

<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Decision Type:</b> Non-Key
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<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b> 10 September 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Simister Island Development Consent Order	
<b>Report of</b>	Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth	

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 National Highways is intending to undertake a major infrastructure development to improve Junction 18 of the M60 (Simister Island) and also widening to five lanes of the M60 between Junction 17 and Junction 18 to facilitate smoother flows of traffic along the connecting motorways, contributing to more reliable and safer journeys into and around Greater Manchester.
- 1.2 The proposal is a “Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project” (NSIP). This means that planning consent for the scheme is determined by the Secretary of State through an application process known as a Development Consent Order (DCO).
- 1.3 A DCO automatically removes the need to obtain several consents that would otherwise be required for development, including planning permission, highway consent and compulsory purchase orders. The idea of this regime is that it is a quicker process for large scale development projects to get the necessary planning permission and other related consents that they would require, rather than having to apply separately for each consent.
- 1.4 A DCO application has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, who have held an Examination and have submitted a report, including a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will decide on whether consent should be granted for the proposed scheme. A decision is expected in September 2025.
- 1.5 As the proposed development is within Bury’s administrative area, Bury Council has played a vital role in the examination of the scheme. The Council cannot decide whether the scheme goes ahead but is an “Interested Party”. At the examination, this involved providing evidence and opinion on the proposal and its impacts within prescribed timetables. If the decision is made to approve the DCO, the Council will be involved in providing opinions on any information submitted as part of the Requirements, which are similar to conditions on a planning application, within a prescribed timetable.
- 1.6 To ensure the views of this Council can be submitted in accordance with these timescales, this report sets out a recommendation to delegate authority

to the Executive Director (Growth) to respond to the relevant stages of the DCO process post decision.

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

That Cabinet

- 2.1 Delegate authority to the Executive Director (Growth) to respond to all consultations and engagement as part of the Simister Island Development Consent Order.

## **3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 Without delegated authority it is unlikely that the Council will be able to effectively engage with the DCO process. If responses are not submitted in accordance with the timescales, they cannot be taken into account. Without the requested delegation in place, this could result in a recommendation made to the Secretary of State on the Requirements, which does not fully take account of impacts upon Bury.

## **4.0 Alternative options considered and rejected**

- 4.1 *Option 2* – Not to delegate authority. This is not recommended for the reasons set out in paragraph 3.1 above.
- 4.2 *Option 3* – Not to participate in the DCO process. This is not recommended for the reasons set out at paragraph 3.1 above.

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## **5.0 Background**

- 5.1 Simister Island Interchange is one of the busiest motorway junctions in the north-west used by around 90,000 vehicles each day. The junction struggles with such high volumes of traffic above what it was designed for, and as a result suffers from congestion and poor journey time reliability.
- 5.2 In January 2021 National Highways announced proposals for the “Northern Loop” option to improve junction 18 of the M60. The main components of the scheme are:-
  - Construction of a new loop road (the ‘Northern Loop’) to provide a new link between the M60 eastbound to the M60 southbound. This will allow drivers to continue along the M60 without having to leave the motorway, navigate the roundabout and re-join the M60.
  - Widening of the M66 southbound through J18 from two lanes to four lanes.

- Widening of the existing M60 northbound to M60 westbound link road from one lane to two lanes.
- Realignment of the M66 southbound slip road to M60 J18 to accommodate the Northern Loop structure, including a new overbridge where the slip road crosses the Northern Loop and realignment of the left turn lane to the M62 eastbound.
- Conversion of the hard shoulder along the existing four-lane Controlled Motorway between M60 J17 to J18 into a running lane (both sides).
- Construction of a new hard shoulder on the M60 between J17 and J18 in the existing verge (both sides).
- Renewal of signs and signals, including new signs and street lighting at M60 J18 and its approaches, renewed traffic signals at the M60 J18 roundabout, and new gantries on the M66 southbound side and between M60 J17 to J18.
- Construction of associated drainage works including new attenuation ponds to accommodate surface water run-off from the highway and improve water quality.

5.3 The proposal will mean less traffic has to travel through and stop at the roundabout because of the new free flow links. The main aims of the scheme are:

- Improve the journey experience for users of this section of network by:
  - reducing peak congestion
  - reducing journey times
  - delivering more reliable journey times
- Provide an option which is safe for all road users
- Minimise the impact of the project on the surrounding environment including within Noise Important Areas and Air Quality Management Areas
- Support future economic growth across the Greater Manchester area by delivering against local aspirations set out in regional and local authorities' transport strategies and local plans.

## **6.0 The DCO Process & The Council's Role**

6.1 As outlined, the proposed development by National Highways is of a scale which means it is classified as a NSIP and planning consent (and other consents) must be obtained through the DCO process. The application has been submitted to and examined by the Planning Inspectorate and the decision on whether to approve the development will be taken by the relevant Secretary of State. As the host authority for the development, the Council played a key role in the DCO process as an "Interested Party".

6.2 The DCO process comprises of six key stages, covering pre-application, acceptance, pre-examination, examination, decision and post-decision stages. The DCO is currently between the examination and decision stages. The Planning Inspectorate have made a recommendation to the Secretary of

State, who has a period of 3 months to make a decision. A decision is expected in September 2025.

- 6.3 The Development Management team in the Planning Service have already been working closely with National Highways throughout the DCO process and have been the lead Service in the DCO process. If the DCO is approved, Requirements (similar to planning conditions) will be used to mitigate any potential harmful effects of the scheme
- 6.4 Should the DCO be approved, the next stage of the process would be to consider the Requirements (similar to planning conditions) which are used to ensure that any potential harmful impacts of the scheme are mitigated. Whilst the Council is not responsible for the discharge of these Requirements, it is obliged to provide comments on these, which are provided to the Secretary of State, who would make the final decision. The Council is likely to become responsible for the monitoring and enforcing of the Requirements.
- 6.5 The assessment of the information for the Requirements will be led by the Development Management team, which will liaise with other departments such as Environmental Health and Highways. This work will include:
- Attendance at meetings for presentations on the plans and reports provided.
  - Attending any site visits required.
  - Providing comments on the adequacy of the information submitted.
  - Submitting Written Representations on the adequacy of the information submitted.
- 6.6 The submission of the representations have relatively very short timescales (typically 7 or 14 days) and much of the work will be of a technical nature, requiring professional knowledge and understanding of planning and highways.
- 6.7 Given the detailed nature of the work required, together with the tight timescales, it is not considered it will be possible to gain Cabinet consent for officers to make representations at the required times within the DCO process.
- 6.8 The Cabinet is therefore asked to delegate authority to the Executive Director (Growth) to ensure that the Council can respond to the consultation or engagement aspects of the DCO process in accordance with the relevant timescales.
- 6.9 This will ensure the Council is in a position to fully engage with the DCO process and ensure the potential impacts of the scheme are understood and taken into account.

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### **Links with the Corporate Priorities:**

The NSIP scheme is a Government proposal, submitted by National Highways. The proposals have gone through a pre-application, consultation process with Council officers

and the public and through an examination held by the Planning Inspectorate. Corporate aims of improved air quality and access would be one of the key aims of the project and part of the requirement of the DCO process is to enable the Council to make representations as a host and consultee authority. It is anticipated that issues of local traffic impacts, ecology, hydrology and planning inputs will reflect local and national planning concerns to underpin the Council's corporate priorities of improved access, air quality and economic opportunity to its residents.

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### **Equality Impact and Considerations:**

National Highways are required to submit an Equalities Impact Assessment as part of the submission documentation to the Planning Inspectorate (which is currently scheduled for the end of February 2024). This will be reviewed as part of the Examination process.

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### **Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:**

<b>Risk / opportunity</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Without delegated authority it is unlikely that the Council will be able to effectively engage with the DCO process as responses could not be submitted within the required timescales. This would result in a recommendation to the Secretary of State, which does not fully take into account the impacts upon Bury.	Delegate authority to the Executive Director (Growth.

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### **Legal Implications:**

If the Secretary of State decides to make an Order to grant development consent, the Council will have a key role in responding to Requirements which are similar to planning conditions.

Having the appropriate delegation of authority in place will ensure that the Council will be in a position where it can respond to the legal obligations placed upon the authority in its role as host authority.

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### **Financial Implications:**

There are no additional financial implications arising directly from this report.

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**Appendices:** None.

**Background papers:** None

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None.

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**

Term	Meaning
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
DCO	Development Consent Order