

Welcome

Thank you for taking an interest in our proposals to upgrade the A358 between the M5 at Taunton and the A303 at Southfields Roundabout.

The improvement is needed to relieve congestion, support economic growth and improve the safety performance of one of the busiest stretches of the A303 / A358 corridor that connects the south west to London and the south east.

The purpose of this consultation is to:

- Inform the local communities and stakeholders about our scheme proposals and route options
- Provide the opportunity for feedback on matters that can inform the decision-making on the preferred route
- Build on the responses received in last year's consultation, specifically gathering more information about where any new sections of road should go and how they should tie into the existing A358

The consultation will run from **16 January – 27 February 2018**



Background and need

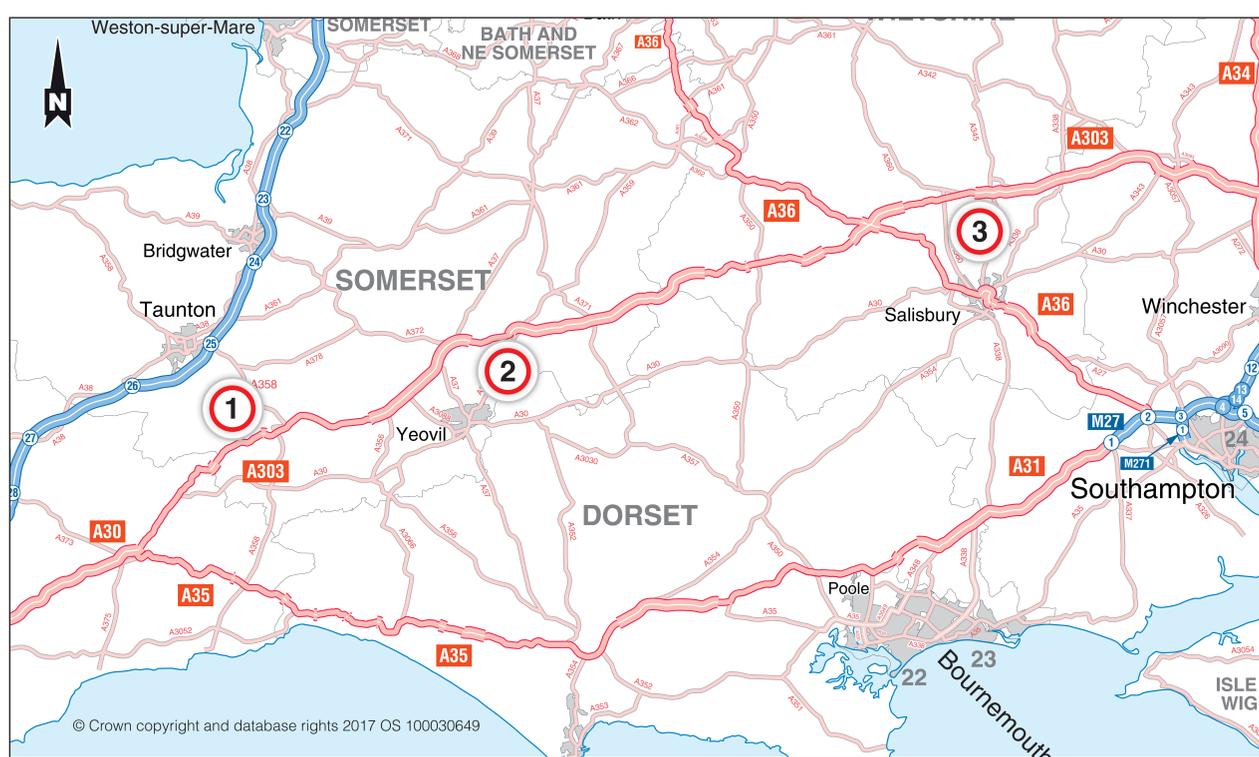
The A303 / A358 corridor provides vital east-west connectivity between the south west and London and the south east, however, there are problems along the route.

There are several single carriageway sections where road users suffer congestion and long delays. The problems are even worse at peak holiday times during the summer months and on weekends, when over an hour can be added to a typical journey between London and the south west.

In recognition of this and the harmful effects to the south west's economy, the Government's Road Investment Strategy: 2015-2020 (RIS) sets out the intention to transform connectivity by upgrading the A303 / A358 corridor to a high quality dual carriageway from the M3 motorway to the M5 motorway at Taunton.

A programme of improvement schemes has been identified along the A303 / A358 corridor to improve journeys to and from the south west. The first 3 currently under development are:

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



A303 / A358 route corridor schemes in RIS period 2015-2020

Scheme objectives

- **Capacity:** Reduce delays and queues that occur during peak hours and at seasonal times of the year
- **Safety:** Improve safety along the route corridor and along the A358 Taunton to Southfields route for pedestrians, cyclists and other non-motorised users
- **Environment:** Avoid unacceptable impacts on the surrounding natural and historic environment and landscape and optimise opportunities for enhancement
- **Local communities:** Reduce community separation and promote opportunities for improving their quality of life
- **Connectivity:** Improve the connectivity of the south west to the rest of the UK, to reduce detachment and improve business and growth prospects
- **Resilience:** Improve journey time reliability and provide extra capacity to make it easier to manage traffic when incidents occur
- **Support economic growth:** Facilitate growth in jobs and housing by providing a free-flowing and reliable connection between the south east and the south west

All the potential options for the scheme have been assessed against economic, social and environmental criteria relating to these objectives, which is how we have arrived at the 3 options being presented for this public consultation.

Further information about the options is set out in the updated Technical Appraisal Report which can be read or downloaded from our website, www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields.

Shortlisting the options

We have considered a wide range of route options for upgrading the A358 between Taunton and Southfields. To make sure we get to the best solution we first identified all the feasible options and then gradually narrowed them down following the broad steps set out below:

Step 1 – Option identification and sifting

From our early appraisal, 28 potential options were identified for improving the A358, with an additional route evolving through the design process. The options considered included routes using the existing road in part or full, as well as entirely new routes across open landscape. These options were appraised against economic, social and environmental criteria and were reduced to 4 options.

Note: In deciding to create a high quality dual carriageway to the south west via the A358, the Government decided not to pursue the alternative A303 / A30 corridor from Ilminster to Honiton and Exeter. This section of A303 / A30 passes through the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the impacts of large-scale road-building were deemed unacceptable within the AONB. Therefore, this alternative was not considered as part of this scheme. Instead smaller-scale improvements will be pursued along this section to improve safety and journey quality for road users.



Step 2 – Appraisal of shortlisted options

The 4 shortlisted options were appraised in greater detail as set out in the technical appraisal report (TAR, dated April 2017) which was published at the time of the 2017 consultation. From these 4 options, one was discounted on environmental grounds, because the new route would run west of the existing road through a tranquil area near the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and would harm a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).



Step 3 – Selection of options for the initial consultation

From the 3 remaining options, we chose one option for the public consultation in 2017. This led to community members and stakeholders indicating that they would like to see more options for connecting the new road with the M5 motorway.



Step 4 – Review of options following consultation

We considered carefully the consultation feedback and concluded that it would be beneficial to carry out further consultation on more route options before selecting a preferred route. We have updated the technical appraisal report accordingly, to explain the sifting that has been undertaken from the original 28 options to arrive at the options now being consulted on. To support this, we have made the information which has informed this process, such as traffic levels, possible junction layouts, journey times and comparative assessments, more accessible.

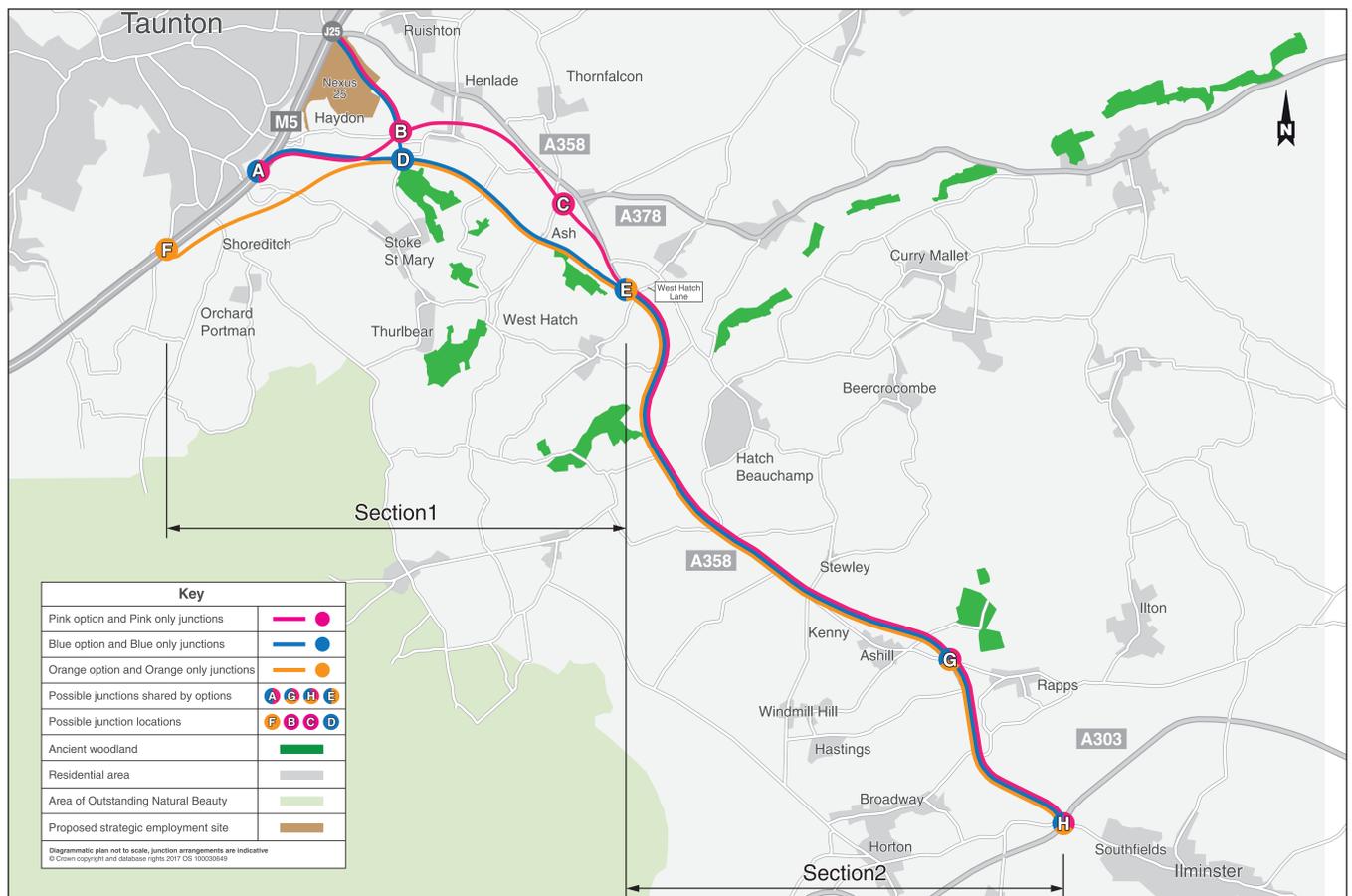


Step 5 – Selection of options for further consultation

The above steps have led to our decision to undertake this further non-statutory public consultation on 3 selected options for upgrading the A358 from Taunton to Southfields.

Proposed options

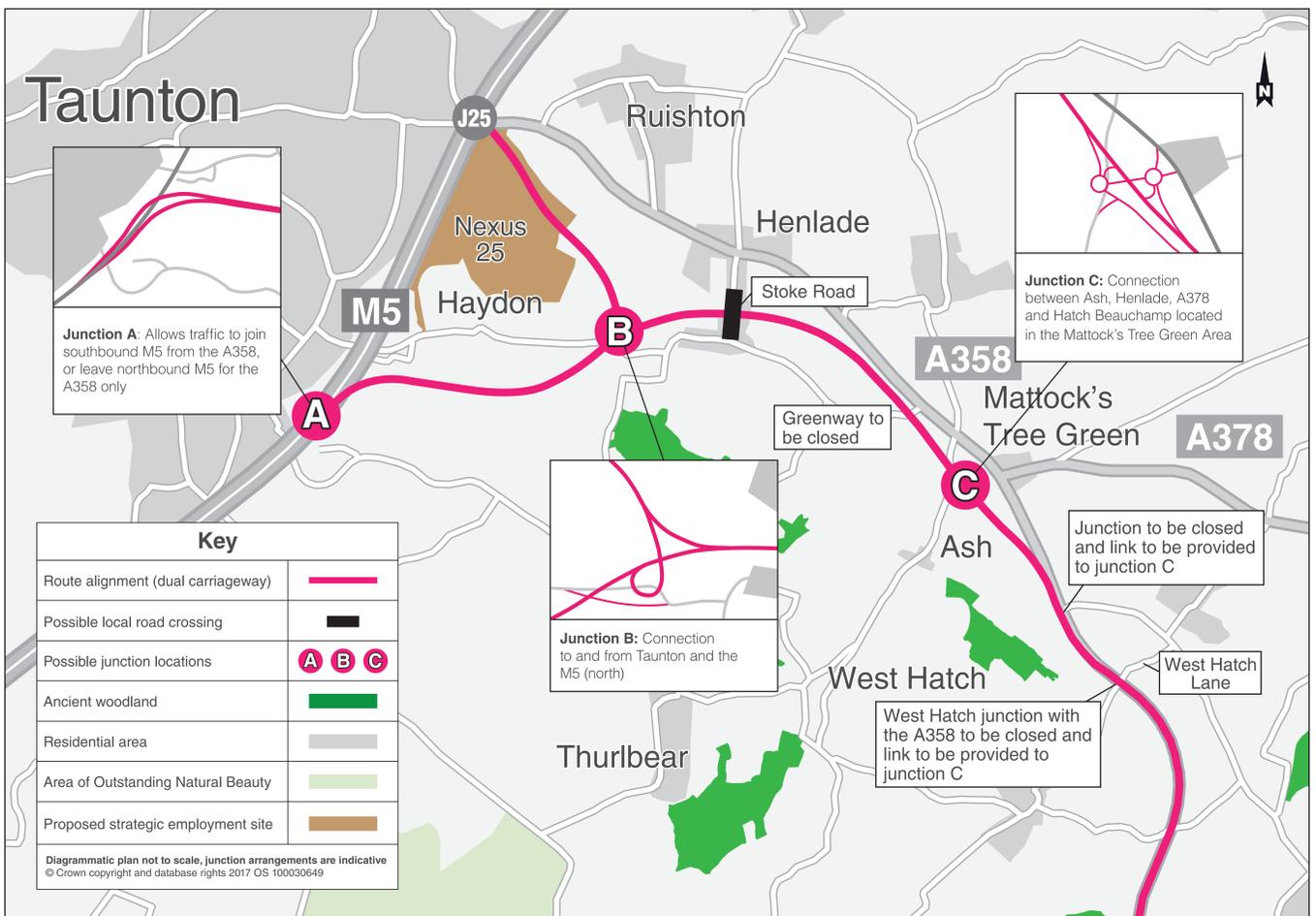
We are presenting 3 options for connecting the upgraded A358 with the M5 motorway and for providing access into Taunton.



The route has been divided into 2 sections to help focus your comments. The sections are:

- **Section 1:** A new motorway junction with the M5 and a new dual carriageway link from the M5 to the existing A358, bypassing Henlade
- **Section 2:** Upgrading the A358 from single carriageway to dual carriageway standard along the line of the A358 from the south east of Henlade to Southfields Roundabout

Pink option (section 1)

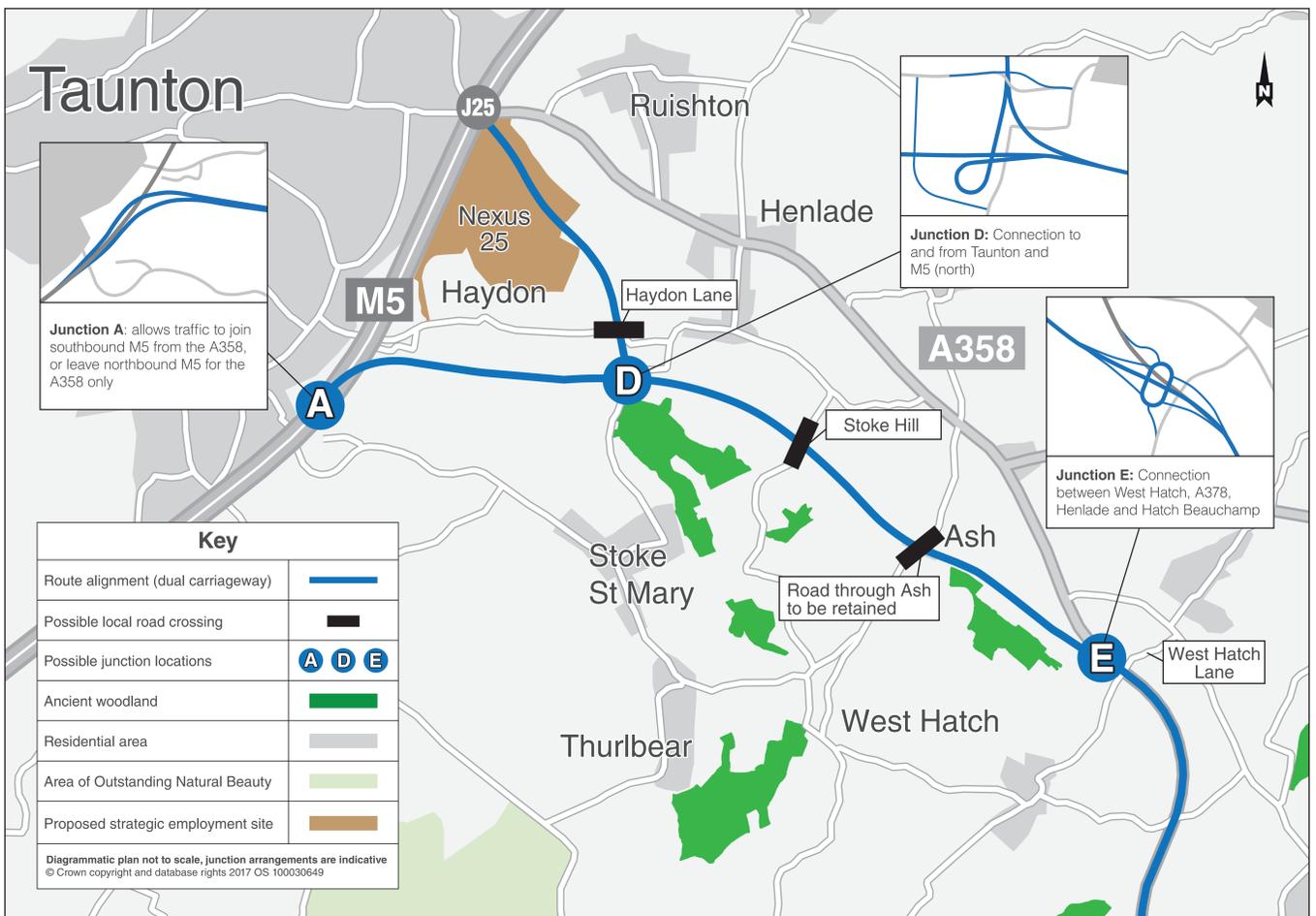


Route description

This route option commences with a new junction (junction A) on the M5 approximately 1.2 miles (2 kilometres) south of the existing junction 25. From the M5, the route runs south of Haydon and north of Stoke Hill to a proposed junction (junction B) with a new dual-carriageway spur road which would run northwards for approximately 0.9 miles (1.5 kilometres) to connect with the existing junction 25, via the proposed Nexus 25 employment site.

From junction B, the route continues through a gap between properties along Stoke Road, Henlade, before running parallel to the existing A358 to a new junction at Mattock's Tree Green (junction C). The distance between junctions B and C would be 1.6 miles (2.6 kilometres).

Blue option (section 1)

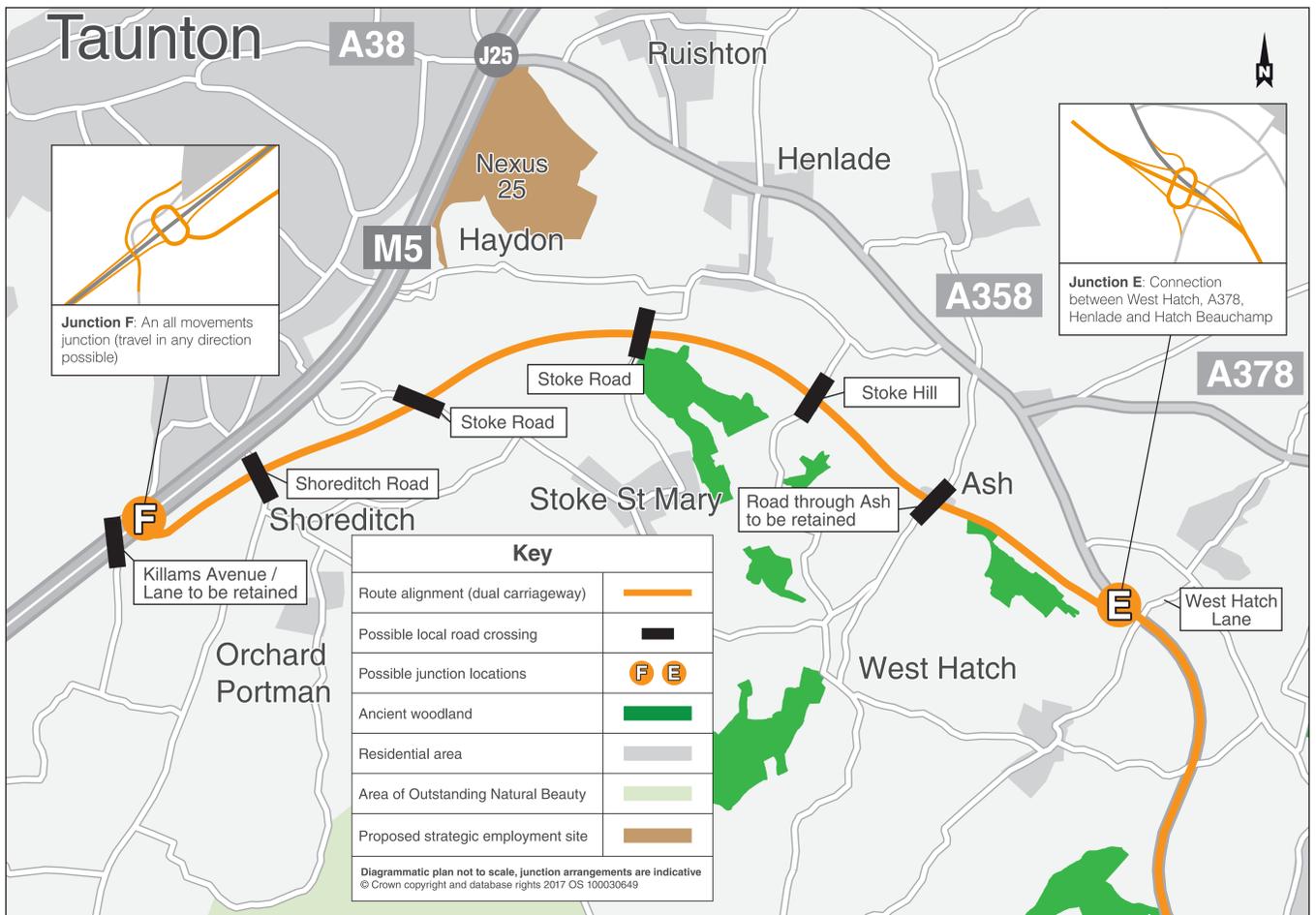


Route description

The Blue option commences at the M5, with a new junction (junction A), approximately 1.2 miles (2 kilometres) south of the existing junction 25. From the M5, the route runs south of Haydon for 1.2 miles (2 kilometres) to a proposed junction (junction D) with a new dual-carriageway spur road which would run northwards for 1.2 miles (2 kilometres) to connect with the existing junction 25 via the proposed Nexus 25 employment site.

From junction D, the route continues in a south-easterly direction for approximately 1.5 miles (2.5 kilometres), passing to the north of ancient woodland north of Stoke St Mary and to the south of Lower Henlade and Ash, before connecting with the existing A358 at a new junction near West Hatch (junction E). The distance between junctions D and E would be 1.6 miles (2.6 kilometres).

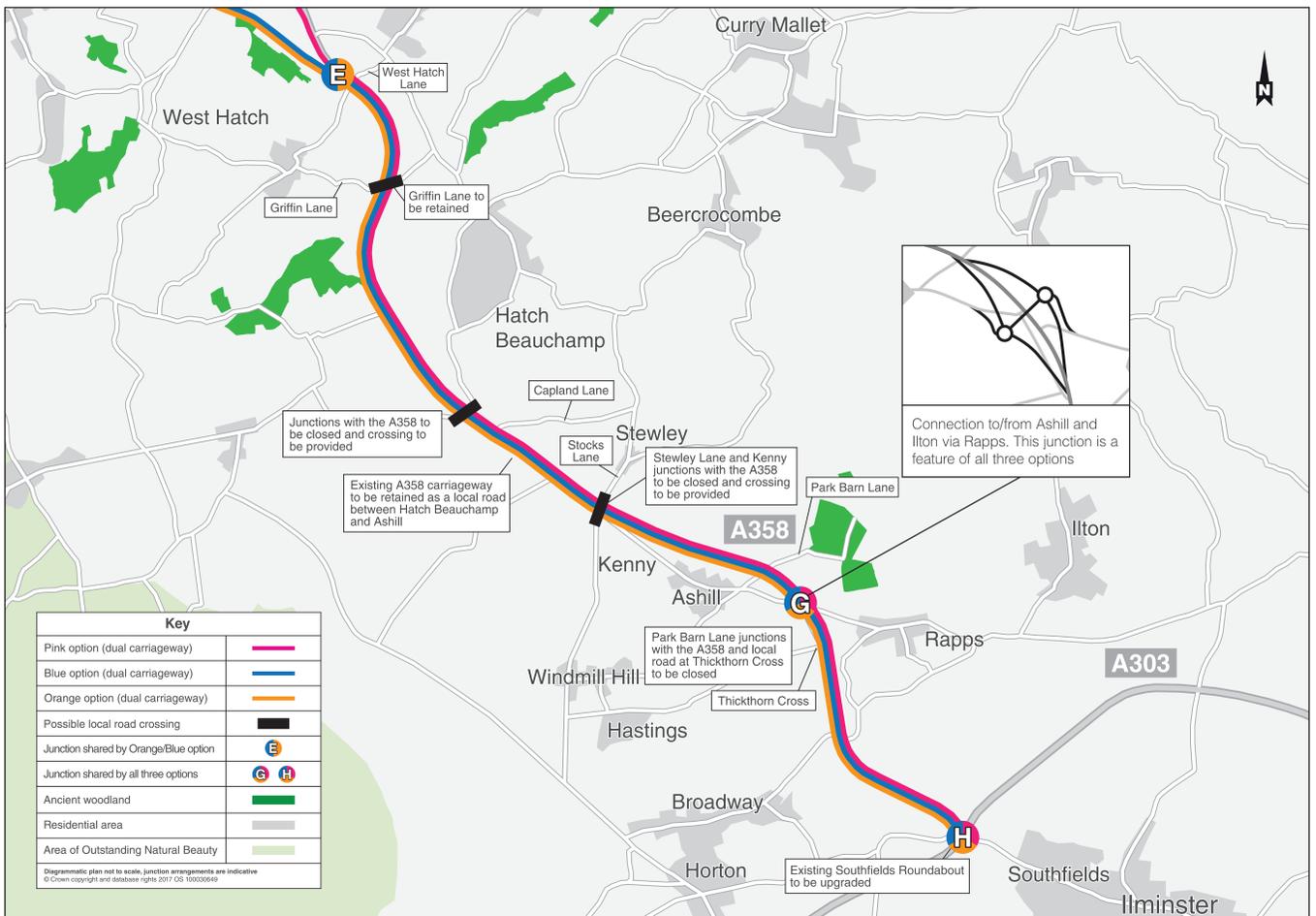
Orange option (section 1)



Route description

The Orange option formed the proposal presented at the initial consultation in 2017. A new junction on the M5 (junction F) would be constructed approximately 2.1 miles (3.5 kilometres) south of the existing junction 25. From the M5, the route runs north-east, crossing the B3170 north of Shoreditch, before curving around the north side of Stoke Hill and then connecting with the existing A358 at a new junction near West Hatch (junction E). The distance between junctions F and E would be 3.8 miles (6.1 kilometres).

Proposals for section 2



Route description

Our proposal is to upgrade this section of the A358 to dual carriageway by widening the existing road. This is a distance of either 6.5 miles (10.4 kilometres) from junction C (Pink option) or 5.8 miles (9.4 kilometres) from junction E (Blue or Orange options).

This on-line dualling will avoid the damaging environmental impacts that would arise if a new dual carriageway was built away from the line of the existing A358.

A new junction would be provided near Ashill (junction G), 1.6 miles (2.5 kilometres) to the north of Southfields Roundabout (junction H). Existing local road junctions and private accesses would be removed from the new dual carriageway, but traffic movements between communities either side of the new road would be maintained via bridge crossings.

Access to the new dual carriageway would be via the proposed junctions (E, G or H). Pedestrian, cycle and horse rider movements across the new dual carriageway would also be maintained safely via bridge crossings accommodating affected public rights-of-way.

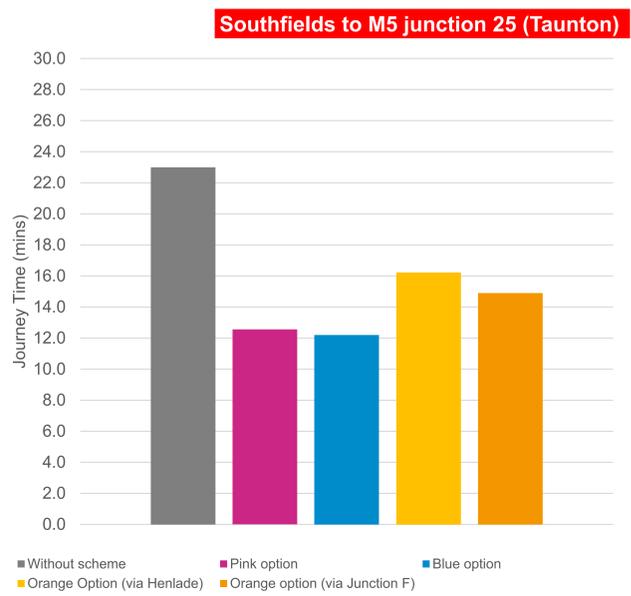
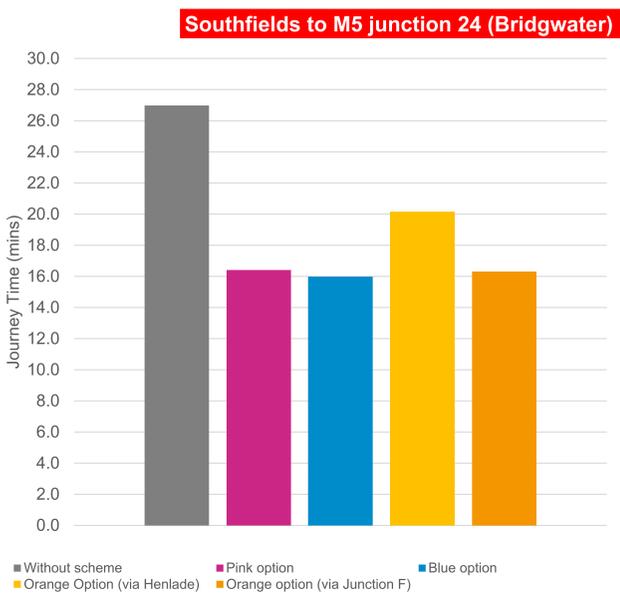
Scheme benefits and effects

		Pink option	Blue option	Orange option
Key differences for connecting with the M5		Both Pink and Blue options would provide a new junction on the M5 for traffic movements to and from the south only, plus a spur linking with the existing junction 25 on the M5.		The Orange option would provide a new junction on the M5 for all movements to and from the M5 north and south of the junction.
Scheme length		14.6km, plus a 1.5km spur leading to M5 junction 25	14.1km, plus a 2km spur leading to M5 junction 25	15.3km
Relative journey time savings (between Southfields Roundabout and M5 junction 25 in 2038, morning peak period) compared with doing nothing.		Approximate 10-minute saving	Approximate 11-minute saving	Approximate 8-minute saving
Capacity Each of the 3 options would provide increased capacity. New junctions would also accommodate easy queue-free access to and from nearby local communities. The specific differences between the options are noted alongside.		This will reduce traffic on the existing A358 through Henlade, from a daily average of 35,100 vehicles without the scheme, to 4,700 vehicles with the scheme in 2023 (opening year). The reliance on junction 25 may lead to queuing on the new spur road at peak times.	This will reduce traffic on the existing A358 through Henlade from a daily average of 35,100 vehicles without the scheme, to 8,400 vehicles with the scheme in 2023 (opening year). The reliance on junction 25 is likely to lead to queuing on the new spur road at peak times.	This would reduce traffic on the existing A358 through Henlade from a daily average of 35,100 vehicles without the scheme, to 25,300 vehicles with the scheme in 2023 (opening year). This would remove the highest proportion of longer-distance A358 traffic from the existing busy junction 25, freeing up its use for local Taunton traffic.
Safety		For all options, the new dual carriageway would be safer than the existing A358, as existing local road junctions and private accesses would be closed, avoiding conflicting traffic-turning movements. Comparatively the Pink and Blue options are better than the Orange option.		
Environment	Noise The options presented here are compared without allowing for mitigation measures. Measures – such as screening – would reduce the noise impact.	The route would run closer to some properties in Henlade and would introduce a new source of traffic noise where it passes through countryside towards its connection with the M5.	The new road would be further away from more properties and would produce the greatest reductions in traffic noise. This option will introduce new sources of traffic noise where the route passes through countryside towards its connection with the M5.	This option would leave more traffic on the existing A358 through Henlade than the other 2 options and would provide the least degree of noise relief. It will introduce new sources of traffic noise where the route passes through countryside towards its connection with the M5.
	Air quality	The differences between the options in terms of overall vehicle emissions are marginal, with no risks to human health being generated by the scheme.		
	Greenhouse gases	All 3 options would lead to marginal increases in greenhouse gas emissions through a slight increase in journey lengths, albeit achieved in shorter, more reliable journey times. There is no substantial difference between the options.		
	Landscape	This option would remain closer to the existing A358 for longer and therefore would have the least impact on open countryside.	This option would intrude on the countryside south and west of Henlade.	This option would intrude on the countryside south of Henlade and west of Stoke St Mary.
	Historic environment	There is some potential for the scheme to have impacts on buried archaeology and on heritage assets such as listed buildings. There is nothing to discriminate substantially between the options.		
	Biodiversity Mitigation measures to avoid or reduce impacts will be incorporated into the more detailed design. Key differences between the options are indicated alongside.	5 local wildlife sites could be affected	6 local wildlife sites could be affected as well as ancient woodland	6 local wildlife sites and 1 local nature reserve could be affected as well as ancient woodland
Water environment	There is no difference between the options in terms of impacts on the water environment. The detailed drainage design will seek to avoid any adverse effects on watercourses and flood zones.			
Local communities		Henlade would benefit through average daily traffic reducing on the existing A358 from 35,100 in 2023 to 4,700. The route would pass close by Lower Henlade, Haydon and Holway settlements, including the new junction on the M5 being next to community land at Higher Holway.	Henlade would benefit through average daily traffic reducing on the existing A358 from 35,100 in 2023 to 8,400. The route would pass close by Ash, Stoke St Mary, Haydon and Holway settlements, including the new junction on the M5 being next to community land at Higher Holway.	Henlade would benefit through average daily traffic reducing on the existing A358 from 35,100 in 2023 to 25,300. The route would pass close by Ash, Stoke St Mary, Shoreditch and Dowslands/Killams settlements.
Connectivity between the south west and the south east		Connectivity would be improved with all options		
Resilience		The spur road connection into junction 25 would reduce traffic on the existing A358 between West Hatch and junction 25, helping to reduce periods of congestion there. However both options rely on the operation of the existing M5 junction 25, which can be congested at times. This means there is likely to be queuing on the spur road at peak times.		The new junction on the M5 would provide the greatest improvement in journey-time predictability, reliability and resilience for longer-distance traffic wishing to avoid being caught in potential queues at peak times at junction 25.
Support economic growth		Both options would help to provide a free-flowing and reliable connection between the south east and the south west as part of the A303/A358 corridor improvement. The new spur road would provide direct access to the proposed Nexus 25 site for traffic approaching via the A358 from the south east.		This option would help to provide a free-flowing and reliable connection between the south east and the south west as part of the A303/A358 corridor improvement. It would provide a more reliable connection for longer-distance traffic seeking to avoid the risk of being held up at junction 25. By removing more long-distance traffic from junction 25, the junction will be able to function more effectively, helping to accommodate local growth. Traffic wishing to access the proposed Nexus 25 site from the south east would most likely travel via the new A358 joining the M5 and approaching it via junction 25.
Scheme cost*		The most likely cost estimate of the Pink option is £452 million.	The most likely cost estimate of the Blue option is £401 million.	The most likely cost estimate of the Orange option is £366 million.

*The total estimated cost at 2014 Q1 prices includes scheme preparation costs, purchase of land and the construction of the new road.

Journey time savings

The graphs below show the relative journey time savings that the options would deliver for traffic travelling during the morning peak-period from Southfields Roundabout with a destination in Taunton, or north or south on the M5, for the year 2038, compared to doing nothing.



The figures indicate that for the Orange option, journey times are shorter travelling via the new route and new junction on the M5, than through Henlade.

What our proposals mean for you

We are committed to delivering a scheme which supports the goals set out in the Road Investment Strategy: 2015-2020.

Through our ongoing work with stakeholder groups, for instance local authorities, businesses, specialist organisations, community representatives and user groups, we will endeavour to produce a scheme that:

In relation to transport

- Reduces congestion, by increasing the road's capacity for free flowing traffic and making mile-a-minute travel the norm
- Boosts road safety and eases driver stress, by creating a high quality strategic route
- Decreases the likelihood of road closures due to incidents or accidents
- Makes it safer and easier for local people to reach community facilities by separating local movements from traffic passing through the area

In relation to economic growth

- Boosts growth across the whole of the south west region, by making arrival times easier to predict
- Improves the perception of the south west by making it an easier place to visit and do business
- Raises productivity, across the south west and more locally in Taunton and Somerset, by creating high-quality connections to other UK regions
- Supports the predicted growth in jobs and housing by increasing the capacity of the strategic road network

In relation to local communities and environment

- Makes it easier to access Taunton and its surrounding communities and developments
- Provides traffic relief to Henlade and local communities

Caring for the environment

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.

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



A Dormouse

The design work is at an early stage, so the mitigation measures have not yet been designed, however, here's a summary of the types that may be used:

Noise:

A combination of noise barriers and low-noise road surfacing could be used where the environmental assessment has determined that they are needed.



A typical noise barrier

Landscape and visual impacts:

Planting would be used as required to provide screening.



Landscape planting

Flooding:

Measures would be put in place to manage the flow of water off the new road.

Pollution prevention:

A construction environmental management plan would be put in place during construction and would include pollution prevention measures such as shielding water courses with bunds, keeping areas of bare soil to a minimum and considering our neighbours, for example during noisy operations.



A typical drainage pond

Tell us your views

The public consultation will run from **16 January until 27 February 2018**.

If you responded to last year's consultation and have nothing further to add, then you do not need to do anything now, as the previous responses will be taken into account as we move forward.

If you would like to share additional feedback though please fill in a consultation questionnaire when you are ready to do so.

You can complete the questionnaire online at
www.highways.gov.uk/Taunton-to-Southfields

Paper copies of the questionnaire can also be picked up here today.

If you have any further queries, you can contact us by:

Emailing us at:
A358TauntontoSouthfields@highwaysengland.co.uk

Calling us on:
0300 123 5000 (9:00 to 17:00, Monday to Friday)

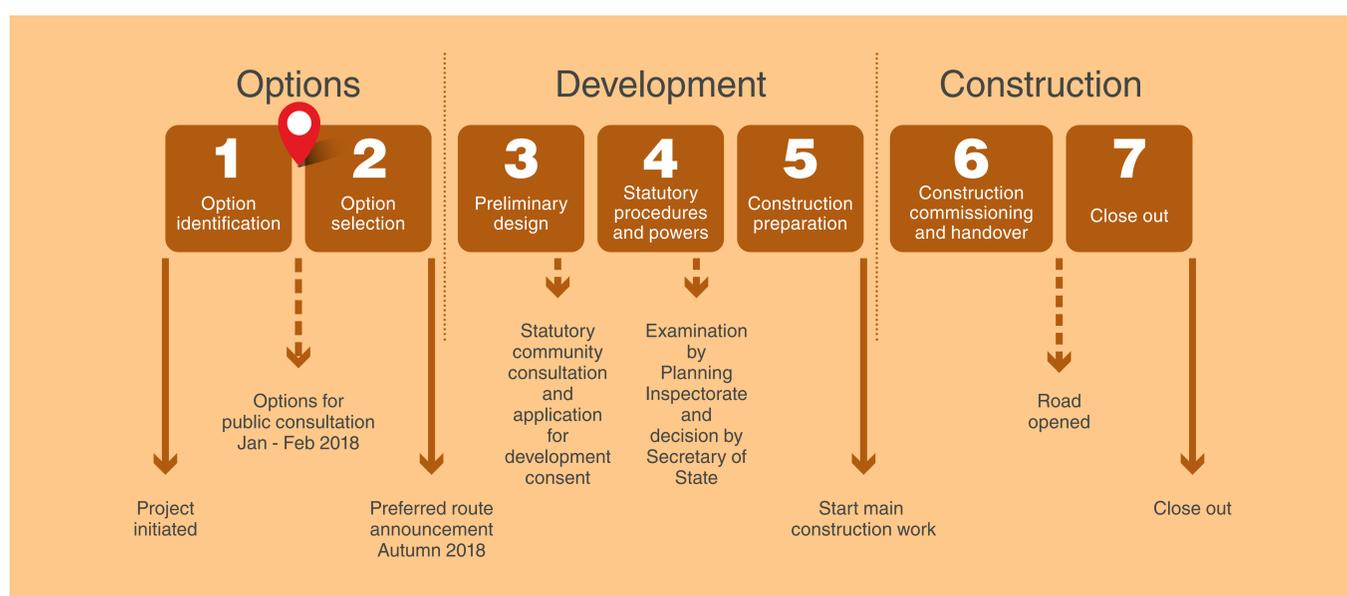
Writing to us at:
A358 Taunton to Southfields Project Team,
Highways England,
2/07K Temple Quay House,
2 The Square,
Temple Quay,
Bristol, BS1 6HA

The deadline for submitting responses to the consultation is
Midnight on Tuesday 27 February 2018.

What happens next

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 analyse your feedback and respond to it in the report we prepare on the consultation. Your views will help us in making a decision on the choice of preferred route.



The Development Consent Order application process:

This scheme is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. Because of its national significance, the scheme needs a special type of planning permission called a Development Consent Order or DCO.

Following this statutory consultation, we will carefully consider all comments received before submitting our DCO application.

If the application is accepted by the Planning Inspectorate, there will then be an examination of the application in which the public can participate. This examination will take a maximum of 6 months. The Planning Inspectorate then has 3 months to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who then has a further 3 months to make a final decision.