

A358

Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme

Responding to feedback from
2021 public consultation





Purpose of document

This booklet summarises how we have used the feedback we received during the public consultation in autumn 2021 to shape our plans for the A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme. It also outlines how these plans have helped to refine the preliminary design changes that we want to receive feedback on in our supplementary consultation in 2022.

We recommend that you read this document alongside the following:

- *Supplementary consultation booklet*
- *Supplementary consultation feedback questionnaire*
- *Summary of changes booklet, Technical traffic note and Environmental note*
- *Public consultation summary report*
- All documents are available via our website at www.nationalhighways.co.uk/a358-taunton-to-southfields



Introduction

At National Highways we believe in a connected country and our network makes these connections happen. We strive to improve our major roads and motorways - engineering the future to keep people moving today and moving better tomorrow.

We've been developing plans to improve the A358 between Taunton and Southfields roundabout, near Ilminster, since late 2014 when it was announced as part of the Department for Transport's first Road Investment Strategy (RIS).

We are proposing to upgrade approximately 8.5 miles (13.6 km) of the A358 between the M5 at Taunton and the Southfields roundabout on the A303 to a high-quality, high-performing dual carriageway. The route would connect

junction 25 of the M5 at Taunton with the existing A303 at Southfields roundabout near Ilminster.

The A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme is intended to improve road safety, reduce traffic congestion and keep road users and local communities connected, while unlocking economic growth in Somerset and the South West. This project is one of several improvements on the A303 and A358 designed to make it easier to travel across the south of England from the M3 to the M5 and beyond.

Developing proposals

We held a public consultation in October and November 2021 where we asked for feedback on our preliminary design of the preferred route. We received more than 2,000 visits to our consultation website, more than 800 attendees at our in-person and digital consultation events and more 900 responses to consultation.

We have considered every consultation response received and have been carrying out additional traffic modelling and environmental assessments to refine the preliminary design. The key milestones to date are shown below.



December 2014 – Project announced

2015 to 2017 – Options identified

March – July 2017 – First options consultation

January – February 2018 – Second options consultation

June 2019 – Preferred route announced

October – November 2021 – Statutory consultation

In this booklet we provide a summary of consultation feedback and how that has continued to shape our proposals. You will find signposts to specific changes that we are seeking further feedback on through our

supplementary consultation - which is taking place between **24 May and 26 June 2022** - and to where you can find more information about other changes we have made.

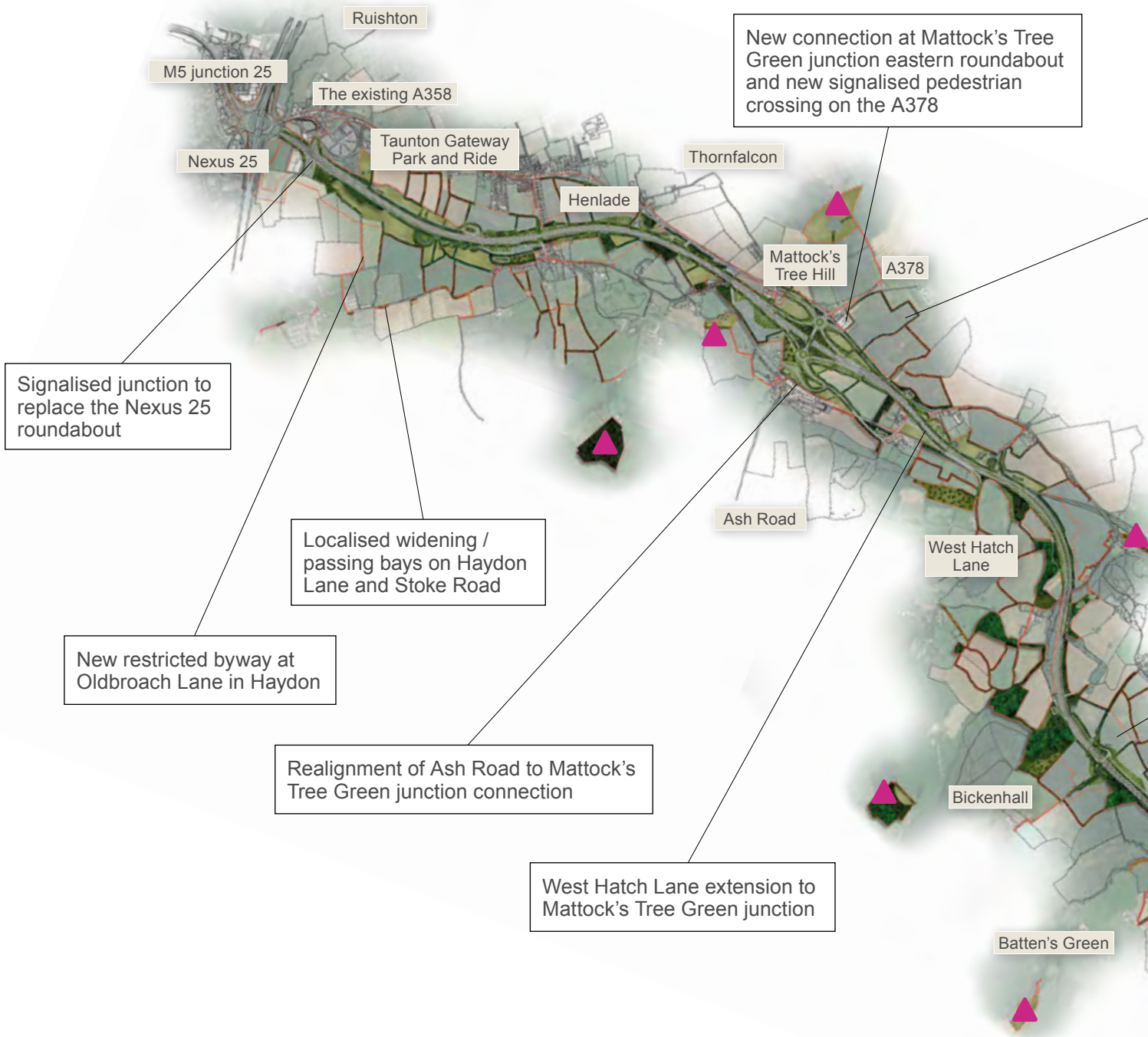
You can read more about how we carried out the 2021 consultation in our *Public consultation summary report* which is available on our website at www.nationalhighways.co.uk/a358-taunton-to-southfields.

We will provide more detailed responses to the 2021 public consultation and the 2022 supplementary consultation in a consultation report, which will describe how your feedback has shaped and influenced our proposals. This report will form part of our Development Consent Order (DCO) application which we plan to submit later in 2022.



Our revised proposals

This map summarises some of the improvements we've made since public consultation in 2021





Legend

- Scheme boundary
- ▲ Offsite environmental mitigation areas

New location for the main construction compound

Changes to new bridge at Bickenhall Lane

Changes to Cad Road / Rapps Road junction

New Capland link road

New signalised junction including a pedestrian and cyclist crossing on the A358 (west)

Hatch Beauchamp

Capland

Stewley

Staple Fitzpaine Road

Ashill

Rapps

Adding traffic calming measures in Ashill village

Thickthorn Lane

Cad Road

A303 Ilminster Bypass

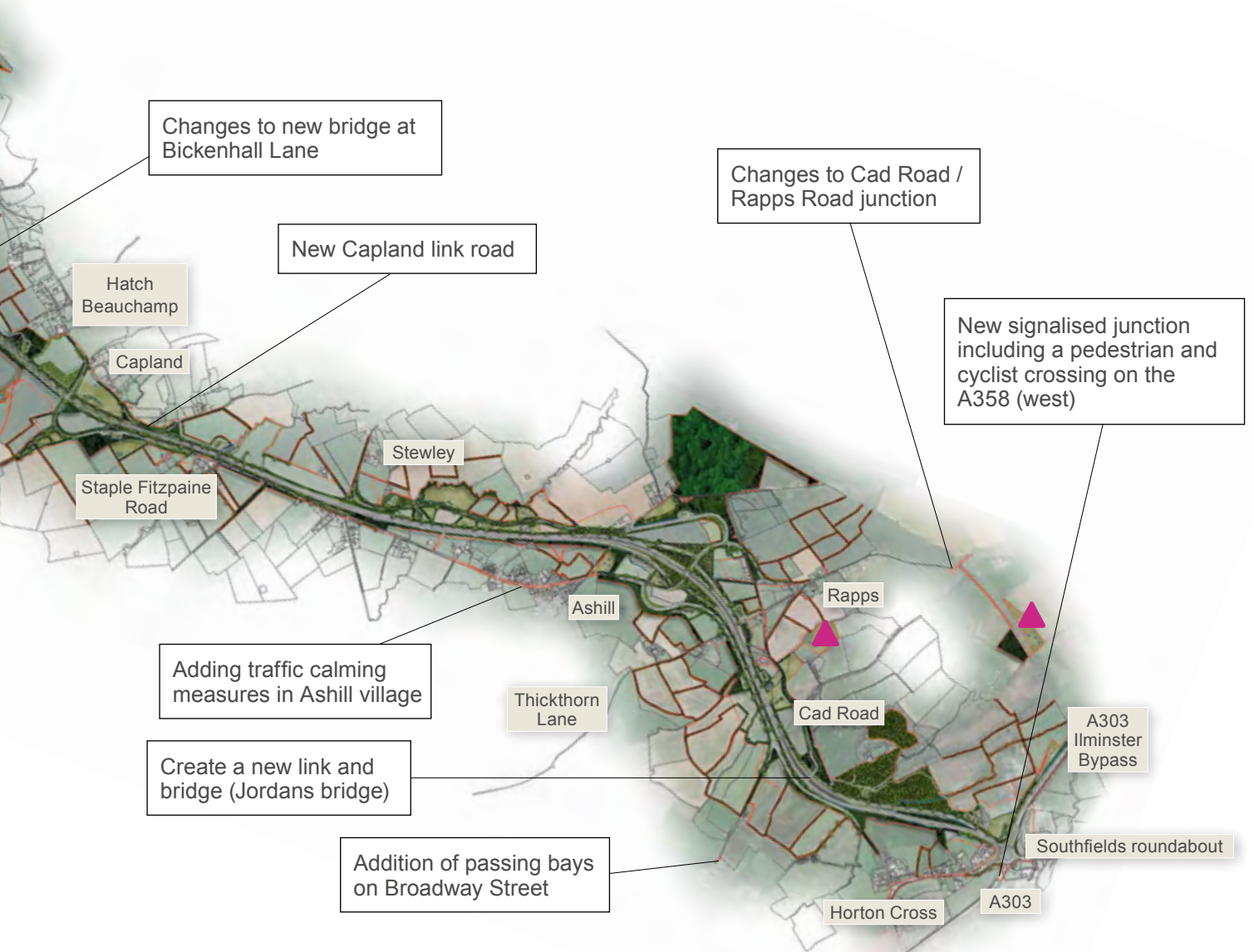
Create a new link and bridge (Jordans bridge)

Addition of passing bays on Broadway Street

Southfields roundabout

Horton Cross

A303



Principle of development

What you told us

Many of you supported our proposals for the new A358, stating that the upgrade is essential and needs to happen as soon as possible. Some of you suggested that rather than dualling the whole route, only some junctions or sections of the route need to be upgraded, for example upgrades or changes should only happen at Southfields roundabout, Nexus 25 roundabout or a Henlade Bypass. Others expressed the view that the scheme is not needed at all and is a waste of money.

Our response

Consultation responses demonstrate that local councils, businesses and many local residents and communities agree that upgrading the rest of the A303/A358 corridor to dual carriageway would reduce traffic congestion in local villages and help connect the South West better to neighbouring regions, unlocking its potential for growth and supporting plans for more homes and jobs.

The road between Taunton and Southfields roundabout



is a mixture of single and dual carriageway road and traffic regularly exceeds the capacity that the existing road was designed for. Many local roads join directly onto the A358. Having traffic joining a fast-moving carriageway and a slow-moving carriageway in Henlade impacts the safety and performance of the route by interrupting the flow of traffic and has the potential to create incidents.

Due to traffic congestion many road users avoid the main A358 by diverting onto smaller local roads, which then increases the level of traffic in surrounding villages. The congestion also impacts on air quality. Upgrading only specific junctions or sections of the route would not address these issues.

By creating a high-quality, high-performing dual carriageway and enhancing access onto the existing A358 via improved junctions, we're aiming to improve road safety, reduce traffic congestion and keep road users and local communities connected, while unlocking economic growth in Somerset and the South West.

The A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme has been identified as a strategic route and is part of the government's second RIS, which identifies parts of the road network that need upgrading to improve safety, connectivity and reliability for its users.

The scheme has also been assessed through a business case appraisal to ensure it represents value for money to taxpayers and delivers a return on investment.

Further details of the economic appraisal of the scheme, which forms the basis for the value for money assessment, will be set out in the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report (ComMA) which will be submitted with the DCO application. You can also find out more in our A358/A303 corridor feasibility study which was published in 2015 and is available at

www.gov.uk/government/publications/a303-a358-and-a30-corridor-feasibility-study-overview

What you told us

Some of you expressed the view that the upgrade is no longer needed due to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on traffic needs.

Our response

Whilst traffic levels dipped during the first lockdown in 2020, they have steadily increased, particularly due to demand for home delivery and online shopping. Traffic data shows that traffic levels have recovered to broadly typical levels on the A358. As of March 2022, overall traffic levels were back up to 97% of pre-pandemic levels (with goods vehicles at 110%).

Traffic volumes are forecast to increase in the area as a result of factors such as population and employment growth, therefore the traffic issues are projected to get worse if this section of the A358 is not upgraded.



What you told us

Some of you suggested that improving public transport would be a better solution to reduce congestion from the number of vehicles using the route rather than dualling it.

Our response

We assessed alternative modes of transport and forecast rates of public transport use during the options appraisal stage for the scheme. This concluded that even substantial improvements to public transport provision, predominantly in the form of rail improvements, would not reduce the number of cars and goods vehicles wishing to use the route and would not eliminate the problems identified along the A303/A358 corridor.

National Highways continues to look for ways to improve how the road network operates. One such approach is our work with partners to implement demand management measures where these may reduce congestion, improve vehicle efficiency, support a switch to public transport and promote walking and cycling. Currently we are piloting a number of measures in different parts of the country and those which deliver the expected benefits will then be applied more widely across the network.



Design

We received lots of comments about the design of the scheme. Whilst many of you supported our design proposals, and felt it was a good solution to address the traffic problems, others felt further improvements could be made.

Road standards

What you told us

Some of you queried the roads standards for the route. You were concerned that this might be designed to expressway or motorway standard, stating that the design we were presenting at our 2021 public consultation was too complex and that a dual carriageway would provide a better solution.



Proposed changes at Mattock's Tree Green junction

Our response

We are committed to delivering a high-quality and high-performing dual carriageway, not an expressway or a motorway. This commitment is set out in National Highways' *Delivery plan 2020-2025*, available at www.nationalhighways.co.uk/delivery-plan. In the first RIS, the government set out its intention to create a new expressway corridor into the region. Over time the direction has changed and the term has since been superseded in reference to the A303/A358 corridor and we are committed to delivering a high-quality and high-performing dual carriageway route along the A303/A358 corridor between the south-east and the south-west.

One of the design principles of an expressway is that it prohibits the use of farm vehicles. We are mindful of the rural nature of the area and understand the complexity of local traffic needing to access a strategic route. We are applying a set of standards that would permit local traffic and agricultural traffic to join the strategic network in a safe way via a limited number of junctions.

Through our design of the scheme, we are committed to a set of principles to ensure we are enhancing safety for all users. A guiding principle for our design is that having traffic joining a fast-moving dual carriageway causes disruption to the flow of traffic impacting safety and performance of the route.



Junction design – M5 junction 25 and Nexus 25

What you told us

You were concerned that our proposed design at M5 junction 25 would not accommodate the forecast increase in traffic. Some of you felt that the Nexus 25 roundabout needs to be enlarged while others raised concerns that the roundabout at Nexus 25 would not be safe for pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders and disabled users.

Our response

The improvements we are proposing to the M5 junction

25 have been designed to complement Somerset County Council's improvements which were completed in 2021. Our traffic modelling shows that the M5 junction 25 would operate within its capacity when the scheme is built.

At the Nexus 25 junction - the existing junction that will connect to the future Nexus 25 employment site - we previously proposed enlarging the existing roundabout to provide adequate capacity for the predicted traffic flows including those linked to M5 junction 25 to improve overall performance.

Following further traffic modelling and design development, we propose replacing the roundabout with a signalised junction to make the crossing more accessible to pedestrians, walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and disabled users and allow more control over traffic movements. Our traffic modelling shows that this junction would operate within its capacity.

We're currently consulting on proposed design changes at the Nexus 25 junction. To find out more, please see pages 14 to 16 of the Consultation booklet.

Junction design – Mattock’s Tree Green and Ashill

What you told us

You raised concerns about the scale of the proposed Mattock’s Tree Green and Ashill junctions, stating that these were unnecessary and not suited to the rural setting.

Our response

We are delivering a high-quality and high-performing dual carriageway along the A303/A358 corridor.

The size and scale of the junctions are in line with the standards needed for this type of dual carriageway and appropriate to providing a connection between two A-roads – the A358 Taunton to Southfields roundabout and the A378 to Wrantage and Langport – as well as providing local connections for rural villages. The junctions have been designed to permit local traffic and agricultural traffic to join the strategic network in the safest practicable way.

Following further traffic modelling, we’re proposing several design changes to Mattock’s Tree Green junction. These would improve access for communities living in West Hatch and Hatch Beauchamp, provide access to the Somerset Progressive School, the Huish Woods Scout Campsite and local businesses at Nightingale Farm Units, and aim to reduce rat running on local roads.



We're currently consulting on the design changes at Mattock's Tree Green junction. To find out more, please see pages 18 to 22 of the Consultation booklet.

Junction design – access to Taunton Gateway Park and Ride

What you told us

Some of you were concerned about whether the new junction layouts would impact how to access the Taunton Gateway Park and Ride.

Our response

Access to Taunton Gateway Park and Ride

would not be possible from the Nexus 25 junction. This is consistent with the existing arrangements.

For road users travelling from the west, access to the Park and Ride would be via the existing A358 off M5 junction 25. For road users travelling from the east, access to the Park and Ride would be via the Mattock's Tree Green junction and the existing A358 through Henlade.





Southfields roundabout

What you told us

Some of you supported our proposed improvements at Southfields roundabout. Others wanted to see further upgrades, including a larger, grade-separated lane and a flyover to reduce congestion at the existing junction.

Our response

We have included several proposed upgrades to Southfields roundabout as part of this project to reduce congestion and improve access to and around the roundabout.

Our proposals include:

- a dedicated left turn lane between the A358 and the A303 eastbound
- widening of the A303 eastbound exit onto the Ilminster Bypass
- widening the A303 westbound entry from the roundabout towards Honiton
- widening the A358 entry from Horton Cross
- improving the signage and road markings

Although not part of the A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme, the roundabout at Southfields has been included in the scope for the A303 South Petherton to Southfields scheme 'A303 Phase 2 upgrade' Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3) pipeline schemes for initial options development. The pipeline of possible future schemes for RIS3 is not committed for delivery, but initial options development work will help to inform the government's investment decisions for RIS3 (2025-2030) and beyond.

For more information on the RIS3 pipeline of schemes see: www.nationalhighways.co.uk/our-work/pipeline-of-possible-future-schemes



Local journeys, traffic flows and modelling

Local road network and local villages

What you told us

Some of you felt that our proposals would help to reduce traffic and congestion in the area, while others were concerned this would increase rat running and the volume of traffic on some local roads. You were concerned about the impacts on local villages, in particular Ashill, Hatch Beauchamp and Henlade. Some of you requested traffic-calming measures across the local road network and others wanted more access onto the upgraded A358, to and from local roads and villages, including wanting to see more slip roads along the route.

Our response

We have carried out traffic modelling throughout the development phase of the scheme to inform its design and to understand its likely effects on traffic on local roads.

Our proposals are designed to improve safety and performance of the route. By reducing congestion and improving reliability, this would encourage traffic to stay on the main A358 route



and therefore reduce traffic using the local road network to cut through most neighbouring communities.

Following a review of consultation feedback, further traffic modelling and ongoing design development have been undertaken. We have identified opportunities to make further changes to the preliminary design which would reduce rat running along with proposed changes to some local roads, such as traffic-calming measures and the introduction of passing bays.

Our updated *Technical traffic note* provides further detail about traffic flows, journey times, routeing and measures to mitigate rat running on the local road network.

We're currently consulting on a number of design changes. To find out more, please see our *Consultation booklet*.

As part our review of our proposed junction design and managing local access onto the upgraded A358 from local roads and villages, we have had to consider our commitment to delivering a high-quality and high-performing dual carriageway and ensuring that the scheme meets the highest safety and performance standards for all users. These safety standards have informed our design on the layout of junctions and access points across the route.

A guiding principle when considering junction design layout is having traffic joining a fast-moving dual carriageway

causes disruptions to the flow of traffic, impacting safety and performance of the route. As part of the preliminary design we have identified two junctions, one at Mattock's Tree Green and the other at Ashill. These new junctions deliver a safe route whilst still providing access to the local road network.

Our design also takes into account traffic demand, environmental impacts, the rural nature of the area and the complexity of local traffic needing to access a strategic route, as well as ensuring that we build a strategic road that delivers value for money. Our proposals would improve safety, reduce congestion, improve journey times and reduce rat running on a number of local roads.

We've considered additional slip roads and our assessments show a number of adverse impacts on the environment, and in particular, local ecology.

Additional slip roads could also impact the proposed offline cycle route, making it less direct and creating further conflict points with vehicles, particularly where high speed traffic exits from the A358 to join Ashill Road or Village Road. Our modelling also shows very low traffic demand on additional slip roads meaning that, in addition to the adverse impacts, they would also offer poor value for money.

Local journeys, traffic modelling and data

What you told us

Some of you wanted to understand more about how local journeys would be affected when the new road is built, including how to get to and from the upgraded A358. Some of you were concerned that the analysis we carried out to determine our proposed junction and link road design, as well as our traffic modelling, was inadequate or not detailed enough.

Our response

We published a *Technical traffic note* as part of the 2021 consultation materials to enable the local community and other stakeholders to understand the traffic impacts. The purpose of the note was to provide further detail on how the traffic in the area had been assessed.

The note included information on modelling methodology, traffic flow and journey times, the value for money assessment, impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on travel demand



and traffic impacts on the local road network. The information in the traffic note reflected the information available at the time of the 2021 consultation and provided the level of detail needed to develop the preliminary design.

To support the supplementary consultation in 2022, we have updated the *Technical traffic note* to take account of the proposed design changes and mitigations on the local road network. The note also includes additional information on junction performance and accidents.

The methodology and results of the traffic modelling will be reported in more detail in the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report (ComMA) submitted with the DCO application.



Walking, cycling, horse-riding and disabled user access

What you told us

Some of you supported our proposals for walking, cycling and horse-riding, including disabled user access. You emphasised the importance of safety and made suggestions for improvements to specific sections of the route. Some of you told us you were concerned about the suitability of the new Bickenhall Lane bridge for public traffic and suggested it should only be open for walking, cycling and horse-riding. Others of you were concerned the scheme would sever public rights of way in some sections.

Our response

We've updated our proposals based on the 2021 consultation feedback and are proposing further changes to prioritise walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and disabled users. These changes also take into consideration access for local landholders.

We're consulting on several changes for walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and disabled users. Some examples are outlined here. To find out more, please see our *Consultation booklet*.



We've proposed to incorporate a signalised junction at the M5 junction 25 to make it more accessible for walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and disabled users. We've also proposed new signalised pedestrian crossings across the A378 at the location of the existing Thornfalcon signals and on the old A358 close to Southfields roundabout.

We propose to limit motorised access on the new bridge at Bickenhall Lane. This would be restricted to walkers, cyclists and horse-riders and would be shared with nearby landholders for farm access. The new bridge at Bickenhall Lane would not be open to public vehicular traffic.

We've also proposed a new crossing - Jordans bridge - between the Ashill junction and Southfields roundabout, which would not be open to public vehicular traffic. This would provide a more direct and open route for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders to cross safely as well as allowing for farm vehicles to use the crossing to access agricultural land.

Where the proposed upgraded A358 route cuts across known walking, cycling or horse-riding routes, we've kept the majority of these in place by offering safe and well-planned alternatives. Our proposals still include nine crossings of the upgraded A358 route, most of which would be solely for walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and disabled users or on lightly trafficked routes shared with access to farmland.

We are continuing discussions with local communities (which includes a dedicated walking, cycling and horse-riding forum) and the relevant councils to help ensure our design reflects the needs and interests of the local community and for people wishing to enjoy the area.



What you told us

Some of you wanted a cycle route to run from M5 junction 25 to Southfields roundabout.

Our response

We have looked very carefully at provisions for cyclists and assessed the benefits between providing a route for cyclists parallel to the A358 route (online) or outside the dual carriageway route (offline).

Our findings show that the roads in and around the A358 are used by a wide range of cycling enthusiasts. This resulted in the proposal to develop an integrated, safe,

comprehensive and high-quality all-purpose cycle route. This means providing cycling facilities which are safe, separate from fast moving traffic and that enable users of all abilities to cycle.

Our proposal is for an 'offline' cycle route, which would provide a signposted cycle route which runs from the M5 junction 25 to Southfields roundabout. This cycle route would use existing infrastructure, allowing cyclists to use existing lightly trafficked roads and traffic-free tracks, providing a much safer option to an online cycle route. The route would also pass through places of interest for those to enjoy the route at leisure.

Whilst a parallel route along the A358 could provide good connectivity for cyclists travelling directly between Taunton and Ilminster, it would reduce connectivity to the national cycle network and the local road network. This is because we would have to align access points to the local road network with our proposed junctions, which would also cause safety issues for cyclists having to cross lanes with fast-moving traffic.

We will continue discussions with local councils and cycling groups as we refine our preliminary design.

Impacts on properties, businesses and community organisations

What you told us

Some of you living very close to the proposed route were worried about the impact on you and your property and on local business and some community organisations. Some of you felt that the scheme had only been designed to consider strategic traffic moving along the A358/A303 corridor and that we hadn't fully considered the impact of the proposed scheme design on the local community.

Our response

We're proposing a high-quality and high-performing dual carriageway which would encourage strategic traffic to stay on the main A358 route and reduce the existing situation where traffic is using some of the local road network as a rat run due to the issues on the current A358.

Our proposals take into account local communities, connectivity and the complexity of local traffic needing to access a strategic route. A key principle is that having traffic joining a fast-moving dual carriageway causes disruption and



has the potential to cause incidents for traffic entering the A358 from surrounding villages and communities.

In developing our preliminary design, we are applying a set of standards that would permit local traffic to join the strategic network in the safest possible way. We are also mindful of the rural nature of the area, for example we are applying a set of standards that allows us to permit agricultural traffic to use the new road.

By creating a dual carriageway and improving junctions, we're aiming to improve road safety, reduce traffic congestion and keep road users and local communities connected, while unlocking economic growth in Somerset and the South West.

We're also proposing some changes to accommodate consultation feedback from local residents, landholders and businesses.

This includes several design changes at Mattock's Tree Green junction which would:

- provide access to Somerset Progressive School, the Huish Woods Scout Campsite and local businesses at Nightingale Farm Units
- improve journey times and journey time reliability for local businesses and communities
- reduce rat running on local roads

We've made several design changes to improve access for walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and disabled users that we're currently consulting on. To find out more, please read the *Consultation booklet*.

The environment

Consultation feedback demonstrated that while some of you supported our proposals for environmental mitigations, others were concerned about the environmental effects of the scheme and felt further changes could be made.

Climate change

What you told us

You told us you were concerned about the environmental impacts in terms of climate change. Some of you felt our proposals do not align with the UK government's target to reach net zero by 2050.

Our response

We acknowledge these concerns and have acted, where possible, to mitigate the negative environmental impacts of the scheme. At National Highways, we are committed to progressing sustained action towards decarbonising



England's motorways and A-roads so they can continue to bring significant benefits to motorists, communities and businesses in a net-zero future.

Our net-zero plan will put roads at the heart of Britain's net-zero future through three key commitments:

- Achieving net zero for our own operations by 2030.
- Delivering net zero road maintenance and construction by 2040.
- Supporting net zero carbon travel on our roads by 2050.

The government supports the delivery of five-year carbon budgets that set a target of reducing greenhouse gas production by 2050. *The Road to Zero Industrial Strategy* published by the Department for Transport outlines the UK government's strategy towards cleaner road transport. This strategy is available on the government website [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

We included an assessment of the environmental impacts of the scheme over a sixty-year period in our *Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report* published in 2021, which also considers emissions during construction and operation. The *PEI Report* published in 2021 is available via our website at

www.nationalhighways.co.uk/a358-taunton-to-southfields

Further details will be provided in our *Environmental Statement (ES)* and *Environmental Management Plan (EMP)* as part of our DCO application.



Air quality

What you told us

Many of you were positive around the effects the scheme would have in reducing air pollution through Henlade, which is a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), but some raised concerns around the impact of increased volumes of traffic that might cause air pollution along the route as a whole.

Our response

We acknowledge the views raised around air pollution, including those in support of the new section of road that moves traffic away from Henlade. By improving congestion and reliability, the scheme aims to improve air quality in the area around Henlade, particularly to enable the AQMA to be improved.





Habitat, ecology and impacts on woodland

What you told us

You raised concerns around the impact of our proposed design on local habitats, wildlife and biodiversity. Some of you asked for wildlife crossings to be introduced as part of the design. You also shared concerns around the loss of woodland. You told us you were concerned about the effects of the proposals on the environment and consider the scale of the proposal unnecessary and does not meet current government policy.

Our response

We're committed to protecting the natural environment that surrounds our roads. We recognise concerns around potential impacts on habitats and wildlife and have sought to avoid or reduce negative effects on the local environment during construction and operation where possible.

Our proposals include new crossings such as mammal tunnels and ledges on structures in key locations to encourage animals to travel safely across the scheme.

We will also be incorporating new mammal fencing at key crossing points.

Since the 2021 consultation, we've identified several new areas for habitat creation 'offsite' – ie not directly adjacent to the route. These areas will include creation of woodland, reptile receptor sites and new watercourse creation to support species including bats, reptiles and water voles.

We've also proposed hedgerow improvements following the identification of dormice within hedgerows, scrub and woodland habitat across the scheme and surrounding area. These hedgerow improvements are also proposed to enhance connectivity to adjacent woodland areas for foraging and commuting bats and have additional benefits for breeding birds and pollinators.

We have proposed woodland improvements for several areas of existing woodland, within which we will be installing dormouse boxes to support relocation. We're currently consulting on these changes.

To find out more about these proposals, please see pages 41 to 44 of our *Consultation booklet* and our *Environmental note*.

The Environment Act became law in November 2021 and introduced a mandate for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) to deliver a relevant percentage increase in biodiversity value. This relevant

percentage is stated in the Act to be 10%. Any such calculation of the change in biodiversity value is subject to the commencement of the Environment Act and its associated secondary legislation, which is expected to set out the Secretary of State's biodiversity metric and methodology. It is anticipated that the secondary legislation will be published in summer 2022.

The Environment Act will be followed by an implementation plan, which will clearly set out the transition arrangements, including the timeframe for the application of this mandate. Any calculation using existing Biodiversity Metric approaches is still subject to variation. For this reason, we cannot commit to providing an overall Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

Presently, under the National Policy Statement on National Networks (NPS NN) (particularly paras. 5.20 – 36) the scheme must show that it has taken advantage of opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and should seek to mitigate any harms. As a last resort, the scheme must compensate for any harms which cannot be mitigated. There is no requirement, or method of calculation available, within the NPS NN for the calculation of BNG.

The project seeks to maximise biodiversity delivery in accordance with the current statutory and policy requirements. The project has aligned with Best Practice Principles, specifically those published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

(CIEEM), in developing its landscaping and biodiversity proposals. These incorporate the areas of offsite mitigation, hedgerow improvements and woodland improvements we are consulting on.

A Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) will be produced by the appointed Landscape Architect and Ecologist prior to construction. The LEMP will describe the proposed management and monitoring, including durations, of the landscape and ecological mitigation and compensation features of the project. The commitment to deliver the LEMP will be secured through DCO Requirement 4 'Environmental Management Plan' which will be submitted as an Appendix to the Environmental Statement as part of the DCO application.

Water and drainage

What you told us

Some of you raised concerns about flooding in the area, including surface water run-off and loss of floodplain storage.

Our response

Road drainage would be managed using a series of attenuation basins and drainage ditches.

Attenuation basins are surface storage facilities that provide flow control through attenuation of stormwater runoff and also provide environmental benefits such as removal of pollutants. They are normally dry and would only hold water for a short period of time after a rainfall event.

Floodplain storage areas are required where the scheme has impacted existing floodplains.

They are required so that watercourse flood levels remain the same as existing (prior to the scheme) and to ensure the current watercourse regime is maintained so that the scheme has no impact both upstream and downstream of the affected area.

Where possible, we have looked to reduce the amount of land take needed for both attenuation basins and floodplain storage areas.

The new link at Capland would seek to improve access to local villages such as Stewley and Beercrocombe during incidences of flooding, which have temporarily closed Stock's Lane in two locations in the past.

Environmental assessment

What you told us

You wanted to understand more about how the environmental assessments are carried out. Some of you felt that these assessments should focus on a wider area and that we had underestimated the environmental and land impact of the scheme.

Our response

Our assessments have been undertaken in accordance with the national standards applied to road projects and relevant best practice guidance issued by professional institutions.

The *PEI Report* published at public consultation in 2021 set out:

- how each environmental topic area is being assessed
- our initial thoughts on the environmental effects of our proposals
- the measures we'll take to avoid or reduce any impact

Since the *PEI Report* was published, we have been gathering more information from surveys, landholders and statutory and non-statutory bodies, which have been used to update our baseline for assessing the environmental impact of the scheme.

We've also assessed the environmental effects and mitigation measures associated with the design changes we are currently consulting on. To find out more, please see our *Consultation booklet* and *Environmental note*.

We will submit our *ES* as part of our DCO application. This will reflect the evolution of the design of the project, informed by the feedback from public and supplementary consultation, results of surveys and the ongoing Environmental Impact Assessment process.

Construction

What you told us

You told us you were concerned about potential disruption to traffic and surrounding communities during construction. You asked us to consider adopting night-time working hours for construction works for the scheme. You raised concerns that the long construction period would have a negative impact on the local community.

Our response

We're continuing to look at how the scheme will be built in order to minimise disruption during construction.

We're currently consulting on a proposed new location for the main construction compound. To find out more, please see pages 45 and 46 of our *Consultation booklet*.



The main construction compound would be accessed via the A378 north of Mattock's Tree Green junction. This will reduce the volume of construction traffic using the public highway as far as reasonably practicable.

We'll carefully plan and manage our roadworks to ensure that we maintain safety for the public and our workforce at all times.

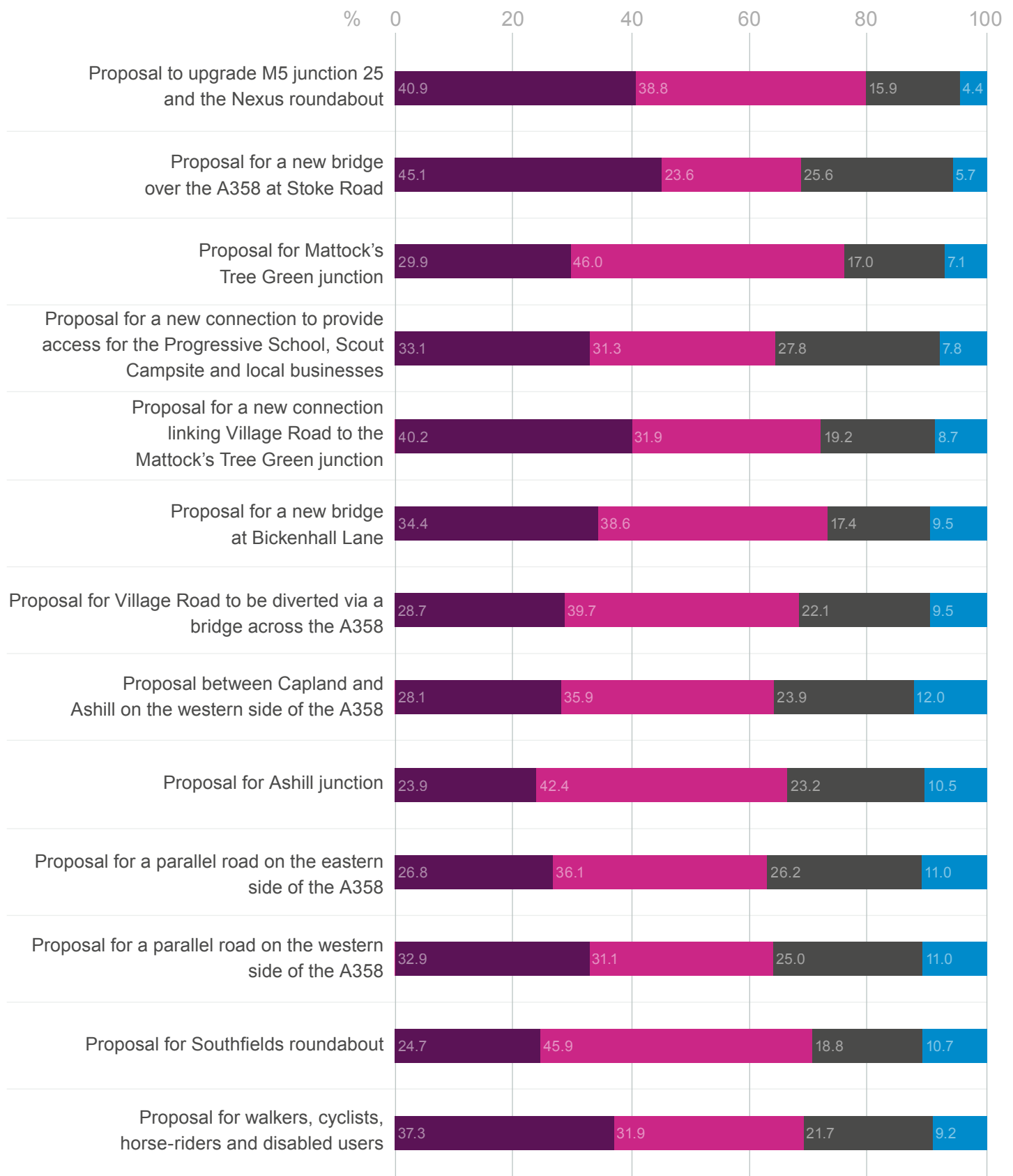
As part of our DCO application, we will produce an *EMP* and *Construction Traffic Management Plan* which would be used to ensure we are closely engaging with communities during construction and that we are taking appropriate environmental mitigation measures throughout. There would be ongoing opportunities for local residents to communicate any issues they may be concerned about throughout this period.

Our *EMP* is also supported by a *Register of Environmental Actions and Commitments within the ES*. This outlines how pollution would be managed through the construction phase.

We will continue to work closely with Somerset County Council during construction to identify and carry out any appropriate mitigation measures required for the local road network as a result of construction.

2021 public consultation responses

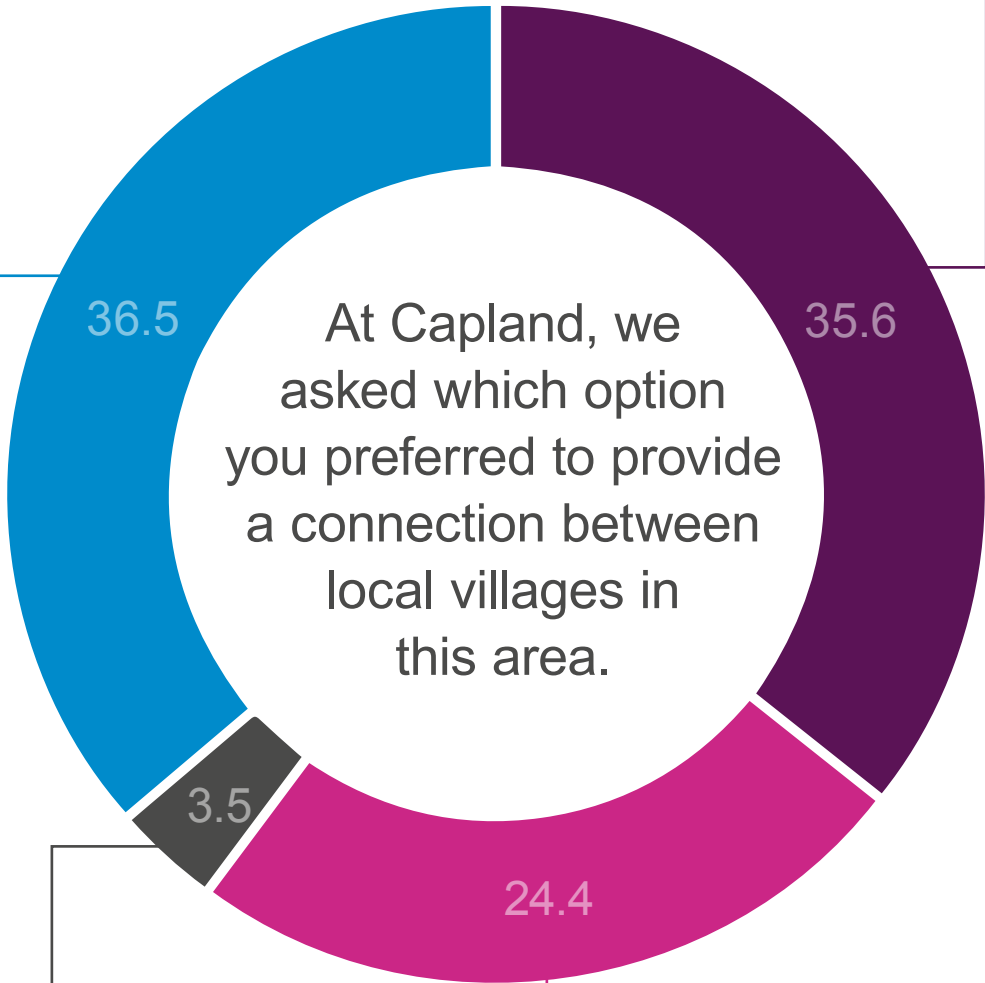
At our 2021 public consultation, we asked people to let us know to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following proposals.



Strongly agree/agree
 Strongly disagree/disagree
 Neutral/don't know
 Not answered

Option 1 - Provide a connecting link road between Capland Lane and Village Road

Not answered



Option 2 – Retain the existing route and provide localised flood improvements

Option 3 – Retain the existing route without providing localised flood improvements

Next steps

We're currently consulting on design changes we are proposing since our public consultation in 2021.

For further information, please read our *Consultation booklet*, available via our website at www.nationalhighways.co.uk/a358-taunton-to-southfields.

Once the consultation has closed, we will review all comments and suggestions that have been received during the consultation period. We will take time to consider your feedback when making further refinements to our proposed design and developing our planned mitigation measures.

We'll set out a summary of the responses to the 2021 public consultation and the 2022 supplementary consultation in a consultation report. This report will also describe how our proposals have been informed and influenced by your feedback.

The consultation report will form part of our DCO application, the special type of planning permission needed for NSIPs like this and will be published following submission of our application.

Our DCO application will include an *ES* and *EMP* to explain how the impact of construction activities and the operation of the proposed scheme would be managed, including on specific habitats and species. These measures would be

taken during both the construction and operational stages of the scheme to protect wildlife.

We expect to submit our DCO application later in 2022.

If our application is accepted for examination, the Planning Inspectorate (acting on behalf of the Secretary of State) will examine the application through written representations and public hearings. They will then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who will decide on whether or not the project will proceed.

If granted by the Secretary of State, start of works on the A358 improvements is planned for 2024/25.

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

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





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