



Department
for Transport

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Dear Sir or Madam,

PLANNING ACT 2008

REVOCATION OF THE A47 WANSFORD TO SUTTON DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER 2023

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for Transport (“the Secretary of State”) to confirm her consideration of the proposed revocation of the A47 Wansford to Sutton Development Consent Order 2023 (“the DCO”).
2. The DCO was granted on 17 February 2023 and gave consent to National Highways Limited to undertake works for the development of a dual carriageway road between Wansford and the western extent of the existing A47 dual carriageway at Sutton (“the Scheme”).
3. On 24 February 2026, the Secretary of State gave notice of and publicised her intention to make an order to revoke the DCO in accordance with regulations 55 and 56 of the Infrastructure Planning (Changes to, and Revocation of, Development Consent Orders) Regulations 2011 (as amended) (“the 2011 Regulations”). The proposed revocation does not involve Environmental Impact Assessment development within the meaning given by regulation 3(1) of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.
4. The proposed revocation is made under section 153 of, and paragraphs 3(1) and 3(7)(b) of Schedule 6 to, the Planning Act 2008 (“the 2008 Act”). This letter is the statement of reasons for the Secretary of State’s decision in accordance with regulation 58 of the 2011 Regulations. The Secretary of State is required by regulation 58(3) to publish the statement in such manner as she thinks appropriate. This statement will be published on the DfT website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proposed-revocation-of-the-a47-wansford-to-sutton-development-consent-order-2023/a47-wansford-to-sutton-revocation-explanation>.

Summary of the Secretary of State’s decision

5. The Secretary of State has decided under section 153 of, and paragraphs 3(1) and 3(7)(b) of Schedule 6 to, the 2008 Act to make an order revoking the DCO.

Consultation

6. The Secretary of State notified interested parties of the proposed revocation of the DCO on 24 February 2026. The deadline for receipt of any representations regarding the proposed revocation was 25 March 2026.
7. The Secretary of State has considered the representations received in response to the notice and does not consider that any further consultation is necessary.

Consultation responses

8. The Secretary of State received five responses to her notice. Two objected to the proposed revocation, two supported it, and one was neutral. One of the objections was received after the consultation deadline but has nonetheless been considered as it raised matters relevant to the decision.
9. An objection was received from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (“the CPCA”), citing the following reasons:
 - there aren’t exceptional circumstances necessary for the Secretary of State to exercise the power to revoke under the 2008 Act,
 - it would be irrational to revoke the DCO, given the established and critical need for the Scheme, and its benefits, and
 - there is no evidence presented in the notice of any perceived blight and no analysis to quantify concerns over blight.
10. The second objection was from a local resident who raised concerns regarding the safety of road users along the route should the Scheme not go ahead. They state that the dualling of the route, along with the proposed updated intersections, would make for the calm flow of traffic and help avert further accidents along the route.
11. Wansford Parish Council and a local resident both recorded their support for the proposed revocation for the following reasons:
 - The Scheme has an inappropriate alignment, which was routed through unstable ground, with associated cost implications, and which prevented the existing road being used for non-motorised traffic including walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.
 - A lack of upgrading of the Wansford Western roundabout, which forms part of the A1/A47 junction, would limit the westbound traffic flow of the A47.
 - Implications on the Scheme if the A1 were to be upgraded in the future.
12. Central Bedfordshire Council confirmed that they had no comment on the proposed revocation.

Consideration

13. On 8 July 2025, the Government announced that the A47 Wansford to Sutton scheme would not be progressed as it was not feasible to support further investment in the Scheme, having regard to other planned improvements to the A47 corridor.
14. If the DCO for the A47 Wansford to Sutton scheme is not revoked, it will remain in place until 10 March 2028, when it would expire if no development has taken place. During that time, the land would continue to be blighted and would be affected by the existence of the DCO and its compulsory purchase powers that place uncertainty on affected landowners. Affected landowners could therefore be able to apply for their blighted land to be purchased at full market value creating a significant financial commitment for National Highways.

The Secretary of State's overall conclusion and decision

15. The Secretary of State has considered the responses received to her consultation. In particular, she has taken into account the detailed concerns raised by the CPCA and a local resident. Ultimately, the withdrawal of Government funding for the proposed development means that it cannot proceed indefinitely. The absence of secured funding, and the lack of other prospects for funding, means the DCO is not capable of being implemented in a reasonable timescale.
16. She recognises that the ongoing existence of the DCO would cause prolonged uncertainty for affected landowners. It would prevent alternative development proposals for the land being brought forward, which are capable of delivery and may offer more beneficial use of the land. Revocation of the DCO would remove the associated legal and planning constraints that continue to affect the land and will provide a flexibility that could help unlock opportunities for local growth and infrastructure investment that might otherwise have been delayed or restricted.
17. Whilst it is noted that the CPCA and a local resident consider that the DCO should be retained, in the event that government policy changes, the DCO and its associated compulsory purchase powers in these circumstances would risk continued land blight, create unnecessary uncertainty for affected landowners, and expose National Highways to potential financial liability.
18. The Secretary of State notes the CPCA's view that removing funding for the scheme does not constitute exceptional circumstances, principally because there could, in theory, be alternate funding options. She disagrees, having regard to the following three considerations which, in her view, justify the conclusion that the circumstances in this case are exceptional:
 - The Oral Statement to Parliament on 8 July 2025 announced a rebalancing in the strategic priorities for government funding of transport projects, which resulted in the removal of secured funding for the Scheme. Without secured funding, the Scheme is unviable. No evidence of alternative funding sources or opportunities has been provided, notwithstanding the fact that such questions of funding are complex, uncertain and would undoubtedly take a significant period of time to negotiate and determine had such alternatives been identified.

Without a tangible or realistic prospect of funding being put in place, the project cannot be implemented within any reasonable timescale. The DCO therefore no longer serves a practical or effective purpose other than to expose National Highways to blight claims, and to constrain the options to develop the land that might otherwise be explored should the DCO be revoked.

- Secondly, the removal of planning blight from affected land. The ongoing existence of the DCO has the potential to constrain the ability of landowners and local planning authorities to bring forward alternative proposals, resulting in prolonged uncertainty and limiting the beneficial use of the land.
- Lastly, the need to support better planning outcomes, enabling land previously safeguarded for the scheme to be released for alternative infrastructure or development projects that are more responsive to local growth need.

19. The Secretary of State acknowledges the concerns relating to road user safety raised by the local resident that has objected to the proposed revocation and the objection raised by the CPCA that there is an established need for the scheme. As set out by the Secretary of State in her 8 July 2025 Statement to Parliament, a total of £500 million is to be invested in improvements along the A47 corridor, with work to dual sections in Norfolk underway. Safety along the A47 corridor will continue to be reviewed.

20. In light of these factors, the Secretary of State has determined that exceptional circumstances exist which make it appropriate to exercise the power under section 153 of, and paragraphs 3(1) and 3(7)(b) of Schedule 6 to, the 2008 Act to revoke the DCO.

21. For all the reasons set out in this letter, the A47 Wansford to Sutton Development Consent Order 2023 is therefore revoked.

General considerations

Equality Act 2010

22. The Equality Act 2010 includes a public-sector equality duty. This requires a public authority, in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (e.g. age; sexual orientation; sex; gender reassignment; disability; marriage and civil partnerships; pregnancy and maternity; religion and belief; and race) and persons who do not share it; and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

23. The Secretary of State has had due regard to the need to achieve the statutory objectives referred to in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and is satisfied that there is no evidence that approving the revocation will adversely affect the achievement of those objectives.

Human Rights Act 1998

24. The Secretary of State has considered the potential infringement of human rights in relation to the European Convention on Human Rights by the proposed revocation. The Secretary of State considers that the revocation of the DCO would not contravene any human rights as enacted into UK law by the Human Rights Act 1998.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

25. In making a decision the Secretary of State has had regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity and, in particular, to the United Nations Environmental Programme Convention on Biological Diversity of 1992 in accordance with the duty in section 40(1) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended by section 102 of the Environment Act 2021. The Secretary of State notes that there will be no new environmental effects as a result of the revocation of the DCO, and as such considers that no further action regarding the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is required.

Challenge to the decision

26. The circumstances in which the Secretary of State's decision may be challenged are set out in the note at Annex A to this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Natasha Kopala

Head of Planning Infrastructure Planning Unit

LEGAL CHALLENGES RELATING TO DECISIONS MAKING CHANGES TO DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDERS

Under section 118 of the Planning Act 2008, a decision under Section 153 of, and paragraph 3(1) and (7)(b) of Schedule 6 to the Planning Act 2008 to revoke an Order granting development consent, can be challenged only by means of a claim for judicial review. A claim for judicial review must be made to the High Court during the period of 6 weeks beginning with the day after the day on which the Order making the change is published. The A47 Wansford to Sutton Development Consent (Revocation) Order 2026 is being published on the DFT GOV.UK webpages at the following address:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proposed-revocation-of-the-a47-wansford-to-sutton-development-consent-order-2023/a47-wansford-to-sutton-revocation-explanation>

These notes are provided for guidance only. A person who thinks they may have grounds for challenging the decision to make the Order referred to in this letter is advised to seek legal advice before taking any action. If you require advice on the process for making any challenge you should contact the Administrative Court Office at the Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, WC2A 2LL (020 7947 6655).