

7. Environmental Impact

The environmental impact of the three options is being identified. The following information summarises what we currently understand, including the potential impacts and the further reports and studies to be completed.

This information will inform the **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** that is being prepared for the scheme.

An EIA is a comprehensive assessment of the scheme's impact on the environment. We are in the early stages of collecting environmental data, undertaking preliminary surveys and preparing initial reporting material.

Air quality

- There is potential for increased amounts of dust during the construction period, which can be mitigated through dust suppression measures.
- It is expected that local air quality will improve due to reduced congestion, including within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
- Detailed modelling will take place in the coming months which will help to determine the best performing option from an air quality perspective.

Noise and vibration

- There could be temporary noise and vibration impacts during the construction period for residents closest to the proposed works areas, appropriate measures will be used to mitigate these.
- Detailed modelling will be used to help to determine the best performing option from a noise perspective.

Biodiversity

- There is potential for protected species to be present, nearby to the proposed works for each option.
- A Habitat Survey (**Habitats Regulations Assessment** or **HRA**) will be undertaken to confirm the presence or absence of protected ecological species.

A HRA is used to highlight any areas where works under a scheme are likely to result in significant effects to protected habitats and to consider ways in which these can be avoided or reduced.

Landscape and visual effects

- Nearby residents and users of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) may experience a change in views over the landscape - a Landscape Strategy will aim to mitigate potential impacts and enhance the environment where possible.

Cultural heritage

- There is potential for impacts to a Scheduled Monument (Cistercian Abbey at Boxley) in close proximity to the proposed M20 slip road widening (for Options 1 and 2). Further design development and cultural heritage studies would aim to mitigate any potential impacts.

Sustainable forms of transport

- The current congestion experienced on the A229 reduces the attractiveness of using PROW and the National Cycling Route 17. It also results in poor journey time which discourages the use of public transport. This project presents an opportunity to encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of transport.
- There is potential for impacts to PROW and a National Trail that cross the A229. Further design development will aim to reduce these impacts.

Road drainage and the water environment

- The watercourse that runs beneath the A229 at Running Horse Roundabout could be impacted. Further design development including flood risk and water quality studies will aim to reduce this potential impact.

Other environmental topics

- A review of local geology, soils and material assets, waste and climate topics (including consideration of carbon) for each of the options will also be undertaken and will form part of the EIA.