

Rationale for Changes to the Environmental Masterplan

The table below sets out the changes proposed to the Environmental Masterplan [APP-57/6.2] submitted with the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the M54 to M6 Link Road project. It has been written to accompany the plan produced to illustrate the proposed changes to the Environmental Masterplan to inform consultation on the changes from 24 August 2020 to 21 September 2020. Please refer to Highways England's website for more information about the changes proposed to the scheme and the consultation process: www.highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/M54-M6linkroad.

Figure Ref	Change to Masterplan	Why we are proposing the change	Implications of the Change
EM1	Reduction in the size of the construction compound to the north west of Junction 11.	The size of the compound area has been reviewed with the contractor to reduce the impact on existing habitat. This has involved detailed consideration of the plant and material storage requirements to ensure that the revised compound area is sufficient. This process has resulted in a reduction in the size of the site compound and a reduced impact on existing habitats.	Reduction in site compound area reduces the impact on existing habitats and consequently overall mitigation requirements. One pond rather than two would be developed on the land. Part of this land will be used temporarily as a construction compound, before being reinstated and used for habitat creation.
EM2	Removal of one ecology pond which was proposed as great crested newt (GCN) mitigation.	Two ecology ponds were proposed to compensate for the one that would be lost during construction, assumed to contain GCN. This was in line with mitigation agreed with Natural England. The pond to be lost was found to not support GCN during 2020 surveys. Therefore, one pond previously proposed has been removed and only one ecological mitigation pond is required in this location.	This whole land parcel is still required permanently to mitigate the ecological impact of the scheme. This includes creation of the new pond in the south western corner of the land parcel to compensate for the loss of the existing pond.
EM3	Removal of proposed species rich grassland to the south east of M6 Junction 11.	The scheme changes reduce the impact of the scheme on ecology due primarily to a reduced footprint. The extent of mitigation has been fully reviewed. This location is Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, with high quality soils capable of consistently producing moderate to high yields of a narrow range of arable crops. Natural England requested that the loss of BMV land be reduced wherever possible. Transforming this parcel into species rich grassland by inverting/scarifying the topsoil to bring the less nutrient rich subsoil to the surface would be in opposition to the need to retain BMV land. Consequently, it is proposed to remove the proposed habitat creation from the land parcel.	Reduced loss of BMV land. This land would no longer be permanently acquired. The northern part of this land parcel will still be acquired temporarily during construction for topsoil and earthworks storage, before being reinstated to its previous condition and returned to the landowner. The southern part of the land parcel would no longer be required for the scheme. The DCO limits would be amended to remove the southern portion of the land parcel from the application.
EM4	Additional hedgerows in the north of the scheme.	Opportunities have been identified for additional hedgerow creation to provide additional biodiversity enhancements.	Ecological enhancements incorporated into the scheme. New hedgerows have been placed in areas that would be required permanently for environmental

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			mitigation, so no additional land acquisition is required.
EM5	Reduction in woodland planting in the area between Park Road and Hilton Lane.	The changes to the scheme have reduced the loss of woodland as part of the scheme, including reduction of loss of ancient woodland, where compensatory planting had been agreed at a ratio of 7:1. As a consequence, less woodland planting is required to mitigate the impact of the scheme.	<p>Reduced new woodland planting as there is less woodland loss.</p> <p>The area of the field permanently acquired would be significantly reduced.</p> <p>A border around the site is still required for permanent acquisition for essential mitigation to mitigate the landscape and visual impact of the scheme. Mitigation to the south east and south west is also still required to mitigate for habitat loss and the impact on Protected Species at Lower Pool and surrounding area. However, the area shown in white would only be required temporarily.</p> <p>The whole area is required temporarily during construction of the scheme for use as a borrow pit.</p>
EM6	Removal of three ecology ponds and wet grassland that were proposed as GCN mitigation.	This habitat was proposed to provide a receptor area for GCN assumed to be present in ponds to be lost during the construction of the scheme. These ponds were found not to support GCN during surveys in 2020, therefore the receptor area is no longer required.	<p>Reduction in habitat creation due to more accurate knowledge of species on the site.</p> <p>Reduced permanent and temporary land acquisition.</p> <p>Part of this land parcel will still be required permanently to provide woodland planting to screen views of the scheme. A sliver of land to the south of Dark Lane would also be required to upgrade the fence on the highway boundary. The remainder of this land parcel will no longer be required and would be removed from the DCO limits.</p>
EM7	Reduction in the size of the southern construction compound to the east of Featherstone.	The size of the compound area has been reviewed with the contractor to aim to reduce the impact on existing habitats. This has involved detailed consideration of the plant and material storage requirements to ensure that the revised compound area is sufficient.	<p>Reduction in impact on existing habitats.</p> <p>This land parcel is required permanently for environmental mitigation and will be used temporarily during the construction phase as a construction compound and for topsoil and earthworks storage. There would be no change to land acquisition.</p>
EM8	Repositioning of individual trees.	Individual trees proposed to the south of the scheme within the boundary of Hilton Park have been repositioned in line with Ordnance Survey 1 st edition map (1900 – 1902).	The land will still be permanently required for environmental mitigation.

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EM9	Removal of a strip of woodland along the length of utilities diversion.	Removal of woodland and tree planting within 6 metres of the proposed utilities diversion. This has been replaced with a strip of species-rich grassland.	This land will still be permanently required for the utilities diversion and environmental mitigation but small areas of planting have been removed.