

**Department for Infrastructure—TransportNI
The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993**

**STATEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT
ON
REPORT ON THE LOCAL PUBLIC INQUIRY
into
NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE A VESTING ORDER
For
Annaghmore Road/Bellshill Road alternative junction**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Content of Decision	1
2	Basis of Decision	3
3	Main Considerations and Recommendations of Inspectors Report.....	5
4	The Departments Decision.....	6



1. Contents of Decision

The Department for Infrastructure (The Department) has carefully considered the Inspector's Report (IR) and has decided to proceed with the Annaghmore Road/Bellshill Road Junction proposals which will form part of the proposed A6 (T8) Toome to Castledawson Dualling Scheme. The scheme is as described in the planning application (H/2013/0243/F) and the draft Vesting Order published by the Department in January 2015.

The proposed Scheme has evolved after two previous Inquiries. In 2007 an Inquiry was held to consider plans for the construction of a dual carriageway between Toome and Castledawson. Whilst it was recommended the dual carriageway should proceed generally as proposed, it was suggested that changes should be made to the treatment of the Bellshill and Annaghmore roads respectively. In 2012, a further Public Inquiry into the Department's proposal for a junction arrangement for the Bellshill and Annaghmore Roads was convened in response to some three hundred and twenty letters of objection. The Inquiry did not endorse the Department's proposal but instead made its own recommendations.

Subsequently, the Department did proceed to revise the design of the Bellshill/ Annaghmore Road junction, and due to changes in the law, was compelled to obtain planning approval for the scheme. A planning application was submitted and approval was granted in December 2014.

The Department is proposing to acquire lands to construct a compact grade separated junction located between the existing Bellshill Road and the Moyola River, southeast of Castledawson and a north / south link road to carry over the proposed A6 (T8) Dual carriageway on an over bridge to connect the Bellshill Road (north) and Annaghmore Road (south). The two connector loops will provide access to the A6 Dual carriageway both east and west bound. The layout of the Proposed Scheme, falls into five separate elements;

- A compact connector to the proposed A6 Eastbound Carriageway
- A compact connector to the proposed A6 Westbound Carriageway
- A north link road between Bellshill Road (N) and Annaghmore Road (N)
- A south link road between Bellshill Road (S) and Annaghmore Road (S).
- A roundabout at the south end of the link road with 4 arms to serve;
 1. the Bellshill Road (S)
 2. the compact connector to the A6 westbound
 3. the South Link road to Annaghmore Road
 4. access to residential, agricultural and farm buildings.

Sections 2, 3 and 4 set out the considerations on which the decision to proceed with the scheme is based and Section 4 describes the actions proposed by the Department to address the comments raised by the Inspector.

2. Basis of Decision

Toome to Castledawson dualling scheme

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.

The Department published proposals in March 2007 to construct a 6.7 kilometre long dual carriageway between Toome and Castledawson Roundabout. Whilst it was recommended the dual carriageway should proceed generally as proposed, it was suggested that changes should be made to the treatment of the Bellshill and Annaghmore roads respectively.

The Department submitted a planning application in December 2010 seeking permission to construct an alternative Annaghmore Road/Bellshill Road junction and published a Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order (NIMVO) in January 2010. In his Report on the February 2012 Public Inquiry into the NIMVO the Inspector recommended that a junction located east of Bellshill Road would be a more acceptable alternative.

Subsequently, the Department did proceed to revise the design of the Bellshill/ Annaghmore Road junction, and due to changes in the law, was compelled to obtain planning approval for the scheme. A planning application was submitted and approval was granted in December 2014 (H/2013/0243/F).

Vesting Order and Objections

TransportNI published a Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order for the proposed scheme on 19 January 2015. The order described the lands to be compulsorily purchased to facilitate construction of the alternative grade-separated junction arrangement at Annaghmore Road/Bellshill Road within the townlands of Annaghmore, Shanemullagh, Tamnadeese Tamnieran, County Londonderry.

In total 13 objections and 3 letters of comment were received regarding the Department's proposal to acquire the required lands. Planning NI also received 10 letters of objection concerning the planning application; these were similar to those received by TransportNI.

Public Inquiry

Given the nature of the proposals and the likelihood that a number of the objections to the Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order (NIMVO) could not be resolved, the Minister for Regional Development requested a Public Inquiry to give objectors, supporters, TransportNI and others a fair opportunity to be heard and to question the case for and against the proposal to vest lands to construct the alternative grade-separated junction proposal. The Department appointed Mrs E Brady as Inspector and Mr J Robb as Assistant Inspector to hold an inquiry to consider the proposed Vesting Order. The Public Inquiry was held on 29 September 2015 in Christ Church Parish Hall, Castledawson; the Inspector reported to the Department on 21 December 2015.

3. Main Conclusions and Recommendation of Inspector's Report

Subject to the recommendations contained in the Inspector's Report, the Inspector is of the opinion that the Vesting Order should be made.

The Inspector recommends that the alignment of the South Link Road at the rear of Mrs Suzanne McMillin's property is adjusted slightly further south, within the vesting line to allow at detailed design stage for the use of a retaining wall, to facilitate a slight reduction in landtake.

Viewing the Inspector's Report

A copy of the Inspectors' Report may be examined, free of charge, at the following deposit locations:

- Department for Infrastructure, TransportNI – Northern Division, County Hall, Castlerock Road, Coleraine BT51 3HS;
- Department for Infrastructure, TransportNI – Northern Division, County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena BT42 1QG;
- Magherafelt District Council, 50 Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt BT45 6EN; and

and at

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/road-improvements/a6-randalstown-castledawson-dualling-scheme>

4. Departmental Comment on the Inspector's Report

The Department welcomes the Inspector's endorsement, subject to the recommendations contained in the Inspector's Report, and her conclusion that the Notice of Intention to Make a Vesting Order should be made.

In continuing to progress the scheme the Department will take cognisance of the contents of the Inspector's Report and its recommendations. In this respect the Department makes the following comments.

Inspector's Report Summary of Recommendations "*Susanne McMillin – Inquiry Reference 07*"

The Department has carried out a review of the alignment of the South Link Road and carefully considered the Inspector's recommendation. However, there is no scope to realign the South Link Road further south. At detailed design, consideration shall be given to steepening the earthworks slopes or provision of a retaining structure to ensure that the scheme can be provided within the vested land.

Summary of Objector Specific Recommendations

Drew and Elaine McKee (Inquiry Reference 01)

The Department confirms that dialogue will continue with the objector.

Thomas and Ellie Hueston (Inquiry Reference 02)

The Department confirms that dialogue will continue with this objector regarding mitigation measures to be implemented.

Mr Garry Galway, William Galway, Nigel Galway and Lynda Galway (Inquiry Reference 03)

The Department confirms that dialogue will be undertaken with the objector regarding relocation of existing farm buildings.

The Department will seek to minimise, where possible, the amount of hedgerow to be removed as part of the scheme.

Tracey Overend (Inquiry Reference 05)

The Department confirms that dialogue will continue regarding mitigation measures to be implemented.

George McMillin and Family (Inquiry Reference 09)

The Department notes the Inspector's comment that an underpass is not required across the Bellshill North/South Link Road.

The Department confirms that dialogue will continue with the objector.

Margaret Mawhinney (Inquiry reference 011)

The Department confirms that dialogue will continue regarding mitigation measures to be implemented.

Ann and Robert Hueston (Deceased) (Inquiry reference 013)

The Department confirms that dialogue will continue regarding mitigation measures to be implemented.

Suggested Alternatives to the North Link Road

The Department welcomes the Inspector's comment that the North Link Road proposal is considered reasonable.