

Transport update: M25 Junction 10 and A3 Wisley Interchange decision extension



I have been asked by my Right Honourable Friend, the Secretary of State, to make this written Ministerial statement. This statement concerns the application made under the Planning Act 2008 for the proposed alteration and upgrading by Highways England of the existing M25 Junction 10 Roundabout.

Under section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within 3 months of receipt of the examining authority's report unless exercising the power under section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline. The Secretary of State received the examining authority's report on the M25 Junction 10/A3 Wisley Interchange development consent order application on 12 October 2020 and the original deadline for a decision was 12 January 2021.

The deadline for the decision is to be extended to 12 May 2021 (an extension of 4 months) to enable the Secretary of State to consult further on the application including on the question of appropriate provision of replacement land to compensate for the proposed special category land to be compulsorily purchased under the development consent order.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.

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Applying for Ofqual recognition

In these case studies, we will take a look at the experiences of 4 end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) who have achieved Ofqual recognition: Autoexcel, EMPI Awards, Awarding UK and Achieve and Partners.

We have collected feedback from these organisations which we hope will help others thinking about, or in the process of, applying for recognition. We share the benefits they found, challenges they experienced and their top tips on applying for recognition.

At the end of the case studies you will find useful links to further resources, as well as how to get in contact with us.

What were the additional benefits of applying for Ofqual recognition to your organisation?

All of the organisations realised additional benefits that have improved their organisations in a variety of ways, such as:

- improved organisational policies, procedures and operations
- strengthened governance
- improved knowledge and expertise within the organisation

Autoexcel told us that they used the rigorous process of gaining recognition as an opportunity to take an in-depth review of how their organisation was operating and will operate in the future, asking themselves if it was the best it can be and in line with their long-term goal of “doing the right thing for their industry”.

We reviewed how we did things and how we can improve things, this made Autoexcel a much less vulnerable organisation and a safer organisation.

Autoexcel

Achieve and Partners and Awarding UK used the General Conditions as well as the Criteria for Recognition to reflect on their organisation's operations, policies and procedures to ensure that they are the best that they can

possibly be. For Achieve and Partners, this helped them to build in compliance from the beginning, and ensured that they had a strong understanding of how their policies and procedures worked in practice across the full qualification lifecycle.

All 4 organisations also highlighted the benefit of improved governance. All organisations reported a strengthened body of governance, either by adding more independence to their governing boards or building a stronger network of advisory voices available to their organisations. This strengthened their organisation's wider proficiency and capabilities in assessment and managing risk, which in turn helped to improve their application further.

EMPI Awards also found that in reviewing operations, processes and procedures for their end-point assessments as part of the application, they improved the way that they design, deliver and award other non-regulated qualifications for their industry.

What were the greatest challenges and realisations?

The bar to achieving recognition is the same, whatever type of qualification or EPA you are offering. It is a high bar because of our statutory duties to maintain standards and protect learners. This means that applicants must spend time demonstrating what they are capable of, and consider the evidence required to meet these standards.

Each organisation shared some of the challenges that they found in achieving recognition. Every organisation is different, so some of these challenges may or may not be similar to those that others experience.

Some of the challenges the organisations faced were:

- the timescales and resources required
- the language used in our documents
- the way that EPAs are regulated as qualifications
- managing and mitigating against conflicts of interest

Awarding UK found that the timescales required were a challenge. Being able to maintain organisational buy-in and resources over a period of months was important and something they had to manage throughout the process.

EMPI Awards' greatest realisation was that previous work on their application to the ESFA's register of end-point assessment organisations was very different to our requirements, therefore taking more time and resources than originally planned. While there is some crossover in the 2 applications, and we are actively working with the ESFA on aligning the processes, they found that we required more detail on qualifications and assessment, and a more holistic view of how policies and procedures worked in practice throughout the entire qualification lifecycle. If you would like more information, or have any questions relating to our recognition process and the ESFA's register of EPAOs, get in touch with us using the details at the bottom of this page.

Autoexcel also found that the greatest challenge to overcome was the time and extra resources required for developing the application, and the wider commitment needed to take on the responsibility of becoming a regulated EPAO. Although Autoexcel found the application itself mainly straightforward, they noted that they found our language different to that already used in their organisation, particularly around treating EPAs as qualifications and referring to training providers as centres.

Language was also a challenge for Awarding UK and Achieve and Partners. Awarding UK found recognition as “a variation on a theme” having significant experience of regulation in Higher Education, but they found that the language used in regulating university qualifications was different from that used by us. A challenge for them was writing policies where their internal/sector vocabulary was different to that of ours and the apprenticeship assessment plans’. In some instances, they had to separate out their HE policies and their EPA policies, and with hindsight believe that this was a good thing to do, as there are some differences in the regulatory requirements for certain areas, for example in appeals policies and procedures.

Achieve and Partners encountered challenges around EPAs being treated as a qualification for regulatory purposes. Although their team is made up of experienced Responsible Officers, they found it a challenge to take the apprenticeship assessment plans, which were not designed and developed by themselves, and work out how they could apply their organisation’s assessment policies, procedures and infrastructure in a compliant way. EMPI Awards found that they did not foresee some of the conflicts of interest that existed within their organisation, and had to develop policies and procedures to manage those conflicts. We have recently published further guidance on conflicts of interest, which you can find a link to below under further resources.

What are your top tips for organisations applying for Ofqual recognition?

Achieve and Partners recommend that organisations take the time to consider what it means to be a regulated Awarding Organisation, and the responsibility that goes with that. It is important to make sure your organisation is capable and has the appropriate resources and assessment expertise in place.

Do your homework to understand what it means to be regulated – what does it mean to be an awarding organisation and the responsibility that goes with it – that every learner has a fair assessment.

Achieve and Partners

Awarding UK also recommend taking the time at the start to read and fully understand our Conditions, Criteria of Recognition and guidance documents, and to make sure you have the most up-to-date information. They recommend

using the process as an opportunity to double check everything that you are currently doing and ensure that everything is the best it can be.

If you have any questions then don't be afraid to ask Ofqual, and don't see feedback as negative, Ofqual is asking these things for a reason and their questions and feedback need to be considered seriously.

Awarding UK

EMPI Awards recommend that organisations consider the General Conditions of Recognition as a starting point, and do a self-assessment of compliance against them. They used a traffic light system of green (compliant), amber (partially compliant) and red (non-compliant). This was useful as it enabled them to fully understand both the language and our approach to regulation. While this took time, it helped in the long run as it ensured that their application was as strong as it could be.

EMPI Awards also emphasise the importance of considering key questions throughout the application such as:

- is it the best it can be?
- what does good look like?
- who does what, where, when, why and, most importantly, how?

Autoexel recommend considering how other organisations have approached the application, but coming up with your own way of doing it. Each organisation is different and our recognition application allows for creativity and individuality. It is not a checklist. We will tell you what needs to be achieved, but not how to do it. Therefore, it is important to show us your way of doing things, what good looks like for you and your sector, and how that all works in practice.

Own the application, you have to live and breathe it as you will be questioned on it at the panel meeting.

Autoexel

All 4 organisations also told us that EPAOs should fully understand everything that's written in their application.

An EPAO must take ownership over their own application, even when using consultants – own your homework, it's okay to have a tutor to clarify, challenge, add value, but you have to own your homework to be successful.

Awarding UK

Further resources

If you are considering applying for Ofqual recognition and have any questions then please get in touch. If you want to talk to us about applying for recognition please [register on the Recognition Gateway](#). Once you have registered on our Recognition Gateway, we can arrange a meeting with one of our team to talk you through the recognition process in more detail and answer any questions that you have.

Alternatively, please email Strategic.Relationships@Ofqual.gov.uk

The resources below will help you with the process, including next steps and further information.

DAO 01/21 Control Totals 2020-21

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Rolls-Royce and UK Space Agency launch first ever study into nuclear-powered space exploration

This new research contract will see planetary scientists work together to explore the game-changing potential of nuclear power as a more plentiful source of energy, capable of making possible deeper space exploration in the decades to come.

Nuclear propulsion, which would involve channelling the immense energy released in splitting the atom to accelerate propellants, like hydrogen, at huge speeds, has the potential to revolutionise space travel.

By some estimates, this kind of engine could be twice as efficient as the chemical engines that power our rockets today. Spacecraft powered by this kind of engine could, conceivably, make it to Mars in just 3 to 4 months – roughly half the time of the fastest possible trip in a spacecraft using the current chemical propulsion.

Nuclear space power is anticipated to create new skilled jobs across the UK to support the burgeoning UK space economy.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

As we build back better from the pandemic, it is partnerships like this between business, industry and government that will help to create jobs and bring forward pioneering innovations that will advance UK spaceflight.

Nuclear power presents transformative possibilities for space exploration and this innovative study with Rolls-Royce could help to propel our next generation of astronauts into space faster and for longer, significantly increasing our knowledge of the Universe.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

Space nuclear power and propulsion is a game-changing concept that could unlock future deep-space missions that take us to Mars and beyond.

This study will help us understand the exciting potential of atomic-powered spacecraft, and whether this nascent technology could help us travel further and faster through space than ever before.

Dave Gordon, UK Senior Vice President, Rolls-Royce Defence said:

We are excited to be working with the UK Space Agency on this pioneering project to define future nuclear power technologies for space. We believe there is a real niche UK capability in this area and this initiative can build on the strong UK nuclear network and supply chain.

We look forward to developing this and other exciting space projects in the future as we continue to develop the power to protect our planet, secure our world and explore our Universe.

It would not just mean a time saving – it would also radically reduce the dose of radiation taken on by astronauts that would be making future trips to Mars or other planets. The size of the dose increases the longer you spend in deep space, away from the bubble of protection given by the Earth's magnetosphere.

The appeal of a small nuclear power generator for propulsion also comes from the fact that power in space becomes increasingly precious with distance from the Sun. In the outer Solar System, sunlight gets too dim for solar panels, and other technologies like fuel cells are often too patchy as a source of

energy.

Nuclear propulsion is an idea that has existed since the 1950s, when the United States attempted to develop a rocket propelled by small atomic bombs tossed out the back.

International travel update, 11 January 2021

Last week the Prime Minister announced that the Government had made the difficult but necessary decision to introduce a new national lockdown.

Both globally and domestically we are seeing significant increases in levels of coronavirus, including the emergence of worrying new strains. It is therefore imperative that we ensure we are doing all we can to protect travel, reduce the risk of imported infections, including from new variants, and protect our NHS while national lockdown and vaccinations take effect.

We already have strong safeguards in place, including a requirement for mandatory 10-day self-isolation for the vast majority of arrivals and our Travel Corridors system remains critical in managing the risk of imported cases from high-risk countries. We also successfully launched the test to release scheme last month, which provides passengers with the option to reduce self-isolation, through isolating for five days after they have left a destination not on the Travel Corridors list and then taking a test. Pre-departure testing does not remove the public health need for international arrivals travelling from non-exempt countries to isolate for 10 days or opt into test to release.

However, as a result of increasing instances of COVID-19 around the world, including the emergence of new variants, we are now taking additional steps to add a further layer of protection to safeguard public health. From 04:00am on 15 January, we will be introducing pre-departure testing requirements for all inbound passengers to England. Passengers arriving by ship, plane or train will have to take a test up to 3 days before departure and provide evidence of a negative result before they travel.

This will be an additional requirement that applies to all passengers, including those travelling from a Travel Corridor country, other than those on a very short list of exemptions. This extra layer of protection is in addition to existing self-isolation requirements.

We will establish the standards that tests must meet in regulations. This will include that the test must be of a diagnostic-standard test such as a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test, and could in some cases include LAMP and Lateral Flow tests within set limits. We will provide clear guidance and

advice to passengers regarding testing standards and capacity.

Guidance will be available to passengers and carriers on what to look for to assure tests and the results provided meet the standards required.

We will keep test standards and innovative testing technologies under review.

In addition, we will also set out the information passengers will need to have with them at check-in and the UK border to show they have had a qualifying negative test. This will include set data fields which test result certificates must include. All information on test requirements will be made available to passengers and transport operators through guidance on gov.uk.

The current advice for those across the UK remains that you must stay at home and not travel abroad unless it is for a permitted exempt reason. The requirements apply equally to visitors from other states and British Nationals, and carriers may deny boarding if passengers are not in receipt of a qualifying negative test. British Nationals that need consular assistance should contact the nearest consulate, embassy or high commission.

If British Nationals test positive for Covid-19 while abroad they should not travel and should follow the local relevant guidance on self-isolation.

Transport operators will be required to check that a passenger has proof of a negative test result before they board their flight, train or ferry, and may deny boarding where appropriate to reduce numbers of non-compliant individuals arriving in England. Border Force will also conduct further checks upon arrival.

If a passenger arrives in England without a pre-departure negative test result they will be fined. We will amend the International Travel Regulations so that fines, starting at £500, can be levied on non-compliant passengers. Operators will also be fined for transporting non-compliant passengers.

Passengers travelling to England from the Common Travel Area (the United Kingdom, Ireland, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey), will not be in scope of the regulations.

Children under the age of 11 will also not be required to complete pre-departure testing.

There will be a very restricted number of exemptions, including hauliers to allow the free flow of freight, and air, international rail and maritime crew.

Certain limited reasonable excuses for not undergoing testing will also be permitted, for example, lack of testing infrastructure in the departure country. This will apply to three overseas territories – St Helena, Ascension Island and the Falklands.

Arrivals from three additional countries will be considered to have a reasonable excuse not to comply due to lack of testing infrastructure. However, for these countries this will only apply for a specific, time limited window. This includes:

- Antigua and Barbuda – until Thursday 21 January 04.00
- St Lucia – until Thursday 21 January 04.00
- Barbados – until Thursday 21 January 04.00

If passengers are arriving from one of the above three countries after the time limited window has ended, they will be required to meet all pre-departure testing requirements.

Further details on exemptions and reasonable excuses will be set out in regulations and in guidance. We will keep exemptions and reasonable excuses under regular review.

We will be making detailed guidance available to both passengers and transport operators to support the implementation of these changes.

Measures are likely to be in place until the end of the current lockdown, although a review will take place before the end of that period.

The Government recognises the continued challenges that the pandemic poses, both for individuals and for businesses.

We have worked closely with the international travel sector during the course of the pandemic and will continue to do so as we emerge from lockdown and are able to encourage people to travel again with confidence. We are also continuing to implement recommendations set out in the Global Travel Taskforce Report to support the safe recovery of international travel.

The delivery of a safe, effective vaccine is also the best way to protect the most vulnerable, save thousands of lives and support the removal of many of the restrictions and return to international travel. We are already making great progress, including having currently vaccinated more people than the rest of Europe combined.

In the immediate term our priority has to be on safeguarding public health and the NHS. With the addition of pre-departure testing requirements, our already robust system to protect against imported cases of coronavirus is further strengthened and will provide the greatest overall protection against the risk of transmission during travel to England and after arrival.