

A358

Taunton to Southfields Dualling scheme

Newsletter – summer 2019

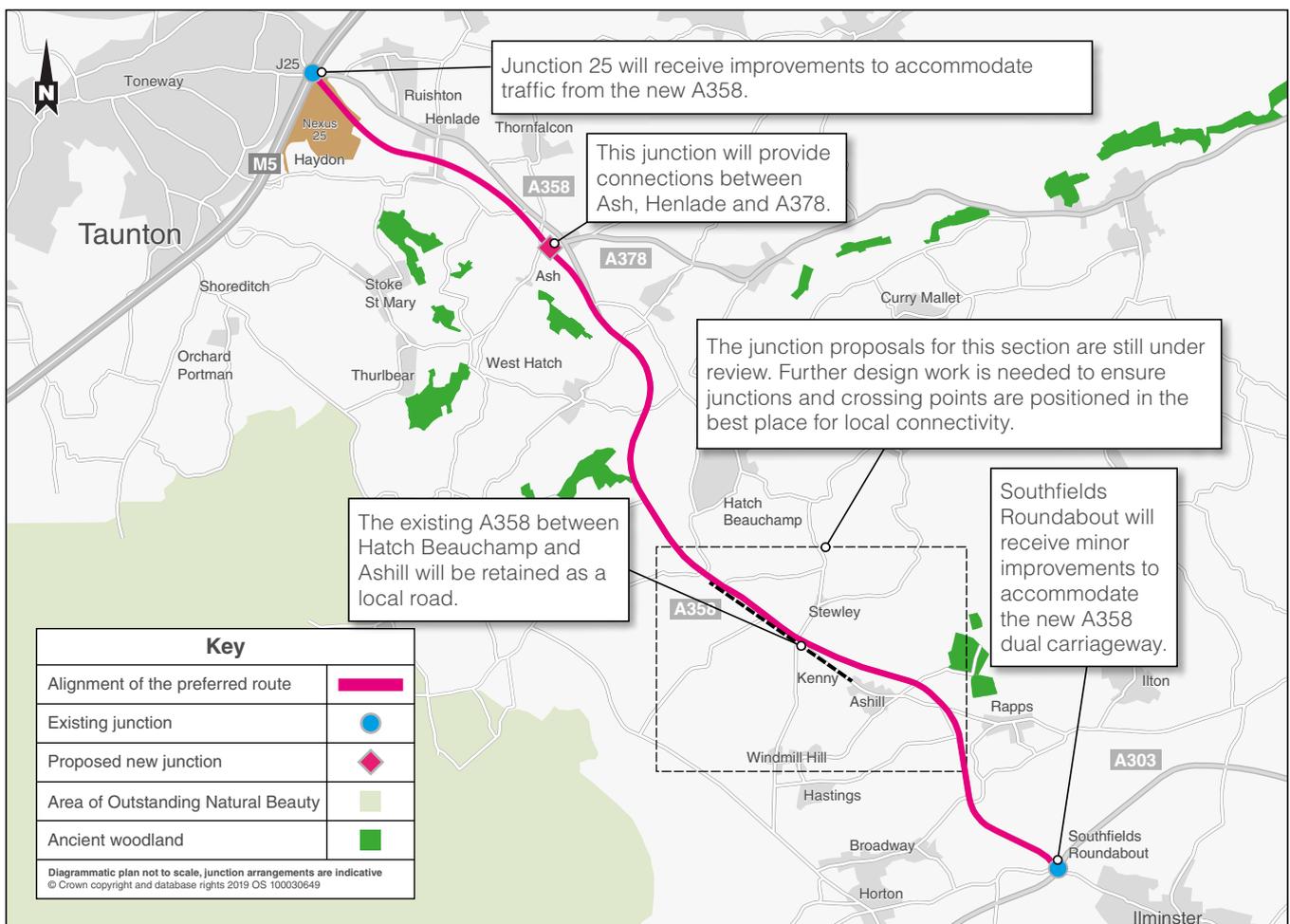
In this edition

- ▶ Preferred Route Announcement
- ▶ Community Liaison Forum update
- ▶ Corridor update
- ▶ Vehicle Safety Campaign

Welcome to the latest update from the A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling scheme

Pink modified selected as preferred route

We have now selected our preferred route for the A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling scheme.



Map of preferred route

In 2018 we took three route options to consultation for the scheme – the Orange option, the Blue option and the Pink option. The Orange option was the subject of consultation in 2017, during which the local community and wider stakeholders called for more options to be presented.

Since the last consultation, we've updated our cost estimates for the scheme. This has shown that the potential cost of each option has risen. We therefore revisited our options to see how they could be modified to balance the scheme's objectives, cost and public feedback.

We're very grateful to everyone who has helped us reach this point. The process has been detailed and time-consuming, but it has been necessary to ensure we made the correct decision.

The preferred route

The route we've selected will create a high quality dual carriageway link between Southfields Roundabout on the A303 and the M5 at Taunton. It is a modified version of the route we called the Pink option during the 2018 consultation, with the junctions we labelled A and B removed. You can see the options shown at consultation here: <https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/taunton-to-southfields-dualling-scheme/>

We carefully considered a number of factors when selecting this option including affordability, capacity, safety, connectivity, resilience, environmental impact, consultation feedback and economic benefits. We have also had to take updated cost estimates for each option into account.

To improve the affordability of the scheme we used the previously published Pink option as a basis to develop a modified option, as this had performed best across our previous assessments. Removing junctions A and B, as well as the dual carriageway link between them, allows us to deliver the right balance between scheme objectives and cost. It also responds to public feedback about the impact that these junctions might have on homes, public open space and the countryside.

Benefits

Benefits of the preferred route are that:

- We'll be substantially reducing traffic flows through Henlade from 33,500 without the scheme to 4,000 vehicles with the scheme in 2038
- We'll be providing a connection to the A378 which will relieve traffic through Henlade helping to improve the air quality
- We'll be improving the environment by reducing pollution from queuing traffic, particularly through Henlade and allow West Somerset and Taunton Council to potentially remove the Air Quality Management Area
- We'll make journeys safer by closing existing road junctions and private accesses helping us to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the road network
- Your local journeys into Taunton will be made better by making your journey times more predictable and reducing the cost and inconvenience of unexpected delays you currently experience
- This route has the least impact on existing homes, public open space and the countryside including avoiding the ancient woodlands at Huish Copse and Stoke Wood
- It will make it easier for you to grow your businesses in and around Taunton by improving connectivity and providing a direct link to the Nexus 25 employment site
- This scheme is the best use of public money as we can deliver a scheme closest to the budget allocated while still meeting the scheme objectives.

You can find out more about the preferred route by reading the brochure we've published along with a report on both stages of consultation and a Scheme Assessment Report setting out the results of our assessments. This is available on our website along with details of pop-up style events we're holding:

<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a358-taunton-to-southfields/>

What happens next?

Selecting a preferred route is important because it allows us to safeguard the land required for the scheme from other development and give certainty to the local community. We'll now undertake further work to look more closely at the local area, completing further surveys and investigations to allow us to design the scheme in greater detail.

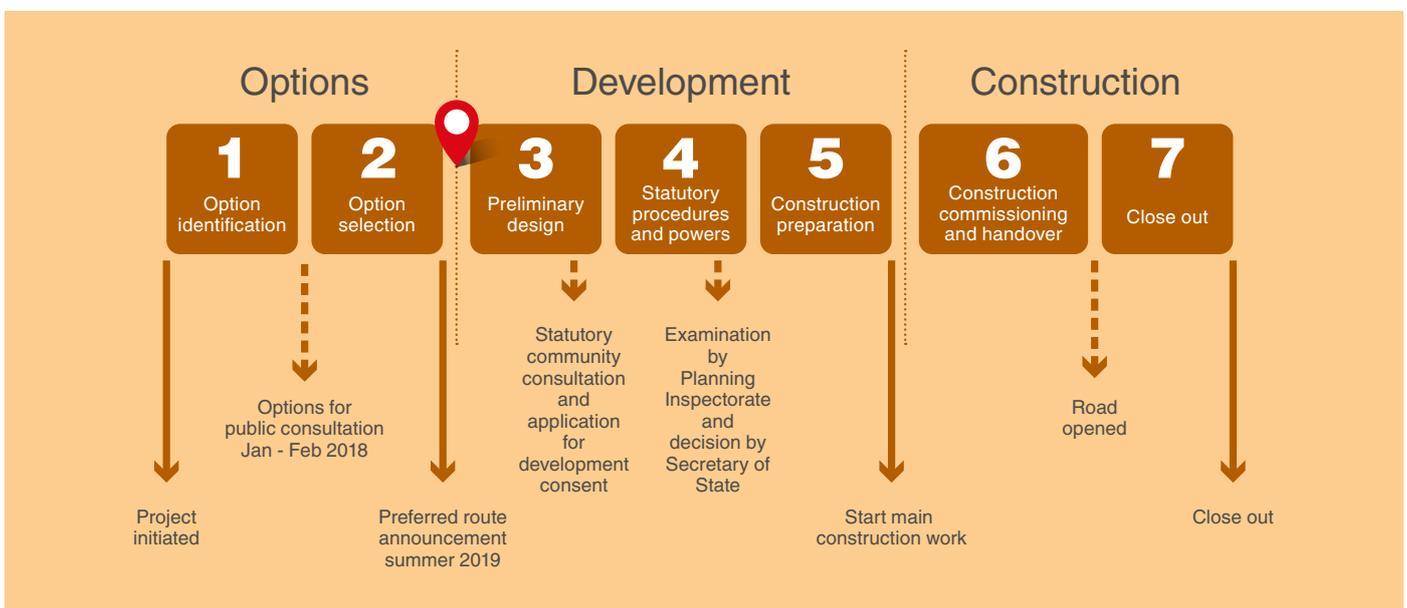
We will then hold a further consultation on our detailed proposals. This will be a statutory consultation, required by the Planning Act 2008. This is because the scheme is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project

(NSIP) – which means we need to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to build it. Before we carry out this consultation, we'll engage with local authorities, technical stakeholders and representatives of the local community to understand the best way to consult at this stage.

You can find out more about the DCO process at the Planning Inspectorate's website:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

The timeline below shows what will happen at each stage of the scheme.



Community Liaison Forum established

We have established a Community Liaison Forum (CLF) to allow us to continue to engage with the community outside of formal consultation periods. The CLF will help us to share timely and relevant information as well as discuss updates with representatives of the local community.

We were pleased to welcome representatives from more than 20 groups to the first meeting of the forum in Taunton on Tuesday 26 February 2019. You can find out more about what was discussed at the forum in the meeting notes, available from our website: <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a358-taunton-to-southfields/>

Now that we've selected a preferred option for the scheme, we'll convene another meeting of the forum to present the route and our next steps to community groups.



Members of the A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme Project team with Mike O'Dowd Jones from Somerset County Council, pictured right, who also presented at the first meeting of the CLF.

Highways England Vehicle Safety Campaign

Every year Highways England traffic officers deal with more than 85,000 breakdowns on the roads they patrol. In the last two years, more than 40 per cent of these breakdowns were caused by vehicles running out of fuel, poor tyre maintenance, power loss and engine trouble.

Fewer breakdowns on the strategic road network also means fewer incidents. This then keeps traffic flowing. And cutting congestion is good for the economy.

- In 2015, there were 56 killed or seriously injured (KSIs) incidents linked to driving without checking the vehicle was roadworthy, falling to 39 in 2017 after three editions of this campaign.
- Every time someone runs out of fuel the breakdown causes delays to themselves and other road users. Last year an average 22 people a day ran out of fuel on our network.
- The challenge we have is to reframe the issue so that drivers are motivated to check their vehicle and provide a trigger for when to perform the check.

Highways England recommend carrying out a few quick and easy checks to ensure you and your vehicle are safely equipped to drive. Having a roadworthy vehicle can also save you time and money in the future.

You wouldn't expect a pilot to take off without running through checks, so why shouldn't you take the same approach for an important journey by road?

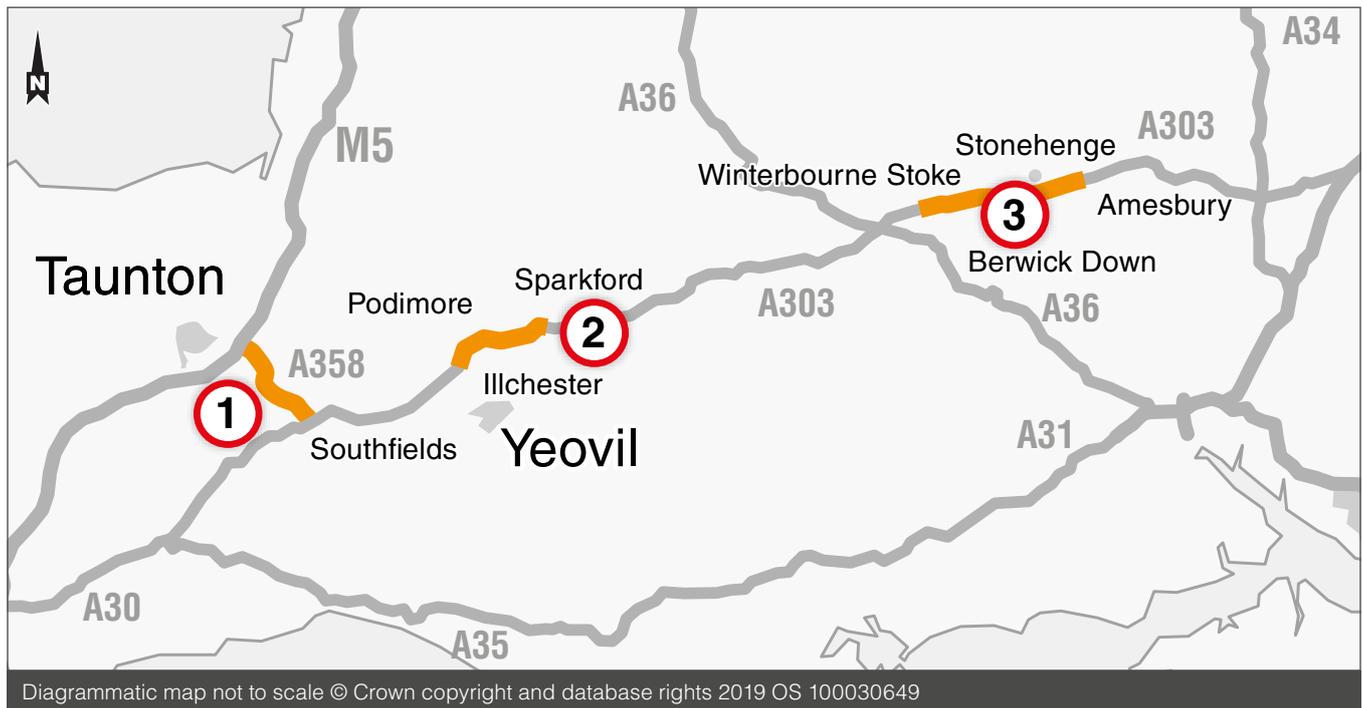
To find out more information about vehicle checks please visit: <https://www.think.gov.uk/campaign/vehicle-safety-checks/>



Corridor update

The A358 Taunton to Southfields scheme is just one of our three planned projects designed to improve the A303/A358 corridor.

Creating a high quality dual carriageway link between the south east and south west.



Here is a summary of what's happening with each of the other two schemes at present:

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling scheme:

Back in July 2018 we submitted our application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) which was accepted for examination in August. Inspectors were appointed to examine our application in October and the examination itself started in December. The examination process takes up to 6 months and was completed on 12 June. You can find out what happens next on their website: <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester/>

You can find out more about the planning process and view our application, including the consultation report, on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-west/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester-dualling/>

A303 Stonehenge – Amesbury to Berwick Down scheme:

The A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down scheme is in the middle of the planning application process. As a nationally significant infrastructure project we have applied for a Development Consent Order, which was accepted for examination in November 2018. More details can be found on the Planning Inspectorate's website: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-west/a303-stonehenge/>

Further information

For further information on the scheme:

-  A358TauntontoSouthfields@highwaysengland.co.uk
-  www.highwaysengland.co.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields
-  0300 123 5000

If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.