

**Department for Regional Development  
The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993**

**Departmental Statement  
for the**

**A6 RANDALSTOWN TO TOOME DUAL CARRIAGEWAY  
PUBLIC INQUIRY**

Roads Service – Northern Division  
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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Department for Regional Development Roads Service proposes to upgrade the A6 from the western end of the M22 Motorway at Randalstown to the Castledawson Roundabout to dual carriageway standard. Part of the route at Toome has already been improved to dual carriageway standard. The Randalstown to Toome part of the dualling scheme will provide a dual carriageway connection from the M22 Motorway at Randalstown to the Toome Bypass.
- 1.2 In March 2007, Roads Service published notices in the local press stating that an Environmental Statement had been prepared and that anyone wishing to submit an opinion should do so before the end of April 2007. Simultaneously, Roads Service published notices in the local press stating that the Department proposed to make an order directing that the proposed dual carriageway would become part of the Trunk Road network and that the Department proposed to acquire lands by vesting order for the purposes of constructing the dual carriageway: the notices also stated that anyone wishing to object to the proposed orders should do so in writing before the end of April 2007. The notices specified how comments on the Environmental Statement and/or objection to the proposed orders could be made and the manner in which these were to be made.
- 1.3 Thirty two letters of objection and seven letters of comment were received regarding the Randalstown to Toome Dualling Scheme. Given the nature of the proposals and the likelihood that a number of the objections could not be resolved, the Minister for Regional Development announced that a Public Inquiry would be convened to give Roads Service and objectors a fair opportunity to be heard and to question the case for and against the scheme.

## 2. Strategic Policy

2.1 The current programme to improve transportation links in Northern Ireland has evolved over the last decade or so. The key documents and strategies guiding this programme are:

- The White Paper “A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone”<sup>1</sup> published 1998;
- “Moving Forward: The Northern Ireland Transport Policy Statement”<sup>2</sup> published 1998;
- “Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025”<sup>3</sup> published 2002;
- “Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012”<sup>4</sup> published 2002; and
- “Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015”<sup>5</sup> published 2005.

2.2 The Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 (RDS) guides the development of Northern Ireland up to 2025 and beyond. The importance of the RDS is underpinned by Article 5 of the Strategic Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and was recognised in the Northern Ireland Executive’s Programme for Government.

2.3 The Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) supports the RDS and makes a significant contribution towards achieving the longer-term transportation vision contained within the RDS. The strategic direction and underlying principles of the RTS were agreed by the Northern Ireland Assembly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2002.

2.4 The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 (RSTN TP) sets out how the RTS will be implemented and confirms the individual schemes and projects to be implemented (subject to economic assessments, statutory processes and availability of resources) to support the RDS and RTS objectives and targets. The Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN) incorporates 5% of the road network, which carries around 37% of total road traffic movements, and all of the rail system. The top tier of the Region’s long distance routes connecting the cities and main towns to the major regional gateways and the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA) are designated Key Transport Corridors. These are:

- the **Eastern Seaboard Corridor** – road and rail links between the BMA and Dublin and northward to Larne;
- the **North Western Corridor** – links the BMA to Londonderry;
- the **Northern Corridor** – links the BMA to Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady and Londonderry by road and rail;
- the **Western Corridor** – links west of Lough Neagh between Donegal, Londonderry, Strabane, Omagh, Monaghan and Dublin; and

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<sup>1</sup> A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone, DETR, July 1998

<sup>2</sup> Moving Forward, DOE(NI) November 1998

<sup>3</sup> Shaping our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025, DRD, September 2001

<sup>4</sup> Regional Transportation Strategy 2002-2012, DRD, July 2002

<sup>5</sup> Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015, DRD, 2005

- the **South Western Corridor** – links the BMA to Craigavon, the Fermanagh Lakelands, the Sperrins and to important cross-border routes.

2.5 Table 5.2 of the RSTN TP includes a proposal to upgrade the North Western Key Transport Corridor to dual carriageway standard between the western end of the M22 Motorway at Randalstown and the Castledawson Roundabout.

### 3. The Existing Situation

- 3.1 The A6 is an important part of the North Western Key Transport Corridor, connecting Belfast and Londonderry via Toome, Maghera and Dungiven. The corridor is of strategic and economic importance within Northern Ireland, providing an essential road link between the Belfast Metropolitan Area and the North-West.
- 3.2 The existing road between Randalstown and Toome is a rural single carriageway trunk road, starting at M22 Junction 3 west of Randalstown and continuing west for about 7 kilometres to the Drumderg Roundabout east of Toome. It traverses an undulating drumlin landform at the eastern end of the route giving way to flatter terrain west of Toome. East of M22 Junction 3 at Randalstown, the road continues as motorway to Belfast. West of the Drumderg Roundabout at Toome, the road continues as dual carriageway bypassing Toome and then as single carriageway to Londonderry.
- 3.3 Traffic on the route increases from approximately 16,400 vehicles per 12-hour day<sup>6</sup> east of Toome to 17,100 vehicles per 12-hour day west of the M22 at Randalstown.
- 3.4 Parts of the route have been improved over the last 4 decades or so. Bends at Derryhollagh were reconstructed in the 1960s to facilitate the then current plan to continue the M22 Motorway to Castledawson. The existing road at Clonboy was widened and strengthened following completion in 1973 of the Ballygrooby to Artresnahan part of the M22. The existing road at Drumderg east of Toome was widened and strengthened in the late 1970s. Improvements to the remainder of the road have been limited to minor junction improvements and routine maintenance surfacing. Poor alignment combined with an increase in traffic volumes has reduced the number of safe overtaking opportunities for road users, resulting in increased journey times and increased risk of frustrated drivers attempting to overtake in unsafe circumstances.
- 3.5 The A6 and the local roads connecting to it service a scattering of hamlets, rural housing and commercial properties resulting in an unacceptable number of potential points of conflict between strategic traffic using the main road and traffic turning into the several side roads, domestic and commercial accesses and field accesses along the main road. Excluding field accesses, the road is considered to have a medium access density between the M22 Junction 3 and Derryhollagh and low access density from Derryhollagh to Toome. Research<sup>7</sup> indicates that accident rates can be related to the number and form of accesses along a route.

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<sup>6</sup> Neutral month weekday count 7:00am to 7:00pm

<sup>7</sup> DMRB 6.2.6 TD 42/95 Geometric Design of Major/Minor Priority Junctions, Highways Agency, January

#### 4. Background

- 4.1 During the latter part of World War II considerable thought was given in Northern Ireland to “post war planning”. A subsequent report “Road Planning in Northern Ireland” laid the foundation for, amongst other things, improvement of the road connection between Belfast and Londonderry. This developed into the 1960s plan for a motorway standard from Belfast to Castledawson and high standard single carriageway from Castledawson to Londonderry. Financial constraints stopped the motorway construction short at Randalstown.
- 4.2 In the mid 1970s Roads Service appraised two schemes for the improvement of the route between the western end of the Derryhollagh improvement (mentioned in paragraph 3.4) and Toome. The first was the construction of a new high standard single carriageway which loosely followed part of the route considered for the M22 extension to Castledawson. The other was online improvements of the existing road. Whilst this exercise favoured the online improvements of the existing road, it was not carried forward into the Antrim Area Plan 1984-2001. This plan included a single carriageway bypass of Toome starting at Drumderg and connecting to the western end of the existing bridge over the River Bann to be carried out during the plan period.
- 4.3 As noted at Section 2, the current programme to improve transportation links in Northern Ireland has evolved over the last decade or so and includes The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 (RSTN TP), which confirms the individual schemes and projects to be implemented (subject to economic assessments, statutory processes and availability of resources) to support the RDS and RTS objectives and targets. The RSTN TP includes a proposal to upgrade the North Western Key Transport Corridor to dual carriageway standard between the western end of the M22 Motorway at Randalstown and the Castledawson Roundabout.
- 4.4 The proposal is also an RSTN TP ‘preparation pool’ scheme, i.e. a high priority scheme that Roads Service is committed to progressing through the statutory procedures of Environmental Appraisal, Direction Order (equivalent to planning approval) and Land Vesting. Preparation Pool Schemes are expected to be implemented within the next five years or so (subject to clearing the statutory procedures, having a satisfactory economic appraisal and the availability of funds at the time).
- 4.5 Development of the scheme has closely followed the Department for Transport’s New Approach to Appraisal (NATA)<sup>8</sup> which provides a framework to appraise, and determine the prioritisation of, transport investment proposals. This takes into account the Government’s five criteria Environment, Safety, Economy, Accessibility and Integration, to inform the choice between different options for solving the same problem, the prioritisation between proposals and the assessment of value for money.
- 4.6 The scheme development process, which included public consultation and consideration of a range of options, concluded that a new dual carriageway should be constructed cross country to the south of the existing road. The existing road would be left for local access.

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<sup>8</sup> A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England: Guidance on the New Approach to Appraisal, DETR, July 1998

## 5. The Department's Consideration

5.1 One of the key objectives of Roads Service is to facilitate the safe movement of people, goods and services for the social and economic benefit of the people of Northern Ireland. As part of this aim, Roads Service is committed to providing an all-purpose dual carriageway on part of the Belfast to Londonderry Route on the grounds that it will provide:

- Better links to destinations such as Belfast and Londonderry;
- Better links to Belfast International Airport;
- Journey time savings and improved journey time reliability; and
- Substantial safety benefits.

5.2 The proposed dual carriageway will assist with the delivery of these objectives, whilst leaving the bulk of the existing A6 between Randalstown to Toome for local access will greatly benefit local traffic (RTS paragraph 5.2.8). The new road will facilitate further expansion of local industry in the area (RTS SPG-ECON2).

5.3 The appraisal of the scheme<sup>9</sup> against the Government's five criteria (Environment, Safety, Economy, Accessibility and Integration) concluded that the proposed scheme is consistent with these objectives, delivering:

- Significant savings in journey times, particularly for strategic traffic;
- Relief to the existing A6, particularly at the existing junctions which currently experience demand in excess of available capacity;
- An improvement in road safety which will reduce accident numbers;
- Substantial benefits over the 60-year assessment period which outweighs the costs; and
- Future maintenance cost savings although these are likely to be exceeded by road user delays during construction.

5.4 Roads Service concludes that construction of a dual carriageway between Randalstown and Toome will greatly improve conditions for both strategic and local traffic. 'Do Nothing' or carrying out of 'selective' improvements along the existing road are not considered realistic long term options.

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<sup>9</sup> NWKTC Randalstown to Toome Dualling SAR Final Report May 2007

## 6. The Proposal

- 6.1 The proposed road is a high standard dual carriageway. It has no private accesses, no central reserve crossovers and with the minimum of junctions. This standard of dual carriageway has considerable safety benefits for the road user.
- 6.2 The scheme would lead traffic onto a 7.3 kilometre long dual carriageway, constructed between Randalstown and Toome. The existing single carriageway would be retained to provide local access to Moneynick Road and the surrounding area.
- 6.3 The proposed scheme would:
- Begin at the western end of the M22 Motorway at Randalstown;
  - Continue offline to the south of the existing Moneynick Road in a combination of cutting and embankment, through a drumlin landscape;
  - Join the Toome Bypass, east of Toome at the Drumderg Roundabout.
- 6.4 A new compact grade-separated junction at the end of the M22 Motorway would connect to the Moneynick Road at Randalstown, facilitating local access east to Randalstown, and west towards Toome.
- 6.5 The existing Moneynick Road would become a local road, providing easy access to the many properties along the road.
- 6.6 Some alterations would be required to the local road network:
- At Derrygowan Road, a bridge would carry this local road over the new dual carriageway, maintaining local access to the surrounding area.
  - The Aghaloughan Road would form a new staggered junction arrangement with the Derrygowan Road.
  - The Greenan Road would be stopped-up either side of the new dual carriageway and no longer be a through road; Greenan Road traffic would use the nearby Derrygowan Road to cross over the new dual carriageway.
  - The Ranaghan Road, south of the new carriageway would be partially realigned to connect to the Ballynafey Road.
  - At Ballynafey Road, a bridge would carry this local road over the new dual carriageway, maintaining local access to the surrounding area.
  - The Gallagher Road would be stopped-up either side of the new dual carriageway, and no longer be a through road. The northern section would become a cul-de-sac, accessed from the Moneynick Road. The southern section of Gallagher Road, from its junction with the Staffordstown Road to the new dual carriageway, would be abandoned.
  - An enlarged roundabout at Drumderg, east of Toome, would connect to the Moneynick Road, providing local access west to Toome, and east towards Randalstown.

- The Moneynick Road would be partially realigned near Toome to tie-in with the enlarged Drumderg Roundabout layout.
- 6.7 Alternative private means of access from the local road network are included to ensure continued access to property and farms.
- 6.8 The Direction Order makes provision for the bulk of the new offline dual carriageway to become part of the trunk road network and for a small section to become part of the M22 Motorway. The Direction Order also allows for the abandonment and stopping up of certain roads and restricts the type of traffic that could use that part of the new dual carriageway to become part of the M22.
- 6.9 The Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order (NIMVO) includes provision for compulsory acquisition of those lands and interests necessary to construct the road. The NIMVO requires the acquisition of 61.2 hectares of land from 67 interests and the demolition of 1 residential property. Additional areas of land beyond the engineering works are included in the NIMVO, in order to allow for: planting of native trees and shrubs at key locations to assimilate the scheme into the existing landscape setting; the construction of Sustainable Drainage features; and private means of access to ensure continued access to property and farms.
- 6.10 The Environmental Statement is a detailed report of the findings of an environmental assessment carried out for the scheme. In particular, it predicts the environmental effects the scheme will have and details the measures proposed to reduce or eliminate these.
- 6.11 The dual carriageway has been designed to reduce, as far as possible, damage to the environment whilst taking account of other factors, such as road safety, engineering design and cost. The route avoids, as far as possible, areas most sensitive to changes in the environment.
- 6.12 The proposed scheme includes Sustainable Drainage features with surface water from the new road draining into a segregated system of drainage basins and swales. These would control the rate of outfall into local watercourses, thus reducing the likelihood / impact of flooding to surrounding lands. This drainage system would also be the basis for creating wet and marginal habitats and would help reduce pollutant levels in the highway runoff discharge to local watercourses.
- 6.13 It is anticipated that construction would take about 24 months. During construction, the Moneynick Road would remain open to traffic. Side roads where they cross the new dual carriageway, would experience sporadic disruption, however the aim would be to minimise disruption to local residents and road users.
- 6.14 Whilst the detailed construction sequence would be a matter for the Contractor, Roads Service would stipulate certain principles. Such measures would include limiting disruption to existing patterns of movement and limiting the routes for construction traffic use. The Contract would include provisions to minimise the effects of construction noise, temporary diversions, works access and working hours.
- 6.15 The proposals to upgrade the A6 between Randalstown and Toome are consistent with The Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012 (paragraph 5.2.7) and The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015 (Table 5.2).

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1 'Shaping our Future', the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, recognises that Northern Ireland is almost wholly dependant on a road based transport system reflecting the small internal transport market and dispersed settlement pattern. The A6 (also designated as a trunk road) is an important part of the top tier of the Region's long distance routes connecting the cities and main towns to the major regional gateways and the Belfast Metropolitan Area. It is essential that this route conveys both social and economic traffic in an efficient and safe manner.
- 7.2 The upgrading of the A6 between Randalstown and Toome will have largely positive effects in terms of national, regional and local planning policies. General principles of road safety are promoted. The scheme is supported and safeguarded by a number of planning policies including those contained in the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 and the Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland. Most policies at strategic level recognise that road transport will remain the predominant means of transport for the foreseeable future.
- 7.3 The Department has carried out a comprehensive study into the various options considered, including a full environmental impact assessment of the preferred scheme. It has concluded that construction of this scheme will have some environmental impacts and that measures can be implemented to reduce or eliminate these.
- 7.4 The Department is satisfied that the selected proposal offers value for money.