

Comment numberCOM09
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NIMVO plot numberN/A

TransportNI has considered the correspondence in the above communication and responds as follows:

- 1. I am writing in response to the letter of 27 January 2015 from Roads Service Eastern Division, regarding the Environmental Statement (ES) which has been prepared for the proposed York Street Interchange.**

I am happy to see that the consultants who have prepared the ES have engaged with Belfast City Council, and taken account of the Council's Reviews and Assessments of Air Quality.

I note that it is predicted that levels of air pollutants (PM₁₀ and NO₂) at sensitive receptors are predicted to be below national air quality standards in Opening Year (2021) and Design Year (2035) scenarios, and that changes in concentrations of pollutants are expected to be in general negligible, and where changes are significant, that levels would nevertheless be below national air quality standards (p158-159).

However, as I set out in my advice of 24th March 2014, levels of NO₂ along the Westlink are currently in breach of requirements set out in Directive 2008/50/EC. I would encourage the consultants who have prepared the ES to give some indication of the predicted effects on concentrations of NO₂ along the A12, and other neighbouring roads, not necessarily just where there is relevant exposure in the vicinity of the interchange (an indicative assessment may suffice). For example, the AQMA in Figure 8.1 extends beyond the general vicinity of the area of mapped receptors. Again, Belfast City Council may be able to advise in this regard.

Air Quality

- a) TransportNI notes the various comments made in relation to the findings of the Air Quality assessment contained within the Environmental Statement.
- b) In terms of the predicted effects on NO₂ concentrations further south along the A12 Westlink AQMA and neighbouring roads, TransportNI would advise that such information (if available) can be useful for the wider issue of local air quality management, but is not a requirement of the assessment guidance that applies to the Proposed Scheme. The air quality assessment reported in Chapter 8 of the ES has made full use of the spatial extent of the traffic model which has been defined on the basis of where there is likely to be significant changes in traffic due to implementation of the Proposed Scheme itself.
- c) The values reported in the ES indicate that there is no measureable change in air pollutant concentrations at receptors along the A12 Westlink at locations furthest from the Proposed Scheme. The scale of the impacts is likely to be similar at locations further along the A12 Westlink, where similar traffic conditions are experienced.

2. **With regard to noise, I would advise that any relevant Noise Action Plans (prepared in fulfilment of requirements of the Environmental Noise Directive – 2002/49/EC) which have been prepared (or will be prepared) will have to take account of the proposed interchange, as necessary.**

Noise

- a) TransportNI notes your comments in relation to noise. The END Round 2 strategic noise mapping was completed in 2012 and the Round 2 Noise Action Plan for Roads was issued in 2013 (Department for Regional Development – Roads – Environmental Noise Directive Round 2 – Noise Action Plan 2013-2018, document reference CO401053/RNAP).
- b) The Noise Action Plan describes how the Department for Regional Development (DRD), in conjunction with the Department of the Environment (DOE), proposes to deliver their obligations under the European Directive for Assessment and Management of Environmental Noise 2002/49/EC. The Noise Action Plan deals with noise from both Major Roads and All Roads within agglomerations of greater than 100,000 inhabitants.
- c) The Noise Action Plan identifies Candidate Noise Management Areas (CNMAs). Some or all of these will eventually be confirmed as Noise Management Areas (NMAs).
- d) TransportNI confirms it is aware that the Noise Action Plan identifies one CNMA on the Proposed Scheme. This is the area of Little Georges Street.
- e) With the Proposed Scheme in operation, noise levels to properties in Little Georges Street are predicted to decrease by approximately 3 to 7 dB (additional noise barriers are specified in this location), as shown on Figures 13.3 and 13.4 in Volume 3 of the ES. Hence, the Proposed Scheme addresses the noise issue for this CNMA, as required by the Noise Action Plan.
- f) The END Round 3 strategic noise mapping will be carried out in 2017 / 2018. Based on the current programme, the Proposed Scheme would be in the early stages of construction. How the Proposed Scheme is to be catered for in the Round 3 mapping and subsequent action plans will be a decision for DRD and DOE in due course.
3. **For information, all historic air quality data collected on the Northern Ireland network can be found at the Department's website: www.airqualityni.co.uk**

Noise maps are available from the Department's website at: www.noiseni.co.uk

If I can be of any further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me.

- a) We would thank you for your interest in this scheme.