be helpful to support ongoing engagement and the provision of advice where required.

- **Early engagement with statutory bodies, local authorities, and other stakeholder engagement to date**

The applicant has commenced engagement with the relevant local authorities through introductory meetings, with further engagement ongoing. Host authorities will be confirmed once the order limits have been finalised. The applicant also confirmed that discussions regarding Planning Performance Agreements are being progressed with local authorities.

- **EIA scoping**

The applicant stated an intention to submit an EIA scoping request at the end of September 2026. Given the scale of the project, the Inspectorate advised that it is in everyone's interest to ensure a proportionate Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and queried how the applicant will ensure this along with the management of information produced. In terms of a proportionate approach, the applicant responded to say that the review of the scoping opinion, provided for HAL, gives substantial detail about the breadth of the assessment that is to be undertaken. Once the applicant has

established the full breadth of the work, along with its methodology, the level of detail will be part of the ongoing conversation in future project update meetings. The applicant intends to take on lessons learned from other scoping reports submitted by other schemes, such as the Gatwick Northern Runway scheme and HAL's scoping report, and minimise the level of detail where possible, engage with stakeholders early, and follow the Inspectorate's guidance. The Inspectorate welcomed this approach. The Inspectorate advised the applicant to take note of the EIA Evidence Review Note produced by the Offshore Wind Evidence and Knowledge Hub (OWEKH), which has good industry-wide recommendations on ensuring a proportionate and consistent EIA.

With regards to EIA scoping, the Inspectorate advised the applicant to give the key statutory bodies at least two weeks' notice in advance of submitting an EIA scoping request to the Inspectorate, so that good relationships with the stakeholders are maintained, and to help them adequately resource in preparation for the Inspectorate's consultation process to be issued under the EIA scoping process. This will benefit the applicant, allowing for better, more informed consultation responses to be received. The Inspectorate also requested for the applicant to provide a GIS shapefile at least 10 working days before the scoping request is submitted.

- **Environmental surveys**

The Inspectorate drew attention to the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), and Water Framework Directive Assessment. The Inspectorate noted that in the applicant's Supplementary Component List and Proposed PINS Engagement Approach, neither assessment have been accounted for. The applicant clarified that it will be undertaking both assessments. The Inspectorate advised the applicant that, given the scale and complexity of the scheme, both assessments should be given particular focus and that the applicant's programme documents should account for both assessments. Any engagement the applicant would require from the Inspectorate on this should be given reasonable notice so that the Inspectorate can arrange resource.

The Inspectorate enquired about environmental surveys asking what had already been undertaken and which surveys were outstanding. The Inspectorate queried whether the applicant would rely upon any of the previous surveys undertaken during the previous application from 2019. The applicant clarified that they would not rely upon the 2019 surveys as they are now out of date. The applicant confirmed that there had been ongoing ecological surveys that have taken place this year and will confirm a list of their forthcoming surveys. The Inspectorate advised that, in the interest of transparency, having a high-level outline of the survey work that the applicant is planning to undertake for their programme document, along with a timeline and any collaboration the applicant is seeking with the HAL proposal, will be helpful. The applicant confirmed that they will put this information in their programme document.

The Inspectorate next drew attention to Biodiversity Net Gain and referenced the new guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) as well as the Biodiversity Gain Statement for Airports that has been released. The Inspectorate queried whether this guidance has been accounted for with regards to the applicant's UK Habitats Classification survey methodologies and timescales. The applicant confirmed they have seen the new guidance and Biodiversity Gain Statement, and would be able to provide the Inspectorate with the information

requested on its UK Habitats Classification survey.

- **Preparing the draft development consent order, including any novel approaches to drafting**

The applicant confirmed that work on the project paused in 2020 and recommenced in 2025. A section 35 direction was previously obtained in relation to the terminal element of the scheme; however, the applicant advised that the proposed development has since evolved to include a runway and that the application will therefore be submitted under section 23 of the Planning Act 2008. The applicant considers that revocation of the section 35 direction is not required, although the Inspectorate advised the applicant to seek its own legal advice on this matter.

The applicant confirmed that the order limits have not yet been finalised and that the scheme may include additional elements, such as transport infrastructure. It was noted that the number and extent of any Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects within the application have yet to be determined. The Inspectorate advised that it would be helpful for future discussions to clarify the various components of the scheme and whether any individual elements constitute NSIPs in their own right.

- **Relationship with HAL Proposal**

The challenges associated with similar, competing DCO applications were discussed.

The applicant outlined its engagement with relevant stakeholders, including the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (HSPG), the Council for the Independent Scrutiny of Heathrow Airport (CISHA), local authorities and the Civil Aviation Authority.

Discussions regarding Planning Performance Agreements are being progressed with the respective stakeholders and the applicant intends to establish topic leads and promote information-sharing with Heathrow Airport Limited, including the sharing of baseline survey data.

The Inspectorate confirmed that the two Heathrow projects are being considered as separate projects.

It was advised by the Inspectorate that clear differentiation between the projects will be important to support effective public engagement and consultation.

- **Land and rights: Scope of compulsory acquisition etc powers sought and potential constraints and issues**

The applicant will provide the Inspectorate with updates on negotiations and discussions throughout the pre-application process.

- **Consultation (statutory and non-statutory)**

The applicant's community engagement programme will be delivered in three stages. Stage 1 commenced in June 2026 and focuses on introducing the local community to the DCO process along with the updated scheme and a commitment to early

stakeholder engagement. Stage 2 will comprise targeted engagement activities following submission of the scoping report and continue through autumn 2026. Subject to programme requirements, engagement activities will be scheduled to minimise overlap with Heathrow Airport Limited's consultation programme. Feedback from early engagement will inform the applicant's approach to Stage 3, including formal consultation, which is currently anticipated to commence in spring 2027.

The applicant outlined its initial engagement activities, which included contact with over 140,000 residential and business properties in the vicinity of Heathrow, supported by local media, social media and project-specific communications. A project website, brochure and supporting materials have been published. Engagement has also been undertaken with Members of Parliament, parish representatives, local authorities, the HSPG (Heathrow Strategic Planning Group) and the CISHA (Council for the Independent Scrutiny of Heathrow Airport).

The applicant confirmed its intention to prepare initial environmental information. The Inspectorate advised on the importance of a proportionate approach to consultation and engagement, taking account of the updated Pre-application Guidance. It was noted that the Adequacy of Consultation Milestone is no longer required, and that ongoing discussions regarding the applicant's engagement approach will continue as the project progresses through pre-application.

The applicant also provided an update on discussions regarding information sharing, including engagement with the Civil Aviation Authority on potential mechanisms to support this. The applicant acknowledged the importance of proportionate consultation and engagement and sought clarification regarding the examination process, including how accessibility for stakeholders and potential duplication across the two Heathrow schemes may be managed – this is to be discussed at future meetings with the Inspectorate.

- **Submission date**

The DCO submission is expected in November 2027.

2. The pre-application service offer

- **The service tier requested by the applicant, including justification**

The applicant confirmed that it intends to request the enhanced pre-application service and has set out its justification within the programme document. The request reflects the scale and complexity of the proposed development, including the interaction with another major scheme being promoted for the same site.

The Inspectorate acknowledged the factors identified by the applicant in support of its request. It was noted that any decision regarding the level of service provided will be

subject to consideration of the relevant circumstances, operational requirements and any applicable guidance at the time.

Annex A

Meeting attendees

Organisation	Role
Planning Inspectorate	Operations Lead
Planning Inspectorate	Operations Manager
Planning Inspectorate	Operations Lead - Environmental Services
Planning Inspectorate	Case Manager
Planning Inspectorate	Case Officer
Arora Group	Founder & Executive Chairman
Heathrow West Limited	Chief Executive Officer
Heathrow West Limited	Projects and Developments Director
Bechtel	Project Manager
Bechtel	Consents & EIA Manager
DWD	Planning Lead
DWD	Planning Manager
Stantec	EIA Lead
CMS	Legal Lead
CMS	Legal Lead