

Application by Highways England for an Order Granting Development Consent for the proposed M4 Junctions 3 to 12 Smart Motorway

Case Ref: TR010019

Note of unaccompanied site inspection

Background

On Wednesday 26 August 2015 the Examining Authority (ExA) undertook an unaccompanied site inspection. The purpose of this inspection was to acquire broad familiarity with the site and its surroundings, and to identify locations which related to issues emergent from the application and the relevant representation, ahead of the Preliminary Meeting on 3 September 2015.

The inspection was undertaken from publicly accessible land (roads). No inspections were undertaken on private land and therefore advance permission to enter land was not required. On this basis the inspection could be undertaken on an unaccompanied basis.

Particulars of the site inspection

The visit was undertaken by the ExA, Wendy Burden. Susannah Guest, the Infrastructure Planning Lead for the transport sector, was also in attendance. There were no other persons in attendance.

The visit was undertaken by car. Weather conditions were very poor with heavy rain severely restricting both long and short range views resulting in difficult driving conditions. The visit enabled an overview of the character of the area through which the M4 passes to be gained, but without any detailed assessment possible.

The ExA noted the following: the extent and location of the proposed works between each junction including overbridges and underbridges requiring alteration or rebuild; proposed changes to junctions 5, 6 and 7 to create through junction running; proposed changes to central reservation and lighting and upgrading of hard shoulder to enable all lane running; the number of proposed emergency refuse areas and police observation platforms; and the level and nature of traffic using this section of the motorway. Details such as the individual sites of proposed new gantries; changes to acoustic fencing; and the locations of residential properties in relation to the motorway were not noted.

The inspection began at approximately noon and, owing to the poor weather conditions and associated visibility and safety implications, finished at approximately 14.00.

Further unaccompanied site inspections will take place during the examination.

Note prepared: 27 August 2015