



**South Downs**  
National Park Authority

**Agenda Item 16**  
**Report NPA19/20-07**

Report to	<b>South Downs National Park Authority</b>
Date	<b>2 July 2019</b>
By	<b>Director of Countryside Policy and Management</b>
Title of Report <b>Decision</b>	<b>Response to Highways England re M3 Junction 9 at Winchester</b>

**Recommendation: The Authority is recommended to:**

- 1. Note the timescale and process for the Highways England public consultation on proposals to address Junction 9 of the M3 at Winchester;**
- 2. Approve the key priorities identified by officers in conjunction with the Authority Chair as set out in section 4 below;**
- 3. Delegate to the Director of Countryside Policy & Management, in consultation with the Authority Chair, responsibility to make an initial submission to the public consultation based on these key priorities;**
- 4. Note that the submitted response and any feedback received from Highways England will be presented to the October meeting of the NPA prior to the final response being submitted.**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 As part of the Road Investment Strategy 1 (RIS1) for the period 2015 - 2020, Highways England (HE) is now about to launch its official public consultation on the scheme for major works to address multiple issues around Junction 9 of the M3 at Winchester, the interchange with the A33 and A34.
- 1.2 M3 Junction 9 is a key transport interchange which connects South Hampshire and Southampton Port with London via the M3 and the Midlands/North via the A34 (which also links to the principal east-west A303 corridor).
- 1.3 The M3/A34 interchange is located right against the boundary of the National Park, with roads running through it to the north over the Itchen and to the south through Twyford Down. In addition to the impact on the National Park and its setting, any scheme will affect the Itchen valley Special Area of Conservation (EU Habitats Directive) part of which is within the Park.

**2. SDNPA involvement to date**

- 2.1 Work began at the SDNPA in 2016 to collect information on the potential impacts of any scheme on the Special Qualities of the National Park. This was in line with the Position Statement agreed by Member in September 2014 as the basis for responding to proposed road schemes and other infrastructure developments.
- 2.2 A Member workshop on Junction 9 was held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018 which included a site visit and a presentation and Q&A session with HE officers. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 the NPA

approved the response to the first, informal, consultation. This made a holding objection to the scheme as proposed at the time, due to the lack of consideration for the impacts on the National Park and the paucity of information with regards to mitigation and compensation. We also made a specific objection to the suggested land take within the SDNP for temporary depots. It was made clear at the time that, should HE come forward with a fully mitigated and compensated proposal at the next stage, then the SDNPA might reconsider its objection.

- 2.3 With regard to Junction 9 itself, since March 2018 a number of conversations have taken place involving the Authority Chair, senior HE officials and Hampshire County Council, and there have been ongoing meetings with officers.
- 2.4 Many issues have been highlighted in these meetings, evidence shared and positive suggestions made by the SDNPA. On 20<sup>th</sup> June we had first sight of the package of proposals which will form the basis of the public consultation and upon which we need to base our response. On a positive note this package drops the suggestion of locating the temporary depots within the National Park
- 2.5 The consultation will run from 2<sup>nd</sup> July to 24<sup>th</sup> August, and since the scheme was only shown to our team on 20<sup>th</sup> June it has not been possible to undertake a considered assessment of the impacts to bring to this NPA meeting. The Authority Chair is meeting HE and HCC on 28<sup>th</sup> June and this will provide another opportunity to learn more, and a verbal update will be provided at this meeting to what is a fast moving situation.
- 2.6 In the light of all the above it is therefore proposed that during the consultation period the SDNPA will make a high level response to HE on the major issues as set out below, and this will be reported back to the October NPA.

### **3. Policy context**

- 3.1 As with other major infrastructure projects in the National Park such as the A27 schemes and the Esso Pipeline, the scheme will go through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning (NSIP) process. After this consultation Highways England will apply to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS (on behalf of the Secretary of State)) for a Development Consent Order. As a 'relevant' Local Authority, the National Park Authority will be invited to produce a *Local Impact Report* on the proposals within the DCO to submit to PINS for their consideration during the application process.
- 3.2 *The National Policy Statement for National Networks<sup>1</sup>* (NPSNN) sets out planning guidance for the development of national significant infrastructure projects on the road and rail networks. The Secretary of State will use this as the primary basis for making decisions on development consent applications for National Infrastructure projects. Its guidance in terms of National parks mirrors that in the National Planning Policy Framework, stating that consent should be refused for major development in these areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest, and that any such development must meet the following tests;
  - The need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
  - The cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
  - Any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

#### 4. The Key Priorities

4.1 It is proposed that the following priorities (in terms of mitigating and compensating for the direct impact of the J9 scheme on the Special Qualities of the National Park) be used as the guiding framework for preparing our submission. They are of equal weight:

- The landscape setting, which featured prominently in the public inquiry into the designation of the National Park (this includes issues such as land reprofiling, lighting and woodland screening);
- Water (particularly the quality and quantity impacts on Winnall Moors SAC);
- Chalk grassland (mitigation or compensation for areas directly impacted by the scheme)
- Access to the National Park from Winchester for walkers, cyclists and other users (preventing any further severance and improving where possible).

For all of these impacts, and in line with the Defra 25Year Strategy, the objective should be a net gain rather than simply prevention of damage. There are plenty of opportunities to do this and no technical reasons why this should not be achievable.

In addition, and over and above the direct impacts of the scheme, there are some big opportunities for the use of designated funds to upgrade the landscape, biodiversity and access of the wider “Winchester gateway” to the South Downs:

- Chalk grassland restoration on sites which are currently scrub (such as parts of St Catherine’s Hill) or arable (east of the M3);
- The Green Bridge over Twyford cutting;
- Wider access improvements e.g. from St Catherine’s Park and Ride, Bar End and by rerouting the South Downs Way to create a better entry to Winchester.

#### 5. Wider context

5.1 A separate project managed by HE under RIS 1 is to convert the M3 to a Smart motorway between the M27 junction and junction 9 at Winchester. Although the two schemes will physically connect, they are being handled by different teams. A third proposal from HE is to investigate the possibility of creating a green bridge across the Twyford Down cutting, but it now seems clear that this would not be considered until RIS 2 and cannot be linked to either RIS 1 schemes.

5.2 In the interim period, the SDNPA has launched a much broader project to look long-term at the entire area at the western end of the National Park and, in particular, the relationship between the city of Winchester, the Itchen Valley and the open downland. Whilst separate from the Junction 9 and Smart motorway issues, this has given us to look at wider opportunities to restore the landscape, gather the views of the public and local communities, and build relationships with statutory agencies and key local land managers such as the Hampshire and IoW Wildlife Trust.

#### 6. Other Implications

Implication	Yes/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	Yes at October NPA
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	Yes. Considerable officer time has already been invested in preparing an evidence base and in meetings with HE. We are seeking a Planning Performance Agreement to mitigate these costs.

How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	No VfM issues
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes. No equalities implications arise directly from this paper. The next stage of this work may require a full equalities impact assessment which will be undertaken at the appropriate time by the appropriate agency.
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	No
Are there any Data Protection implications?	No
Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?	Yes, this scheme will have impacts in terms of environmental limits and the choices people are able to make about modes of travel and how to access the National park.

## 7. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
None			

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Appendices

None

SDNPA Consultees

Chief Executive; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services, Environment and Infrastructure Strategy Lead

External Consultees

None

Background Documents

[NPA Sept 14](#)

[NPA Dec 15](#)

[P&R Feb 18](#)