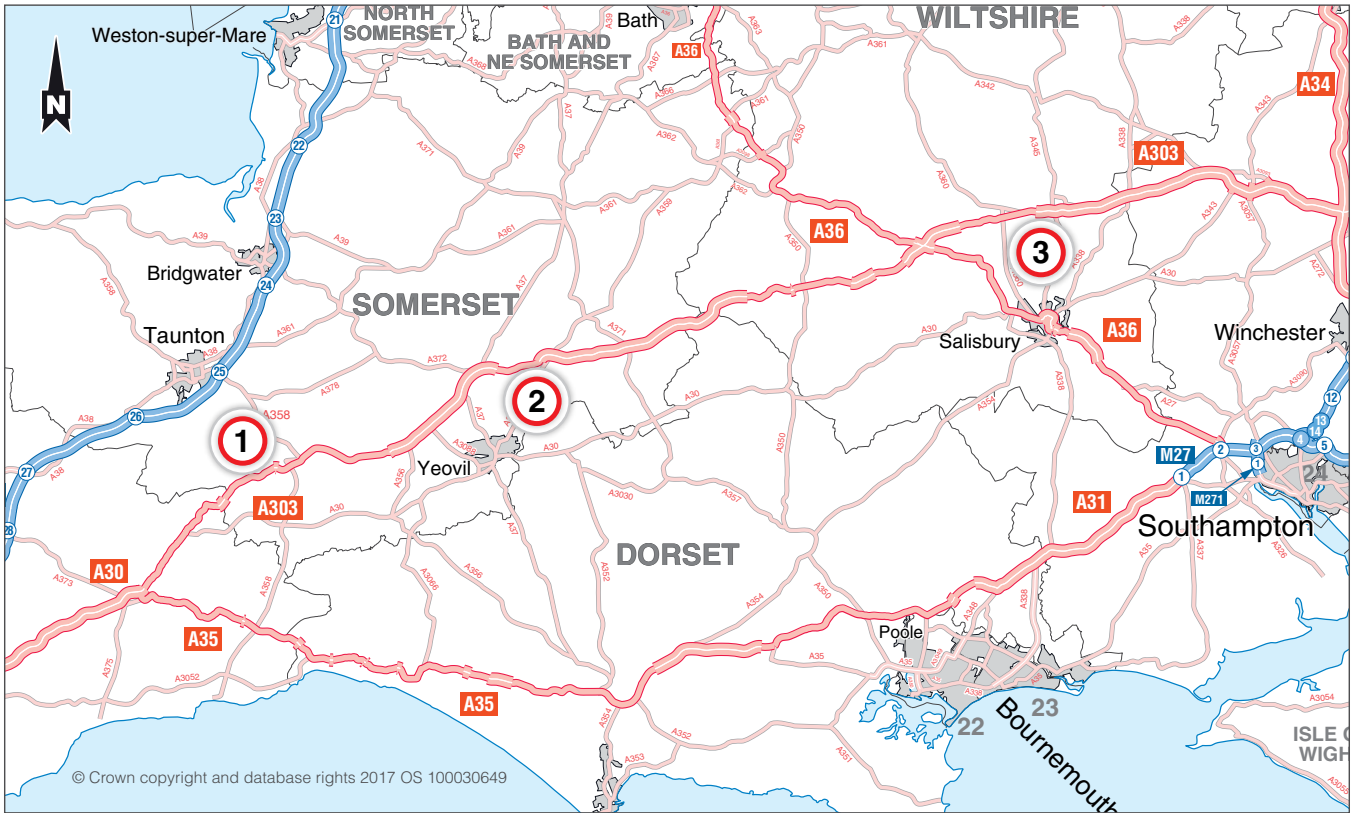


A358

Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme
Public consultation





A303/A358 route corridor schemes

Introduction

Highways England is consulting on proposals to upgrade the A358 between the M5 at Taunton and the A303.

The scheme objectives are to relieve congestion, support economic growth and improve safety on one of the busiest stretches of the A303/A358 corridor that connects the south west to London and the south east.

There are important decisions to be made as the scheme progresses and your views will help to inform how the route will be taken forward to the next design stage.

Please take the time to read this brochure, attend a public consultation event and provide us with your comments by returning a completed questionnaire. Information can also be found online at:

www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields

Background

The A303/A358 corridor is a vital connection between the south west and London and the south east connecting people, communities and businesses.

The existing A358 between Taunton and Southfields is a mix of dual and single carriageway. Where two lanes merge into one, these bottlenecks lead to delays and uncertain journey times. In addition to this, the number of vehicles using the existing road exceeds the designed capacity further contributing to delays. An improvement to this section of road had been considered previously, with recommendations to link a dualled A358 to the M5 near Taunton being made in 2002. Work was carried out, leading to a public consultation on a single route option in 2007, but was not progressed further.

The Government's *Road Investment Strategy: 2015/16 to 2019/20* sets out the intention to transform connectivity between London and the south east and the south west by improving the route from the M3 motorway to the M5 at Taunton. To support this, we are developing three major road improvement schemes along the A303/A358 corridor:

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

Looking at the options

We have considered a range of route options that have the potential to improve the A358 between Taunton and Southfields. These were assessed in terms of traffic capacity, journey time reliability, road safety, economic growth, community access and environmental considerations. The assessment also took into account affordability of the scheme options as well as the practical constraints of construction.

As an example, in the consideration of options, upgrading of the A358 along its entire existing route alignment was assessed. This option was discounted for a number of reasons including:

- traffic capacity reasons on the A358 in the proximity of junction 25 of the M5 motorway
- the presence of an Air Quality Management Area at Henlade
- the direct impact on existing residential properties
- the existing road alignment is unsuitable for upgrading to a high speed dual carriageway
- separation and disconnection of existing communities in the Henlade area
- potential adverse impacts on the future employment development site near M5 junction 25

To help the identification of a suitable option, discussions have taken place with key stakeholders including local authorities, parish councils and environmental bodies. Working

together has helped inform our understanding of the priorities, development plans and community needs from a local perspective.

Various surveys have been undertaken and continue in the area to make sure that we understand important local information. We have recorded how people walk, cycle and ride along the public rights of way and bridleways to make sure the needs of non-motorised users are taken into account. In addition, environmental studies are being carried out to search for evidence of protected wildlife. We want to avoid disturbing protected species' habitats and, where possible, take opportunities to improve local diversity.

Consulting with you

Following our assessment, we are proposing a route that is in line with the Government's road investment strategy and is sensitive to the expectations and requirements of local communities.

Once we have received your feedback, the preferred route will be announced and a more detailed design will be drawn up. We expect to deliver the scheme in phases, which will help reduce disruption across the route corridor during construction and minimise any adverse impacts on both road users and local communities.

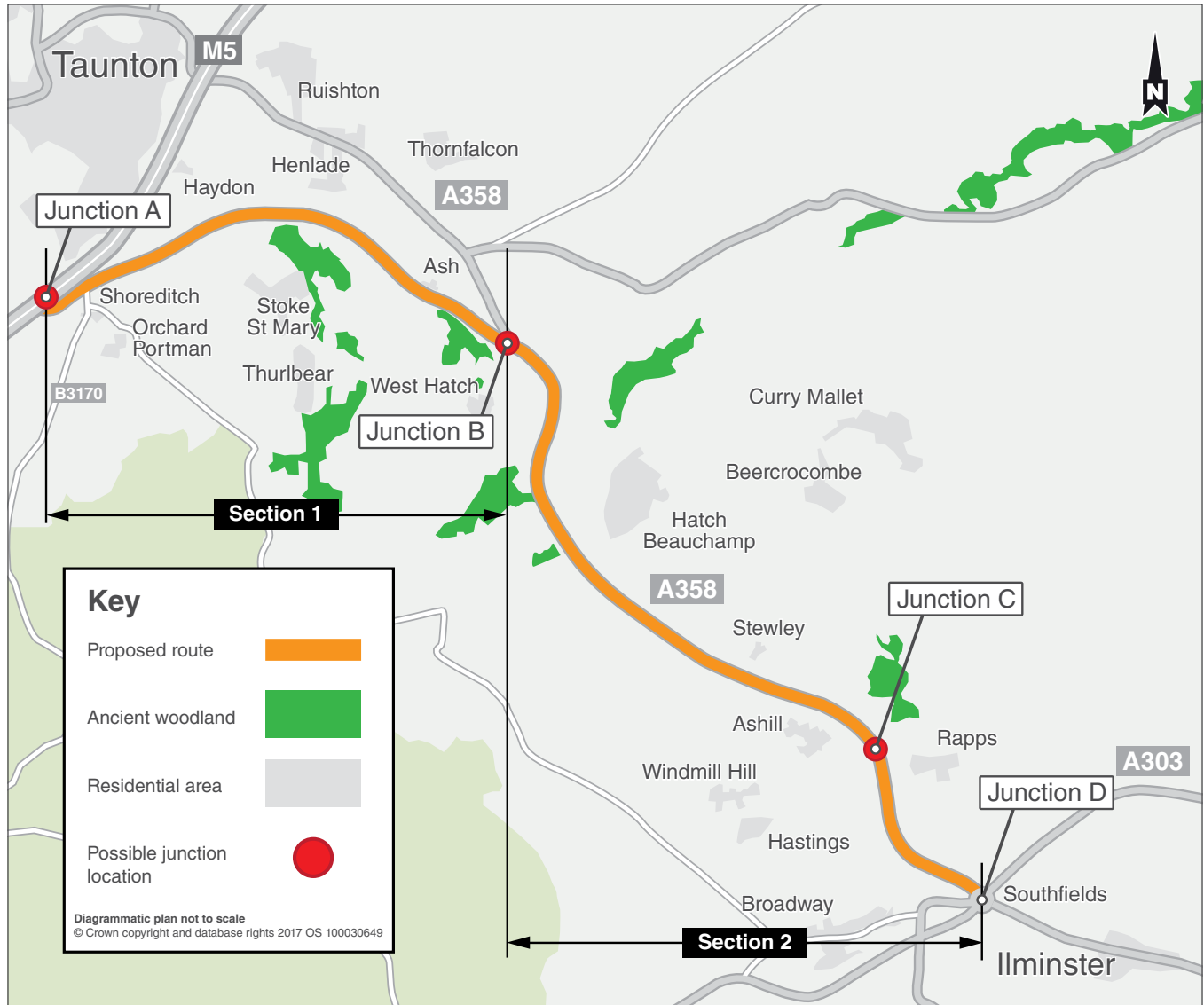
Consultation sections

We have divided the route on which we are consulting into two separate sections to help us focus on your comments.

These are:

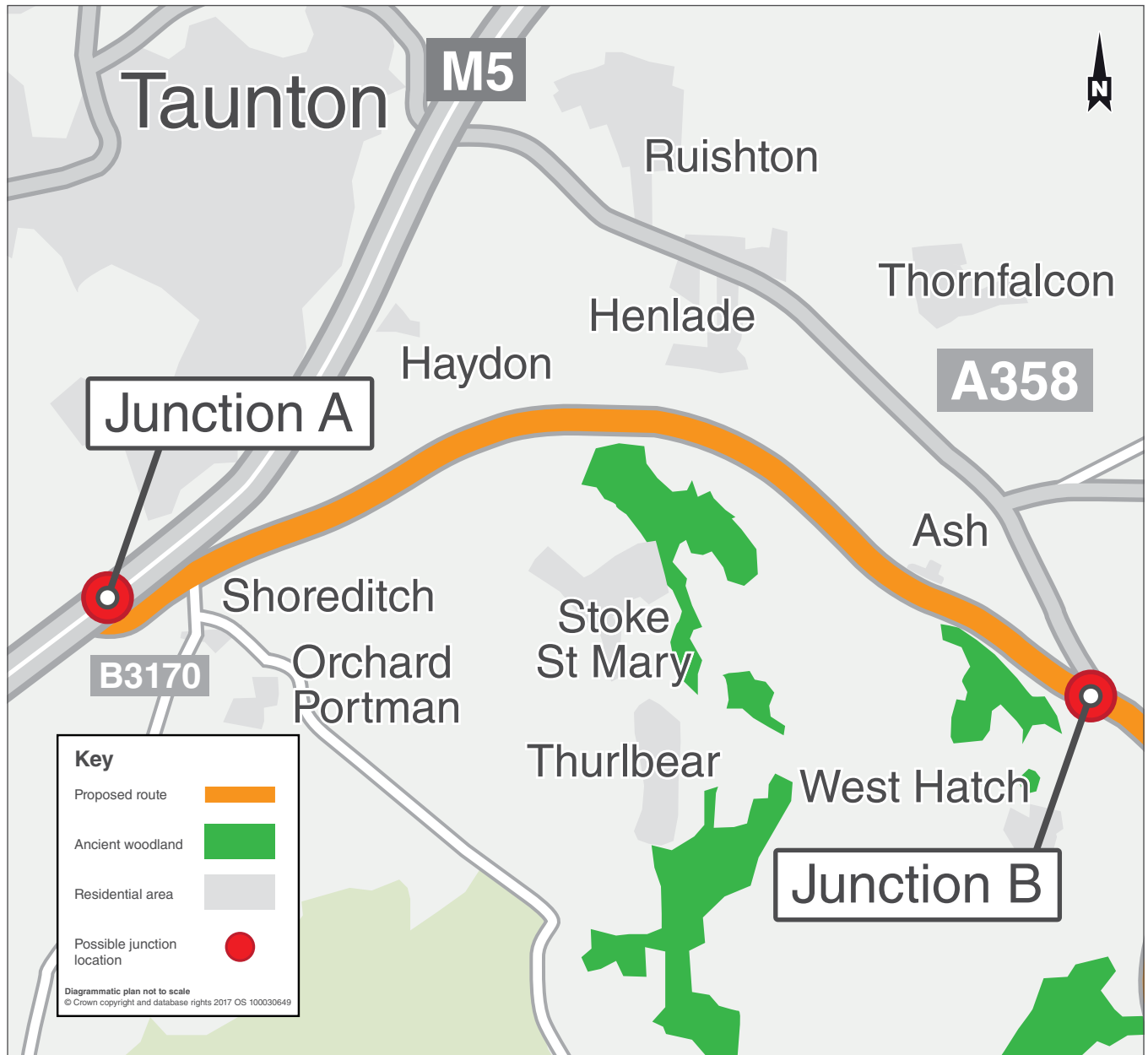
Section 1 – New motorway junction and dual carriageway section from the M5 to West Hatch Lane

Section 2 – Widening of the existing carriageway from West Hatch Lane to Southfields Roundabout



Section 1

New motorway junction and dual carriageway section from the M5 to West Hatch Lane



This section connects the M5 motorway with the existing A358 at West Hatch Lane, and includes the following:

- A new M5 motorway junction located south of Taunton (Junction A), sited between the existing Junctions 25 and 26 (at Killams Avenue), permitting all-direction movements between the M5 and the new dual carriageway
- A new section of dual carriageway from the M5 which:
 - Crosses the B3170 Shoreditch Road (north of the village of Shoreditch and Taunton Racecourse)
 - Crosses Stoke Road approximately 800 metres west of the village of Stoke St Mary
 - Passes approximately 300 metres south of the settlement of Haydon and 600 metres north of the village of Stoke St Mary
 - Passes approximately 300 metres south of the village of Lower Henlade
 - Passes north of Stoke Wood, Henlade Wood, Huish Copse and Strangeways Copse
- Provision of a new grade separated junction at West Hatch Lane to connect to the existing A358 road alignment (Junction B)
- Ability to use Junction B to connect to the A378 and other local areas including Thornfalcon, Ruishton and Henlade

- Provision of new bridges or underpasses at locations to be determined to ensure good connectivity is retained across the dual carriageway for motorists, cyclists, equestrians, and pedestrians

Expected benefits of Section 1 include:

- Provision of a modern dual carriageway for A358 traffic travelling to and from the M5 motorway
- All-directions traffic connection between the M5 motorway and A358 dual carriageway
- Retention of the A358 between West Hatch Lane and M5 Junction 25 for local traffic and as an alternative route
- Removal of traffic from the existing A358 between West Hatch and M5 Junction 25 helping to reduce periods of congestion
- The new all-direction movements M5 motorway junction located south of Taunton (Junction A) will improve route resilience, journey time reliability and support economic growth
- Release of road capacity on the existing A358 to support economic growth at the Junction 25 employment development zone
- Safer crossing points for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians

Potential impacts of Section 1 include:

- The A358 dual carriageway route would pass through:
 - through relatively undeveloped countryside
 - between residential areas including Shoreditch, Haydon and Stoke St Mary
 - close to a number of farms and through farmland
 - close to designated Ancient Woodlands
- Visibility from some elevated sections of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Some adverse visual impact for residential properties located alongside the M5 motorway near Junction A
- Limited temporary traffic management measures, such as temporary traffic lights, would be required to help reduce inconvenience at West Hatch during construction
- Construction periods would be scheduled to minimise adverse impacts on residential properties located near the M5
- Construction periods would be scheduled to minimise temporary impacts on residential properties, farms and businesses located near to the A358 dual carriageway
- Mitigation measures for wildlife habitats affected by the dual carriageway route alignment

Construction considerations of**Section 1 include:**

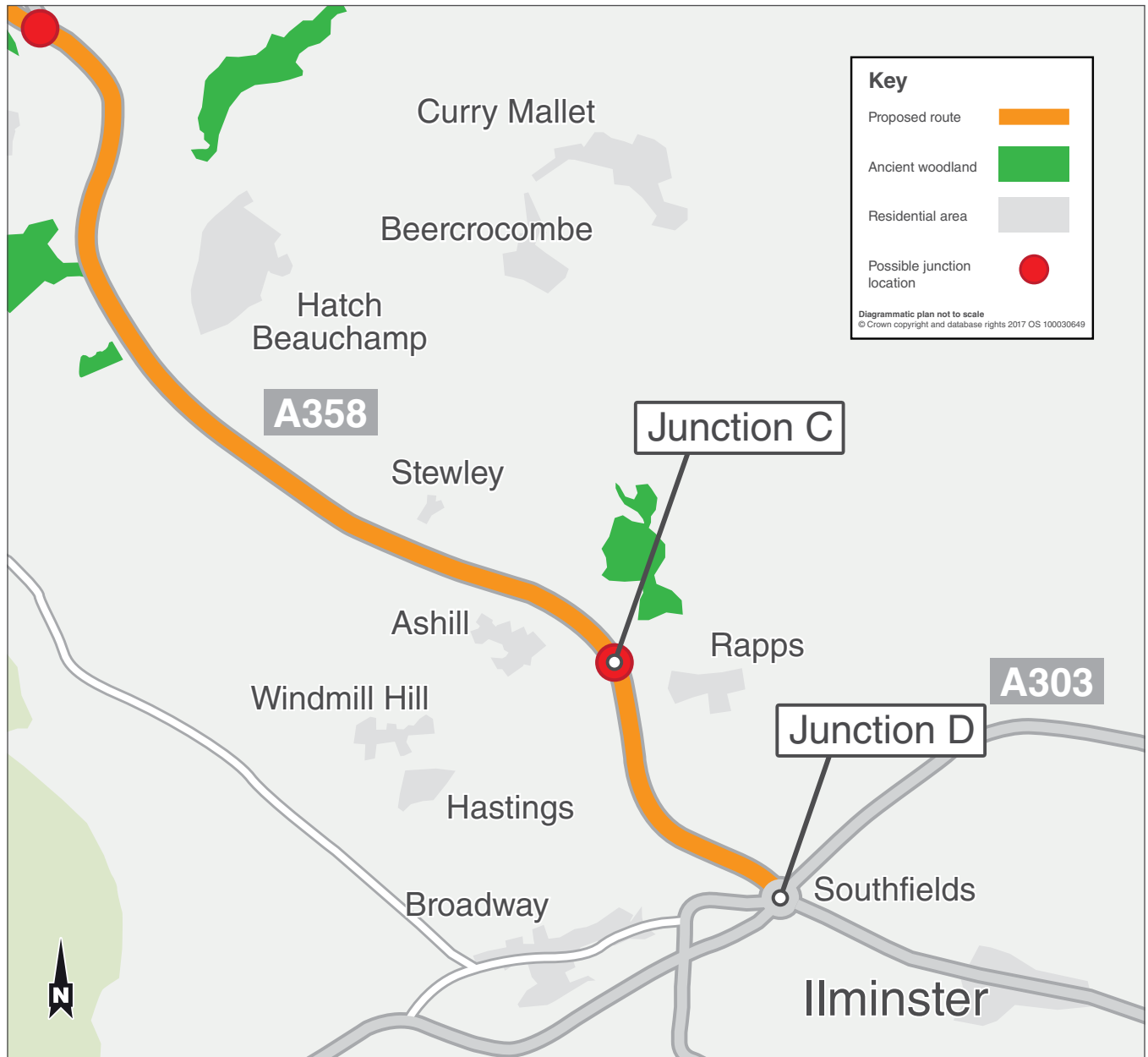
- Temporary M5 motorway lane closures would be required during construction of a motorway connection at the Junction A location

We are seeking your feedback on Section 1. Please complete the questionnaire so we can capture your views.



Section 2

Widening of the existing carriageway from West Hatch Lane to Southfields Roundabout



This section deals with the alignment of the proposed A358 dual carriageway between West Hatch Lane and Southfields Roundabout.

Details of the proposal include:

- Proposed widening of the existing A358 to dual carriageway standard between West Hatch Lane and Southfields Roundabout
- Possible new junction located at Park Barn Lane to the east of Ashill (Junction C)
- Southfields Roundabout upgraded to accommodate a new dual carriageway connection (Junction D)
- Provision of bridges or underpasses at locations to be determined to ensure connectivity is retained across the dual carriageway for motorists, cyclists, equestrians and pedestrians

Expected benefits of Section 2 include:

- Greater traffic capacity of the dual carriageway will improve existing congestion issues
- Improved safety by removal of direct access to the dual carriageway from fields, properties and side roads
- Safer access points from the local road network to the dual carriageway at new and upgraded junctions
- Safer crossing points for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians
- Continued use of the existing road corridor minimising wider environmental impacts of the dual carriageway

Potential impacts of Section 2 include:

- Removal or rerouting of direct access from existing side roads and privately owned land and property to the new dual carriageway standard road
- Existing properties in the immediate proximity of a new dual carriageway may be adversely impacted by construction or operation of a new dual carriageway
- Periods of traffic disruption during construction would require management to minimise disruption to road users and local communities

Construction considerations of Section 2 include:

- Possible overnight closures for the construction of bridges.
- Construction periods would be scheduled to minimise temporary impacts on residential properties, farms and businesses located near to the A358 dual carriageway
- Maintain existing two-way traffic flows.
- Mitigation measures for wildlife habitats affected by the dual carriageway route alignment

We are seeking your feedback on Section 2. Please complete the questionnaire so we can capture your views.



Supporting economic growth

Unlocking the potential for economic growth in the area has been a key objective in developing our route option proposals. The new junction at the M5 motorway (Junction A) will provide a significant capacity enhancement to the network. It is expected that increases in traffic demand could be accommodated at the new junction, supporting major development opportunities in the area south of Taunton.

Improving the performance of the A358 between Taunton and Southfields with more reliable journey times will help support the growth of existing businesses and support the establishment of new businesses. This will also provide a boost to the already healthy tourism sector in the area and for tourists travelling to and from the south west peninsula.

Creating a safer, more reliable, free-flowing road will help to reinforce the message that the south west is open for business.

Caring for the environment

Understanding the impact on the environment and community along the A358 corridor is very important to us. Our aim is to minimise any adverse effects while ensuring that wider opportunities for environmental improvement created by this scheme are implemented.

The area surrounding the A358 between Taunton and Southfields 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. A map showing the constraints is available on our website:

www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields

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

Tell us your views

This is the first stage in our consultation process. We would like to know what you think about the route proposal. We will listen to your views and publish a consultation report which summarises your feedback and how they will be considered to inform the detailed design stage.

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

www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields

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

A358TauntontoSouthfields@highwaysengland.co.uk

Writing to us at

A358 Taunton to Southfields 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)

Next steps

Selecting a preferred route

This consultation is your opportunity to express your views on the current proposals ahead of further development and final selection of a preferred route.

After the consultation ends, we will publish a report summarising the responses. Subject to the findings of the consultation, a preferred route announcement is likely to be made in Winter 2017.

There will be another public consultation period in Spring 2018 that will ask for additional feedback on details of the selected preferred route.

The Development Consent Order application process

This scheme is classified 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 submit 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>

Explaining the Development Consent Order (DCO) process



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

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This document is also available on our website at www.gov.uk/highways

If you have any enquiries about this publication email info@highwaysengland.co.uk or call **0300 123 5000***. Please quote the Highways England publications code **PR265/16**.

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