



M621 Junctions 1 to 7

Response to Statutory Instrument Consultation

**Proposed amendments to slip road and mainline
speed limits**

March 2024

Introduction

National Highways Limited (“**NHL**”) recently consulted on some proposed amendments to the speed limits on the slip roads of the M621 motorway between junctions 1 to 7, and on sections of the mainline carriageway between junctions 6 and 7. The consultation took place between 28th November 2023 and 23rd January 2024. This document provides a summary of the responses received to the consultation and sets out NHL’s response to these.

Background to the consultation

The M621 motorway runs from junction 27 of the M62 to junction 43 of the M1. The motorway serves the centre of Leeds and the surrounding areas.

The M621 Junctions 1 to 7 Improvement Scheme (“**Scheme**”) includes capacity and technology upgrades to the M621 corridor. The Scheme was confirmed in the Government’s first Roads Investment Strategy in 2014. Construction commenced in August 2022.

As part of the Scheme, NHL reviewed the speed limits on the M621 motorway between junctions 1 to 7. As a result, NHL is proposing to change the speed limits on certain entry and exit slip roads between junctions 1 to 7 of the M621. This will ensure that appropriate speed limits are in place on all slip roads.

NHL is also proposing to make permanent the current temporary 50mph speed limit on a section of the eastbound carriageway of the M621 between junctions 6 and 7. A permanent a 50mph speed limit is already in place between junctions 1 to 7 of the westbound carriageway, and between junctions 1 to 6 of the eastbound carriageway¹.

Average speed enforcement cameras will also be installed as part of the Scheme.

The speed limit changes are required due to the M621 motorway’s unusual layout. The motorway was built with tighter bends than on rural motorways due to its urban location. Additionally, the motorway’s junctions are located close together, which results in a high level of weaving traffic. The proposed speed limit changes are required on safety grounds and to help ensure a smooth-running network.

¹ These speed limits were imposed by the M621 Motorway (Speed Limit) Regulations 2000 and the M621 Motorway (Speed Limit) (Amendment) Regulations 2007.

The consultation process

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

Details about the consultation were sent to 334 stakeholders who were identified as having a potential interest in the proposals due to their function or location. These stakeholders included local councillors, local Government bodies and MPs, emergency services and transport services, statutory and regulatory bodies, local businesses and schools and local community groups.

Information about this consultation and a link to the consultation document were also published in a local newspaper, The Yorkshire Evening Post, on 28th November 2023.

The consultation document was also published on NHL's Citizen Space website here: <https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/m621-j1-7-speed-limit-amendments/>.

The consultation document explains the proposals and contains a consultation response form, which invites stakeholders to share their feedback on the proposals with NHL. The consultation took place between 28th November 2023 and 23rd January 2024.

NHL has considered all feedback received during the consultation. This document provides a summary of the comments received and sets out NHL's response to these.

Summary of consultation responses

Thirty-one responses to the consultation were received. This table shows the breakdown of responses received from different respondent groups:

Respondent Group	Number of responses received
Member of the public	18
Local Government	2
Central Government	1
Police	2
Small to Medium Enterprise (up to 50 employees)	3
Large Company	2
Unknown	3
Total	31

The consultation response form asked respondents if they were in favour of NHL's proposal to amend the speed limits on certain slip roads between junctions 1 to 7 of the M621 and on a section of the eastbound carriageway of the M621 between junctions 6 and 7. The responses were as follows:

Response	Total
Yes	12
No	19
Not answered	0

Respondents were also invited to comment on the proposals. Fifteen respondents provided comments, which are summarised below, along with NHL's response to these.

1. The proposed speed limits are too low

Nine respondents commented on the proposal to make permanent the temporary 50mph speed limit on a section of the eastbound carriageway of the M621 between junctions 6 and 7. Five respondents thought that a 50mph speed limit was too low for a motorway and suggested that either a 60mph or 70mph speed limit would be more appropriate. Two respondents expressed concern that a 50mph speed limit would increase driver fatigue and promote inattention.

NHL's response

A temporary 50mph speed limit is currently in place on the eastbound carriageway of the M621 motorway between junctions 6 and 7. In their response to the consultation, West Yorkshire Police commented that this temporary speed limit has contributed to road safety on the motorway.

NHL has determined that a permanent 50mph speed limit is necessary on this stretch of carriageway to help ensure driver safety and lower the risk of accidents. This is because the M621 motorway is an urban motorway with an unusual layout.

The motorway has tighter bends than on rural motorways. The junctions are also located close together, which results in high level of weaving traffic. The shape of the carriageway between junctions 6 and 7 dictates that a 50mph speed limit is necessary to meet the recommended minimum sight stopping distance on this stretch.

Safety on this stretch of carriageway was also reviewed as part of the junction 7 improvement works. These works facilitated the establishment of the Stourton Park and Ride. The Park and Ride generates more traffic queuing on the junction 7 eastbound exit slip road, which increases the risk of high-speed shunts on this short exit slip road. As a result, it was determined that safety benefits would arise from implementing a permanent 50mph speed limit on the section of the eastbound carriageway approaching the slip road between junctions 6 and 7.

2. The proposed speed limits will cause congestion and delays

Four respondents stated that lower speed limits have the effect of causing traffic jams and increasing bottle necks rather than improving the flow of traffic.

NHL's response

The unusual layout of the M621 motorway (which has tight bends and junctions located close together) results in a high level of weaving traffic. A 50mph speed limit on the section of the eastbound carriageway of the M621 motorway between junctions 6 and 7 achieves a smoother flow of traffic and is required due to a tight 500 metre bend along this stretch of carriageway.

3. The proposed speed limits will increase air pollution

One respondent commented that vehicles travelling at 50mph cause more pollution than traffic travelling at 60mph.

NHL's response

The M621 motorway is not considered to be an air quality problem zone and the pollution levels in the area are within safe limits.

The [Air Quality Assessment](#) carried out by NHL's environmental experts was updated to take into account the latest traffic and Scheme details, and guidance updates. In the air quality study area, there are no exceedances of the annual mean Nitrogen Dioxide Air Quality Score objective, with or without the implemented Scheme setup.

The Scheme is consistent with environmental requirements as it would not be considered to have a significant adverse air quality effect.

4. Concerns around the use of average speed cameras

Two respondents raised concerns about average speed cameras. They commented that these can lead to accidents, as drivers can become fixated on watching their

speed instead of paying attention to their surroundings. They also said these can cause driver frustration and lead to bad driving.

One respondent commented that the aim of introducing average speed cameras was to raise revenue from the motorist.

NHL's response

Average speed cameras are very effective in achieving compliance with speed limits and increasing road safety.

The Scheme's use of average speed cameras was determined following consultation with the North-East Regional Enforcement Coordinator, NHL's Enforcement Specialists, camera manufacturers, West Yorkshire Police and the West Yorkshire Safety Camera Partnership, alongside detailed reviews and development by NHL's design team and progression through internal Safety Governance reviews.

The average speed camera installation strategy was designed to ensure the greatest safety benefits for the Scheme. The use of average speed cameras is primarily for safety reasons, to support the sections of carriageway where lanes are narrower, reducing the risk of collisions and making the road safer for the travelling public. This will in turn ease congestion at key locations along the M621, providing a better, safer, experience for motorists and more reliable journeys.

The Scheme's use of average speed cameras was approved following a review by NHL's National Safety Control Review Group on 27th March 2018. This concluded that average speed cameras are appropriate on this stretch of the M621 and deliver greater compliance than spot speed enforcement.

Whilst NHL is responsible for the installation and maintenance of camera technology on motorways and some A roads in England, it is not an enforcement agency and does not benefit financially from the enforcement of speed limits. Enforcement is carried out by the police for the purposes of public safety.

5. Consultation concerns

One respondent felt that the consultation had been hidden from the public. They believed the consultation document was unclear and that the information in this document was vague.

NHL's response

NHL takes its consultation obligations seriously. We take care to comply with the Government's consultation principles when conducting consultations.

Details about the consultation were sent to 334 stakeholders who were identified as having a potential interest in the proposals due to their function or location. These stakeholders included local councillors, local Government bodies and MPs, emergency services and transport services, statutory and regulatory bodies, local businesses and schools and local community groups.

The list of stakeholders has been kept under review and updated throughout the life of the project to ensure that NHL maintains the appropriate level of engagement.

Information about the consultation and a link to the consultation document were published in The Yorkshire Evening Post on 28th November 2023. A link to the article can be found here:

<https://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/news/transport/m621-leeds-public-consultation-launched-over-plans-to-reduce-speed-limit-on-major-city-motorway-4425109>.

Full details about the proposals and a link to the consultation document were published on NHL's Citizen Space website. This can be found here:

<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/m621-j1-7-speed-limit-amendments/>.

The proposed changes and the reasons why these are necessary are clearly set out in the consultation document. Section 3 explains the proposed speed limit changes. This section includes a map showing the affected stretch of motorway. It also includes a table which explains each proposed speed limit change in turn.

Consultation outcome

NHL has considered all responses received to the consultation and is grateful to respondents for their contributions. The government has decided to take forward the proposals contained in the consultation document. The new statutory instrument which will implement the proposals set out in the consultation document will come into force in June 2024.