

Operations

M5 Junction 1 to Junction 3

Statutory Instrument Consultation Response Document
Proposed revocation of 60mph speed limit

January 2026

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Background to the consultation	4
The consultation process	5
Summary of consultation responses	5
Responses	6
Organisation Responses	8
Members of the public responses	12
Consultation Outcome	16

Introduction

National Highways recently consulted on a proposed Statutory Instrument to revoke the M5 Motorway (Junctions 1 to 3) (60 Miles Per Hour Speed Limit) Regulations 2022. These Regulations put in place a 60mph speed limit for the purposes of reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) between M5 junction 1 and junction 3. The air quality on this stretch has since improved, with annual mean NO₂ concentrations now below their legal threshold, which means the Regulations can now be revoked and the national speed limit reinstated.

The consultation launched on Monday 22 September 2025 and closed at 23:59 on Sunday 2 November 2025.

This document provides a summary of the responses received to the consultation and National Highways' response.

Background to the consultation

A 60mph speed limit is currently in place between just north of junction 1 and just south of junction 2 on the M5. It is in place due to the M5 Motorway (Junctions 1 to 3) (60 Miles Per Hour Speed Limit) Regulations 2022.

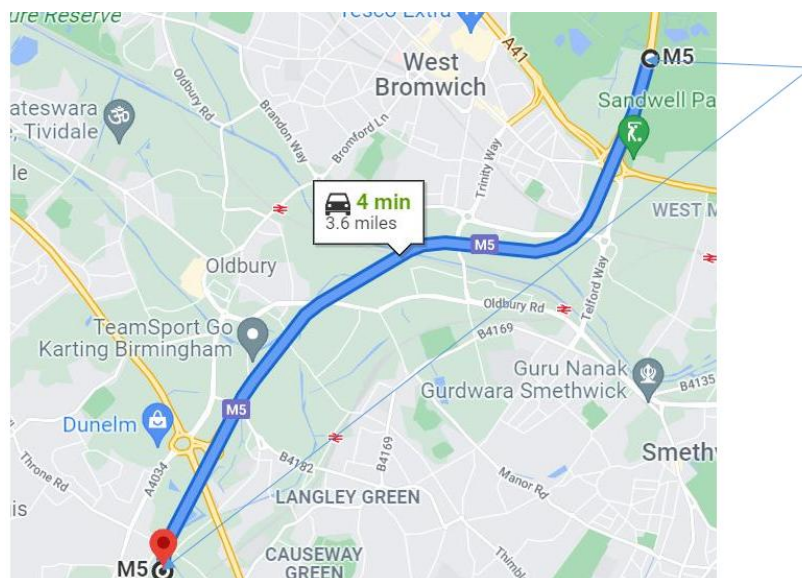
The 60mph speed limit was introduced to address air quality concerns in this area, specifically the levels of annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) which exceeded their limit value as set by the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010.

Concentrations of NO₂ have now dropped sufficiently that the 60mph speed limit measure can be removed and the section returned to the national speed limit, without risk of the NO₂ levels exceeding their limit value reoccurring. The proposed statutory instrument will revoke the M5 Motorway (Junctions 1 to 3) (60 Miles Per Hour Speed Limit) Regulations 2022, which will result in this section of the M5 returning to the national speed limit.

By returning this section to the national speed limit, the intention is that vehicles travelling on this route will be able to travel at a higher speed if appropriate for the driving conditions and vehicle type. In addition, it should reduce the journey time for users where conditions permit on this area of the strategic road network.

Removal of the speed limit will involve work to take away the current mandatory 60mph speed limit signs and the associated explanatory signs which were installed to provide information to users regarding the purpose of the speed limit. Additionally, as part of the works, advisory speed limit signs and bend warning signs would be re-instated which were previously in place along this stretch of carriageway.

The consultation provided an opportunity for interested parties to comment on the proposal to remove, by way of statutory instrument, the permanent 60mph speed limit.



A map showing the approximate extent of the 60mph speed limit

The consultation process

National Highways considers the views of stakeholders and listens to feedback from anyone with an interest in the proposals as part of the consultation process.

Details about the consultation were sent to 1,264 stakeholders who were identified as having a potential interest in the proposals due to their role or location. These stakeholders included local councillors, local Government bodies and Members of Parliament (MPs), emergency services and transport services, statutory and regulatory bodies, business groups and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) groups.

The consultation document was also published on National Highways' Citizen Space website here <https://nationalhighways.citizenspace.com/he/m5-j1-j3-si-consultation/>.

The consultation document explained the proposals and included a consultation response form, which invited stakeholders to share their feedback on the proposals with National Highways. A link to an online version of the consultation response form was also available through the consultation webpage.

The consultation launched on Monday 22 September 2025 and closed at 23:59 on Sunday 2 November 2025.

National Highways has considered all feedback received during the consultation. This document provides a summary of the comments received and sets out National Highways' response to them.

Summary of consultation responses

In total, 37 responses to the consultation were received – 35 via the online form and 2 via email into the M5 J1-3 SI mailbox as an acknowledgement of the consultation notice.

The table below shows the breakdown of responses received from different respondent groups:

Respondent Group	Number of responses received via online form	Number of responses received via email
Member of the public	19	
Emergency services (Police and Fire Service)	0	
Local Government	2	
Large Company	5	2
Not Answered	3	
Other	6	
Total	35	2

Respondents in favour or not in favour of National Highways' proposal to remove the 60mph speed limit and reinstate the national speed limit have been summarised in the table below:

The responses were as follows:

Response	Total
Yes	24
No	13

Respondents were invited to comment on the proposals and 20 of the 37 respondents provided comments. Responses provided on behalf of an organisation are attributed to that organisation, responses from members of the public have been anonymised, all of which are summarised below along with National Highways' response.

Responses

1. Increasing the speed limit will lead to poorer air quality

National Highways Response

The current legal frameworks which identify the pollutants to be assessed, the corresponding thresholds and averaging periods are set by the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000, Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 and the Environmental Targets (Fine Particulate Matter) (England) Regulations 2023.

The annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) limit value is defined in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010, with the thresholds set at a level to provide protection to human health, paying particular attention to those members of the population who are sensitive to air quality.

Once the legal limit value has been met, and the measured concentrations are sufficiently low that there would be no risk of re-exceeding the limit value, then the measure can be removed as the legal requirement to achieve compliance with the limit value has been met. This is in keeping with the approach followed by local authorities. Where previously they introduced a charging Clean Air Zones (CAZ) for the purposes of achieving compliance with the limit value in the shortest timescales possible, they are being decommissioned once the limit value has been met.

The purpose of the 60mph speed limit introduced on the M5, was to bring forward compliance with the annual mean NO₂ limit value in the shortest timescales possible, as required by the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010.

Air quality measurements for annual mean NO₂ alongside the M5 are below their limit value set out in the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010, meaning that the 60mph speed limit can be removed. The measurements are sufficiently low enough that we are confident that reinstating the national speed limit would not cause levels of air pollution to increase and cause an exceedance of the air quality thresholds.

National Highways has completed a detailed study looking at the changes in roadside air quality measurements on sections of our network with 60mph speed limits. Our work showed that over the last few years, measured concentrations continue to improve year-on-year. However, it was not possible to attribute any of the observed ongoing improvements in air quality to the change in the speed limit, with sections of the network operating at the national speed limit and those with 60mph speed limits having almost identical outcomes. Based on this work, we concluded that reinstating the national speed limit is unlikely to bring about an observable change or lead to a deterioration in the levels of air pollution at the roadside.

The reports linked to air quality matters for National Highways routes can be viewed on the National Highways website, from this link: [LINK](#)

Organisation Responses

2. Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

The respondent was not in favour of the proposal. The respondent's comments fall within three categories as set out below. In summary, the respondent requested National Highways reconsider the removal of the 60mph limit on the basis it supports public health protection, road safety and environmental sustainability.

Air Quality

The respondent stated that the 60mph speed limit contributed to improvements in local air pollution and its removal would represent a backward step in protecting public health. In addition, that signage stating "Speed Limit for Air Quality" plays a vital role in public awareness. The respondent further stated that legal compliance on NO₂ levels, was not synonymous with health protections based on the WHO guidelines.

The respondent also stated that National Highways has a statutory obligation to have regard to the National Air Quality Strategy for England (2023). This places an expectation on National Highways to engage constructively with local authorities and to take preventative action.

Road Safety Implications

The respondent stated that the time savings from increasing speed are negligible and gave an example that travelling 3 miles at 60mph takes approximately 3 minutes, and at 70mph, the same distance takes 2 minutes 34 seconds - a difference of just 26 seconds.

The respondent further said that maintaining vehicle speed reductions enhances safety which lowers the risk of collisions and improves overall traffic flow. The respondent was interested to know if collision data demonstrated a reduction in road traffic collisions as a result of the 60mph speed limit.

Traffic Flow and Pollution Dynamics

The respondent stated that higher speeds often lead to traffic compression, increased braking and acceleration, and ultimately worse air pollution. The respondent believed that maintaining a lower, consistent speed can help smooth traffic flow and reduce emissions.

National Highways Response

Air Quality

National Highways addressed a number of the concerns raised by the respondent in the response relating to increased speed leading to poorer air quality above.

In relation to the other matters raised, Government has responded to the Office for Environment Protection (OEP) addressing the question as to whether the World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guidelines should be followed. In their response to the OEP, the Government advised that the WHO air quality guidelines are intended to inform the setting of air quality standards and are not ready-made targets for direct adoption. This is because they do not consider achievability or individual countries' circumstances. However, the Government will consider WHO guidelines and other countries targets as part of an evidence led process, when considering any changes or updates to future long-term targets¹.

There is no legal duty imposed on National Highways, nor local authorities, to assess and consider air quality concentrations described by the WHO guidelines.

National Highways in their capacity as a Relevant Public Authority (RPA) has engaged with the local authority, including Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and the associated air quality working group and have provided contributions to the development of their ongoing plans to help improve air quality.

Road Safety Implications

National Highways has reviewed the performance and risk of this section of the M5 returning to 70mph via a risk assessment carried out in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) GG104 - Requirements for safety risk assessment. As part of this, a review of injury collision rate prior to and post the implementation of the speed limit, found no significant variation on safety performance with the 60mph limit in place.

In relation to the example given to show time savings from increasing speed, when this is considered against the volume of traffic carried by the M5 on a daily basis, this quickly becomes a significant value of time. If this amendment to the speed limit is not made, we would be slowing drivers through this section, without a valid reason to do so. This additional time to journeys would just represent lost time for users.

The reports linked to air quality matters for National Highways routes can be viewed on the National Highways website, from this link: [LINK](#)

¹ Government response to January 2025 Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) report on EIP progress from 2023 to 2024 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-the-oep-report-environmental-improvement-plan-progress-from-2023-to-2024/government-response-to-january-2025-office-for-environmental-protection-oep-report-on-eip-progress-from-2023-to-2024>)

Traffic Flow and Pollution Dynamics

Published reports by National Highways analyse the traffic performance and impact on this section. More modern vehicles have a 'flatter' emissions profile across a range of speeds, meaning that there is little difference between emissions across a range of speeds with more modern vehicles, so speed is less of a factor in terms of emissions values. Therefore, the shift from 60mph to 70mph would not be expected to have a significant impact.

3. Transport for West Midlands (TfWM)

The respondent concurred with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council over its views on revoking the 60mph speed limit.

The respondent believed an increase in speed limit would increase NO₂ emissions and requested data on the likely impact of the 70mph speed limit on NO₂ levels. The respondent also welcomed any information on other impacts the 60mph speed limit may have achieved.

The respondent thought National Highways should consider retaining the 60mph speed limit if increasing the speed limit would lead to a negative impact on NO₂ emissions, road traffic accidents, diversions onto the local road network due to road traffic accidents and carbon emissions.

National Highways Response

We would consider this response linked with that provided by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, and we have addressed a number of the concerns raised in this response in the response to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council above. National Highways would be happy to engage and provide the risk assessment which was carried out for this section of the M5 linked to the change of speed limit to both parties, which addresses the collision statistics.

The reports linked to air quality matters for National Highways routes can be viewed on the National Highways website, from this link: [LINK](#)

4. Small to Medium-sized Enterprise (Currall Lewis & Martin)

The respondent was not in favour of the proposal and mentioned that raising the speed limit would be academic, as typically north bound traffic is queued or slowed from junction 2 and the time saved in either direction would not make any appreciative difference to journeys. In addition, the increase in noise pollution would impact those living nearby.

National Highways Response

National Highways recognise that this section of the M5 can be congested around peak times, during off-peak periods and/or periods of 'free flow' conditions. Traffic would be unduly restricted to a lower speed if the 60mph limit were to be retained. This would have an impact on journey times during these periods.

The restriction has not delivered any appreciable benefit to its intended function, therefore we would not have a justification to retain the lower limit, as it does have a negative impact in terms of journey times for users during periods where a 'free-flow' state is seen on this section.

Reviewing the expectation in change of noise levels linked to this change in speed, this would be within 1 and 2 dB(A). This noise change will be noticeable to some people in the short term, but the impact of noise from this stretch of road will be no greater than it was before the speed limit was introduced.

5. Small to Medium-sized Enterprise (Mr Tyreman)

The respondent was not in favour of the proposal and expressed concerns regarding attendance at emergency callouts on the hard shoulder as increasing the speed limit would significantly raise the risks particularly due to the sharp bends and limited visibility. Therefore, the respondent believed that maintaining the current 60mph speed limit was crucial for ensuring the safety.

National Highways Response

National Highways appreciates the risks involved with this type of work. However, the original justification for the speed reduction on this section was associated with nitrogen dioxide emissions values, which have now reduced. We cannot justify retaining this lower limit as this position is no longer the case, and therefore the original justification is no longer valid. We are returning the section to the original state, so not increasing the risk profile from what would have been the operational situation if the air quality speed limit had not been imposed.

The injury collision performance, which was reviewed via the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) GG104 - Requirements for safety risk assessment did not highlight any changes between the national speed limit and the 60mph limit.

Members of the public responses

Respondent #1

The respondent was not in favour of the proposal. The respondent stated that especially north bound on the M5 at peak times, the traffic is very heavy and the queues to join the M6 can go back past junction 2. The respondent believed that keeping the 60mph speed limit would help slow traffic around junction 2 which would improve safety. In addition, that not re-introducing the national motorway speed limit would save money on replacing the current signage.

National Highways Response

Regarding the traffic queuing and issues joining the network, this would appear to be under traffic conditions which are unlikely to be impacted by increasing the speed limit from 60mph to 70mph, as these types of queues and congestion issues would not be in conditions which would have traffic travelling at speeds close to these limits. There is no justification to retain the limit for air quality purposes, and congestion unfortunately can happen on our network at peak and busy times.

Respondent #2

The respondent was not in favour of the proposal. The respondent believed the 60mph speed limit was a good traffic calming measure regardless of the cleaner air issue.

National Highways Response

The strategic road network is intended for longer journeys, with reliable trips under safe conditions, and an intention that these journeys would be made at a higher speed than other road networks, where conditions are appropriate.

Traffic calming measures would normally be associated with areas of highway where there are severance issues where the carriageway 'severs' communities by making services and amenities difficult to access, typically by making the route difficult to cross via walking or cycling. Traffic calming measures are also associated with areas of highway where traffic is likely to interact significantly with other active modes such as cyclists or pedestrians.

Therefore, this section of the M5, being part of the motorway network, would not be appropriate for traffic calming measures.

Respondent #3

The respondent commented that the speed limit should be 50mph, given the tight/sharp bends of this section of the M5. They believed it could not be safe to drive at 70mph on this section and the 60mph section should be maintained around the bends or lowered to 50mph.

National Highways Response

This section of the M5 does contain some bends. There is warning signage in place ahead of these bends to make drivers aware.

Prior to the implementation of the 60mph speed limit, these bend warning signs had supplementary plates, with an advisory speed limit of 50mph. When the mandatory 60mph limit was implemented, the advisory limit element of the bend warning signs was removed to avoid displaying two different speed limits.

As part of the works associated with the return of this section to the national speed limit, the advisory speed limit of 50mph associated with these bends will be re-instated as a supplementary plate on the bend warning signs.

Regarding driving speeds; we would encourage drivers to refer to rule 146 in the Highway Code; “Adapt your driving to the appropriate type and condition of road you are on”.

Respondent #4

The respondent was in favour of the proposal and requested sight of the data set to see the before and after results for the Air Quality measurement, to see what improvements were made.

National Highways Response

National Highways acknowledges and thanks the respondent for their response and support for the proposal in this consultation. The reports linked to air quality matters for National Highways routes can be viewed on the National Highways website, from this link: [LINK](#)

Respondent #5

The respondent was in favour of the proposal and believed the 60mph speed limit was pointless as the most polluting vehicles were limited to 60mph on motorways and a large development next to the motorway has been underway for a couple of years. The respondent further commented that lengthy roadworks would be required to replace the signage.

National Highways Response

The speed limit was implemented at 60mph to balance the desire to provide fast, reliable journeys against the optimum efficient speed for vehicles, which at the time was expected to be 50mph.

We cannot comment on development proposals as they are outside the scope of this consultation.

We are expecting to be able to complete the amendments to the signs in approximately 2 weeks of overnight lane closures, which should maintain the M5 as a route to traffic, but which may require some diversions when work is required on the entry and exit slip roads at Junction 1 and Junction 2.

Every effort will be made to maintain access for the travelling public, but some closures are required to enable our workforce to carry out their duties safely.

Respondent #6

The respondent was in favour of the proposal and stated that the 60mph limit seems to encourage panic braking and removing it may improve safety.

National Highways Response

We carried out a review of the proposal to re-instate the national speed limit on this section, and following a review of the safety performance of the section, we did not find any significant impact following the reduction of speed. However, we appreciate that there may be users who may not expect the transition from the national speed limit to a lower speed limit on this type of route. Returning this section to national speed limit should help to reduce this risk, but we would again encourage drivers to refer to rule 146 in the Highway Code; “Adapt your driving to the appropriate type and condition of road you are on”.

Respondent #7

The respondent was in favour of the proposal and commented that a minimum speed limit is required on motorways of 60mph to avoid congestion and cameras should be used for enforcement.

In addition, the respondent believed that speed limits have no effect on air quality.

National Highways Response

Enforcement of driving standards and speeds is a matter for the Police. In times of congestion, we would encourage drivers to be careful around lane changes and driving to the conditions.

Nitrogen dioxide emissions values have now reduced below the legal threshold and so the lower speed limit can be removed.

Respondent #8

The respondent was in favour of the proposal and commented that they were more than happy with the speed limit being removed due to time spent in traffic.

National Highways Response

National Highways acknowledges and thanks the respondent for their response and support for the proposal in this consultation.

Respondent #9

The respondent was in favour of the proposal and commented that they had noticed no difference in the area with the 60mph speed limit in place.

National Highways Response

National Highways acknowledges and thanks the respondent for their response and support for the proposal in this consultation.

Respondent #10

The respondent was in favour of the proposal. The respondent stated that the change will help improve traffic flow and journey times for road users. The respondent recognised the extensive work to assess the impact of lower speed limits on air quality with the insights gained being invaluable in helping meet the environmental responsibilities while keeping the network moving.

National Highways Response

National Highways acknowledges and thanks these respondents for their responses and support for the proposal in this consultation.

Respondent #11

The respondent stated that the junction should revert back to 70mph to help traffic flows.

National Highways Response

National Highways acknowledges and thanks these respondents for their responses and support for the proposal in this consultation.

Consultation Outcome

National Highways has considered all responses received to the consultation and is grateful to respondents for their feedback.

National Highways intends to take forward the proposals contained in the consultation document. It is anticipated that the Statutory Instrument to revoke the M5 Motorway (Junctions 1 to 3) (60 Miles Per Hour Speed Limit) Regulations 2022 will implement the proposals set out in the consultation document and is expected to come into force in July/August 2026.