

## M2 Junction 5 improvements: Environmental Assessment Summary

### Introduction

This note describes how and why we assess the potential environmental impacts of the M2 Junction 5 / A249 Stockbury Roundabout improvements scheme. More detailed documents covering this topic are available on our website: [www.highways.gov.uk/m2-junction-5-improvements](http://www.highways.gov.uk/m2-junction-5-improvements).

### What is an Environmental Impact Assessment?

An Environmental Impact Assessment is the process of assessing the likely significant environmental impacts of a proposed scheme. It looks at a series of environmental factors and uses industry-standard criteria to measure the likely environmental changes resulting from the proposed scheme. It assesses the likely environmental performance and helps us develop the proposal in a way that avoids (where reasonably possible) or reduces negative environmental impacts and enhances positive environmental impacts. This can include the development of “impact mitigation measures” to further reduce negative impacts.

### How are environmental impacts assessed, measured and documented?

Potential environmental impacts are assessed through a combination of desk-based studies, site visits and surveys, and modelling of future environmental conditions. They are measured using a combination of an environmental asset’s sensitivity (usually defined by its importance, for example an internationally important wildlife site or World Heritage Site, and its existing quality or condition) and the size or scale of the anticipated impact resulting from the proposed scheme.

The environmental assessment findings are reported in the Stage 1 Environmental Study Report, which is available on the website ([www.highways.gov.uk/m2-junction-5-improvements](http://www.highways.gov.uk/m2-junction-5-improvements)) and at the public exhibitions. The Environmental Study Report sets out how the initial assessment has been undertaken, the information on existing conditions collected and a preliminary assessment of potential impacts. We use the Environmental Study Report to help us to identify the options that are taken forward for further assessment.

### What topics are examined for the Environmental Impact Assessment?

The Environmental Impact Assessment process considers the potential for impacts on:

- Air quality
- Noise and vibration
- Landscape and visual
- Cultural heritage
- Biodiversity
- Geology and soils
- Climate change
- Water and flood risk
- Materials and resources
- People and communities
- Human health
- Equality
- Vulnerability to major accidents and disasters

A geographical study area is designated for each of these topics, which is identified through initial scoping studies and published industry best practice guidance. These geographical study areas vary by topic, since some effects can be experienced across a wider area than others. Further information on the individual study areas is provided in the Stage 1 Environmental Study Report.

### When is an Environmental Impact Assessment required?

The Environmental Impact Assessment process has basis in European and UK legislation, and is one of the documents required to form part of a planning application submission.

Infrastructure developments of certain sizes / scale and in environmentally sensitive areas or likely to cause significant environmental impacts are required to undertake a statutory (legally compliant) Environmental Impact Assessment.

At this stage it is assumed that the M2 Junction 5 / A249 Stockbury Roundabout improvements scheme will require an Environmental Impact Assessment. The findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment would be reported in an Environmental Statement which is one of the documents required in support of an application for consent. However, future revision of the scheme design may reduce the scale of potential impacts to environmentally sensitive areas which may then mean that a statutory Environmental Impact Assessment is not a requirement.

Where a statutory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required, non-statutory environmental assessment would still need to be undertaken and the resulting reporting would be submitted as part of the application for consent.

The EIA process is transparent in identifying the potential positive and negative environmental impacts of a scheme, and gives the public the opportunity to comment on the proposals as well as the measures to reduce, offset, or eliminate significant negative environmental impacts. The information contained within an EIA is used when engaging with potentially affected individuals and communities, and can ultimately influence the development of terms and conditions within the planning consent.

#### How is data gathered and used in the assessment?

Surveys and desk based investigations are undertaken to establish the baseline conditions (what is already there) within the topic specific geographical study area. We can then identify the possible impacts on sensitive resources, such as protected species, habitats, designated sites, historic features, and people and communities and assign mitigation measures to avoid or minimise impacts. Environmental data gathering, both desk and field based, has been on-going since the start of Stage 1. Data collection and surveys will continue to investigate a number of different factors, including ecology, noise levels, cultural heritage, landscape and water quality. Landowners have been approached to seek land access prior to the surveys being undertaken.

#### Who checks and comments on whether the work is carried out to a sufficient standard?

Prior to any application material being submitted the technical content of the Environmental Impact Assessment will be reviewed by senior technical specialists. Statutory organisations, such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England, and Kent Downs AONB, will be engaged from early in the process to inform the full scope of the assessment. These parties will then be consulted by the decision maker once the application has been submitted.

#### What further work will be undertaken at the next design stage?

The next stage of design is the preliminary design phase when we develop the preferred option, as made public in the Preferred Route Announcement, and take it through the necessary statutory processes. In order to do this the following tasks will need to be completed:

- Undertake further surveys (such as topographical, geotechnical, environmental)
- Complete and fix the preliminary design of the preferred route
- Prepare an application for consent
- Complete the statutory Environmental Impact Assessment or non-statutory environmental assessment reporting for inclusion as part of the scheme application.