

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme TR010036

6.1 Environmental Statement Chapter 1 Introduction

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)
Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed
Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
July 2018



Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

**The Infrastructure Planning
(Applications: Prescribed Forms
and Procedure) Regulations
2009**

**A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling
Scheme**

Development Consent Order 201[X]

**6.1 Environmental Statement
Chapter 1 Introduction**

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| Regulation Number: | Regulation 5(2)(a) |
| Planning Inspectorate Scheme Reference: | TR010036 |
| Application Document Reference: | 6.1 |
| Author: | A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme Project Team, Highways England |

| Version | Date | Status of Version |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Rev 0 | July 2018 | Application Issue |

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) can be defined as an assessment of those consequences of a major project which affect the natural, built and social environment. The *Infrastructure Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017* (the *EIA Regulations*) require an assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects, which are likely to have significant effects on the environment, before development is granted.
- 1.1.2 The EIA Regulations require that the findings of the EIA be reported in the form of an Environmental Statement (ES). The ES is a key part of the application documents submitted by Highways England in support of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application for the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling scheme (hereafter referred to as ‘the scheme’).
- 1.1.3 The principal purpose of this ES is to assess the likely significant effects of the scheme on the environment, to provide the Planning Inspectorate with enough information to enable an informed recommendation to be made to the Secretary of State.
- 1.1.4 This ES is structured as follows:
- The ES main text setting out the environmental assessment in chapters (Volume 6.1).
 - The ES figures, including drawings, photos and other illustrative material (Volume 6.2).
 - The ES technical appendices (Volume 6.3).
 - The ES Non-Technical Summary (Volume 6.4).
- 1.1.5 Table 1.1 sets out the structure of the ES further and provides a summary of the chapters.

Table 1.1: Structure of the ES

| Chapter | Description |
|--|--|
| ES main text (Volume 6.1) | |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | Chapter 1 provides an overview of the scheme, the purpose and structure of the ES, outlines the legislative and policy framework, provides competent expert evidence in relation to the ES coordinators, and explains the availability of the ES. |
| Chapter 2 The scheme | Chapter 2 identifies the need for the scheme and the scheme objectives, provides a description of the scheme location an overview of the key environmental constraints, a description of the future baseline scenario, and provides a detailed description of the scheme (during both construction and operation). |
| Chapter 3 Assessment of Alternatives | Chapter 3 explains how the scheme has developed from a number of different route options during the optioneering process and provides an outline of the main alternatives considered. |
| Chapter 4 Environmental Assessment Methodology | Chapter 4 provides a summary of the environmental scoping process undertaken, general assessment assumptions and limitations, an explanation of the significance criteria, and a summary of the environmental consultation that has been undertaken to date. |
| Chapter 5 Air Quality | Chapters 5 to 13 assess and explain the likely significant effects of the scheme in relation to the environmental factors specified in Schedule 5(2) of the <i>Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017</i> . Each of the chapters include the following: |
| Chapter 6 Cultural Heritage | |
| Chapter 7 Landscape | |
| Chapter 8 Biodiversity | |
| Chapter 9 Geology and Soils | |
| Chapter 10 Material Assets and Waste | |
| Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration | |
| Chapter 12 People and Communities | |
| Chapter 13 Climate | |
| Chapter 14 Combined and Cumulative Effects | |
| Chapter 15 Summary | Chapter 15 provides a summary of the likely significant effects reported in the ES, and a summary of the monitoring requirements for significant effects.. |
| Chapter 16 Glossary | Chapter 16 provides a glossary of the key terms and acronyms used. |
| ES figures (Volume 6.2) | |
| Figures have been produced to support a number of the above ES chapters. | |
| ES technical appendices (Volume 6.3) | |
| Technical appendices support a number of the above ES chapters and have either been produced as part of the ES or comprise previous material referenced to support the ES. | |
| ES Non-Technical Summary (Volume 6.4) | |
| Non-Technical Summary | The Non-Technical Summary includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme • Alternatives • Assessment of likely significant effects • Description of mitigation measures |

1.2 Overview of the scheme

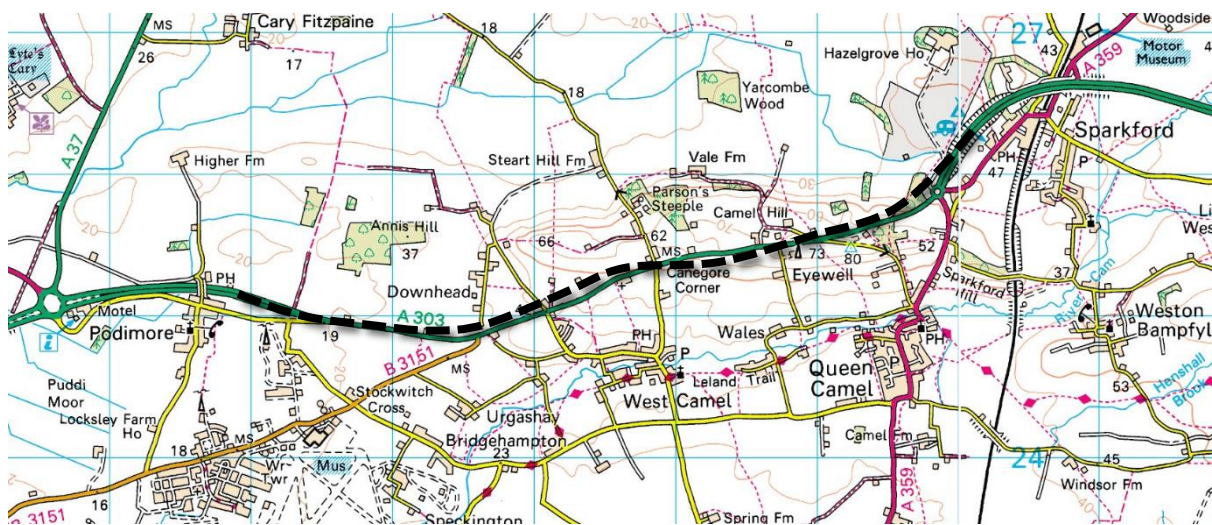
Existing corridor

- 1.2.1 The existing A303 forms part of Highways England's Strategic Road Network (SRN) and a strategic link between the south west and the rest of the south, south-east and London. The route comprises multiple road standards, including dual carriageway, single carriageway, and single carriageway sections with overtaking lanes. Speed limits also vary between 40 miles per hour and 70 miles per hour, depending on the character of the road and its surroundings.

Existing road

- 1.2.2 The section of the existing A303 that is being upgraded as part of this scheme commences at the eastern limits of the existing dual-carriageway of Podimore Bypass. Travelling east, the road reaches the junction with the B3151 before bearing north-east and rising upwards through Canegore Corner to reach the crest of Camel Hill at Eyewell. This section of the road is characterised by a single lane road, with double white lines negating overtaking and subject to a 50 miles per hour speed limit. There are several priority junctions along the route giving access to the settlements of Queen Camel and West Camel to the south and Downhead to the north, as well as several farm accesses and parking laybys.
- 1.2.3 From the crest of Camel Hill, the road descends to meet the roundabout at the western limit of the dual-carriageway of Sparkford Bypass (Hazlegrove Roundabout). This section comprises 2 lanes in the westbound direction, 1 lane in the eastbound direction and is also subject to a 50 miles per hour speed limit. Hazlegrove Roundabout forms a junction between the A303 and the A359 which runs south through Queen Camel and north-east through Sparkford. The roundabout also provides access to a service station, and to a school at Hazlegrove House.
- 1.2.4 The section of the existing A303 that is being upgraded is almost 3.5 miles or approximately 5.6 kilometres long.
- 1.2.5 The extents of the scheme are illustrated in Figure 1.1 of Volume 6.1 below. Figure 1.1 of Volume 6.2 shows the proposed red line boundary for the scheme.

Figure 1.1: Scheme extents



Source: Mott MacDonald Sweco Joint Venture

Scheme proposals

- 1.2.6 The proposed scheme is to provide a continuous dual carriageway linking the Podimore Bypass and the Sparkford Bypass. The scheme would involve the removal of at-grade junctions and direct accesses. The proposed Hazlegrove Junction would be constructed to grade-separated standards and Downhead Junction and Camel Cross Junction would be constructed to compact grade-separated standards, as illustrated on Figure 2.3 General Arrangement Plans, contained in Volume 6.2.
- 1.2.7 The speed limit for the highway once open would be 70 miles per hour, and the area of the proposed scheme within the red line boundary is approximately 110 hectares.
- 1.2.8 A detailed description of the scheme is provided within Chapter 2 The Scheme of Volume 6.1.

The scheme promoter

- 1.2.9 The promoter of this scheme is Highways England, a government owned company charged with operating, maintaining and improving England's motorways and major A roads.

The project team

- 1.2.10 Mott MacDonald Sweco Joint Venture has been appointed by Highways England to undertake the preliminary design and environmental assessment for the scheme. Together, Mott MacDonald Sweco Joint Venture and Highways England make up the project team.

1.3 Legislative and policy framework

Legislative context and the need for Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.3.1 Council Directive (2014/52/EU)¹ on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the *EIA Directive*) forms the basis of the legal requirements for EIA and of EIA practice in the UK. The *EIA Directive* has been transposed into UK law through the *Infrastructure Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017* (the *EIA Regulations*). The scheme falls within Schedule II of the *EIA Regulations*. The Secretary of State was subsequently notified in accordance with Regulation 8(1)(a) of the *EIA Regulations*, that an ES will be produced for the scheme.
- 1.3.2 The scheme is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) within sections 14(1)(h) and 22(1) of the *Planning Act 2008*. Under section 22 an NSIP must fall within 1 of the 3 categories specified, which are expressly stated to be alternatives. This scheme is the “construction” of a highway within the meaning of section 22(1)(a). While the scheme includes some alteration and improvement of the existing A303, the new carriageway will follow a different alignment requiring construction of sections of new highway with a speed limit in excess of 50 miles per hour on an area in excess of 12.5 hectares. The land proposed for the new carriageway and embankments alone is 62.37 hectares. The scheme is wholly located in England and Highways England, a strategic highways company, will be the highway authority for the highway to be constructed under the scheme. The scheme therefore complies with the requirements of sections 22(2) and 22(4).

Planning policy context

National Policy Statement for National Networks

- 1.3.3 Section 104 of the *Planning Act 2008* states that when deciding the approval of an NSIP, the Secretary of State must consider any National Policy Statements (NPSs) which relate to the development being considered. NPSs are produced by central Government and provide policy on specific aspects of national infrastructure.
- 1.3.4 The National Policy Statement of relevance to the scheme is the *National Policy Statement for National Networks*² (NPSNN). The NPSNN deals predominately

¹ European Union (2014). Council Directive (2014/52/EU) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (codification) (*EIA Directive*).

² Department for Transport (2014) *National Policy Statement for National Networks* [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387223/npsnn-web.pdf (last accessed March 2018).

with linear infrastructure; section 4.11 of the NSPNN notes that these differ from other types of infrastructure covered by the *Planning Act 2008* as:

- These networks are designed to link together separate points. Consequently, benefits are heavily dependent on both the location of the network and the improvement to it.
- Linear infrastructure is connected to a wider network, and any impacts from the development will have an effect on pre-existing sections of the network.
- Improvements to infrastructure are often connected to pre-existing sections of the network. Where relevant, this may minimise the total impact of development, but may place some limits on the opportunity for alternatives.

1.3.5 Section 4.12 of the NPSNN notes that “*In considering applications for linear infrastructure, decision-makers will need to bear in mind the specific conditions under which such developments must be designed*”. Sections 4.15 to 4.21 of the NSPNN outline specific requirements in relation to the production of an EIA.

1.3.6 Evidence demonstrating compliance of the scheme with the NPSNN has been provided within the ***Case for the Scheme (document reference TR010036/APP/7.1)***.

National Planning Policy Framework

1.3.7 The *National Planning Policy Framework*³ (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and the requirements for the planning system. It provides a framework within which local authorities and residents can produce local and neighbourhood plans reflecting the needs and priorities of communities.

1.3.8 The NPPF does not contain specific policies for NSIPs for which particular considerations apply. NSIPs are determined in accordance with the decision-making framework set out in the *Planning Act 2008* and relevant NPSs for major infrastructure. For highways schemes, the relevant NPS is the NPSNN, as described above.

³ Communities and Local Government (2012) *National Planning Policy Framework* [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf (last accessed March 2018).

Defra 25 Year Environment Plan

- 1.3.9 On the 11 January 2018 the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) published a 25-year environmental plan⁴ which sets out the Government's ambition to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than it was found. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first. It is intended to be read as a statement of intent, setting the direction of travel for future government policy.
- 1.3.10 The plan has identified a number of goals and 6 areas where future policy will be focused, including embedding an environmental net gain principle for development, including infrastructure.

Local policy

- 1.3.11 The relevant local development plan document is the *South Somerset District Local Plan*⁵. The local policies included within this document that are of relevance to the scheme have been identified within each of the environmental topic chapters (Chapters 5 to 14 of Volume 6.1), and within the **Case for the Scheme (document reference TR010036/APP/7.1)**.

Highways England policy

Highways England Licence

- 1.3.12 The Highways England *Licence*⁶ document sets out key requirements which must be complied with by the licence holder as well as statutory guidance. In exercising its functions and complying with its legal duties and obligations, the licence holder must act in such a manner which it considers best calculated to:

- Ensure the effective operation of the network.
- Ensure the maintenance, resilience, renewal, and replacement of the network.
- Ensure the improvement, enhancement, and long term development of the network.
- Ensure efficiency and value for money.
- Protect and improve the safety of the network.

⁴ Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (2018) *A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment* [online] available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69315/8/25-year-environment-plan.pdf (last accessed April 2018).

⁵ South Somerset District Council (2015) *South Somerset Local Plan* [online] available at: https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/707200/south_somerset_local_plan_2006-2028_adoption_version_march_2015.pdf (last accessed April 2018).

⁶ Department for Transport (April 2015) *Highways England: Licence* [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/431389/strategic-highways-licence.pdf (last accessed March 2018).

- Cooperate with other persons or organisations for the purposes of coordinating day-to-day operations and long term planning.
- Minimise the environmental impacts of operating, maintaining, and improving its network and seek to protect and enhance the quality of the surrounding environment.
- Conform to the principles of sustainable development.

1.3.13 In complying with section 4.2(g) and its general duty under section 5(2) of the *Infrastructure Act 2015* to have regard for the environment, the Licence holder must:

- Ensure that protecting and enhancing the environment is embedded into its business decision-making processes and is considered at all levels of operations.
- Ensure the best practicable environmental outcomes across its activities, while working in the context of sustainable development and delivering value for money.
- Consider the cumulative environmental impact of its activities across its network and identify holistic approaches to mitigate such impacts and improve environmental performance.
- Where appropriate, work with others to develop solutions that can provide increased environmental benefits over those that the Licence holder can achieve alone, where this delivers value for money.
- Calculate and consider the carbon impact of road projects and factor carbon into design decisions, and seek to minimise carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases from its operations.
- Adapt its network to operate in a changing climate, including assessing, managing, and mitigating the potential risks posed by climate change to the operation, maintenance and improvement of the network.
- Develop approaches to the construction, maintenance and operation of the Licence holder's network that are consistent with the government's plans for a low carbon future.
- Take opportunities to influence road users to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from their journey choices.

Highways England Delivery Plan

1.3.14 The Highways England *Delivery Plan*⁷ sets out Highways England's long term plans for the modernisation and renewal of the road network over the 5-year period from 2015 - 2020. It provides a brief outline of what Highways England has delivered during 2015 -2016 and sets out a clear programme of activity for 2016 - 2017, as well as annual and future commitments.

⁷ Highways England (2015) Highways England *Delivery Plan 2015 – 2020* [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/424467/DSP2036-184_Highways_England_Delivery_Plan_FINAL_low_res_280415.pdf (last accessed March 2018)

1.3.15 Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and other Performance Indicators (PI) have been set out from the January 2016 *Operation Metrics Manual*⁸ produced in collaboration with the Department for Transport and Office of Rail and Road (ORR). Environmental KPIs include:

- Number of Noise Important Areas (NIAs) mitigated. Highways England aims to mitigate 1,150 NIAs through interventions, to reduce the noise exposure of the population within the NIA.
- Delivery of improved biodiversity, as set out in Highways England's *Biodiversity Plan*⁹. Highways England aims to reduce the net loss of biodiversity by the end of the first Road Period, on an ongoing annual basis.
- Helping cyclists, walkers, and other vulnerable users of the network through a number of new and upgraded crossings. The measure of success is an increase in the number of completed new crossings and upgraded crossings.

Highways England Environment Strategy

1.3.16 The Highways *England Environment Strategy*¹⁰ sets out Highways England's vision that will guide their environmental actions and activities over the next five years. The strategy outlines Highways England's commitment to improving their environmental outcomes. In doing this, it seeks to help protect, manage and enhance the quality of the surrounding environment, with a focus on people and the built, natural and historic environment. The strategy will be delivered through all aspects of Highways England's business, and in particular the operation, maintenance and improvement of Highways England's network.

Highways England Sustainable Development Strategy

1.3.17 Highways England's *Sustainable Development Strategy*¹¹ intends to communicate the approach and priorities for sustainable development to Highways England's key stakeholders. Sustainable development is defined in Highways England's licence to operate as "*encouraging economic growth whilst*

⁸ Highways England (2016) *Operational Metrics Manual* [online] available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/532725/Operational_Metrics_Manual_June_2016.pdf (last accessed July 2018).

⁹ Highways England (2015) *Our plan to protect and increase biodiversity* [online] available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/441300/N150146_-_Highways_England_Biodiversity_Plan3lo.pdf (last accessed July 2018).

¹⁰ Highways England (2017) *Environment Strategy: Our Approach* [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/605063/Environment_Strategy_21_.pdf (last accessed March 2018).

¹¹ Highways England (2017) *Sustainable Development Strategy: Our Approach* [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/605079/Sustainable_Development_Strategy_6.pdf (last accessed March 2018).

protecting the environment and improving safety and quality of life for current and future generations”.

1.4 Competent expert evidence

- 1.4.1 This ES has been coordinated by a Principal Environmental Coordinator with a masters level degree in Environmental Science who is also a Chartered Environmentalist and Full Member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). The Principal Environmental Coordinator has over 10 years’ professional experience in EIA coordination, authoring ES chapters and non-statutory EIA reports, and peer review of ES chapters for highways schemes. This includes schemes that have progressed through the DCO application process, schemes progressed under the *Highways Act 1980* and road schemes progressed under the *Town and Country Planning Act*.
- 1.4.2 Competent expert evidence for each of the environmental specialist leads is provided within each of the environmental discipline chapters (Chapters 5 to 14 of Volume 6.1).

1.5 Environmental Statement availability

- 1.5.1 This ES, together with other DCO application documents, would be published on Highways England’s project webpage:
- <http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester/>
- 1.5.2 All application documents, including this ES, would be published on the Planning Inspectorate’s website. Application documents can be downloaded free of charge via the following link:
- <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/south-west/a303-sparkford-to-ilchester-dualling/>
- 1.5.3 Paper copies of the documents, including the ES, would be placed on deposit at 2 locations in the area surrounding the scheme for the duration of the pre-examination and examination period, and will be available for the public to view, free of charge, at these locations. Details of the locations would be published in advance in Highways England’s statutory notice of the submission and acceptance of the application, through advertisements in national and local newsletters. The locations will be:
- Haynes International Motor Museum, Sparkford, Yeovil, BA33 7LH.
 - Yeovil Library, King George Street, Yeovil BA20 1PY.

1.5.4 A CD copy of the ES can be provided free of charge. Paper copies of the ES Non-Technical Summary (Volume 6.4) can also be provided free of charge.

1.5.5 Highways England can be contacted:

- By email: A303Sparkfordtoilchesterdualling@highwaysengland.co.uk.
- In writing: 2/70K Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6HA.
- By telephone: 0300 123 5000.