

## **Departures from Standards and Specification**

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**Summary:**

This document provides guidance on how to submit a Departure from Standard and Specification using the NRA Departures Website. The document also includes a description of what constitutes a Departure and provides details on submitting a Departure including what information the application should contain.

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CONTENTS  
SECTION 0 GENERAL PROCEDURES**

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**PART C**

**DEPARTURES FROM STANDARDS AND  
SPECIFICATION**

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## 1 Implementation

1.1 This Standard shall be used for the design of all new or improved National Roads unless otherwise agreed with the National Roads Authority. All roads affected by NRA projects shall also be designed in accordance with this Standard unless otherwise agreed with the relevant Road Authority.

1.2 If this Standard is to be used for the design of Regional and Local Road schemes, the Designer shall agree with the relevant Road Authority the extent to which the document is appropriate in any particular situation.

1.3 During development of the design; the Designer may seek a Departure from Standard where it can be shown that the safety of the user, operational effectiveness and design life are not compromised.

## 2 Definitions

2.1 *Road Schemes:* All works that involve new road construction or permanent change to the existing road layout.

2.2 *Employer:* The organisation managing the various phases of scheme preparation and supervision of construction or as defined in the Contract.

2.3 *Employer's Representative:* The Engineer or other person appointed by the Employer as it's representative in accordance with the Works Contract.

2.4 *Designer:* The Design Team undertaking the various phases of scheme preparation or supervision of construction.

2.5 *The Applicant:* The Designer at the particular phase of the scheme when the departure is required.

2.6 *Overseeing Organisation:* For National Road Schemes the Overseeing Organisation is the NRA. Where the scheme is not on a National Road, then the appropriate overseeing organisation shall be substituted for NRA.

2.7 *Approved Departure:* An approved Departure shall be considered as meeting the NRA's requirements for that element of the works, provided that any mitigation measures proposed by the designer or conditional to that approval are also incorporated into the design and works.

2.8 *Refused Departure:* Where the decision of the NRA is that the Departure proposed is unacceptable.

2.9 *Rejected Departure:* Where insufficient, inappropriate or contradictory information has been submitted as part of the Departure Application. Further information may be required and it is not possible to form a conclusive decision to Approve or Refuse the application.

## 3 Departures

- 3.1 A Departure from Standard shall mean any of the following:
- a) A Departure from any of the mandatory requirements of the NRA DMRB;
  - b) The use of technical design standards other than those in the NRA DMRB;
  - c) The use of technical specifications for materials or workmanship other than those in the NRA Specification and the NRA Road Construction Details;
  - d) The use of a set of requirements or additional criteria for any aspect of the Works for which requirements are not defined in the Contract;
  - e) The use of a technical design standards or technical specification in a manner or circumstance which is not permitted or provided for in such directive or specification;
  - f) A combination of any of the criteria specified above.
- 3.2 While the Approval of a Departure shall be considered as meeting the NRA's requirements for that element of the works (subject to section 2.7 above), the following should be noted with respect to Approved Departures:
- a) The approval of an application in no way precludes the NRA from requesting that certain safety measures be carried out at a future date in relation to the approvals given.
  - b) The approval of a Departure, with or without comments, does not imply that the NRA relieves the designer of any responsibility for the design;
  - c) Departures are approved on a location-specific basis and relate to the particular circumstances identified in each submission. A similar Departure approval may be quoted to support a new application, but each case will be considered on its own merits;
- d) The NRA may allow "bulk" Departures (when the same non-standard method or material is proposed for use at more than one location) in certain, clearly defined circumstances.
- 3.3 The following are variations that are not considered as constituting a Departure from Standard:
- a) Suggestions/Recommendations within NRA DMRB;
  - b) Anything contained within Advice Notes – adopted as 'best practice' advice or as background information only. (Generally to be read in conjunction with a related standard.);
  - c) Relaxations – these need to be recorded in the Departures Report, but a formal application does not need to be completed.
- ## 4 Submitting a Departure
- 4.1 All Departures are to be digitally inputted on the NRA Web-based Departures Database at <http://nrastandards.nra.ie>. Applicants are required to pre-register with the **NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards)** prior to inputting Departures. Applicants shall be one named individual working on behalf of the Designer for the applicable stage of the road scheme.
- 4.2 During the Design & Build Tender Process, Tender Stage Departures are **not** to be entered onto the NRA Web-based Departures Database. Instead, an MS Word copy of all the departure applications should be emailed or sent by CD to the Employer's Representative and NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards).

4.3 A corresponding hardcopy of the Departure applications, including drawings, calculations and any other relevant information, are also to be submitted as follows:

- a) Cover letter with 1 full set of Departures applications, including a hardcopy print of the Departure Application Forms as completed on the NRA Departures Website, to the **NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards)**;
- b) Cover letter with 1 full set of Departures applications, including a hardcopy print of the Departure Application Forms as completed on the NRA Departures Website, to the **Employer's Representative**;

4.4 During the Construction Phase, a PDF copy of the application will be emailed to the Employer's Representative as appropriate.

4.5 Contact details in the NRA for submission of Departure Reports are as follows:

NRA Project Manager  
(Engineering Standards)  
National Roads Authority  
St. Martins House  
Waterloo Road  
Dublin 4  
E-Mail: [dmrbdeps@nra.ie](mailto:dmrbdeps@nra.ie)

## 5 Details Required

5.1 The following details shall as a minimum be included in all Departure reports:

- A short description of the scheme, including details of the type of contract, the stage the scheme is at and other background information. The outcome of any Safety Audits

and Statutory Processes should also be detailed if applicable.

- A Departure Application Form (as printed from Departures Website for each individual application). The application should contain sufficient detail to enable a recommendation to be made on the application. It is particularly important that the 'Justification' section is fully completed, and a detailed reason given why the Departure is being sought. If alternative designs have been considered in order to avoid the Departure, these should be outlined. Proposed compensatory measures should also be outlined where applicable.
- A detailed drawing for each Departure showing plan and long section (in all cases), so geometric details can be ascertained. This drawing should also show (with dotted lines or different colours) how the area of the scheme would look if the correct standards were applied. The drawing should clearly show the scale used. This enables the reviewer to see the difference between standard and sub-standard design and to understand more clearly the justification for the Departure.
- Drawing(s) of the entire scheme (at min scale of 1:10000), so the reviewer can see how the Departure fits in with the overall scheme.
- Contact details for the Employer's Representative and/or who to contact for further information.
- If a number of applications are being submitted at the same time, then these should take the form of a Departures Report. The report should be bound and include the necessary drawings within the bound report. A3 drawings are preferable but this will depend on the amount of information contained on the drawing. If A1 drawings are required then these

- should be folded and bound into the report in plastic sleeves.
- If an application does not contain sufficient information for assessment, then the Departure will be returned to the applicant, and a subsequent time-frame for assessment cannot be guaranteed. A 'Departure Application Checklist' has been provided in **Appendix B** which should be completed and returned with the Departures Report.
- 6 Departure Decision Process**
- 6.1 The decision of the NRA in relation to each Departure Application may be to:
- Approve the Departure;
  - Refuse the Departure; or
  - Reject the Departure.
- 6.2 The relevant NRA section will make a recommendation on each individual application:
- All structures Departures are forwarded to NRA Structures Section for comment.
  - All geometric and specification applications are assessed by the Standards section.
- 6.3 All comments/recommendations are recorded in the database and approval and refusal numbers are assigned as appropriate and are digitally sent to the applicant via the NRA web-based database.
- 6.4 Approvals once issued electronically are deemed to have been signed by the NRA Head of Engineering.
- 6.5 The decision of the NRA is notified to the Applicant on the NRA Web-based database.
- Tender Stage
- 6.6 The Employer's Representative prepares comments on the Tenderer's Departure applications and forwards these to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards) within 7 days of receipt of the reports.
- 6.7 During the Tender Phase, a PDF copy of the decision will be emailed to the Employer's Representative as appropriate. The Employer's Representative shall confirm the decision of the NRA to the applicant, the Local Authority and the NRA Engineering Inspector as appropriate. (As outlined in Appendix C);
- Construction Stage
- 6.8 The Employer's Representative prepares comments on the Applicant's Departure applications and forwards these to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards) within 7 days of receipt of the reports.
- 6.9 During the Construction Phase, a PDF copy of the decision will be emailed to the Employer's Representative as appropriate. The Employer's Representative shall confirm the decision of the NRA to the applicant, the Local Authority and the NRA Engineering Inspector as appropriate. (As outlined in Appendix C);
- 6.10 Applicants should allow a **minimum** of 3 weeks from receipt of applications by the NRA to notification of decision. (This will take longer for larger schemes with a large number of applications – especially during the D&B/PPP Tender process where there may be multiple sets of Departure requests). The time taken to assess Departures will depend on the number of applications; the quality of information submitted and

scheme priority. Accordingly, applications should be submitted as early as possible so as to avoid delays.

- 6.11 If a scheme with a large number of applications is to be submitted, then advance notice should be given to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards) in order that the applications can be dealt with as swiftly as possible. In the case of Design & Build or PPP schemes, information contained in the Contract Documents regarding the submission of Departures should be forwarded to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards) for information (this applies in particular to the timetable for submission of Departures during the tendering process).

## 7 Electronically submitted Departures

- 7.1 Electronically submitted Departures on the NRA web-based database will be accepted for processing but this processing cannot be completed until the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards) receives a hard copy. In all instances the hard copy will be taken as the overriding document.
- 7.2 Global co-ordinates shall be included for each separate element included in an electronically submitted Departure, where the most appropriate point along the length of each element is located by co-ordinates, or in the case of scheme-wide Departures, the start chainage for the works on the designed centre-line of the road.

## 8 Submitting Departure – Timeframes

### Preliminary/Specimen Design

- 8.1 Applications for Departures from Standards during the Preliminary/Specimen Design Stage must be submitted for assessment **prior to** incorporation into the design, and well in advance of the finalisation of the landtake line for Compulsory Purchase

Order/Tender Stage. The designer shall complete the Departure Application form in full. The official decision of the NRA will be issued to the applicant who should forward it to any other relevant parties.

- 8.2 When the designer proposes to specify Works Requirements that require the approval of a Departure from the NRA DMRB or an approval in relation to the NRA Specification then these should be applied for and obtained before incorporation into the Contract Documents.

### Tender Stage

- 8.3 The Tendering Timetable should be forwarded to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards) for information as soon as it is available.
- 8.4 Tender Departures are **not** to be submitted on the NRA web-based database but instead should be submitted in hardcopy and MSWord format (CD or email) on the Departure Application Form (as attached in Appendix A) together with the accompanying information as detailed in paragraph 4 on or before the date specified in the Instructions to Tenderers. Submitting applications on or before the date specified allows processing and issue of a reply 2 weeks before the end of the tender process - a reply cannot be guaranteed for applications submitted after the date specified in the Instructions.

- 8.5 The Employer's Representative, upon receipt of the Tenderer's applications, will prepare a summary table (as attached in Appendix D) of all the applications and add comments before forwarding the comments to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards). This work must be



completed in a minimum of 7 working days from receipt of tenders. The Employer's Representative's comments will be taken into account by the NRA in assessing the Departures for official recommendation.

- 8.6 The decision of the NRA will be issued to the Employer's Representative who then informs the Tenderers of the decision.

Construction Stage/Detailed Design

- 8.7 Departures will be processed as quickly as possible during the Construction Stage/Detailed Design; however, as in all cases, a minimum of 3 weeks should be allowed for processing of applications.
- 8.8 During Construction the Applicant inputs the Departure into the NRA Web-based Departures Database and also submits the Departures Report to the Employer's Representative, who comments on the application(s) and forwards the Report to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards).
- 8.9 The reply from the NRA will be issued directly to the Applicant. A copy of the decision will be emailed to Employer's Representative who should forward it to the Applicant as conformation.

## 9. Enquiries

- 9.1 All technical enquiries or comments on this document or any of the documents listed as forming part of the NRA DMRB should be sent in writing to:

Head of Engineering  
National Roads Authority  
St Martins House  
Waterloo Road  
Dublin 4



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T. AHERN  
Head of Engineering

**Appendix A – Application for a Departure from the NRA Design Manual for Roads and Bridges during the Tender Stage Only**

<b>General Information:</b>		
Route:	Scheme:	Contract Type: (e.g. PPP /D&B/ Traditional)
Design Speed	Traffic Flow and Composition (if applicable):	
Carriageway Type/Cross Section		

<b>Applicant Information:</b>	
Applicant Name:	Contact Person and Contact Details:
Applicants Departure Reference No.	

<b>Departure Information:</b>
Departure Location and Chainage:
Departure Category (e.g. Road Design, Structures etc.)
Departure Type (e.g. Horizontal Geometry, Vertical Geometry, Cross Section, etc.)
Standard Required by NRA DMRB
Standard Provided
Departure Justification
Other Departures or Relaxations at same location

<b>NRA DMRB References:</b>	
NRA DMRB/MCDRW Reference (e.g. TD 9/05 etc):	NRA DMRB Paragraph/Table/Figure:
<b>Additional Information and Supporting Documentation List:</b>	

<b>RECOMMENDATION AND APPROVAL (FOR NRA USE ONLY)</b>	
Recommendation on Application	
<i>Signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<b>National Roads Authority Approval</b>	
<i>Signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
Head of Engineering	
NRA Reference Number:	

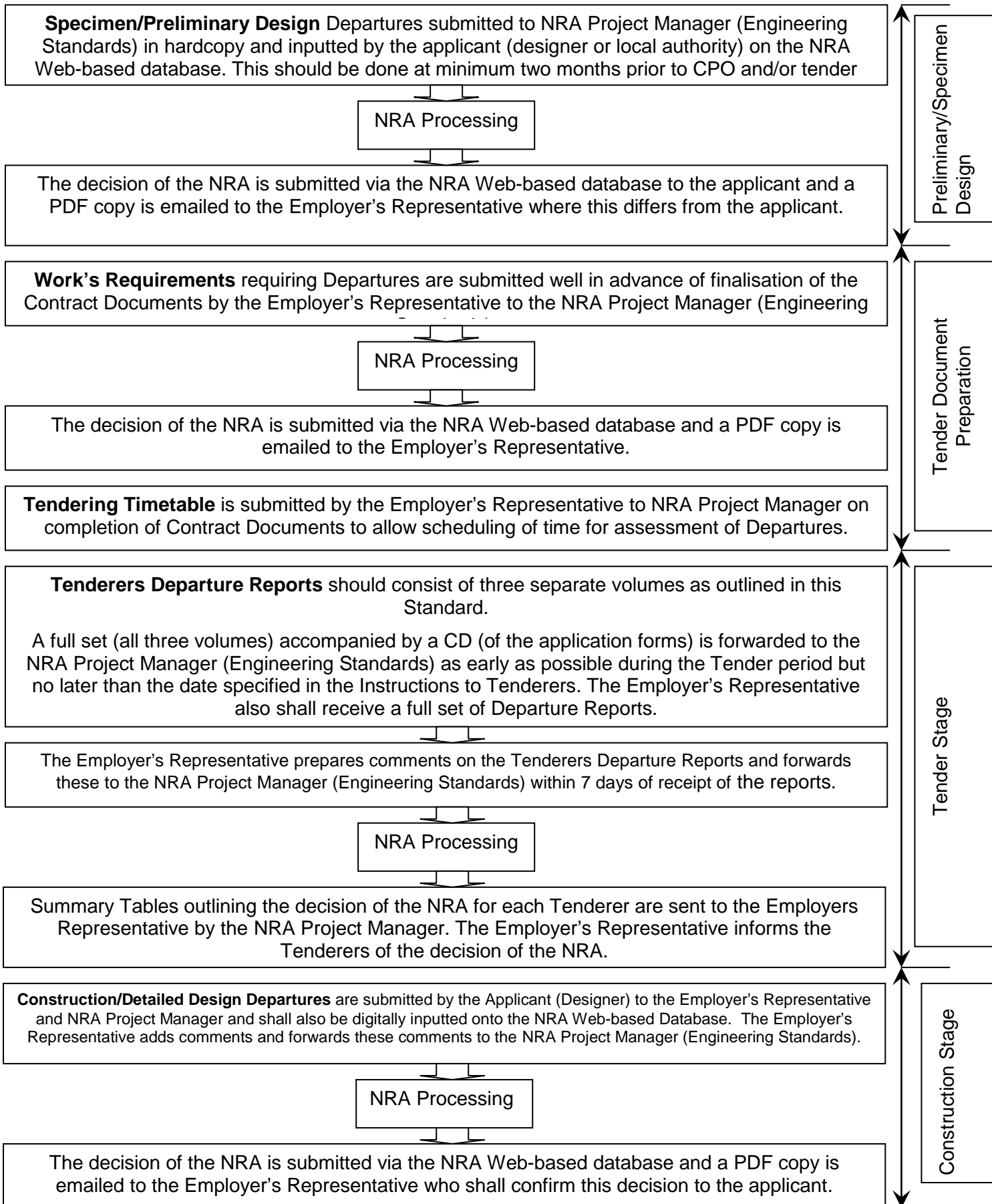
**Appendix B – Departure Application Checklist**

<b>General:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Has the Cover Sheet for the Departure Report been completed?	
Is it clear who the Employer is and who the official response should issue to?	
Has sufficient background information been given to ascertain the stage the scheme is at?	
Have any time constraints regarding receiving a decision on the application been outlined?	

<b>Application:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Has an individual application form been completed for each Departure?	
Have the application form(s) been submitted via the NRA Web-based Database to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards) to speed up the database input process?	
Has a plan and longitudinal section been provided for each geometry Departure?	
Does the drawing show how the area of the scheme would look should the correct standard be applied?	
Does the justification give sufficient information for a person not familiar with the scheme to be able to make a recommendation?	
Have any alternatives considered been outlined and shown on the drawings submitted?	
Have possible mitigation measures been outlined?	

<b>D&amp;B/PPP Schemes:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Has the tendering timetable been submitted to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards)?	
Has the full set been submitted to the NRA Project Manager (Engineering Standards)?	
Have the structures Departures (Volume 2) been submitted directly to NRA Structures Section?	
Has the Employer's Representative commented on all applications?	

**Appendix C – Departure Application Procedures**



**Appendix D – Tender Comparison Table**

Appendix D

Departure Location & Chainage	Departure Category and Classification	Departure Type	Details	Status	NRA Reference	Application Comments	Bidder 1 (B1)	Bidder 2 (B2)	Bidder 3 (B3)	Bidder 4 (B4)	Bidder 5 (B5)	Specimen Design
e.g.												
Mainline and associated side roads	Drainage	Thermoplastic Structured Wall Pipes (HAPAS 02/H068)	HAPAS Cert 02/H068			This application is recommended for APPROVAL for pipes and fittings other than those included in Table 5/2 provided that they hold a current Irish (or British) Agreement Board Roads and Bridges Certificate (or equivalent) stating that they are a suitable alternative for the usage specified in Table 5/2. They shall comply with all other requirements of Series 500 and with the standards and particular requirements therein and be of 100mm internal diameter unless otherwise described.	Applicants Reference	Applicants Reference	Applicants Reference	Applicants Reference	Applicants Reference	SpecDes_D01
Whole Scheme	Pavement	Reduction of PSV in HRA	PSV=40			This application is recommended for REFUSAL as a reduction in PSV has implications for skid resistance and cannot be considered.			Applicants Reference			