



The project is required to submit an Environmental Statement (ES) as part of the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application. The aim of the ES is to report the likely significant effects of the scheme on the environment and the steps that are proposed to reduce those effects during construction and once the rail link is operational.

Key findings of the studies and assessments which have been undertaken are described below

Air quality

The assessment has identified that the transfer of some 3,750 vehicles daily from road to rail will result in a reduction in traffic related pollutants and improvement in local air quality. It will also reduce emissions of greenhouse gases including carbon dioxide.

Activities such as earth moving during re-grading of cutting and embankment slopes as the proposed scheme is constructed will generate dust. Measures such as damping down of earthworks and on-site haul routes during dry weather will ensure that potential effects are appropriately controlled.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

The studies and assessments have identified that the proposed scheme will not have a significant effect on any designated nature conservation sites. Where there is a potential for localised impact, such as at the Lairage Lands Local Nature Reserve, design measures and methods of construction have been proposed which will ensure that the value and status of the site is safeguarded.

There will be some loss of trees and scrub, most noticeably where cutting and embankment slopes will be re-graded to meet present day design and safety standards. Areas of new planting will, however, be introduced as part of the proposed scheme. This will serve to re-establish the role of the existing disused line as a green corridor. New planting will also include an increased diversity of tree and shrub species which will be of benefit to the habitat types and the wildlife they support.



The construction and future use of the proposed link will disturb fauna and protected species, particularly along the existing disused corridor between Ascot Road and Wiggshall Road. The presence and movement of animals including badger, bats, breeding birds and reptiles have been investigated. Measures have been identified to ensure that local populations of the species are safeguarded and protected. These include badger fencing, relocation of reptiles, provision of bat boxes and timing of construction works to avoid disturbance of breeding birds.

Design and construction measures have also been carefully considered to ensure that the value of the rivers and local watercourses as ecological corridors is safeguarded. These include:

- the design of the viaduct to ensure continuity of the river and watercourse corridors beneath the structure; and
- the retention of existing piers and abutments supporting existing bridges crossing watercourses to avoid construction within the existing channel and disturbance of that habitat.

Townscape and Views

The introduction of a tall, 450m long viaduct crossing the western gateway to Watford will have a marked influence on the appearance and character of the area between the existing Metropolitan line and Ascot Road. There are two factors which will serve to reduce the influence:

- Existing mature tree planting with a canopy level which is taller than the proposed structure will ensure that views of the viaduct are broken.
- Design features, including the cladding of the structural beams that support the deck of the viaduct as well as the sympathetic design of the piers will contribute to the integration of the structure within the local townscape.

The removal of trees and scrub associated with the re-grading of cutting and embankment slopes will break the continuity of the tree-lined corridor which has become established along the disused line. It is an important townscape and green infrastructure feature which forms a backdrop to the view for many residents living close to the corridor. The tree and shrub planting proposed as part of the scheme will serve to close the gaps and re-establish the continuity of the corridor as an important feature in the townscape and in views for residents.



Noise

Construction activities such as excavation, drilling, piling and manoeuvring of plant and delivery vehicles will introduce temporary, sometimes loud, noise sources close to houses and recreational areas used by the community. Measures which will be adopted to reduce the impact of potential construction-related noise include the boring of piles rather than use of percussive equipment, the shielding of some high level noise activities and regular maintenance of equipment. Where construction will involve higher order noise levels, consultation with the local community will be undertaken to ensure the nature and duration of such events are understood in advance of the work being undertaken. All measures identified will be subject to discussion between the appointed contractor and the Council to ensure that an agreed construction-related noise plan forms part of the Code of Construction Practice for the project.

Once construction is complete there will be an increase in existing noise levels for some properties and community focused activities located close to the corridor. The studies have indicated that the increases will be unlikely to result in levels above those set out in the noise insulation regulations for railways and that measures provided for under the regulations will not therefore be required. The studies, however, necessarily involve the prediction of noise during use. The predicted levels will, therefore, be checked by way of a monitoring survey within the first twelve months of use to establish the actual levels and establish if the provisions under the noise insulation regulations should be further considered.

Community Facilities and Accessibility

One of the principal objectives of the proposed scheme relates to the relief of congestion and hence improved accessibility for residents and visitors to facilities and services within the town. The traffic and transport studies and environmental studies have identified that:

- the proposed scheme will result in a transfer of journeys from road to rail;
- there will be fewer vehicles using the local road network and a reduction in queuing vehicles within the network;
- there will be an overall improvement in pedestrian accessibility to public transport and community facilities; and
- there will be a consequent benefit relative to accessibility between the community and local facilities as a result of the scheme