

A1 in Northumberland: Morpeth to Ellingham

7.39 Applicant's Response to Secretary of State's Request

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

November 2023

Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

**Infrastructure Planning
(Examination Procedure) Rules
2010**

**The A1 in Northumberland: Morpeth to
Ellingham**

Development Consent Order 20[xx]

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State's Request**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document relates to an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO), made on 7 July 2020, by Highways England (now National Highways) (the 'Applicant') to the Secretary of State for Transport via the Planning Inspectorate (the 'Inspectorate') under section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 (the '2008 Act'). If made, the DCO would grant consent for the A1 in Northumberland: Morpeth to Ellingham (the 'Scheme').

The Scheme comprises two sections known as Part A: Morpeth to Felton (Part A) and Part B: Alnwick to Ellingham (Part B), a detailed description of which can be found in Chapter 2: The Scheme, Volume 1 of the Environmental Statement (ES) [APP-037].

The purpose of this document is to set out the Applicant's response to the Secretary of State for Transport's request for comments set out in their letter dated 7 November 2023. This note responds to that request, setting out the specific request and the Applicant's response.

2. APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO SECRETARY OF STATE'S REQUEST

2.1.1. Secretary of State's request

The Secretary of State notes the Applicant's response of 25 October 2023 to the above question and that they require further consideration to be given as to whether additional work is required to update the air quality and biodiversity information submitted as part of the application for the Proposed Development.

2.1.2. National Highways' Response

Air Quality

The Applicant has already submitted substantial data in relation to traffic and air quality as part of the Application for the Scheme. Therefore, using the previous data and analysis, the Applicant will qualitatively assess the likely impact on traffic flows due to changes in growth using the updated annual forecast traffic growth for the north-east region. This will be in accordance with the national road traffic projections (RTP) 2022, as well as taking account of a revised opening year of 2029.

The Applicant will then consider the potential impact of changes in traffic flows to determine whether there is any material impact on the conclusions of the air quality assessment submitted as part of the environmental information accompanying the Application and during the examination.

In addition, in line with recent practice, air quality assessments now consider the contribution of ammonia emissions from vehicles at designated ecological sites to ambient ammonia concentrations (with respect to a habitat-specific critical level), and to nitrogen

deposition rates (with respect to a habitat-specific critical load). The Applicant will include this information in an updated assessment of air quality impacts on designated ecological sites.

Biodiversity

The Applicant will use any new outputs from the ammonia assessment to update the associated biodiversity air quality assessment and identify any changes to the significance of effect reported as part of the Application. This assessment will also identify whether there is a need for additional mitigation/compensation proposals to be secured under the DCO itself and/or the Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan.

The Applicant will also undertake an updated ecology desk study and a habitat validation walkover of the Scheme in December 2023 and January 2024. This is to confirm that the habitat types have not changed significantly from the original baseline assessment that was set out in the Application. This validation assessment is proposed in recognition of the advice note published in April 2019 by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) in relation to the lifespan of ecological reports and surveys¹.

2.1.3. Secretary of State's Request

The Secretary of State requests to the Applicant that this information be provided by 21 November 2023, or that he is provided with an indication of the time required to complete this work.

2.1.4. National Highways' Response

Once the necessary assessment updates are complete, the Applicant will provide a submission to the Secretary of State setting out the detailed methodology and updated assessments for air quality and biodiversity in line with the scope set out above. Given the scale of the data gathering and analysis required, the Applicant expects the submission to be made by 21 March 2024. However, should this transpire to be unachievable the Applicant will notify the Secretary of State of a revised submission date.

¹ <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>

