

M2 Junction 5 improvements: Planning Policy Summary

Introduction

This summary describes the planning context in which the M2 Junction 5 / A249 Stockbury Roundabout improvements scheme would be assessed and what we must do to obtain consent to deliver the project.

What is the Government's vision for the national transport network?

The *National Policy Statement for National Networks* (NPSNN) establishes Government policy on the need for development of the national transport network, and sets criteria to assess and evaluate the planning merits of such projects.

The NPSNN states that the Government will deliver national transport networks that meet the country's long-term needs, supporting a prosperous and competitive economy and improving overall quality of life, as part of a wider transport system. This means creating road networks which:

- Have the capacity, connectivity and resilience to support growth and create jobs
- Support and improve journey quality, reliability and safety
- Help meet environmental goals and the move to a low carbon economy
- Join up our communities.

The *Roads Investment Strategy 2015* specifies the need for a number of major projects, including the M2 Junction 5 / A249 Stockbury Roundabout improvements scheme, to upgrade and improve England's strategic road network so that it can deliver the performance needed to support the nation in the 21st century.

What are Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)?

If a highway improvement project is of a certain scale and significance, it is designated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) according to the Planning Act 2008.

The M2 Junction 5 / A249 Stockbury Roundabout improvements scheme may be defined as a *Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP)* by the Planning Act 2008. This will depend on the eventual size and impacts of the scheme, which may change as we develop our designs. If the scheme is an NSIP, we must obtain a *Development Consent Order (DCO)* from the Secretary of State, after examination by the Planning Inspectorate. A DCO is a comprehensive type of planning permission combined with powers necessary to develop complex infrastructure schemes, such as powers to compulsorily purchase land.

A key feature of a DCO application is that it is mandatory for the promoter (i.e. us, Highways England) to have regard to pre-application consultation undertaken in accordance with a published *Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC)*. We plan to publish this early in 2018 and then there will be a further round of (statutory) consultation in spring / summer 2018 on the Preferred Route for the scheme.

Following the consultation, we will then prepare and lodge the planning application with the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). An Inspector will carry out a six-month public examination, where they hear evidence from a range of sources to inform their recommendation report.

The final decision on the scheme will be made by the Secretary of State for Transport, who will take into account the following factors:

- National planning policy, principally the policies contained in the *National Policy Statement for National Networks* (NPSNN).

- The impacts and benefits of the scheme (which might include local impacts and local policy matters).
- Legal and international obligations.

More information on the planning process and opportunities to be involved is available from the Planning Inspectorate at: <http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>.

The scheme cannot be built without consent from the Secretary of State for Transport.

What if the project is not a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project?

If the scheme is amended such that it is not an NSIP and does not require a *Development Consent Order (DCO)*, consent will be sought via the Highways Act 1980. After the Preferred Route has been identified for the scheme we will then develop a detailed proposal so that drafts of the orders required for the scheme, under the Highways Act 1980 and Town and Country Planning Act 1990, can be prepared along with the Environmental Assessment Report/Environmental Statement. After the draft Orders and the Environmental Statement have been published copies of these will be available for you to look at and there will be an objection period, which is usually 6 weeks. During the objection period an orders exhibition will be held, usually 1 to 2 weeks after the publication date.

A Public Inquiry will be held if relevant objections are received. The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) will allocate an Inspector to undertake the Public Inquiry. The Inspector will consider the objections and representations received and will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport. It is the Secretary of State for Transport's decision about whether the draft order for the scheme should be approved. The decision will be made with regard to policies in both the NPSNN and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

What are the national planning policy issues for M2 Junction 5?

We expect that the scheme can achieve compliance with the relevant policies of the NPSNN and the NPPF in respect of air quality, landscape, geology and soils, materials, noise, people and communities, and road drainage and the water environment. This has been or will be achieved through appropriate design, evidence, and through the inclusion of appropriate mitigation and management measures during both the construction and operational phases of the scheme.

Cultural heritage policy issues have been identified, due to the potential for some degree of harm to the remains of the Chatham Land Front WWI defences, if they are found to be present. The degree of harm, and the location, significance and sensitivity of these potential heritage assets in the vicinity of the scheme, will be determined by survey work and subsequent assessment and considerations. The design of the scheme can then be refined to potentially avoid and minimise impacts to these assets, if present. Asset specific heritage preservation and management measures can also be developed following survey and assessment. To address these issues Highways England is carrying out the above surveys, studies, assessments and design work, and developing preservation and management measures.

Nature conservation policy issues have been identified, due to the potential to result in impacts to existing ecological values. To address these issues Highways England is carrying out the appropriate surveys, studies, assessments, design refinements, and ecological preservation, management and enhancement measures.