

# A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

## Introduction

Highways England is consulting on proposals to upgrade the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester to dual carriageway.

This improvement is needed to relieve congestion and improve the safety performance of one of the busiest stretches of the A303/A358 route corridor that connects the south west to London and the south east.

We are holding this public consultation to present the current scheme proposals and to seek feedback on them.

The consultation will run from **15 February - 29 March 2017**.





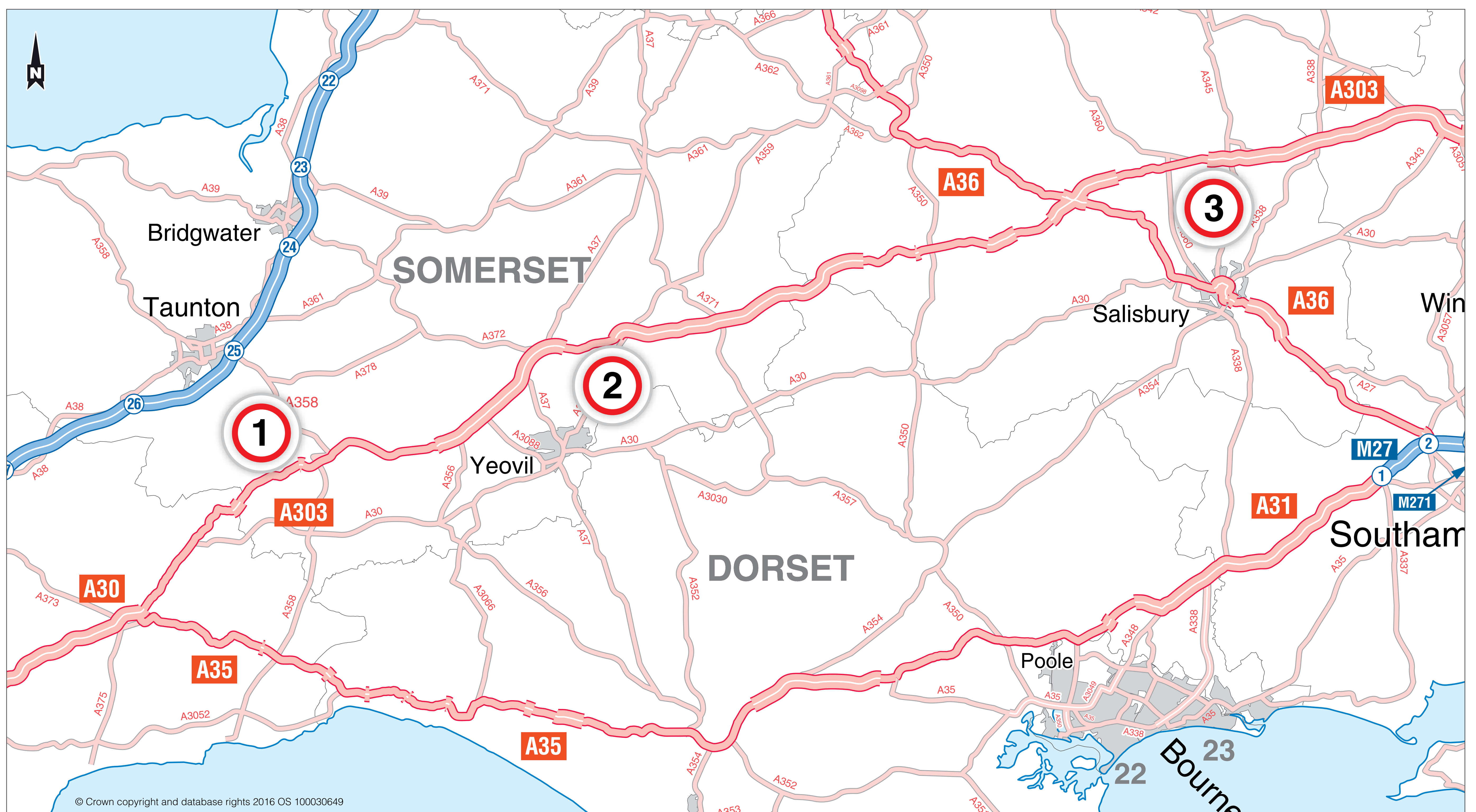
# A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

## Background

The Government announced its Road Investment Strategy (RIS) for the period between 2015/16 and 2019/20 in December 2014. The strategy includes the Government's intention to upgrade all remaining single carriageway sections of the A303 between the M3 and the A358 to dual carriageway standard, together with creating a dual carriageway link from the M5 motorway near Taunton to the A303, as part of a long-term commitment to creating an expressway to the south west.

To support this ambition, we are developing three major road improvement schemes along the A303/A358 route corridor:

- 1 - A358 Taunton to Southfields**
- 2 - A303 Sparkford to Ilchester dualling**
- 3 - A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down**





# A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

## The A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme

The A303/A358 route is a vital link between the south west, London and the south east, connecting people, communities, and business.

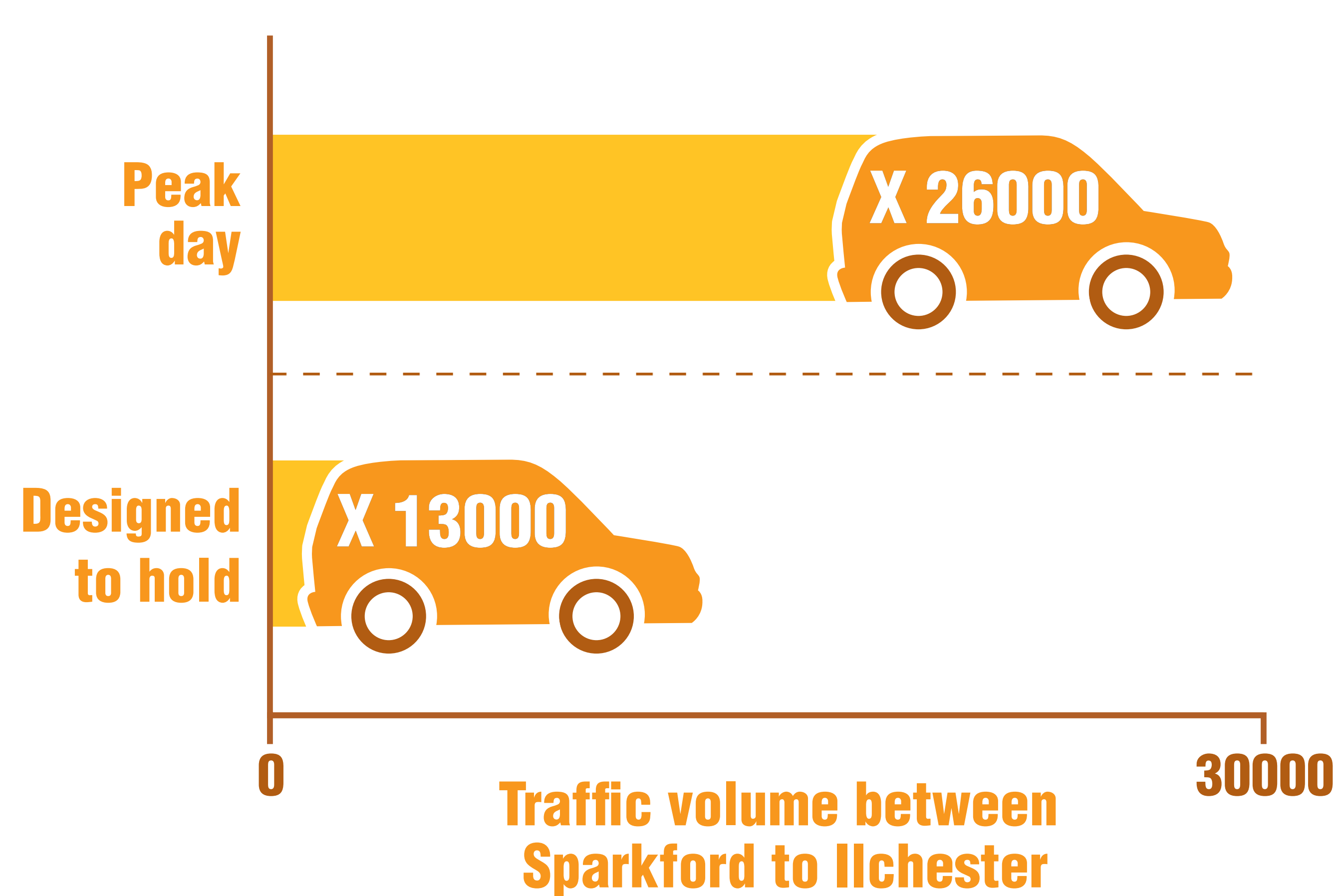
The section of the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester comprises a mix of dual and single lane carriageway, which leads to localised congestion, impacting adversely on journey times and journey time reliability.

On a normal day up to 26,000 vehicles use this single carriageway section, which is twice as much as it was designed for. At weekends in the summer the number of vehicles using this section of road can increase by nearly half as many again.

Due to the increase in traffic, average travel times can double on the eastbound direction on a Friday in August, making it impossible to predict the time a journey will take.

We are proposing to dual the 3 mile section of single carriageway between Sparkford and Ilchester, with a view to creating nearly 30 miles of dual carriageway on the A303 between South Petherton and Mere.

### Average daily traffic



### Average journey times





## A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

### Why do we need the scheme?

While there are sections of dual carriageway on the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester, the majority is still single carriageway. This presents the following issues:

- poor junction visibility
- slow moving agricultural vehicles
- limited opportunities for overtaking
- increasing traffic levels outgrowing the capacity of the existing road design

The consequences of these issues are:

- congestion and longer journey times
- unreliable journey times
- queueing at the junctions
- increased risk of incidents

If nothing is done to improve capacity and connectivity, these delays are forecast to get worse in future years. In developing this scheme we aim to address these issues by upgrading this section of the A303 to a high quality dual carriageway.



## A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

### Benefits of the scheme

The proposed scheme provides a number of benefits to road users, businesses, the local community and tourists, they include:

- **relieving traffic congestion** on a vital link to the south west peninsula, providing more reliable journey times
- **improving safety** and reducing driver stress by providing a more free-flowing network
- **providing** safer local access provisions for pedestrians, cyclists and other non-motorised users
- **supporting the local economy to grow** through the creation of a modernised and reliable road that reduces delays and makes the south west more accessible for tourism and business
- **improving the environment** by reducing pollution from queuing traffic, particularly during the busy summer months





# A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

## Developing the scheme

An improvement to this section of road had been considered previously during the 1990s, reaching Public Inquiry in 1994. In October 2003, following additional development of the scheme, a public exhibition was held but further work was stopped in 2005.

Following the reintroduction of the scheme in December 2014, we considered a number of route options that had the potential to improve the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester.

We assessed these route options in terms of:

- improved traffic capacity
- better journey reliability
- road safety
- economic growth opportunities
- community access
- environmental considerations
- affordability
- meeting the scheme objectives

We have also met with key stakeholders and carried out various surveys to understand local priorities, local development plans and technical and environmental constraints that create road improvement challenges.

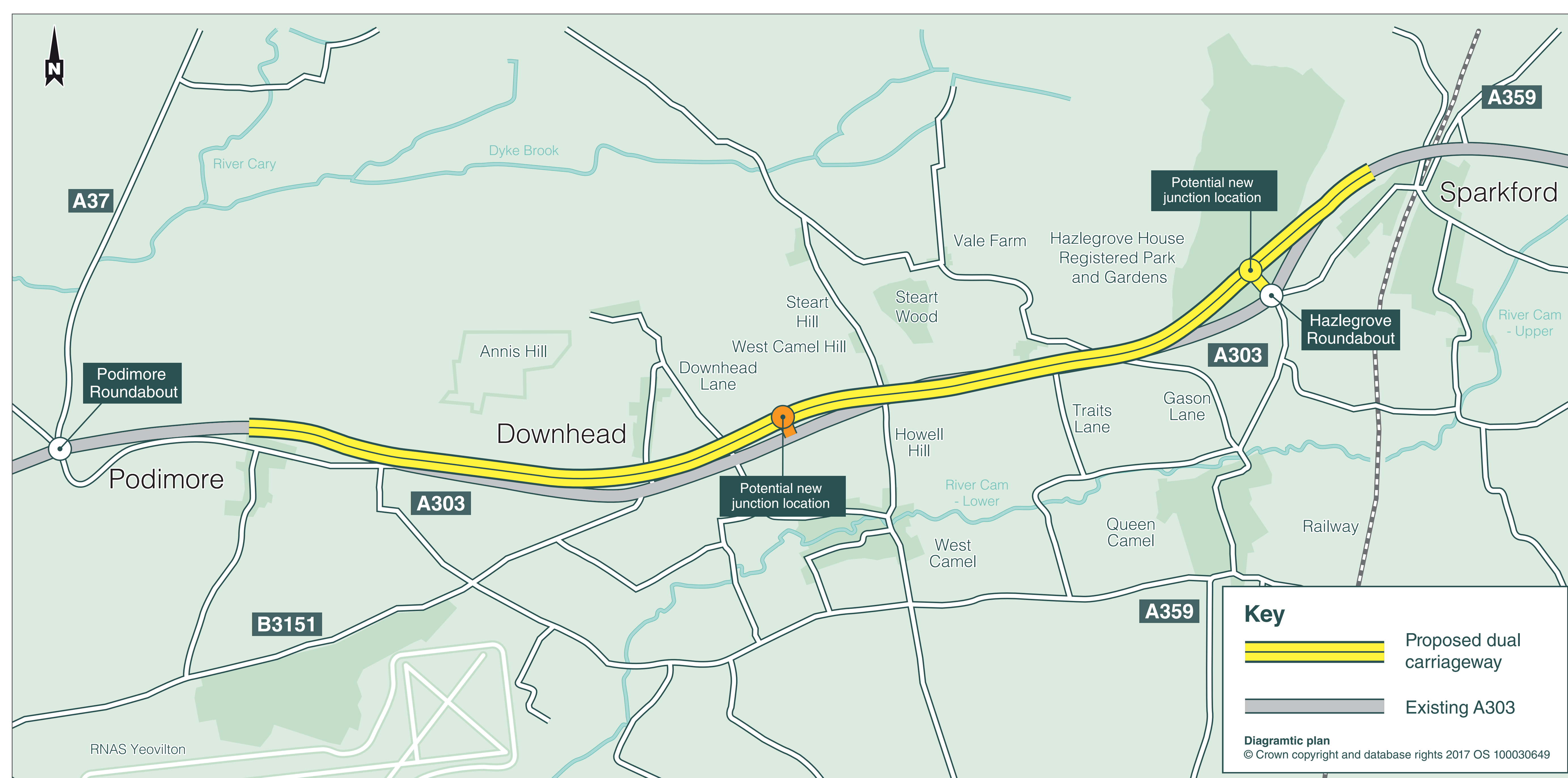
Following the assessment process we have shortlisted two route options which comply with the Government's Road Investment Strategy commitments and are sensitive to the local community.



# A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

## Proposed route options

### Option 1



### Option 1 overview

Option 1 is a dual carriageway that starts east of Podimore Roundabout and follows the alignment of the existing A303 to Downhead. At this point the dual carriageway moves north before reverting to follow the route of the existing A303 in the direction of Hazlegrove. The route would re-join the existing dual carriageway near Sparkford.

At present the junctions at Downhead Lane and Hazlegrove are not suitable for national speed limit roads and will need to be removed or upgraded as part of the scheme proposals. The proposal for these junctions has not been confirmed, the future arrangements will be considered based on the outcome of traffic and economic modelling, public consultation feedback and environmental impact assessments. Construction of this option could possibly be phased.

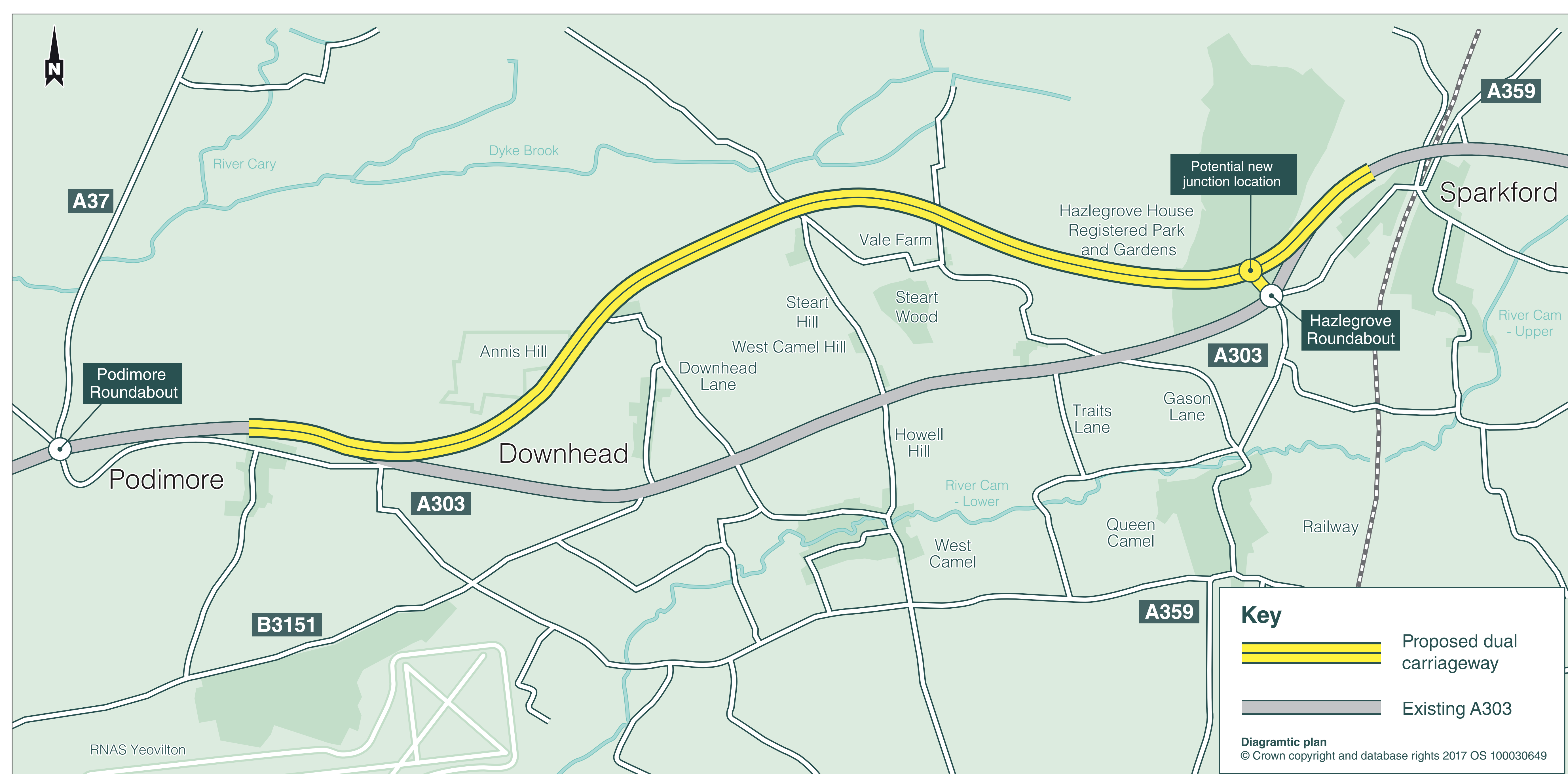
This option includes a new bridge under the dual carriageway at Traits Lane.



# A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

## Proposed route options

### Option 2



### Option 2 overview

Option 2 is a dual carriageway that starts east of Podimore Roundabout before leaving the existing A303 to pass south east of Annis Hill. The new dual carriageway passes north of Steart Hill in the direction of Hazlegrove. The route would re-join the existing dual carriageway near Sparkford.

It is likely that Hazlegrove Roundabout will be retained for access to local villages, however currently this junction slows traffic down because approaching vehicles must give way. The proposal for this junction has not been confirmed, the future arrangements will be considered based on the outcome of traffic and economic modelling, public consultation feedback and environmental impact assessments. Construction of this option could possibly be phased.

This option includes the construction of 3 new bridges over the dual carriageway, 1 at each of the following locations:

- Downhead Lane
- Steart Hill
- Vale Farm



# A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

## Option comparisons

Comparison	Option 1	Option 2
<b>Route description</b>	The route would follow the existing corridor of the A303 very closely, although in many locations it would be aligned just to the north or south of the existing carriageway.	The route would be located approximately up to 1 kilometre to the north of the existing carriageway between Podimore and Sparkford.
<b>Construction considerations</b>	There would be a need to manage traffic disruption during construction as the majority of the improvement will be made to the existing road.	Traffic disruption would be minimised during construction as it would be built away from the existing road.
<b>Potential benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Modern safe road design.</li> <li>■ This would be the shortest route.</li> <li>■ Re-use of much of the existing road corridor to minimise local environmental impacts.</li> <li>■ Segregated crossing points for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Modern safe road design.</li> <li>■ Potential for one additional large junction.</li> <li>■ The existing A303 would be retained and provide local traffic access.</li> <li>■ Segregated crossing points for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians.</li> </ul>
<b>Potential impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Potential for two additional large junctions.</li> <li>■ The route would require significant side road modifications to retain good access for local traffic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The route would pass through relatively undeveloped countryside.</li> <li>■ The route could require construction of a deep cutting through the eastern edge of the Annis Hill Local Wildlife Site.</li> </ul>



## A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

### Caring for the environment

Understanding the impact on the environment and community within the A303 corridor is very important to us. Our aim is to minimise any adverse effects, while capturing the wider opportunities for improvement created by this scheme.

The area surrounding the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester has a number of sensitive and valued environmental sites, as well as a number of dwellings and farm businesses. We have identified environmental constraints and used this information to help us develop the scheme proposals.

Work is underway to collect further environmental information which will help us to select a preferred route and plan how we can mitigate adverse impacts on the environment. This could include planting, habitat creation and species protection.





## A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

### Share your views

The public consultation period runs from  
**15 February - 29 March 2017.**

This is the first stage in our consultation process. We would like to know what you think about the route option proposals. We will listen to your views and publish a Consultation Report to inform the selection of a preferred route.

**To help us with this, please complete the questionnaire, which you can access online at our website:**

**[www.highways.gov.uk/Sparkford-to-Ilchester](http://www.highways.gov.uk/Sparkford-to-Ilchester)**

Paper copies of the questionnaire will be available at the public events, at public information points and can be requested from the project team by:

**emailing us at:**

**[A303SparkfordtoIlchesterDualling@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:A303SparkfordtoIlchesterDualling@highwaysengland.co.uk)**

**writing to us at:**

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Project Team, Highways England, 2/07k Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6HA

**calling us on:**

**0300 123 5000** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

The deadline for submitting responses to the consultation is  
**11:59pm Wednesday 29 March 2017.**



# A303 Ilchester to Sparkford Dualling Scheme

## Next steps?

### Selecting a preferred route

This consultation is your opportunity to express your views on the current scheme proposals ahead of further development and selection of a preferred route. After the consultation ends, we will publish a report summarising the responses. From this the project team will make recommendations for further development of the scheme. Subject to the findings of the consultation, a preferred route announcement is likely to be announced in autumn 2017.

### Development Consent Order application

This scheme is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. As such, we are required to make an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to gain authorisation to construct the scheme. Following the submission of the application, the Planning Inspectorate will hold a public examination before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport who will decide on whether the project should go ahead. We intend to make our application in summer 2018. Prior to the application, we will undertake further public consultation on our detailed design proposals.

More information about the DCO process can be found on the Planning Inspectorate's website:

<http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk>

