



**Application by Highways England for the A1 in Northumberland: Morpeth to Ellingham**  
**The Examining Authority's written questions and requests for information (ExQ4)**  
**Issued on 24 May 2021.**

The following table sets out the Examining Authority's (ExA's) fourth round of written questions and requests for information – ExQ4. Questions are set out using an issues-based framework derived from the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues provided as **Annex C** to the Rule 6 letter of 19 November 2020. Questions have been added to the framework of issues set out there as they have arisen from representations and to address the assessment of the application against relevant policies.

Column 2 of the table indicates which Interested Parties (IPs) and other persons each question is directed to. The ExA would be grateful if all persons named could answer all questions directed to them, providing a substantive response, or indicating that the question is not relevant to them for a reason. This does not prevent an answer being provided to a question by a person to whom it is not directed, should the question be relevant to their interests.

Each question has a unique reference number which starts with an alphabetical code and then has an issue number and a question number. For example, the first question on general matters is identified as GEN.4.1. When you are answering a question, please start your answer by quoting the unique reference number.

If you are responding to a small number of questions, answers in a letter will suffice. If you are answering a larger number of questions, it will assist the ExA if you use a table based on this one to set out your responses. An editable version of this table in Microsoft Word is available on request from the case team: please contact [A1inNorthumberland@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:A1inNorthumberland@planninginspectorate.gov.uk) and include 'A1 in Northumberland' in the subject line of your email.

**Responses are due by Deadline 8a: 4 June 2021.**



**Abbreviations used:**

<b>ARN</b>	Affected Road Network	<b>NCC</b>	Northumberland County Council
<b>Art</b>	Article	<b>NE</b>	Natural England
<b>BoR</b>	Book of Reference	<b>NNNPS</b>	National Networks National Policy Statement
<b>CA</b>	Compulsory Acquisition	<b>NSIP</b>	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
<b>CEMP</b>	Construction Environmental Management Plan	<b>PA2008</b>	The Planning Act 2008
<b>dDCO</b>	Draft DCO	<b>PRoW</b>	Public Right of Way
<b>DMRB</b>	Design Manual for Roads and Bridges	<b>R</b>	Requirement
<b>EA</b>	Environment Agency	<b>REAC</b>	Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments
<b>EIA</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment	<b>RIS</b>	Road Investment Strategy
<b>EM</b>	Explanatory Memorandum	<b>Sch.</b>	Schedule
<b>ES</b>	Environmental Statement	<b>SoCG</b>	Statement of Common Ground
<b>ExA</b>	Examining Authority	<b>SoR</b>	Statement of Reasons
<b>HRA</b>	Habitats Regulations Assessment	<b>SoS</b>	Secretary of State
<b>HEMP</b>	Handover Environmental Management Plan	<b>SPA</b>	Special Protection Area
<b>IP(s)</b>	Interested Party (Parties)	<b>TP</b>	Temporary Possession
<b>LEMP</b>	Landscape and Environmental Management Plan	<b>TRA</b>	Traffic Reliability Area
<b>LIR</b>	Local Impact Report	<b>WCH</b>	Walkers, cyclists and horse riders
<b>LWS</b>	Local Wildlife Site	<b>WSI</b>	Written Scheme of Investigation
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding		



### **The Examination Library**

References in these questions set out in square brackets (eg [APP-010]) are to documents catalogued in the Examination Library. The Examination Library can be obtained from the following link:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010059/TR010059-000838-A1%20Northumberland%20Examination%20Library%20Morpeth%20to%20Ellingham.pdf>

It will be updated as the examination progresses.

### **Citation of Questions**

Questions in this table should be cited as follows:

Question reference: issue reference: question number, eg GEN.4.1 – refers to question 1 in this table.



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ExQ4	Question to:	Question:
<b>GENERAL QUESTIONS</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.
<b>AIR QUALITY AND EMISSIONS</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.
<b>BIODIVERSITY AND HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT</b>		
BIO.4.1	Applicant	<p>The Environment Agency (EA) [REP5-044] [REP7-021] and Natural England (NE) [REP5a-004] both state that the proposed changes to the application would result in the loss of natural riverbank habitat and therefore there is a need for compensatory habitat to be provided to offset the damage/ loss to the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).</p> <p>The EA also states that the mitigation measures outlined in the Deadline 4 Environmental Statement Addenda [REP4-061] [REP4-063] [REP4-064] only partially lessen the impact and cannot be viewed as an appropriate alternative to a naturally functioning system.</p> <p>The Applicant is asked to explain how it has considered suitable compensation elsewhere within the River Coquet system to offset the impacts on the riverine habitat for which the SSSI is designated?</p>
BIO.4.2	Applicant	<p>In its Relevant Representation (RR) submitted at Deadline 7a the Woodland Trust requested that the Applicant explores all potential options that would ensure the safety of the existing and new bridges while avoiding loss of ancient woodland.</p> <p>In responding to the RR submitted by the Woodland Trust, the Applicant is asked to demonstrate what other options were considered to avoid the loss of additional ancient woodland.</p>
BIO.4.3	Applicant	In its RR submitted at Deadline 7a NE reiterated its comments on the proposed changes to the application made at Deadline 5a [REP5a-004].

**ExQ4: 24 May 2021****Responses due by Deadline 8a: 4 June 2021**

<b>ExQ4</b>	<b>Question to:</b>	<b>Question:</b>
		In responding to the RR submitted by NE, the Applicant is asked to address the effect of the loss of the loss of natural bankside habitats and the impact of the proposed works on sediment supply from the surrounding slopes.
		<b>HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT (HRA) REPORT</b>
BIO.4.4	NE	The Revised HRA [REP4-056] applies the Conservation Objectives from the Northumbria Coast SPA to the Northumbria Coast Ramsar (Table 2-2, p.37). Does NE agree that these objectives are appropriate?
BIO.4.5	Applicant	The Applicant is requested to identify any factors that might affect the certainty of the implementation of the mitigation measures listed in paragraphs 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 of the revised HRA [REP4-056]?
BIO.4.6	NE	Does NE agree with the conclusions of the revised HRA [REP4-056]?
<b>CARBON EMISSIONS</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.
<b>COMPULSORY ACQUISITION/TEMPORARY POSSESSION</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.
<b>COMBINED AND CUMULATIVE EFFECTS</b>		
CC.4.1	Applicant	NE [REP5a-004] states that, when the cumulative impact of the works on both northern and southern banks of the River Coquet are assessed over the lifetime of the scheme, the permanent loss of the natural bed and bank features, the decoupling of the channel from the sediment supplied by the gorge slopes and the cessation of the natural evolution of the channel over even a limited area of the SSSI, should be viewed as a significant impact on this nationally important river system.

**ExQ4: 24 May 2021****Responses due by Deadline 8a: 4 June 2021**

<b>ExQ4</b>	<b>Question to:</b>	<b>Question:</b>
		The Applicant is asked to comment on how it has assessed the combined and cumulative impacts of the proposed change on the River Coquet and if it views such impacts as significant.
<b>DRAFT DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.
<b>GEOLOGY AND SOILS</b>		
GS.4.1	Applicant	NE [REP5a-004] has highlighted concerns regarding the effects of the proposed changes to the application on the geomorphology of the River Coquet. Furthermore, NE agrees with the EA [REP6-053] [REP7-021] in relation to the Change Request Addenda in relation to the geomorphological impacts of the proposal. The NE and EA believe that the proposed bank stabilisation works, and the scour protection works will constitute a break in the connectivity between the terrestrial and riverine habitat, with long-term implications for local sediment supply in this area. This, in the view of NE and the EA does not constitute a minor adverse impact.  Can the Applicant confirm why it considers that the permanent loss of natural riverbank would constitute a minor adverse impact?
GS.4.2	Applicant	NE [REP5a-004] states that proposed changes to the application will impact on how the channel evolves over an area larger than the actual footprint of the proposed work, leading to a longer-term deterioration of the channel, its flora and fauna.  Can the Applicant explain how the long-term consequences on the channel have been assessed?
<b>HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.

ExQ4	Question to:	Question:
<b>LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL</b>		
LV.4.1	Applicant	<p>[REP4-062] Earthworks Amendments - Non-Technical Summary - Rev 1 states that twenty-two receptors would experience beneficial visual impacts once the Earthworks Amendments are constructed, as a result of the proposed soil bunds, the slackening of slopes and raised levels of the junction 'bowls'. In addition, one residential receptor would experience beneficial visual impacts as a result of the proposed increase in height of a proposed bund, which would provide additional screening of the Scheme.</p> <p>Can the Applicant provide further reasoning and explanation on how such visual impacts were assessed in relation to the twenty-three identified receptors and why such impacts have been assessed as a benefit?</p> <p>Can the Applicant also confirm whether the effects of the above mentioned earthworks have been assessed in relation to landscape?</p>
		<b>Part A</b>
LV.4.2	Applicant	<p>[REP4-062] Earthworks Amendments - Non-Technical Summary - Rev 1 states that proposals for Part A of the Scheme would be achieved by a series of measures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increase in height of soil bunds already proposed in the original ES would maximise use of soil bunds for disposal of excess site material.</li> <li>• Maximising of fill within slackened (gentler) slopes for re-use of site material, as proposed in the original ES.</li> <li>• Laying down additional material increasing some localised ground levels.</li> <li>• Raising levels of junction "bowls" (level or rounded rather than dished).</li> </ul> <p>Can the Applicant confirm the proposed maximum height of the proposed soil bunds, slopes and bowls and how the impacts have been assessed in terms of visual effects and effects on the landscape?</p>
		<b>Part B</b>
LV.4.3	Applicant	<p>[REP4-062] Earthworks Amendments - Non-Technical Summary - Rev 1 states that there would be a proposed reduction of imported materials of approximately 132,000 m<sup>3</sup> (of which approximately 88,000 m<sup>3</sup> is from Part A of the Scheme) compared to the original</p>

**ExQ4: 24 May 2021****Responses due by Deadline 8a: 4 June 2021**

<b>ExQ4</b>	<b>Question to:</b>	<b>Question:</b>
		<p>ES, which is anticipated to lead to approximately 110,000 m<sup>3</sup> to be used onsite rather than being disposed offsite. These proposals for Part B of the Scheme would be achieved by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of new soil bunds to maximise re-use of excess site material.</li> <li>• Maximising of slopes for re-use of excess site material.</li> <li>• Laying down additional material increasing some localised ground levels.</li> <li>• Raising levels of junction "bowls" (level or rounded rather than dished).</li> <li>• Creating new, temporary soil storage areas.</li> <li>• Utilising borrow pits to exchange and win additional material suitable for construction.</li> </ul> <p>Can the Applicant confirm the proposed maximum height of the proposed soil bunds, slopes and bowls and how the impacts have been assessed in terms of visual effects and effects on the landscape?</p>
<b>MATERIAL RESOURCES</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.
<b>NOISE AND VIBRATION</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.
<b>POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.

**ExQ4: 24 May 2021****Responses due by Deadline 8a: 4 June 2021**

<b>ExQ4</b>	<b>Question to:</b>	<b>Question:</b>
<b>TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT</b>		
		The ExA does not wish to ask any further questions on this topic at this point in the Examination.
<b>WATER ENVIRONMENT</b>		
WE.4.1	EA	<p>The EA [REP5-044] requested that the Flood Risk Assessment should be updated to include the risk implications of the proposed temporary bridge across the River Coquet. The applicant has submitted a Flood Risk Assessment Addendum - River Coquet - Rev 1 [REP7-015] which seeks to address this point in light of the proposed changes and recent geotechnical investigations.</p> <p>Could the EA confirm if it is satisfied with the information submitted and if there are any remaining concerns regarding the effects of the proposed changes on flooding?</p>
WE.4.2	EA NE	<p>The EA [REP5-044] and NE [REP5a-004] have expressed concerns regarding the effect of the change request for stabilisation work and southern access works on to the River Coquet, particularly in relation to its geomorphology. Consequently, the EA has requested that the River Coquet Geomorphology Modelling Assessment be updated. The Applicant has submitted the River Coquet Fluvial Geomorphology Assessment [REP07-003] in order to address these concerns.</p> <p>Can the EA and NE please confirm if they are satisfied with the information submitted and if there are any remaining concerns in relation to the effects of the change request for stabilisation work and southern access works on the River Coquet?</p>
WE.4.3	EA	<p>The EA [REP5-044] has stated that a plan identifying the borrow pits which require dewatering and daily quantity and duration/ restoration proposals has been asked to be submitted as part of the DCO submission. In addition, it has also stated that a dewatering assessment should consider impacts to unknown licensed and private water supplies and groundwater dependent designation such as peat bogs. Subsequently, the Applicant has submitted a Borrow Pit Dewatering Assessment [REP7-004] in order to address the EA's concerns.</p> <p>Can the EA confirm if it is satisfied with the information submitted and if there are any remaining concerns regarding the borrow pit dewatering assessment and its impacts?</p>

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<b>ExQ4</b>	<b>Question to:</b>	<b>Question:</b>
WE.4.4	EA	<p>The EA [REP5-044] asked for confirmation of the type of lining to be utilised in Borrow Pit 4, as it is proposed to be used as a detention basin. The EA also raised concerns regarding the methodology used in order to backfill Borrow Pits 1 and 2 and also requested further information regarding the proposed long-term use of Borrow Pits 3 and 4. the Applicant, in [REP6-040], has addressed this matter.</p> <p>Can the EA confirm it is satisfied that its concerns have been addressed?</p>
WE.4.5	Applicant	<p>The EA [REP5-044] and NE [REP5a-004] have both raised concerns regarding the proposed scour protection (rock armouring) associated with the change request for Stabilisation Works and Southern Access Works. The proposed scour protection would lead to the permanent loss of bankside habitat from with the SSSI.</p> <p>How does the Applicant propose to address the adverse effects of the rock armouring, particularly in relation to the loss of the riparian zone?</p>