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Dear Sir/Madam

**HIGHWAYS ACT 1980 SECTIONS 105(A) AND (B)
ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT
PROPOSED M25 WIDENING, Junctions 27 to 30**

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for Transport, ("the Secretary Of State") to refer to the Environmental Statement ("the Statement") for the proposed widening of the M25 Motorway between Junctions 27 and 30 ("the Scheme") that describes the likely environmental impacts of the Scheme and the measures proposed to minimise those impacts. The Statement was published by the Highways Agency ("the Agency"), as an executive Agency for the Department for Transport, and acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, on 15th November 2007 in accordance with Section 105 A (3) of the Highways Act 1980 ("The Act"). It was placed on deposit from 15th November 2007 until 7th February 2008 at the locations given in the Appendix to this letter and the proposals it contained formed the basis of 5 public exhibitions between 23rd November and 8th December 2007 at the locations given in the Appendix to this letter. Information was also made available on the Agency's website and via interactive touch screen kiosks located at four locations as listed in the Appendix. Members of the public and others were invited to express their opinions on the Scheme in the light of the Statement. Comments received until 29th February 2008 have been considered.
2. This letter is published in accordance with Section 105B (6) of the Act; it summarises the opinions and comments received on the published details of the Statement and sets out the decision of the Secretary of State on whether to proceed with the Scheme to which the Statement relates.





THE SCHEME

3. The Scheme, as described in the Statement, will provide an additional lane in both the clockwise and anti-clockwise carriageways of the M25 over a distance of 25.5 km between Junctions 27 (M11) and 30 (A13). The work would be undertaken within the existing highway boundary and is expected to be completed by 2012. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the Scheme is a stand alone scheme.

COMMENTS ON THE SCHEME

4. In total, 91 comments were received; 63 at the public exhibitions and 28 via the Highways Agency Information Line, by email and by letter. Two responses were received from Statutory Environmental Bodies while 3 other stakeholder groups also commented. The Secretary of State has considered all the comments received, together with those given orally to the Agency's representatives at the public exhibition. The following paragraphs summarise the principal comments and give the Secretary of State's responses.
5. The Secretary of State has given careful consideration to the request from a respondent to the consultation that a public inquiry should be held into the proposals for the Scheme but is satisfied that such an inquiry would be unlikely to produce any significant new information relevant to her decision. She has noted subsequent correspondence between the Agency and the respondent and that both parties have expressed a willingness to engage in further discussions to ensure that the concerns of the respondent are taken into account in the planning of the proposals.

ENVIRONMENT

6. The Secretary of State has taken due cognisance of the comments of Natural England and the Environment Agency and also the further correspondence between Natural England and the Agency. The Secretary of State has noted that Natural England have stated that they consider there are no potential nature conservation showstoppers in respect of the scheme when considered 'in isolation'. The comments received from the Environment Agency were mainly of a detailed technical nature which will help to inform the Agency in the construction of the Scheme and the Secretary of State does not consider that they raise any concerns about the viability of the Scheme.





Noise

7. Noise from the motorway traffic was a significant environmental concern identified by respondents and several commented that more noise barriers should be installed. A number of respondents questioned the accuracy of the Agency's modelled impacts. The Agency carried out the assessments using the Department for Transport's guidance "Calculation of Road Traffic Noise, 1988" which is the standard method of assessment and requires the user to take account of the issues raised by respondents, on allowing for wind direction for example.
8. The Agency considers that the noise mitigation measures provided as part of the Scheme have been developed to provide a noise environment after the widening that would mostly not be discernibly worse than that which would exist if the widening did not proceed. Low noise surfacing has been specified for the scheme and this will reduce the level of noise generated by the vehicles on the road.
9. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the Statement has properly identified and addressed the noise impacts of the Scheme and that the Agency's proposals for assessing and mitigating the impact of the scheme on noise are appropriate and adequate.

Lighting

10. Some comments were received regarding the proposal for upgrading the lighting along the motorway. In response the Agency has stated that the proposed form of lighting will be of the cut-off type which will minimise the scatter of light beyond the motorway fenceline and reduce the light spill currently experienced from the existing lighting. The lighting is justified on safety grounds as it is predicted that it could lead to a reduction in night time accidents of 10%. The Agency is also considering the possibility of using variable timing and varying the intensity of lighting to the carriageway.
11. The Secretary of State considers that the lighting is justified on safety grounds and that the proposed improved form of the lighting will reduce the impact of it on the environment and on neighbouring properties.

Air Quality

12. Air quality both during construction (including the effects of dust) and after opening was the subject of a number of comments. The existing air quality conditions have been monitored and modelling has indicated that NO2 concentrations are unlikely to exceed the limit value at properties in the opening year and then to decrease in later years as the increased efficiency of new vehicles reduces their impact. The Scheme is expected to increase the





amount of free flowing traffic on the Motorway, resulting in improved air quality. The Agency will also be working with the contractors employed to undertake the works to minimise the levels of dust produced during construction, though some increase will be inevitable.

13. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the Statement has properly identified and addressed the air quality impacts of the Scheme and that the Agency's proposals for assessing and mitigating the impact of the scheme on air quality are appropriate and adequate.

HERITAGE

14. Comments from the London Borough of Havering have identified errors and omissions in the Statement in the identification of the various Listed Buildings and other heritage sites in the Borough. The Secretary of State is satisfied that this has no material consequences for the overall delivery of the Scheme and that the Agency's proposals for liaison with the Borough before and during construction will ensure that the impacts on all heritage sites are adequately considered.

RIGHTS OF WAY

15. Comments from both Brentwood Borough Council and the London Borough of Havering have stressed the importance of the Rights of Way network to enable access across the Motorway for non-motorised travellers and they have identified omissions and errors in the Statement. The Secretary of State is satisfied that these have no material consequences for the overall delivery of the Scheme and that the Agency's proposals for liaison with the Boroughs before and during construction will ensure that the impacts on the Rights of Way network are adequately considered.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S DECISION

16. The Secretary of State for Transport is satisfied that the requirements of European Directive No. 85/337/EEC, as amended by Directive No. 97/11/EC and Directive No. 2003/35/EC, implemented by sections 105A, 105B, 105C and 105D of the Highways Act 1980, have been complied with fully in respect of the published scheme ("the project"). The Secretary of State is also satisfied that the Environmental Impact Assessment undertaken for the project and the Environment Statement, have properly identified, assessed and addressed all significant environmental effects, and that members of the public and others concerned have been given reasonable opportunity to express their opinion, before deciding whether to proceed with the project to which the assessment relates. Therefore, having considered the Statement and any opinions on that Statement expressed by the public and others, the





Secretary of State has decided, taking into account the comments made in paragraphs 6 to 15 above, to proceed with the project to which the assessment relates. For the purposes of section 105B(6), publication of the Secretary of State's decision to proceed with the scheme will be given by public notice as set out in section 105B(7).

17. When public notice is given, any person who is aggrieved by the Secretary of State for Transport's decision and wishes to question its validity, or of any particular provision contained in it, on the grounds that the Secretary of State has exceeded her powers or has not complied with the relevant statutory requirements may, under the provisions in section 105D of the Highways Act 1980, do so by application to the High Court. Such application must be made within six weeks of publication of the notice. The decision to which the notice applies shall not be questioned in any other legal proceedings whatever.

NEXT STEPS

18. The Secretary of State proposes that after this letter has been issued, the Agency will publish the date on which they intend to commence work on site, together with the name, address and telephone number of the contractor who will supervise construction and be the focal point for enquiries about the works.

COMPENSATION

19. Householders may submit a claim for compensation under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 one year after the new roads have been brought into use, where traffic noise or other specified physical effects stemming from the use of the new carriageways have caused depreciation in the value of their properties. Information on how claims should be made will be published in local newspapers and advertised locally at the appropriate time.

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS

20. A copy of this letter has been sent to all those organisations and individuals who submitted written comments on the proposals set out in the Statement. Additional copies of this letter are available free on request to the Government Office for the East of England, Eastbrook, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8DF (tel: 01223 272598). Copies of this letter and of the Statement may be inspected during office hours at the offices of the Highways Agency, Major Projects M25 Division, Birmingham. To arrange please contact David Lake, Major Projects, M25 Division, Floor C8, 5 Broadway, Broad Street



GO-East



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Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T. Freathy".

TIM FREATHY
Deputy Regional Director
Development and Infrastructure



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



APPENDIX

LIST OF DEPOSIT LOCATIONS

- Epping Library
- The Parish Office, Theydon Bois
- Chipping Ongar Library
- Harold Hill Library
- Brentwood Library
- Upminster Library
- Belhus Branch Library
- Chafford Hundred Library
- Grays Library
- Thurrock Borough Council offices
- Highways Agency, Dorking Office
- Highways Agency, Bedford Office
- Highways Agency, Birmingham Office

LIST OF EXHIBITION LOCATIONS

- Quality Hotel, Epping (23rd and 24th November 2007)
- Holiday Inn, Brentwood (29 November 2007)
- Thurrock Hotel, Thurrock (30 November 2007)
- Park Inn, Grays (1 December 2007)
- Central Park Leisure Centre, Harold Hill, Romford (7th and 8th December 2007)

LIST OF INTERACTIVE TOUCH SCREEN KIOSK LOCATIONS

- Birchanger Green Service, M11 Junction 8
- M1 Toddington Services, M1 Junctions 10-11
- Medway Services, M2 Junctions 4-5
- The Galleria Shopping Centre, Hatfield

