

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

The Trunk Road T2 (Ballynahinch Bypass) Order (Northern Ireland) Order 2021

S.R. 2021 No. 153

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Department for Infrastructure to accompany the Statutory Rule (details above) which is laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- 1.2. The Statutory Rule is made under Articles 14(1), 68(1), (3) and (5) of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 and is subject to the negative resolution procedure.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The Order provides that 3395 metres of new and upgraded road shall become trunk road and be part of the Belfast to Newcastle Trunk Road T2.

3. Background

- 3.1. The A24 Ballynahinch Bypass will be a 3.14km single 2-lane carriageway bypass with widening to provide overtaking opportunities aligned to the east of the town. It commences with a roundabout at the A24 Belfast Road/A21 Saintfield Road junction and terminates with a roundabout at the A24 Drumaness Road/B2 Downpatrick Road junction. It would also include a compact grade-separated junction at the B7 Crossgar Road.
- 3.2. Implementation of the bypass would greatly benefit both strategic and local road users by reducing journey times, improving journey time reliability and improving safety on the A24 Belfast to Newcastle trunk road. The A24 forms part of the T2 Trunk Route from Belfast to Newcastle. The A24 in Ballynahinch is used by both strategic traffic, including commuters travelling to and from Belfast, and local traffic.
- 3.3. Ballynahinch is a market town, situated approximately 24km (15miles) from Belfast, and approximately 16km (10miles) from both Downpatrick and Lisburn. Due to the town's strategic location between several surrounding settlements, a number of roads in addition to the A24 radiate from the town. Ballynahinch forms a bottleneck for strategic traffic, as the A24 through Ballynahinch is the main route for converging traffic from the west (M1/A49) and north (A21/A24) of the province. This problem is particularly prevalent during the Easter and summer holiday seasons with road users seeking to access the popular seaside town of Newcastle and the greater Mourne area. The A24 trunk road conveys traffic through town centre streets which are fronted by retail, commercial, educational, public service and residential properties.

4. Consultation

- 4.1. Comprehensive public consultation was carried out during the development of the scheme and publication of draft statutory orders. The public

consultation was held on 12 November 2009. Personnel from the Department and their consultants were present to answer questions and to provide assistance to members of the general public. A visitor attendance list was kept for those attending the exhibition, and a total of 107 names were entered during the day. The publication of the draft Orders and Environmental Statement on 23rd and 30th March 2015 commenced the consultation period for the scheme which ran until 19th May 2015. The documents were made available at a Public Exhibition of the Proposed Scheme held on the 14th and 15th April 2015 at the Market House, Ballynahinch.

- 4.2. The objective of the exhibition was to advise landowners and other interested parties of the detail of the Proposed Scheme and its potential impact, including the extent of land proposed to be vested and the conclusions of the Environmental Impact Assessment. Representatives from TransportNI and their technical advisors were present to answer questions and to provide assistance to members of the general public. Following this Exhibition, a formal consultation period was opened for feedback and objections to the proposed scheme. 36 responses were received prior to the closing date of the consultation and a further 3 were received after the closing date of 19th May 2015.
- 4.3. On consideration of the responses submitted, the Department determined it appropriate to convene a Public Local Inquiry to examine the case for and against the Proposed Scheme.
- 4.4. The Department appointed Mr Mike Shanks as the Inspector to the Public Inquiry. A Pre-Inquiry meeting took place on Wednesday 16th December 2015, at which a number of administrative matters and other issues were discussed. The Inquiry opened on Tuesday 26th January 2016 and closed on Wednesday 27th January 2016, lasting a total of 2 days. Following the Inquiry, a number of site visits between the Inspector, Departmental representatives and objectors took place on 5th February 2016. In December 2016 the 'Notice of intention to Proceed' with the Scheme was announced. However, with collapse of the Executive in early 2017, the Department was unable to make the Direction Order.
- 4.5. The Department has carried out a review and update of the Environmental reports prepared for the scheme. This review has concluded that there have been no significant changes in the environmental impact of the scheme.
- 4.6. It is planned to make the Direction Order with modification in June 2021.

5. Equality Impact

- 5.1. A relevant section 75 Equality of Opportunity Screening Analysis was carried out for this scheme. This determined that an Equality Impact Assessment was not required.

6. Regulatory Impact

- 6.1. A Regulatory Impact Assessment was not considered necessary.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. Funding has not yet been identified for the A24 Ballynahinch Bypass. This scheme remains a priority for the Department.

8. Section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

8.1. The scheme requires the vesting of land & property from private individuals, therefore, limiting their ability to enjoy/use their land or property. This engages Article 8, Right to respect for family life and Protocol 1, Article 1, Right to property. Articles 3, 110, 111, 112 & 113 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 provide the powers for the Department to acquire land or property through the vesting process. The road scheme will benefit society as a whole and is in the public interest to use the Department's powers to compulsorily purchase property/land for this scheme. Affected property owners will receive compensation in accordance with a series of Acts of Parliament, case law and established practice.

9. EU Implications

9.1. Not applicable

10. Parity or Replicatory Measure

10.1. None

11. Additional Information

11.1. Not applicable