

Northern Corridor

M2 link: Ballee Road East to Ballymena Bypass

Need for Scheme

The A26 is part of the Northern Key Transport Corridor and is the main road connecting the major hub towns of Antrim, Ballymena and Coleraine. There are a high number of accidents where traffic on this strategic route circulates around the Larne Road Roundabout.

North of the Larne Road Roundabout the M2 carries flows in excess of 25,500 vehicles per day. South west of the roundabout Ballee Road East is a 2-lane all purpose dual carriageway carrying flows in excess of 22,500 vehicles per day. About 15,000 vehicles per day are long distance north-south strategic traffic passing straight through the roundabout. This long distance strategic traffic conflicts with local traffic negotiating the roundabout and results in queues and delays at peak times.

Location Plan



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The Scheme

The Proposed scheme

The proposal will divert strategic north south traffic currently circulating around the Larne Road Roundabout onto a new 2.1 kilometre dual carriageway constructed underneath the Larne Road Roundabout.

The new road deviates from the existing Ballee Road East dual carriageway east of the Ballee Roundabout. The route then curves to the left, continuing underneath the Larne Road Roundabout to connect to the southern end of the M2 Ballymena Bypass. A single gap in the central reserve of the new dual carriageway will provide a 'U-turn' facility to maintain access to several properties south east of the existing dual carriageway. New slip roads constructed to the south side of the existing 'half-diamond' interchange at the Larne Road Roundabout will provide access to and from the new road.

West of the new road, the bypassed part of Ballee Road East will retain its connection with the Larne Road Roundabout and will continue to service Pennybridge Industrial Estate. East of the new road, the Liminary Road local road from Kells will be realigned to connect directly to the Larne Road Roundabout. This 0.9 kilometre length of realigned road bypasses part of the Liminary Road. The bypassed part will become a cul de sac servicing six dwellings and farm land.

Extensive planting of native trees and shrubs at key locations will help re-assimilate the scheme into the existing landscape setting. Environmentally friendly sustainable drainage systems will provide additional wetland areas for wildlife.



New road looking north east towards Larne Road Roundabout



New road looking north towards Larne Road Roundabout

Benefits

The scheme will:

- Assist economic growth by reducing journey times.
- Conserve and enhance the environment.
- Reduce congestion and delays and accommodate increasing traffic flows.
- Improve road safety.
- Make best use of the existing strategic road network.

These objectives align with the Department for Regional Development's policy as set out in the 'Regional Transportation Strategy 2002-2012'.

Progress

After diligent consideration of the Inspector's report and recommendations made in light of the objections and representations made at the March 2007 local public inquiries, the Department for Regional Development has determined that construction of the proposed M2 Link: Ballee Road East to Ballymena Bypass dualling scheme should proceed. Notices were placed in the local press during weeks beginning 10th and 17th March 2008 confirming the Department's intention to proceed with the scheme.

Construction of the scheme is expected to start in February 2009 and take about 12 months to complete.