



**Ref: TR010036**

## **Application by Highways England for an Order granting Development Consent for works to the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester**

### **Examining Authority's Note of Unaccompanied Site Inspection on Wednesday 17 October 2018**

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 As Examining Authority (ExA) we undertook our first Unaccompanied Site Inspection on 17 October 2018. The purpose was to support our examination of an application for development consent for the proposed dual carriageway on the A303 linking the Podimore Bypass and the Sparkford Bypass. The application has been made by Highways England (the Applicant).
- 1.2 In the interests of efficiency, we commenced our unaccompanied inspections following our appointment but before the Preliminary Meeting (PM) which was held on 12 December 2018.
- 1.3 Inspections were undertaken from publicly accessible land including highways and public rights of way. No access to private land, including that forming part of the application site, was sought and therefore we were able to undertake the inspection on an unaccompanied basis.
- 1.4 We undertook the inspection on our own. We did not encounter any interested parties or other persons during our inspection, although we visited the Haynes International Motor Museum in Sparkford which has been suggested as a venue for the Issue Specific Hearings.
- 1.5 Weather conditions were reasonable, being cloudy and dry although there had been recent rain. Visibility was acceptable at all times. Our inspection was primarily undertaken by car.
- 1.6 The purpose of this note is:
  - to inform the Applicant, interested parties (IPs) and other persons involved in the Examination of actions already taken by the ExA; and
  - to enable the Applicant and IPs to consider which, if any, additional sites the ExA might need to inspect.
- 1.7 Further site inspections will be required. Before agreeing to any additional site inspections at particular locations, we will consider the degree to which it is necessary to visit a site that has been nominated for an inspection to inform the ExA about the application. We may decide not to visit nominated locations where we have already visited the location or we consider that it is not necessary to see the features to be observed there.
- 1.8 The dates for any Accompanied Site Inspections will be included in the ExA's Examination Timetable and the Rule 8 letter to be issued after the Preliminary Meeting. Arrangements for the Inspections will be published in due course.

1.9 Further site inspection notes will be published following further visits to the site.

## 2. **Particulars of the Inspection**

2.1 The purpose of the visit was for us as ExA to become familiar with the Application site and surrounding area. Our visit commenced at approximately 11:15 hours and was completed by approximately 13:00 hours.

2.2 We began our inspection by arriving along the A303 from the east and noted the current location of the Hazlegrove roundabout. We then drove along the existing A303 to the Podimore roundabout noting the location of the existing Camel Hill Service Area and the various buildings in close proximity to the road along the existing route.

2.3 We then drove eastwards to Sparkford along the existing roads to the south of the A303, starting by following the northern perimeter road of RNAS Yeovilton, through West Camel and the West Camel Conservation Area traversing Southmead, Fore Street and Parsonage Road, to Queen Camel and the Queen Camel Conservation Area along Wales Lane and Blackwell Road. We then drove to Sparkford visiting the existing Sparkford Service Area.

2.4 After this, we drove along the A359 through Sparkford to the Haynes International Motor Museum, noting the Grade II\* Triumphal Arch Gateway to Hazlegrove House and the development currently taking place in the village. Following the brief visit referred to above, where we noted the display of the application materials, we then drove back along the A359 through Queen Camel before turning around at the roundabout at the junction of the A359 with West Camel Road.

2.5 We returned to the A303 and drove to the Podimore Roundabout before heading northeast along the A37 to drive into Babcary from the northwest along Babcary Lane noting the location of the Red Lion Public House. We then followed the direct road back to Sparkford in a south-easterly direction, joining the Sparkford Road to pass under the existing A303 to get to the A359.

2.6 We then travelled along the A303 to the junction with Plowage Lane and continued to West Camel. After this we retraced our route, but crossed over the A303 to Downhead, passing the Medieval Settlement Scheduled Ancient Monument turning at the entrance to Downhead Farm.

2.7 We returned to the A303 stopping in the layby on the north side of the A303 in the approximate location of the proposed Downhead junction. Here we noted the existing landform. We then drove back along the A303 travelling east passing the site of the Camel Hill Romano-British settlement Scheduled Ancient Monument at Camel Hill. We returned to the Sparkford roundabout and pulled into the entrance of Hazlegrove House, but went no further. We then left the area to the east along the existing A303.

## 3. **Conclusion**

3.1 We have now familiarised ourselves with the route of the proposed scheme, existing roads and the surrounding area, including the proximity of the various settlements in its vicinity.

3.2 We did not walk along the various existing routes for Non-Motorised Users. We would anticipate visiting these routes during the course of the Examination. We may visit these routes on an unaccompanied basis since we would be using public

rights of way.

3.3 Further unaccompanied site inspections will take place during the examination.

*Lesley Coffey*

Lesley Coffey  
**Lead Member of the  
Panel of Examining Inspectors**

*Robert Jackson*

Robert Jackson  
**Panel Member**