

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017 ('EIA Regs')

SCREENING OPINION

Introduction

This document comprises a Screening Opinion of the Local Planning Authority in relation to proposals associated with the Transpennine Route Upgrade.

Specifically, it is in response to a request made by Network Rail under Regulation 6(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 – Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) for works proposed under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

It is, however, associated with works proposed to be undertaken within a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) yet to be submitted, and therefore there is a cumulative impact to consider as part of this screening process.

Background

The Transpennine Route Upgrade, hereinafter referred to as TRU, is a major infrastructure initiative aimed at delivering faster, more frequent rail services, enhanced passenger capacity, and improved connectivity between Manchester, Leeds and York. It is associated with delivering a more sustainable and low-carbon transport solution compared to the existing rail network.

It is proposed to deliver the programme in a series of phases over several years and the phase from Stalybridge to the west of Standedge tunnel is known as "W2B". Such works will involve routine track renewals and improvements, works to existing structures, other built development and associated temporary works.

The wider scope of works associated with the proposed development are to be carried out under powers to be sought in a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application expected to be submitted in late 2025.

The works proposed to be undertaken via the TWAO were subject to a separate Environmental Impact Screening Request submitted to the Transport and Infrastructure Planning Unit (TIPU) by Network Rail on 7th February 2024. In response, TIPU confirmed by letter dated 22nd March 2024 that those works did not constitute EIA development, and an EIA would not therefore be required for the TWAO elements of the project.

Screening Requirements

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that only a very small proportion of Schedule 2 developments will require EIA.

Category 13 of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations relates to “Changes and extensions” of development with a description listed in paragraphs 1 – 12 of column 1 of Schedule 2 where that development is already authorised or executed. Essentially, the proposed railway upgrade can be considered a change or extension of a project which is already consented and executed, with the relevant thresholds provided for such projects being whether it exceeds 1 hectare or where the “development as changed or extended may have significant adverse effects on the environment”.

The area subject to the Screening Request is approximately 33ha and therefore the threshold has been exceeded. As such, the scope of the works will only comprise EIA development if the change may have significant effects on the environment.

Regard must be taken of the selection criteria within Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations (selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development) which includes:

- Characteristics of the development;
- Location of the development; and,
- Types and characteristics of the potential impact.

The Screening Request concerns works proposed to be undertaken under the provisions made by the following parts of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended):

- a) Part 4 (Temporary buildings and uses), Class A “temporary buildings and structures”;
- b) Part 8 (Transport related development), Class A “railway of light railway undertakings”
- c) Part 18 (Miscellaneous development), Class A “development under local or private Acts or Order) including those where a prior approval is required.

Schedule 2 development does not constitute permitted development unless the local planning authority has adopted a screening opinion to the effect that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required, the Secretary of State has made a screening direction to the same effect or the Secretary of State has directed that the development be exempt from the requirements of the 2017 Regulations. Where an Environmental Impact Assessment is required, permitted development rights are withdrawn and a planning application must be submitted and accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

The following has been provided with the request:

- a) A plan sufficient to identify the land;

- b) A description of the development;
- c) A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development
- d) A description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment
- e) Such other information or representations including any features of the proposed development or any measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.

The scope of the works proposed to be undertaken under the provisions of the GPDO identified above include:

- Track realignment and capacity enhancements. Realignment of operational lines, including associated embankments /earthworks to support increased line speeds and enhance operational flexibility.
- Track renewal. Replacement of track materials and components, including ballast and formation treatments plus track drainage work necessary to accommodate higher line speeds.
- Signalling and switching improvements. Upgrades to track points, switches and signalling systems to improve operational efficiency and enable increased line speeds.
- Structural repairs and minor works. Localised repairs and improvements to bridges, culverts, and other structures along the route, including relining, partial reconstruction, and installation of new track drainage infrastructure.
- Geotechnical work. Remedial works to retaining walls and other geotechnical structures to address embankment, earthworks and tunnel stability issues.
- Workforce safety measures. Provision of a Continuous Positions of Safety (CPoS) along the lineside for railway personnel, except where site-specific constraints render this impractical.
- Overhead line equipment (OLE) upgrades. Installation of OLE components, along with new electrification works and associated lineside infrastructure.
- Access and safety infrastructure. Installation of road-rail access points (RRAPs) in accordance with Network Rail safety guidance, including measures to prevent unauthorised vehicle access.
- Electrification works. Renewal of lineside signalling and telecommunications equipment to ensure compatibility with new electrification systems.

- Installation of new fencing to prevent unauthorised lineside access.
- Other works including establishment of temporary compounds, site welfare and laydown areas at various locations to support specific construction activities.
- Associated works including site clearance, tree felling, traffic management, site restoration and reinstatement post construction.

The scope of works proposed to be undertaken under the provisions of the GPDO include:

W2B PDR Work	Name/Location	Description	LPA Area
Overbridge	MVL3/23-OB Greenfield	Demolition of bridge to enable adequate clearance for OLE	Oldham
Overbridge	MVL3/35-OB, Ravenstone Drive Footbridge, OL3 5JU	Bridge parapet extensions	Oldham
Underbridge	MVL3/29-UB Oldham Road, Saddleworth OL3 6HY	Ballast retention and GRP handrails	Oldham
Site Compound	Shaw Hall Bank Road, Greenfield	Site compound for storage	Oldham
Station	Greenfield Station	1. Demolition of station footbridge 2. New footbridge with lift shafts, platform extensions, alterations to station furniture and structures 3. Associated utilities, track and OLE works, and SME from Platform 1	Oldham
Former Station platform	Former Saddleworth Station Platform,	Fencing within NR land	Oldham

	Wool Road, OL3 5NS		
Overbridge	MVL3/16-OB, New Earth Street, Tameside	Parapet Raise	Tameside
Overbridge	MVL3/14-OB, Mossley Station Footbridge	Demolished as part of the station decommissioning works	Tameside
Overbridge	MVL3/18-OB, Roughtown Road, OL5 9AZ	Bridge reconstruction	Tameside
Underbridge	MVL3/10-UB, Manchester Road, OL5 9QN	Installation of replacement handrails and fencing	Tameside
Footbridge	MVL3/10A-OB, Manchester Road, OL5 9QN	Bridge reconstruction	Tameside
Footbridge	MVL3/12-OB Abney Footbridge	Installation of Chevaux de Frise and replacement handrails to staircase	Tameside
Tunnel	MVL3/3 Stalybridge	Track lowering and OLE works	Tameside
Tunnel	Scout Tunnel, Mossley	Track Lowering and OLE works	Tameside
Tunnel Portal	Scout Tunnel Western Portal, Stalybridge OL5 9QN	Coring works to structure	Tameside
Site Compound	Bridge 3/10A and Tunnel Laydown	Site compound with a new access from	Tameside

	Area, Manchester Road, OL5 9QN	an unclassified road and earthworks	
Existing Station	Mossley Station	Decommissioning of former station involving partial demolition of the station platforms and mechanical, engineering and plumbing (MEP) works to realign utilities	Tameside
Track and other works	Mossley Cottages	Works to slew the railway track to the west away from Mossley Cottages and OLE portals on the opposite side of the railway from the cottages.	Tameside
Track works, signalling, power, electrification, OLE, fencing.	Scheme wide	Track renewals, track lowering, installation of OLE, lineside fencing, re-signalling works.	Tameside and Oldham
Where required - tree felling and site clearance.	Scheme wide	Tree felling and site clearance. Subsequent restoration and reinstatement work.	Tameside and Oldham

Formal Screening Opinion

The request for a Screening Opinion has been submitted with a covering letter and a completed Screening Matrix which, taken together, provide a description of the proposed development and the likely significant effects having regard to the requirements of Regulation 6(2) and Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations.

On the basis that the identified mitigation measures are implemented during the development you have concluded that the proposed development is not likely to result in significant adverse effects on the environment by virtue of its nature, size or location. It is also understood additional

mitigation measures would be adopted in line with Network Rail's Environmental and Social Minimum Requirements. The covering letter concludes that there are no significant environmental effects arising from the proposed development either in combination or cumulatively with other projects including those to be undertaken using powers in the TWAO.

The proposals support significant improvements to the existing transport network which will facilitate the electrification of the railway line resulting in overall improvements to sustainability.

Having reviewed the submitted details referred to above I can confirm that Oldham Council, in its capacity as Local Planning Authority, agrees with your conclusions that the proposed development, when considered cumulatively with other developments or proposed development, would not have significant or wider than local environmental effects, and therefore does not constitute development for which an Environmental Statement would be required.

Yours sincerely,

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