



**CORRIDOR BETWEEN THE A34 MILTON INTERCHANGE AND THE B4015  
NORTH OF CLIFTON HAMPDEN**

**CASE REF: APP/U3100/V/23/3326625**

**CASE REF: NATTRAN/SE/HAO/286 (DPI/U3100/23/12)**

As you may be aware I am now the Inspector appointed to conduct the above Inquiries and report on the planning application and associated Orders. I have reviewed the application and there are a number of matters I would like to update/clarify in order to assist with the smooth running of the Inquiry.

**Programme Officer**

Mrs Vincent, the Programme Officer, has advised me that Gateley Hamer are acting as Agents for the appellant. Mrs Vincent confirms that there are clear information barriers in place within Gateley Hamer to ensure that independence and impartiality is maintained so to avoid any conflicts of interest arising.

Mrs Vincent is a neutral officer of the Inquiry, responsible to me. She will play no part in my report to the Secretaries of State beyond helping with the collation of lists of those appearing at the Inquiries and of Inquiry documents, which will be appended to it.

**Documents and Emails**

As you will be aware there are a considerable number of documents associated with Inquiries of this nature. The website has been updated in order to make it easier to navigate and will be kept under review.

Although the Inquiries will be conjoined, I will first hear evidence in relation to the called in planning application, followed by evidence in relation to the Orders. Whilst there will undoubtedly be some overlap in the evidence, it is important that I, and the other parties to the Inquiries, are clear as to whether the submitted evidence relates to the planning application and/or the Orders. All of the evidence from Rule 6 parties will be included within the planning application part of the website.

It would be helpful to me and Mrs Vincent if proofs of evidence and other statements included a front page clearly stating whether it relates to the planning application and/or Orders, the topic to be addressed and the party submitting it. The date of the document should also be included, so that if it is updated we can ensure that all parties are working to the same document.

I also request that documents are paginated, and as far as practical that paragraphs are numbered. This allows for easy searching of documents during the event and referencing in submissions.

Emails should include the topic to which it relates in the subject and should be cross copied to other parties.

**Sitting Days**

As the parties may be aware, I am unable to sit the w/c 11 March as previously scheduled. I am available to sit the w/c 5 March, w/c 8 April, w/c 29 April or w/c 12 May (starting on Tuesday each week). I am also available 10 May. I am aware that the Inquiry has been programmed on the basis of half a sitting day on Fridays. Whilst I would welcome finishing earlier on a Friday in order to allow time to travel, I am happy to sit until about 15:00 on Fridays where this would assist with programming. Therefore it may be that additional sitting days are not required.

Notwithstanding this, could the parties please advise of their availability for the dates indicated above, should they be necessary. Could I also be advised of any constraints on witnesses, including holidays and other responsibilities that may impact on their availability. I would hope that the timetable can be arranged around such commitments.

### **Proofs of Evidence**

I am uncertain as to whether it was mentioned at the Pre-Inquiry Meeting (PIM), that Proofs of Evidence should include a summary *unless 1500 words or less*. Appendices should be bound separately, indexed using projecting tabs, labelled and paginated.

Any presentations/models should be accompanied by a printed document and/or photographs.

### **Site Visit – Planning Appeal**

Although the previously appointed Inspector proposed an unaccompanied site visit, having reviewed the case, and taking account of the linear nature of the route, I consider that an accompanied visit would be more helpful to me, although I may also undertake additional unaccompanied visits. I agree that the number of parties at the visit need to be limited for practical reasons. I suggest that a representative of the Applicant, someone from the Local Planning Authority and/or the District Councils and a representative from the Rule 6 parties would be appropriate. There will be no discussion of the merits of the case at the site visit, and any comments will need to be made at the Inquiry. A draft itinerary should be prepared as previously suggested and shared with all of the main parties including the Rule 6 parties. The precise arrangements for the site visit can be discussed at the Inquiry, but a draft itinerary should be submitted no later than **6 February 2024** as previously agreed. A separate site visit may be required in relation to the Orders. I will review the need for this closer to the date of the Inquiry.

### **Statements of Common Ground**

I am in receipt of a signed Statement of Common Ground between the applicant and the Local Planning Authority in relation to the planning application. This is helpful in so far as it outlines the positions of the parties relative to the application and provides an indication of the proposed conditions. I also note that there have been several amendments to the application since it was originally submitted and in the interests of clarity the applicant and Local Planning Authority should provide a list detailing the plans/information on which the Local Planning Authority based its submissions; any subsequent plans/information relied upon; identify the relevant development plan policies; matters in agreement and matters in dispute. I would be grateful if this is submitted as early as possible and no later than **9 January 2024**.

It would be helpful to me if Statements of Common Ground could be agreed with South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse Council. Whilst I understand that due to the number of other Rule 6 parties there may be difficulties in

agreeing Statements of Common Ground, wherever possible these should be pursued, in order that the Inquiry can focus on the differences between the parties.

### **Likely Main Issues**

It would seem that there are a number of topics that are not explicitly covered in the note following the Pre- Inquiry Meeting on which I shall wish to hear evidence. It is unclear to me whether the matters below would be addressed by planning witnesses, or whether parties wish to put forward additional witnesses. I am therefore bringing these matters to the attention of the parties now, in order that that all parties have sufficient time to ensure that they are able to address them at the Inquiry. It may be that some of these matters are agreed by all parties, but I shall nevertheless need sufficient information to conclude upon them in my Report.

Having regard to my duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I shall need to understand the effect of the proposal on the significance of the various heritage assets identified. The parties should explain:

- The significance of the asset, and to what extent its setting contributes to that significance.
- The contribution that the appeal site makes to that significance/setting of the asset.
- The extent to which the appeal proposals enhance or detract from that significance and/or the ability to appreciate it.

I shall also wish to understand the landscape and visual effects of the proposal, including the extent of the proposed tree loss and replacement planting proposed, and the design of the Science bridge, including any mitigation measures proposed such as acoustic barriers.

I note that Sport England raised an objection regarding the loss of facilities within the Vale of White Horse District. I shall require sufficient information in order to assess this against national and development plan policies.

Based on the evidence I have seen to date it would seem that the proposal may result in the loss of bat roosts and have other implications for biodiversity, including the Bridge Farm restoration area and possibly other restoration projects. These matters should be addressed in evidence and where possible a Statement of Common Ground agreed.

*Lesley Coffey*

PLANNING INSPECTOR

21.12.2023