

A47 Blofield to North Burlingham Dualling

Scheme Number: TR010040

Volume 6

6.1 Environmental Statement

Chapter 1 - Introduction

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed
Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

July 2021

Deadline 1

Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

A47 Blofield to North Burlingham Development Consent Order 202[x]

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Regulation Number:	Regulation 5(2)(a)
Planning Inspectorate Scheme Reference	TR010040
Application Document Reference	6.1
Author:	A47 Blofield to North Burlingham Dualling Project Team, Highways England

Version	Date	Status of Version
Rev 0	December 2020	Application Issue
Rev 1	July 2021	Deadline 1

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1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. The promoter and applicant of the A47 from Blofield to North Burlingham to dual carriageway (referred to in this Environmental Statement (ES) as the 'Proposed Scheme') is Highways England, a government company charged with operating, maintaining and improving England's motorways and major A roads.
- 1.1.2. As the Applicant, Highways England is proposing to improve approximately 2.6km of the A47 between Blofield and North Burlingham, due to the volumes of traffic and delays. The proposed upgrade is part of the wider programme of A47 corridor improvement programme.
- 1.1.3. This ES is a report that documents the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process which has been carried out for the Proposed Scheme.

1.1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1.1. EIA can be defined as an assessment of those consequences of a major project which affect the natural, built and social environment. The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations) require an assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects, which are likely to have significant effects on the environment, before development consent is granted.
- 1.1.2. The EIA Regulations require that the findings of the EIA be reported in the form of an ES. The ES is a key part of the application documents submitted by Highways England in support of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the Proposed Scheme.
- 1.1.3. The overall purpose of this ES is to provide the Planning Inspectorate with enough information on the anticipated effects of the Proposed Scheme to enable an informed recommendation to be made to the Secretary of State.
- 1.1.4. Table 1-1 sets out the structure of the ES along with a summary of what is included in each chapter.

Table 1-1 : ES Structure

Chapter	Description
Non-Technical Summary (NTS) (TR010040/APP/6.4)	
Separate document to the ES	Summary of the ES in a non-technical language.
Main Report (TR010040/APP/6.1)	
Chapter 1 Introduction	Provides an overview of the Proposed Scheme, the purpose and structure of the ES, outlines the legislative and policy framework, and provides competent expert evidence.
Chapter 2 The Proposed Scheme	Provides a detailed description of elements assessed in the ES, explains the objectives and need of the Proposed Scheme. Chapter also includes the baseline scenario, construction, operation, management and demolition of the Proposed Scheme.
Chapter 3 Assessment of alternatives	Describes the alternatives considered as part of the design process and methodology for the assessment.
Chapter 4 Environment assessment methodology	Provides a summary of the environmental scoping process undertaken, general assumptions and limitations and an explanation of the significance criteria.
Chapter 5 Air quality	Presenting the assessment for each specialist environmental parameter, including an introduction to the topic area, approach and method, baseline (ie existing) conditions, assessment of impacts, mitigation and residual effects.
Chapter 6 Cultural heritage	
Chapter 7 Landscape and visual	
Chapter 8 Biodiversity	
Chapter 9 Geology and soils	
Chapter 10 Material assets and waste	
Chapter 11 Noise and vibration	
Chapter 12 Population and human health	
Chapter 13 Road drainage and water environment	
Chapter 14 Climate	
Chapter 15 Cumulative effect assessment	Presents the assessment for combined effects as a result of the Proposed Scheme (the interrelationship between different environmental factors) and cumulative effects from different proposed developments (with the Proposed Scheme being assessed).
Glossary	Abbreviations and definitions used within the ES.
Figures (TR010040/APP/6.2)	
To support the corresponding chapters and appendices in Volume 1 and 3	
Appendices (TR010040/APP/6.3)	
To support the corresponding chapters in Volume 1	

1.2. Overview of the Proposed Scheme

- 1.2.1. The Proposed Scheme is one of six projects to improve journeys on the 115 mile section of the A47 between Peterborough and Great Yarmouth. Together, the proposals will relieve congestion and improve the reliability of journey times for drivers.
- 1.2.2. The proposals include converting almost eight miles of single carriageway to dual carriageway and making improvements to junctions across the route. The six schemes are:
- A47 Wansford to Sutton dualling
 - A47 Guyhirn junction improvement
 - A47 North Tuddenham to Easton dualling
 - A47 Blofield to North Burlingham dualling
 - A47 / A11 Thickthorn junction improvement
 - A47 Great Yarmouth junction improvements
- 1.2.3. The Blofield to North Burlingham section of the A47 is located approximately nine kilometres to the east of Norwich. This 2.6km of single carriageway forms a part of the main arterial highway route connecting Norwich with Great Yarmouth to the east.
- 1.2.4. The extent of the Proposed Scheme is illustrated in Figure 1.1 Scheme overview **(TR010040/APP/6.3)**. A detailed description of the Proposed Scheme is provided in chapter 2 The Proposed Scheme **(TR010040/APP/6.1)**.
- 1.2.5. Currently, the existing A47 from Blofield to North Burlingham experiences delays and high levels of congestion during peak hours. The situation is predicted to get worse with proposed growth in residential development.
- 1.2.6. Key elements of the Proposed Scheme include:
- 2.6km of dual carriageway on the A47
 - de-trunking of the existing A47 section between Blofield and North Burlingham
 - improvements at Yarmouth Road Junction, including closure of the central reserve, closure of High Noon Lane direct access, merge lane, realignment of Waterlow and local access improvements at the Sparrow Hall properties
 - introduction of a compact grade separated junction at B1140 Junction, including the B1140 Overbridge
 - a new overbridge at Blofield traversing the proposed A47 dual carriageway, connecting Yarmouth Road with the existing A47

- provision of new drainage systems including an infiltration basin and retention of existing drainage systems where possible
- a retaining wall in the western extents
- introduction of lighting at the Yarmouth Road Junction and new lighting layout at the B1140 Junction
- closure of an existing layby and provision of a new layby
- walking and cycling routes connecting Blofield and North Burlingham via the Blofield Overbridge to the west and the B1140 Overbridge to the east
- provision of North Burlingham Access
- an agricultural access track
- fencing, safety barriers and signage
- environmental mitigation
- diversions of an intermediate pressure gas main and other utilities

1.3. Legislative and policy framework

Legislative context and the need for EIA

- 1.3.1. The Proposed Scheme is defined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), as it consists of the construction of a highway under sections 14(1)(h) and 22(1)(a) of the PA 2008, together with associated development and other ancillary matters. Further detail concerning the Proposed Scheme's qualification as an NSIP can be found in the prescribed form within the Application Form (**TR010040/APP/1.1**) and in the Explanatory Memorandum to the Draft Development Consent Order (**TR010040/APP/3.2**).
- 1.3.2. In accordance with the legislation, a Development Consent Order (DCO) is required to allow the construction and operation of the Proposed
- 1.3.3. The Proposed Scheme falls under schedule 2, part 10 Infrastructure Projects (f) Construction of roads of the EIA Regulations. Highways England have determined that EIA is required on the basis that there is a potential for significant effects on the environment.
- 1.3.4. In accordance with Regulation 8(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations, Highways England has notified the Secretary of State for Transport (Secretary of State) in a letter to the Planning Inspectorate dated 5 January 2018 that an ES presenting the findings of the EIA will be submitted with the DCO application for this project.
- 1.3.5. The Localism Act 2011 appointed the Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) as the agency responsible for operating the DCO process for NSIPs. In its role, the Inspectorate will examine the application for the Proposed Scheme and then

will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will make the decision on whether to grant or to refuse the DCO.

- 1.3.6. In accordance with section 104(2) of the PA 2008, the Secretary of State is required to have regard to the relevant National Policy Statement (NPS), amongst other matters, when deciding whether or not to grant a DCO. The relevant NPS for the Proposed Scheme is the National Networks National Policy Statement (NNNPS) which was designated in January 2015.
- 1.3.7. Other matters that the Secretary of State would consider important and relevant include national and local planning policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in June 2019.

Planning policy context

National Policy

- 1.3.8. When the DCO application for the scheme is to be progressed as an EIA development, an environmental assessment will be undertaken in compliance with national policies and regulations and will also consider whether legal duties and obligations set out within the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) and Highways England Licence would be met.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.3.9. The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three interdependent overarching objectives; an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective. All three need to be explored in mutually supportive ways.

National Networks National Policy Statement

- 1.3.10. The NNNPS sets out the need for, and the Government's policies to deliver development of, NSIPs on the national road network in England and also sets out the primary basis for making decisions of development consent for NSIPs in England. The Government recognises in the Appraisal of Sustainability accompanying the NNNPS that some developments will have some adverse local impacts on noise, emissions, landscape and visual amenity, biodiversity, cultural heritage and water resources. The significance of these effects and the effectiveness of mitigation is uncertain at the strategic and non-local specific level of the NNNPS. Therefore, whilst applicants should deliver developments in accordance with government policy and in an environmentally sensitive way, including considering opportunities to deliver environmental benefits, some adverse local effects of development may remain.

1.3.11. Outside the NSIP regime, government policy is to bring forward targeted works to address existing environmental problems on the strategic road network (SRN) and improve the performance of the network. This includes:

- reconnecting habitats and ecosystems
- enhancing the settings of historic and cultural heritage features
- respecting and enhancing landscape character
- improving water quality and reducing flood risk
- avoiding significant adverse impacts from noise and vibration
- addressing areas of poor air quality.

Road Investment Strategy 2

1.3.12. In April 2020, the Department of Transport (DfT) published the Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) for 2020-2025. The RIS2 sets out the list of schemes that are to be developed by Highways England over the period covered by the RIS.

1.3.13. Highways England, as the strategic highways company and appointed by the Secretary of State must, in exercising its functions and complying with its legal duties and other obligations, act in a manner which it considers best calculated to, among others:

- minimise the environmental impacts of operating, maintaining and improving its network and seek to protect and enhance the quality of the surrounding environment.
- conform to the principles of sustainable development.

Highways England policy

Highways England Licence

1.3.14. The Highways England Licence document sets out key requirements which must be complied with by the Licence holder as well as statutory guidance. In exercising its functions and complying with its legal duties and obligations, the Licence holder must act in such a manner which it considers best calculated to:

- ensure the effective operation of the network
- ensure the maintenance, resilience, renewal, and replacement of the network
- ensure the improvement, enhancement and long-term development of the network
- ensure efficiency and value for money
- protect and improve the safety of the network

- co-operate with other persons or organisations for the purposes of coordinating day-to-day operations and long-term planning
- minimise the environmental impacts of operating, maintaining and improving its network and seek to protect and enhance the quality of the surrounding environment
- conform to the principles of sustainable development
- in complying with section 4.2(g) and its general duty under section 5(2) of the Infrastructure Act 2015 have regard to the effect of the exercise of its functions on the environment
- ensure that protecting and enhancing the environment is embedded into its business decision-making processes and is considered at all levels of operations
- ensure the best practicable environmental outcomes across its activities, while working in the context of sustainable development and delivering value for money
- consider the cumulative environmental impact of its activities across its network and identify holistic approaches to mitigate such impacts and improve environmental performance
- where appropriate, work with others to develop solutions that can provide increased environmental benefits over those that the Licence holder can achieve alone, where this delivers value for money
- calculate and consider the carbon impact of road projects and factor carbon into design decisions, and seek to minimise carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases from its operations
- adapt its network to operate in a changing climate, including assessing, managing and mitigating the potential risks posed by climate change to the operation, maintenance and improvement of the network
- develop approaches to the construction, maintenance and operation of the Licence holder's network that are consistent with the government's plans for a low carbon future
- take opportunities to influence road users to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from their journey choices

Highways England Delivery Plan

- 1.3.15. The Highways England Delivery Plan explains how we will invest our government funding in the strategic road network up to 2025. It further describes how we will deliver our programme of work and meet our targets.
- 1.3.16. Key performance indicators (KPI) and other performance indicators are set out in the January 2016 Operation Metrics Manual produced in collaboration with DfT and Office of Rail and Road. Environmental KPIs include:

- on reducing the impact of noise pollution, continue with the Noise Important Area improvement programme and consider the opportunities provided by new road surfaces and design of the soft estate, especially in sensitive areas such as National Parks and areas of high population density
- on biodiversity, ensure no net loss across Highways England's activities in RP2 and continue progress towards the target of delivering a net gain in biodiversity by 2040. New planting will be appropriate to local habitats
- on air quality, work to identify and implement measures to address NO2 exceedances on the SRN and supporting the work of local authorities to develop and implement their clean air plans, where there are interactions with the SRN
- address severance issues, (the negative effects arising from the way busy infrastructure routes can divide people, places and species because of their relative impermeability), both as part of the design of new schemes and through improvements where existing problems are severe
- continue to respect ancient woodlands and protected wildlife sites. Mitigations will be considered as part of scheme design, such as the translocation of trees and soil, wherever such areas are unavoidably affected
- ensure measures are put in place to address heritage assets at risk, or those negatively impacted by the SRN, whilst seeking to avoid and minimise harm to heritage assets, or put heritage assets at risk as a result of works to the SRN
- support efforts to tackle the shortage of lorry parking. This will help to remove the pressure of drivers to park inappropriately and the negative environmental consequences of fly-parking for local residents and drivers

1.4. Competent Expert Evidence

- 1.4.1. The EIA Regulations require that the ES is prepared by 'competent experts' (Regulation 14 (4) (a)). Galliford Try and Sweco have undertaken the ES as the competent expert on behalf of Highways England. Sweco has been awarded the EIA Quality Mark from the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), demonstrating competency in ES preparation.
- 1.4.2. The EIA has been undertaken by competent experts with the relevant and appropriate experience in their respective topics. A competent expert section within the individual topic chapters has been provided as evidence.
- 1.4.3. The overall EIA lead and competent expert responsible for the ES is a full member of the chartered institute of environmental sciences and a chartered member of the landscape institute.