

From: [REDACTED]
To: [A303 Sparkford to Ilchester](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling - Written representation
Date: 22 January 2019 21:35:35
Attachments: [Written representation to the ExA .pdf](#)
[Meeting Notes A303 31st May 2018.pdf](#)
[A local view of the detailed proposals February 2018.pdf](#)

Dear PINS

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling – Deadline 2 submission.

Please find attached my written representation.

1. Written Representation to the ExA
2. Meeting Notes A303 31st May 2018
3. A local view of the detailed proposals February 2018

A short summary of the written representation follows as requested in the Rule 8 letter.

I would be grateful if you would please confirm receipt.

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling – Project TR010036

Phil Gamble – registration identification number 20015057

Written Representation.

Summary

I am a resident of West Camel who has lived in the village for over 40 years. I have been a Parish Councillor and was Chairman of the Council for a number of years. I was involved at the time of the dualling proposed in 1990 and the resulting Public Enquiry in 1994.

The scheme in principle has the full support of everyone, but it could and should leave a positive local legacy not a missed opportunity which leaves local business and the local community frustrated that yet again the people in charge, who don't have to live with the consequences, know what is best for us!

Many accidents, including loss of life, occur on this section of the A303 and both users of the A303 and locals overwhelmingly welcome the scheme and urge for its early completion.

After inspecting the HE proposals there are several areas where, in my opinion, the scheme does not maximise the benefits to either travellers or local people.

In my detailed written submission I argue for two minor changes which could improve safety for both road users and NMUs and could also save money from the public purse.

- 1. A Parallel Link Road using parts of the existing A303 carriageway.**

2. The removal of the mid-section east-bound junction at Downhead.

Most of the issues and concerns are not new and have been raised with and recorded, during due process, by HE.

My Plea is - Plan for the future whilst achieving the best overall value from the public purse.

Phil Gamble

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Written Representation.

Introduction

I am a resident of West Camel who has lived in the village for over 40 years. I have been a Parish Councillor and was Chairman of the Council for a number of years. I was involved at the time of the dualling proposed in 1990 and the resulting Public Enquiry.

Certain facts and recommendations were made at that time by the inspector, Mr M D Kavanagh, which are as valid today as they were then. The concerns of the local people who will have to live with the final results are as important now as they were then.

The objective is still the same – to dual this section of the A303 from Sparkford to Podimore making the flow of fast moving through traffic as smooth and as safe as possible and to enable slow moving local traffic to go about their business safely without interference.

Many accidents, including loss of life, occur on this section of the A303 and both users of the A303 and locals overwhelmingly welcome the scheme and urge for its early completion.

The scheme in principle has the full support of everyone, but it should leave a positive local legacy not a missed opportunity which leaves local business and the local community frustrated that yet again the people in charge , who don't have to live with the consequences, know what is best for us!

After inspecting the HE proposals there are several areas where the scheme does not maximise the benefits to either travellers or local people.

In this written submission I will argue for two minor changes which, in my opinion, will both improve safety for both road users and NMUs and will also save money from the public purse.

- 1. A Parallel Link Road using parts of the existing A303 carriageway.**
- 2. The removal of the mid-section east-bound junction at Downhead.**

Most of the issues and concerns are not new and have been raised with and recorded, during due process, by HE.

Detailed Representation

1. Creating a Parallel Link Road using parts of the existing A303.

The suggestion of creating a parallel link road for local use has been a central argument of many representations and is formally recognised and recorded by HE (see TR010036-000126-A303_5.12_S47 Consultation Material Annex_K – page 111).

In my opinion, this suggestion has been summarily dismissed by HE without mature and well-argued logic.

In principle this link road would:

- Allow existing local business along this section to survive and could well provide new business opportunities which in turn would support local employment. The local businesses affected include Mattia's Diner, the Shell Petrol station and a newly proposed coffee shop, Crusty Bakery, the Walnut Tree Inn in West Camel village, the Red Lion Inn in Babcary, Wayne's Bistro and the Podimore Inn at Podimore
- Provide a sensible diversion route in the event of an accident, in times of congestion or during maintenance work on the new Expressway.
- Avoids the need to use the A359 through Queen Camel, past a new Primary School and on through Bridgehampton, Stockwich Cross and Podimore village as an alternative diversion route.
- Would provide good access to the RNAS Yeovilton base and also the Fleet Air Arm Museum from the existing Sparkford roundabout. Both west bound and east bound traffic could use this route which could eliminate the need for any intermediate junctions at Downhead.
- Would allow slow moving agricultural traffic to move around the area with ease and without the need to access the new Dual Carriageway/Expressway.
- Would by default enhance local community connectivity with Downhead and Steart Hill who are in the Parish of West Camel but are currently cut off by the existing A303 trunk road. There is a recently constructed new village hall, the Davis Hall, on Howell Hill which offers a full range of community lead activities for local groups together with an all-weather play/tennis court, a children's play area and a newly installed set of exercise equipment for use by adults adjacent to the Davis Hall.
- Would save a considerable amount of public money and possibly time and anguish of diverted motorists during the construction phase of the project. Arguments will no doubt have been put forward by others, more expert in their submissions, which demonstrate possible financial saving by removing the need for separate haul routes and the need for lengthy diversionary routes during the various stages of the project.
- It should also be noted that for many years after the completion of this upgrade, traffic will queue at Podimore roundabout as the first major westbound interchange on the new Expressway. The proposed parallel road would save the small local roads of West Camel and other villages from the "rat-run" traffic.

An extract from the Highways England's Consultation Report 5.1 (para 5.3.5) states

5.3.5 The following significant comments did not result in design changes:

- Requests to retain the existing A303 as a parallel local road to assist local traffic flow and provide a diversionary route avoiding West Camel and Queen Camel in case the A303 is closed. Highways England has not been able to incorporate this suggestion into its design. An analysis of the environmental impact of the scheme had shown it would be marginally worse than the current proposal, due to the presence of the Camel Hill Transmitter Station Local Wildlife Site. There is uncertainty about the availability of MOD land, which would be necessary for the parallel local road proposal. It would not be possible to rely on the use of this land, and doing so would be a risk to the delivery of the scheme. Additionally, the cost of the parallel local road proposal, estimated at £180 million, was more than the £171 million estimated for the current proposal. Highways England recognises concerns about the impact of the scheme on traffic on local roads raised during the statutory consultation. However, Highways England's modelling show that the effect will not be great enough to be considered significant in transport assessment terms. Taken with the fact that the scheme is deliverable without the proposed alternative, Highways England would not be able to justify the inclusion of the parallel local road; *Planning Inspectorate Scheme Ref: TR010036 Application Document Ref: TR010036 /APP-023/5.1 – page 68*

The merits of retaining a parallel link road have been voiced on numerous occasions. Back in 1994 the inspector, Mr M D Kavanagh, at the Public Inquiry recognised the benefits both during the construction phase and after opening the new carriageway.

More recently in the Technical Appraisal Report, when the various options of routes were considered, these same benefits were also stated in the report.

In the early and consequential discussions with Mott-MacDonald and HE the benefits have been emphasised and reinforced with the many and varying benefits.

The merits are particularly poignant for many local people who have to deal with the current effects on a daily basis. As local residents we “enjoy” the dangers and the disruption caused by the “overflow” of A303 westbound through traffic on a regular basis. There is overwhelming support for the dualling of our section of the A303 but please listen to us - future resilience is still important and the ability to provide this must be considered.

Resilience is one of the six major objectives stated by HE in their planning of our future road network and, in my opinion, the need for resilience on this section of the A303 will not change in the immediate future after the new dual carriageway opens.

I would like to challenge and test each of the reason why HE dismissed a parallel link.

In their Consultation Report 5.1 para 5.3.5 HE dismiss retaining a parallel link. They say the following significant comments did not result in design changes:

- Requests to retain the existing A303 as a parallel local road to assist local traffic flow and provide a diversionary route avoiding West Camel and Queen Camel in case the A303 is closed.

I would like to add that resilience is also required when the A303 is busy (West bound traffic already queues at the Sparkford roundabout, particularly on Fridays and Saturdays during the summer months). Will these queues just move on to the traffic lights at Podimore roundabout until the Podimore flyover is constructed? Without the parallel road motorist travelling west would undoubtedly be prompted, with modern sat-nav information, to make their own diversions just as they do now through the lanes and villages between Sparkford and the Podimore roundabout.

The A303 also overflows when the M5 is congested or closed. (This happened in November 2017 when Highways England had one of their consultation days in the Davis Hall. On this occasion the M5 was closed for a prolonged period and this is not unusual).

- An analysis of the environmental impact of the scheme had shown it would be marginally worse than the current proposal, due to the presence of the Camel Hill Transmitter Station Local Wildlife Site.

The suggested change here is only marginal and could/would quickly recover.

- There is uncertainty about the availability of MOD land, which would be necessary for the parallel local road proposal. It would not be possible to rely on the use of this land, and doing so would be a risk to the delivery of the scheme.

The uncertainty about the availability of MOD land must be questioned. It was not required for the 1990 proposals when a parallel route was an option. At an early stage in consultations, Mott MacDonald admitted that availability of this land had not been a priority in discussions with the MOD. Discussions with the MOD have been held to agree to reroute a public footpath on their land but no recorded discussions with regard to releasing land for a parallel link. Why is this? At an early meeting on the 31st May 2018 our MP, David Warburton, offered to help in direct discussion with the appropriate Minister but his help was rebuffed as inappropriate by HE. (Meeting notes of this meeting prepared by HE are attached. I had trouble locating these Meeting Notes in the Examination Library.)

From previous design work it is questionable as to whether any MOD land would be required

- Additionally, the cost of the parallel local road proposal, estimated at £180 million, was more than the £171 million estimated for the current proposal.

The Consultation Report suggests that the cost difference is £9M. Although I understand HE has been in correspondence with West Camel Parish Council detailed financial information has not been made publically available and hence could not be questioned or challenged.

I understand that detailed costs of constructing a parallel link road have been provided to HE by their engineering consultants. If HE believed there is no possibility of providing this link, without negotiating the release of land from the MOD why would they spend time and our money providing this analysis. Also if they have provided a professional detailed costing then much of the design work must have been undertaken so there should be no significant delay were it to be incorporated in the proposal.

I also ask the question “what cost savings have been taken into account in their calculations which offset the direct construction costs”:

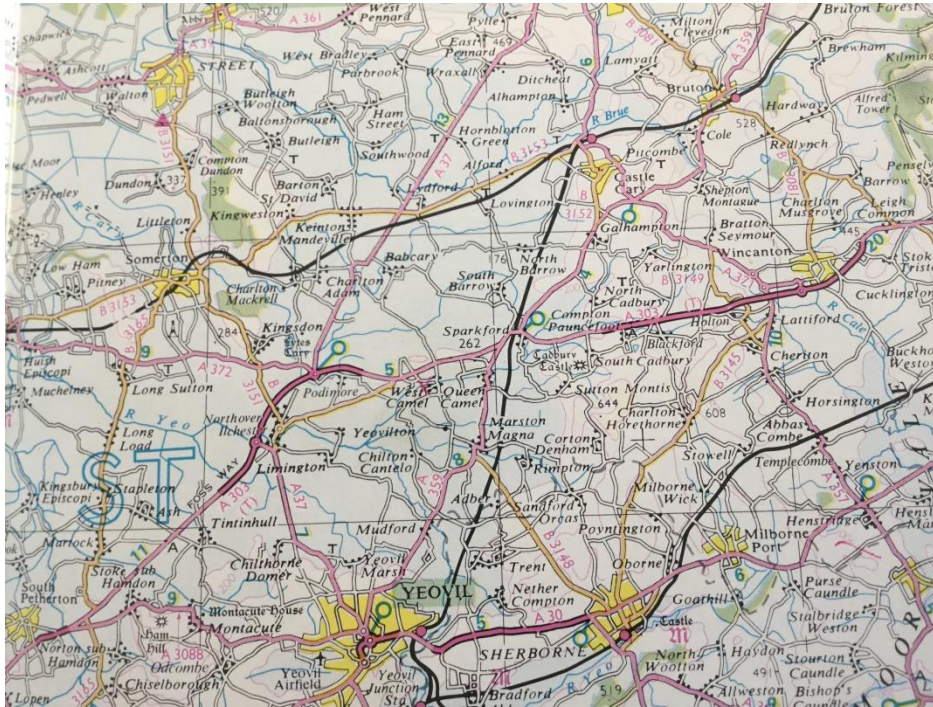
- Does this take into account there would be no need at all for the east-bound junction at Downhead? Access to the RNAS Yeovilton and the Fleet Air Arm Museum from the west would be via the Hazlegrove junction, the Sparkford roundabout and the new parallel road and access from the RNAS Yeovilton and the Fleet Air Arm Museum to the west via the new west bound junction with the B3151. Access to the RNAS Yeovilton and the Fleet Air Arm Museum from the east would be from the new west bound junction with the B3151 and access from the RNAS Yeovilton and the Fleet Air Arm Museum to the east is via the new parallel road, Sparkford roundabout and the Hazlegrove junction.
- Does this take account of the reduced compensation to businesses on route that could continue to trade and benefit our rural economy?
- Does this take into account the major benefits and savings during the construction phase? Minimal rerouting of through traffic, reduction in land required for construction traffic, reduces the need for additional haulage routes, removes the need for temporary bridges for construction traffic (RR1-001- RR-024.6), etc. These are real and major benefits during the construction phase and would benefit drivers reducing stress and the challenges of finding their own diversions routes. These are detailed and submitted in other written representations.
- At the recent Open Floor Hearing (at Yeovil 12th December 2018) Mr Daniel Hewlett, Blackwell Farm, raised the problem of access for emergency vehicles to the Blackwell/Eyewell settlement. HE have already designed and suggested a new access road to Daniel’s farm to enable him to continue trading. I understand an amended proposal is being considered but over a minor road which floods regularly. With the retention of a parallel link road none of this work would be necessary as access could be from the parallel road. Have these possible cost saving been taken into account?

I understand that to join the terminated end of the existing A303 at Camel Hill to the proposed field access road east of Howell Hill and to the south of the new dual carriageway would require, approximately, an additional 370 metres of tarmac road.

- [Highways England recognises concerns about the impact of the scheme on traffic on local roads raised during the statutory consultation. However, Highways England’s modelling show that the effect will not be great enough to be considered significant in transport assessment terms.](#)

Traffic calming is already an issue in the village of West Camel, where the two through roads narrow to single track with no pedestrian footway, because the village is on a daily rat-run route. In my opinion the presented traffic modelling predictions are open to challenge.

There are no easy links between west and north of the Podimore roundabout and east and south of Sherborne. (see map below). For the commuter and the frequent traveller the challenge is to find a suitable cross-country route to join the B3148 at Marston Magna.



Regular travellers, and there are many, tend to find their own favourite routes and many journey through the village of West Camel. I believe that providing a mid-section junction at Downhead off the east-bound carriageway would make this option a firm favourite for regular commuters, further challenging the control of rat-run traffic through the village.

- Taken with the fact that the scheme is deliverable without the proposed alternative, Highways England would not be able to justify the inclusion of the parallel local road;

Just because the scheme is deliverable without the inclusion of a parallel road is not a sound, logical or professional reason to dismiss it.

Several local people with considerable experience of similar projects have offered engineering details and contributed to the consultation process but seemingly their practical options have not been fully costed or, if they have, this information has not been shared.

During the construction phase. I don't think the full benefits of being able to maintain the existing road or a newly constructed parallel link road should be underestimated. Ignoring this impact, both financial and to driver stress for the through traffic users, who are already 2+ hours into their journey, particularly at weekends (throughout the year and not only in the summer months) is inexcusable and must not be discounted. No doubt this is difficult to quantify and would not appear as a direct costs for HE or on the public purse but would be a significant individual burden on each and every road user.

Another significant benefit from the existence of a southerly parallel route is the safety-at-work opportunities. This proposal not only does it provide greater physical separation between construction workers and the fast moving traffic but it also significantly reduces the need for mixing construction traffic and commuters with far fewer road crossings.

- Requests to provide through roads for businesses which currently have direct access to the A303. This is not possible while meeting the scheme's objective of removing at-grade accesses to the A303. Access to these properties will be maintained by the scheme;

A parallel link road would provide a through road for all the existing businesses situated on the existing A303 and at least give them a chance of survival in testing business conditions. It would also maintain access to Blackwell Farm with no new road required. Also access for emergency vehicles to the hamlet of Blackwell could be maintained in spite of regular flood conditions.

The recent **Comments on Relevant Representations** submitted for deadline 1 – (document RR1-001) record HE's response, on multiple occasions, to the suggestion of a parallel road by saying:

The proposed dual carriageway has been deliberately aligned to maximise retention of the existing A303 carriageway for this use. Between the A359 (Hazlegrove) and B3151 (Camel Cross) junctions - a distance of 3.5 kilometers - a total of 2.3 kilometers of existing carriageway will be retained for this purpose.

Whilst developing this aspect of the scheme, 2 major land constraints were identified which have prevented the remaining 1.2 kilometres of existing carriageway from being retained (or the provision of a new alternative). At the summit of Camel Hill there is a Scheduled Monument immediately to the north of the existing A303 and land owned by the Ministry of Defense (MOD) immediately to the south of the A303. The existing A303 carriageway passes between these 2 sites. It has been determined that a dual carriageway can also be accommodated through this corridor, although there is insufficient width to accommodate an additional single carriageway without acquisition of land from either the Scheduled Monument or the MOD.

Regarding the Scheduled Monument, consultation with Historic England concluded that they would not support the scheme if proposals involved the acquisition of any land from this site. Acquiring land to the north of the A303 for a parallel local road at this location was therefore rejected.

Regarding the MOD site, Highways England are not able to acquire land from the MOD by compulsion. Any land for the scheme would therefore have to be acquired through agreement. The Applicant decided that reliance on acquiring the land through agreement presented a high risk both in terms of the project's programme and the potential for buried services in this location.

It could be deduced from this response that HE did not even investigate the option of acquiring the necessary MOD land for a continuation of a parallel road. The suggestion of maintaining a parallel link has been discussed since the early days and the indications are that HE had already decided on their position.

I do not feel that this is an adequate response to what has been and still is a major concern to many people who have registered and made their representations on the matter. There is an indication that the additional amount of land if required is small (if any is actually required at all) and that the MOD are willing to discuss the details.

It is also noted that on the works plans that the east and west carriageways of the proposed design have already started to diverge at this pinch point which would impact significantly on the amount of land required from the MOD. Common sense would suggest that at a pinch point you minimise the “extras” to test whether the necessary essentials are possible. Previous professionally produced designs have accommodated a dual carriageway and a single carriageway at this point.

To further highlight the situation, only recently have HE been in discussions with the MOD and expeditiously agreed the rerouting of a Public Footpath over MOD land for inclusion in the scheme.

2. Is the mid-section east-bound junction at Downhead necessary?

An extract from the [Highways England Consultation Report 5.1](#) (para 5.3.5) states

5.3.5 The following significant comments did not result in design changes:

- Requests to remove Downhead Lane junction and Hazlegrove junction from the scheme. These have been retained as they are required to maintain access between local roads and the A303, and to enable local road and non-motorised users to cross the A303 once at-grade junctions are removed; *Planning Inspectorate Scheme Ref: TR010036 Application Document Ref: TR010036 /APP-023/5.1 – page 68*

The Downhead junction only provides access to the A303 for local traffic. The links to the A303 to/from the National Trunk A-Road network are at the Podimore roundabout (A37 links to Yeovil and Bristol) and at the Sparkford roundabout (A359 Castle Cary and Yeovil).

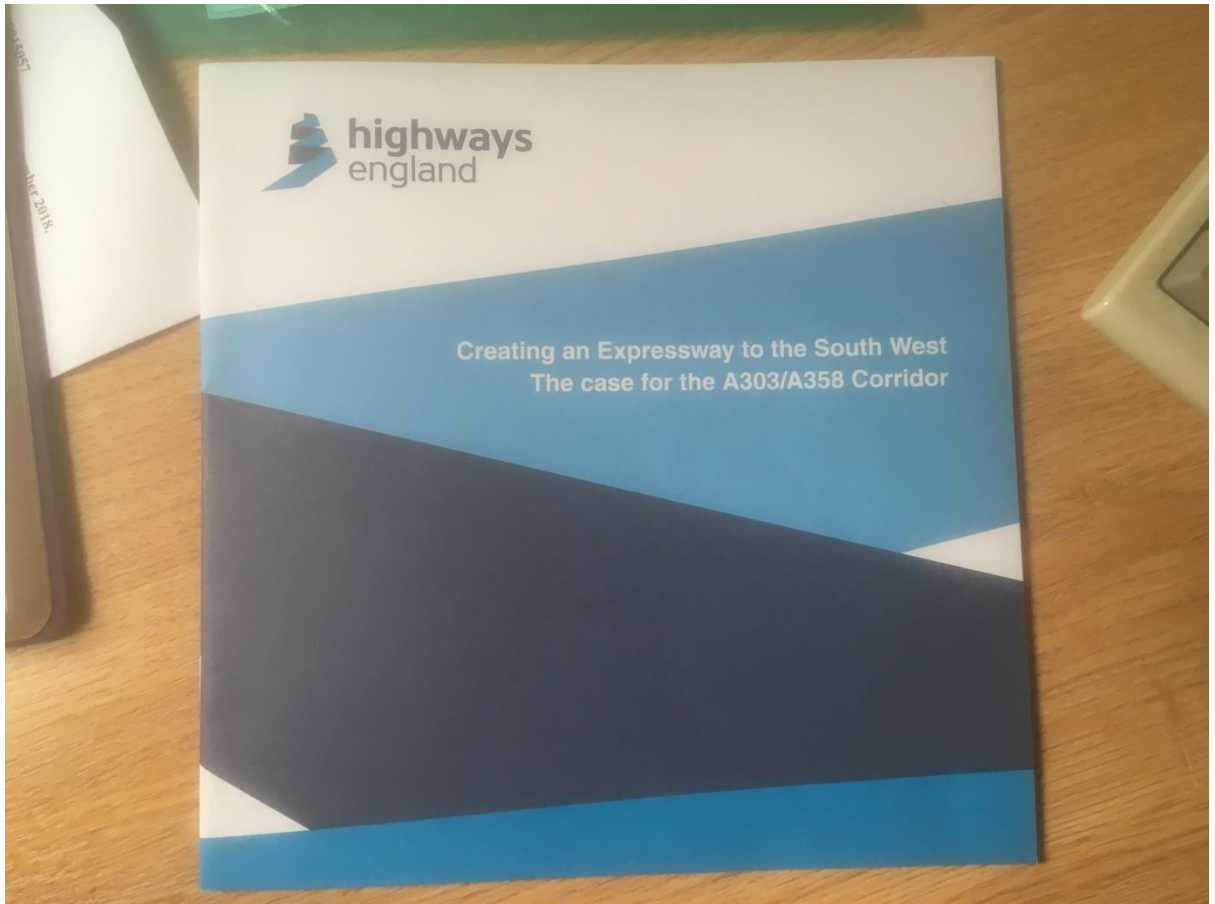
As a major safety issue and in Highways England's own words, from their Technical Appraisal Report (para 8. Safety Assessment), "Fewer junction means improved safety - reduces junction hopping and carriageway weaving". With less than 6kms between junctions at Podimore and Hazelgrove the safe use of the proposed dual-carriageway could be improved by removing the mid-section east-bound junction at Downhead.

I recognise that this junction would provide easy access for two large agricultural enterprises situated north of the current A303, who frequently only use the A303 to gain access to either the Podimore or Sparkford roundabouts where they leave the A303 to gain access to farming land.

In a recent publicity release from the DfT, reported on in the National press on 30th December 2018, data showed that the number of crashes caused by slow drivers increased by almost a third last year. Analysis of DfT data found that two people were killed and 175 injured in accidents in which a driver was going too slowly for the conditions or a slow-moving vehicle was a contributing factor. The total number of casualties was 31 per cent higher than for the previous year.

HE state that the current proposals are for the upgrade to a dualled carriageway and not to Expressway standards but looking forward in a recent article ([published in the Times "Tractor ban on A-roads puts farmers in a jam" page 18 Saturday 27th October 2018](#)) Jim O'Sullivan, chief executive of Highways England, confirmed their continuing commitment to convert a small number of dual carriageways into motorway standard expressways starting with the A14(M) between Cambridge and Huntingdon.

- “Creating an Expressway to the South West, The case for the A303/A358 Corridor” (PR155/16)



- “A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme, Public Consultation” (PR103/16)

If this section were upgraded to Expressway status then it would restrict access to slow moving traffic. Alternative arrangement would have to be considered to cater for large slow moving agricultural vehicles involving additional expense with possible significant impact on the local community of West Camel.

I believe to provide this proposed east-bound junction is questionable and certainly not a good use of public money to provide a junction just for local users which in the future becomes inaccessible by two large local agricultural businesses.

Without the east-bound junction at Downhead access to the RNAS Yeovilton and the Fleet Air Arm Museum from the west would be via the Hazlegrove junction, the Sparkford roundabout and the new parallel road. Access from the RNAS Yeovilton and the Fleet Air Arm Museum to the west via the new west-bound junction with the B3151.

Access to the RNAS Yeovilton and the Fleet Air Arm Museum from the east would be from the new west-bound junction with the B3151 and access from the RNAS Yeovilton and the Fleet Air Arm Museum to the east is via the new parallel road, Sparkford roundabout and the Hazlegrove junction.

Without the east-bound Downhead junction it would be possible to upgrade the A303 from Mere to Podimore and beyond to Expressway standard without any impact on local connectivity. Over this section there are existing local roads essential to maintain local access with no further actions or expense necessary, assuming the parallel road is maintained.

Final Comments

My plea is - Plan for the future whilst achieving the best overall value from the public purse.

The Parish of West Camel is a small caring and self-supporting active community.

The majority of residents are fully supportive of dualling this section of the A303 and have been so since the first proposal back in 1990. It can't come soon enough. We have had a long time to think about it, suffer the consequences when the proposals were aborted, and welcome the separation of fast moving through traffic from slower local vehicles.

All through the consultation process, in written publications and in written and oral exchanges HE has stated that local views and concerns would form one of the central themes in their design considerations. Local organisations/agents have been actively engaged throughout – positively, honestly, ardently, openly, and with constructive contributions.

[Quote from HE PR170/17 A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dually Scheme – Statutory Public Consultation](#)

[Local Communities: We need to consider effects on local communities both during construction and once the new road is open to traffic. Before construction starts, we will develop a community relations strategy setting out how we will work alongside the local communities to reduce disruption.](#)

Yet the perception is that local views have fallen on deaf ears and those local views, ideas and concerns have been summarily dismissed and not been treated to due diligence.

In my opinion this was adequately demonstrated by Mr Julian Boswall, HE solicitor, in his unfortunate and untimely comments towards the end of the Open Hearing Meeting at Yeovil on the 12th December 2018, when he stated that the changes suggested had already been considered and dismissed. Mr Boswall intimated that HE would not be making any revisions. I was obviously mistaken into thinking that this decision would be made by the Examining Authority. In my opinion the changes suggested are minor and not material in planning terms and would not significantly delay the project, as most of the design and survey work has already been completed (and paid for).

It is generally accepted that major projects such as this are for the benefits of the many but the impact on the few deserve due consideration.

Plan for the future whilst achieving the best overall value from the public purse.

Phil Gamble

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Associated attachments

- **Copy of Meeting Notes for 31st May 2018 prepared by HE.**
- **Copy of an email to Highways England in February 2018. A local view of the detailed proposals for the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme – February 2018.**

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester dualling scheme

Meeting note

Date: 31 May 2018 **Time:** 1400

Location: Davis Hall,
Howell Hill,
West Camel,
Yeovil BA22
7QX

Attendees: Barry Gadsden (West Camel Parish Council)
Les Stevens (West Camel Parish Council)
John Wade (West Camel Parish Council)
Keith Tingey (West Camel Working Group)
Phil Gamble (West Camel Working Group)
Cllr Mike Lewis (South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council)
David Warburton MP (Member of Parliament for Somerton and Frome)
Mike O'Dowd Jones (Somerset County Council)
Jo Manley (South Somerset District Council)
Alex Murphy (Mott MacDonald Sweco Joint Venture)
Douglas Johnson (Mott MacDonald Sweco Joint Venture)
Chris White (Mott MacDonald Sweco Joint Venture)
Andrew Alcorn (Highways England)
Elliot Hayes (Highways England)

Apologies: None

No.	Actions / Key Messages	Owner
1.0	Introductions	
1.1	David Warburton MP (DW) opened the meeting, introducing himself as the local MP and inviting attendees to introduce themselves.	
1.2	Barry Gadsden (BG) set out that he is Chairman of West Camel Parish Council (WCPC), and that the purpose of the meeting was to understand how Highways England had responded to feedback from the recent statutory consultation.	

	Elliot Hayes (EH) noted that WCPC had set out a number of agenda points prior to the meeting, and proposed to address each of these in turn.	
2.0	Scheme design	
2.1	Alex Murphy (AM) set out changes to the design of the scheme that had been made following the statutory consultation, particularly with regards to the proposed new junctions at Hazlegrove, Downhead and Camel Cross. Camel Cross junction has been amended to include a roundabout. The layout of Downhead junction is now significantly more compact, as the skew bridge shown during the statutory consultation has now been straightened. Hazlegrove junction now includes a roundabout north of the A303; the need to reduce impacts on Hazlegrove Park and Garden remains a key consideration for the design of this junction. Highways England has considered Somerset County Council's comments about traffic speed and merging in updating the design for each of these junctions.	
2.2	BG set out that these changes did not address a major concern raised by WCPC in its response to the statutory consultation, that the inclusion of a junction at Downhead would encourage more traffic to pass through West Camel. The scheme did not include the retention of the existing A303 as a parallel local road, as suggested by WCPC.	
2.3	AM set out that Highways England had assessed the proposal for a parallel local road, and had not included in the scheme because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An analysis of the environmental impact of the scheme had shown it would be marginally worse than the current proposal, due in part to the presence of the Camel Hill Transmitter Station Local Wildlife Site There was uncertainty about the availability of MOD land, which would be necessary for the parallel local road proposal. It would not be possible to rely on the use of this land, and doing so would be a risk to the delivery of the scheme The cost of the parallel local road proposal, estimated at £180 million, was more than the £171 million estimated for the current proposal 	
2.4	EH set out that Highways England recognises the concerns about the impact of the scheme on traffic on local roads raised during the statutory consultation. However, Highways England's modelling show that the effect will not be great enough to be considered significant in transport assessment terms. Taken with the fact that the scheme is deliverable without the proposed alternative, Highways England would	

	not be able to justify the inclusion of the parallel local road.	
2.5	Phil Gamble (PG) asked whether it would be physically possible to fit the parallel local road between the Camel Hill Transmitter Station to the south and the Scheduled Ancient Monument to the north. AM set out that this would require the use of MOD land.	
2.6	DW asked if there was uncertainty over the MOD land because of a difficulty communicating with the MOD. He offered to facilitate this contact if required. AM explained that Highways England had been in contact with the MOD, but that there was no formal agreement on the use of the land.	
2.7	Andrew Alcorn (AA) set out that there is a lengthy process required to acquire Crown Land. The delivery timescales required of Highways England by the Government mean that it must submit a DCO application in July 2018. Were Highways England to submit a DCO application including the proposed parallel local road, it could not be certain of the use of the MOD land; this in turn would present a risk to the delivery of the project. BG set out his disappointment that the parallel road would not be included due to a relatively small strip of land.	
2.8	Cllr Mike Lewis (ML) asked whether the district or county councils could buy the land. EH explained that only the relevant Crown Authority has the ability to dispose of Crown Land.	
2.9	Les Stevens (LS) asked whether Highways England had considered the benefit in terms of cost of removing the need for a haul road. EH noted that the calculation of cost and benefit is more complex; removing the all-movements junction at Downhead would negatively affect the cost-benefit ratio. AM confirmed that the cost estimate for the parallel local road did not include a junction at Downhead, but that it did include an overbridge. PG asked whether Highways England would supply its cost estimate for the parallel local road; AA said that it would.	EH
2.10	PG set out that the proposal for the parallel local road was rooted in safety concerns. He noted that there are several local businesses, such as Hopkins and Lindsay Clark, which farm large areas and need to access Podimore roundabout. The inclusion of a junction at Downhead would therefore create a risk of 2 lanes of slow moving agricultural traffic. In addition, the eventual shift to expressway standard would result in these businesses either switching to use local roads or losing their ability to work effectively in the area. BG noted there is an additional risk with the junction or an overbridge that these vehicles will simply move through West Camel. PG set out that the proposal for a parallel local road would allow businesses to access the local road network without	

	moving through West Camel.	
2.11	LS set out that he did not recall the Local Wildlife Site from the statutory consultation, and asked what it comprised. He noted it is regularly mowed and includes a footpath. AM set out that it was included in the Environmental Constraints Plan published during the statutory consultation, and that Highways England would revert on the designation of the site. Jo Manley (JM) noted that the Camel Hill Transmitter Station Local Wildlife Site is included in South Somerset District Council's website.	EH
2.12	DW asked whether the junction at Downhead was necessary. Chris White (CW) said it was required to maintain local access. PG asked who benefits from the junction; EH set out that the junction will provide local businesses with the access they need to the A303, and that it would prevent community severance. AA noted that he had challenged the junction during the design process, and that its removal would affect the cost benefit ratio for the scheme. PG asked to see the figures supporting this argument; AA agreed.	EH
2.13	PG set out that his main concerns remained safety. AA noted that safety is one of Highways England's central imperatives, and that it was important to maintain a balance with access.	
3.0 Traffic calming measures in West Camel		
3.1	CW said that traffic modelling did show that the proposed parallel local road would relieve traffic through West Camel. However, the modelling also showed that implementing traffic calming would be as effective in relieving traffic through West Camel. AM set out that, given that the parallel local road performed worse than the existing scheme, Highways England was proposing to fund traffic calming measures in West Camel and would welcome WCPC's views.	
3.2	CW noted that the traffic volumes in question are relatively low, with an increase of several hundred vehicles per day by 2038. LS set out that the issue was that the roads in West Camel are not classified, unlike those in Sparkford and Queen Camel. The real issue is that traffic levels in West Camel are already a problem; Highways England has designed the scheme using a local baseline, but for WCPC the baseline is already unacceptable. There are issues with volume, which WCPC has measured reaching 800 vehicles per day, and speed. CW noted that traffic calming measures would address the projected increase by 2038. PG asked whether it would be possible for Highways England to share these numbers; CW confirmed that it could.	EH

3.3	LS questioned whether traffic calming measures would actually relieve traffic through West Camel. WCPC had understood from previous meetings with Somerset County Council that it is not possible to calm volumes of traffic. BG set out that satnav systems were contributing to the volume of traffic through the village.	
3.4	EH said that traffic calming would reduce vehicle speeds and encourage drivers to use classified road. With regards satnav systems, AA set out that this would result in these appearing slower, and therefore less attractive, to drivers when presented as an option on satnav systems. PG noted this relied on drivers and satnavs behaving as expected; AA set out that data collection through phones meant that satnavs were becoming more effective.	
3.6	LS asked what the model shows happening to traffic which would have gone through West Camel. CW said that it in part goes to Podimore.	
3.7	CW set out Highways England's proposals for traffic calming. He noted that these included horizontal measures such as pinch points rather than vertical measures such as speed bumps, as the latter would require the introduction of permanent street lighting in the village. The design of these measures would need to be appropriate to the vehicles which travel through the village; PG noted this includes combine harvesters.	
3.8	DW asked whether traffic calming measures would result in an increase in noise for residents. AA set out that reducing the speed and volume of traffic would reduce noise impacts.	
3.9	LS set out that there is already a gate at the top of Howell Hill, which is not effective in reducing traffic volume or speed through the village. Traffic calming measures would therefore need to be physical to be effective.	
3.10	BG set out that he would like to see more significant measures at the top of the village. DW asked whether speed humps would be more effective in this regard. BG set out that the measures proposed at the bottom of the village are similar to those that WCPC has requested from Somerset County Council.	
3.11	LS asked whether any consideration had been given to closing Plowage Lane to traffic. This would allow traffic calming measures to be concentrated, and also reduce issues on Fore Street. PG said that the change in road size on Plowage Lane meant it was one of the most dangerous roads in the village. AM suggested it might be possible to add in another narrow point further along Plowage Lane.	
3.12	BG asked whether Highways England would listen to requests to close Plowage Lane if this was in keeping with	

	local opinion. LS noted that it is a Somerset County Council road, and asked for their view. Mike O'Dowd Jones (MODJ) set out that Somerset County Council did not close roads lightly; there would need to be a robust assessment, supported by consultation. The County Council would likely prefer to resolve the issues using other measures if possible.	
3.13	DW said that even more mitigation would reduce the impact of traffic further. PG noted that, in his view, the most effective mitigation would be the inclusion of the proposed parallel local road, and that this would be worth the additional 5% cost.	
3.14	AA reiterated the reasons for not including the proposed parallel local road in the scheme. He also set out that Highways England would like to understand what it could do to address WCPC's concerns about the traffic impacts of the scheme. If Highways England can make the situation better, it would consider that a benefit.	
3.15	AA set out that Highways England understands the issue with securing traffic calming in West Camel has been delivery, and the availability of funding to Somerset County Council. He said that Highways England would provide funding to Somerset County Council which would enable it to put in place traffic calming measures in West Camel in advance of the upgrade to the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester.	
3.16	BG said this would be welcome as it mirrors what WCPC has already asked for, but that it would only begin to offset the impact of the junction at Downhead.	
3.17	LS asked whether Highways England would deliver the traffic calming measures. AA explained that Highways England would not be able to include the traffic calming measures within the DCO; this will allow them to be delivered in advance. Instead, Highways England will provide Somerset County Council with funding to do the work. He noted it was likely Highways England would include a condition with the funding to ensure it was used for the traffic calming measures, and in advance of the upgrade of the A303.	
3.18	MODJ accepted that there the introduction of traffic calming measures in the village had been slow to date. However, he felt the allocation of funding would enable the measures to be delivered before the upgrade of the A303. He also noted that he was pleased with the fact that Highways England had taken WCPC's concerns seriously, and that the measures proposed exceeded what many other developers would provide. DW agreed with this latter point.	
3.19	ML asked whether and why more traffic would go through	

	Podimore, which he noted fell within his division at Somerset County Council. AM explained the proposal for a junction at Camel Cross.	
3.20	JM asked how the traffic calming measures would sit alongside the DCO when they were related to the upgrade of the A303. EH set out that, because traffic modelling does not show a significantly adverse effect on West Camel, the measures would effectively be voluntary mitigation outside of the DCO. MODJ noted there would need to be a legal discussion to ensure that the proposals for traffic calming did not prejudice the planning process.	
4.0	Expressway standard	
4.1	LS asked how the evolution of the A303 to an expressway would work. AA set out that the RIS talks about an intention to create a route to the south west which meets expressway standards. However, Highways England is still in the process of developing an appropriate timescale for this. Delivery will need to take place on extended sections of road to be effective.	
4.2	PG set out that he felt there was an opportunity to deliver a road to expressway standards in this section of the A303 by including the proposal for a parallel local road. This would mean Highways England did not need to return at a later date with fresh proposals to upgrade the road to expressway standard.	
4.3	MODJ set out that Somerset County Council believes the questions of finding alternative routes for users who will be removed from the A303 as part of the move to expressway standard needs to be addressed.	
5.0	Noise	
5.1	EH noted that WCPC had also asked about noise mitigation east of Howell Hill. AM set out that noise modelling did not show any significant effects at that location after mitigation. Mitigation would include quiet surfacing, bunds, planting and the use of a false cutting.	
5.2	PG asked about the height of the false cutting. AM said that Highways England would report back on this point.	EH
5.3	PG asked about the impact of noise on Orchard Park, and set out that it would be good to see Highways England's noise assessments. AM explained that noise assessments had been carried out as part of the production of the Environmental Statement, and that this information would be available when it is published as part of the DCO application.	

6.0	Close of meeting	
6.1	BG set out that WCPC had a difficult message to take to people in West Camel following the meeting. He said he was disappointed that the parallel road had not been included due to the presence of a small strip of MOD land; he felt people in the village would likely ask why this had not been required for a similar scheme in 1991. He noted that this meant Highways England would need to return in the future to upgrade the road to expressway standard. However, WCPC would explore the proposed traffic calming measures with Somerset County Council.	

A local view of the detailed proposals for the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme – February 2018

The benefits of having a link road to the South during construction.

There are many arguments in favour of establishing/maintaining a local link road as part of the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme, some of which are included in the Highways England Scheme Assessment Report.

The benefit of having a link road to the **south** of the new Expressway is that it could be constructed without the need to interfere with the daily traffic currently using the A303. The new short section of single carriageway, that needs to be constructed between the top of Camel Hill and the existing A303 to the west of Howell Hill, intersects with the existing A303 carriageway at points where the carriageway is wide enough to accommodate the necessary construction work unfettered.

Once this link is established the construction of the new Expressway can begin and continue unfettered without the need to affect the daily A303 traffic flow. There would be no need for traffic diversions with the extra travel miles, or overloading of these diversionary routes, or the frustration of the drivers who follow them, or the challenge of following your own sat-nav options, which are readily available today, in trying to better the official diversion to save time and money and which increases the annoyance in those local settlements who are not equipped to deal with such a volume of traffic.

This would immediately improve the safety for construction workers as it provides greater separation of workers from fast moving vehicles.

This would reduce the necessity to establish haulage routes through productive farm land for the duration of the project and the cost of their reinstatement after the work has finished thus reducing the overall costs of the project from the public purse.

Benefits from having a link road means that the need for several junctions both on and off of the new Expressway could be reviewed, possibly reducing proposed project costs thus making the provision of a link road cost beneficial.

Below are local comments about the proposed junctions on the proposed route which could be validated with appropriate traffic monitoring and measurement.

- 1) With the establishment of the local link between Podimore roundabout and Hazlegrove Roundabout the need for the Downhead junction on and off the eastbound carriageway becomes unnecessary or becomes a very expensive option to provide that access for a limited number of road users.
 - a) Considering the on junction first. At present very few road users turn right onto the eastbound carriageway of the A303 at the B3151 junction. The bulk of this traffic

requiring to travel east are from the RNAS or the FAA Museum (commuters or deliveries) and would access the road by travelling directly to the Podimore roundabout. If the link were available then they could travel via this route to the Hazlegrove roundabout and gain access further east there. This route would also support any ad hoc heavy Military needs, as it does now. All local traffic from West Camel or those who rat run through the village would also gain access to the link road and then travel to the east to the Hazlegrove roundabout and beyond.

- b) Considering the off junction. Again there would be the opportunity to exit the A303 at the Podimore roundabout and follow the same routes as they do now with a number of options through local communities and narrow byroads. Unless a new road were constructed between Podimore roundabout and the RNAS direct, the main sufferers of this would be the residents of High Street Podimore as the majority of this traffic is likely to travel this way. The major beneficiaries from a no-off option would be the villagers of West Camel, (residents on Plowage, Keep Street, Fore Street, Howell Hill and Parsonage Road)

c) Cost/benefit of this junction please!

- 2) With the establishment of the local link between Podimore roundabout and Hazlegrove Roundabout the need for the junction off the eastbound carriageway at Hazlegrove becomes unnecessary or becomes a very expensive option to provide that access for a limited number of road users.
 - a) Who would use this junction? Anyone wishing to gain access to the A359 to travel north would continue along the Expressway to the next junction (approx. 1km) without the need to negotiate the horrendous link to the Hazlegrove roundabout and then along Sparkford High Street, and then to turn left by the cricket pitch before they join the road where they would be if they continued along the new Expressway for another 1km.
 - b) Anyone traveling to Hazlegrove School would join the new link road from the Podimore roundabout and travel safely with their valuable children to the school along the route they use now, without the need to compete with fast moving commuter traffic on a daily basis. This would also provide access for the local employees at the Sparkford Services.
 - c) Anyone wishing to gain access to the A359 to travel south, I suspect, would only be travelling to Queen Camel or the immediate vicinity. Anyone wishing to travel beyond Queen Camel, (ie Marston Magna or Sherborne and beyond) would have exited at Podimore roundabout and used the local roads rather than travel further east before doubling back on themselves to travel through the traffic calmed Queen Camel to get to their destination.

d) Cost/benefit of this junction please!

- 3) With the establishment of the local link between Podimore roundabout and Hazlegrove Roundabout the need for the junction onto the westbound carriageway at the B3151. Wayne's Bistro becomes unnecessary or becomes a very expensive option to provide that access for a limited number of road users.
 - a) Who would use this junction? The obvious answer is anyone who temporarily stops off the westbound carriageway to enjoy refreshments at Wayne's. Also anyone who is traveling through West Camel and/or the surrounding local roads who want to gain access to a major trunk road traveling west or north. This traffic could travel directly

to Podimore roundabout but may have to use Podimore High Street dependant on the route the new link road takes.

- b) I suspect the bulk of the possible users would be the commuters and deliveries from the RNAS or the FAA Museum who currently travel directly to the Podimore roundabout through Podimore village in order to gain safe access to the A303 to travel west. I am sure traffic data for this junction is readily available.

c) Cost/benefit of this junction please!

- 4) With the establishment of the local link between Podimore roundabout and Hazlegrove Roundabout the need for the junction off the westbound carriageway at the B3151, Wayne's Bistro should be reviewed.
 - a) I understand the arguments for keeping this westbound off junction to satisfy the current travellers to the RNAS, the FAA Museum or those just stopping at Wayne's Bistro for refreshments. But a counter argument could be that, with the continuation of the link road through to the Podimore roundabout, it may well encourage eager travellers, whose sat-navs/travel information links foresee a hold up at the traffic lights at the roundabout, to exit the new Expressway at this point and travel down the link road through down Podimore village High Street to join the A303 at the roundabout, where (currently) there are no traffic lights controlling access.

Highways England and Mott MacDonald seem to be focused on minimising cost (quite rightly so) but the new Expressway must be fit for purpose as well as delivering value for money.

If the provision of a resilient local link is to be considered as a viable option then the impact on the provision of the proposed junction arrangements should be an essential requirement. If any of the junctions are found unnecessary then it could offer considerable saving on project construction cost and construction time, as well as savings on land utilisation, and possibly make the building of the additional short section of road required to complete the link road to the south of the next Expressway cost beneficial.

The benefits of having a link road after construction.

Improved Safety

Safety should always be the number one priority. A link road will allow total separation of large volumes of fast moving through traffic and slower moving local traffic. Fewer junction means improved safety - reduces junction hopping and carriageway weaving. It is less than 6km from the Podimore roundabout to the Hazlegrove junction. Separating slow moving traffic from fast moving traffic improves safety and reduces accidents. **(quotes from Highways England scheme literature)**

On the subject of safety, the access to and from Hazlegrove School seems to be fraught with danger as it is shown very close to the acceleration lane accessing the westbound carriageway. This access to the school is used daily by Mums with young children on board travelling slowly to turn left into the school and then, when leaving, having to turn right across the traffic flow of vehicles who are anxious to join the Expressway at the correct speed.

Resilience

Resilience is how well a road copes with difficult or unforeseen events. Opportunities for resilience should not be missed at the design stage. A local link between Podimore roundabout and Sparkford roundabout would provide the long term resilience of this section. **(again direct quotes from Highways England Scheme Assessment Report)**

The villages of Queen Camel, West Camel, Bridgehampton and Podimore are currently exposed on a regular basis to the overflow traffic from the A303. After construction the link road would handle all this traffic without any need for any drivers to find a more circuitous route around any hold ups on the main Expressway.

Locally it is felt that without close monitoring and active traffic management at the traffic lights at Podimore roundabout then there will continue to be the opportunity for congestion to occur at these traffic lights until the flyover is constructed.

An added attraction for Queen Camel is that after the new Expressway is open local traffic from the immediate West Camel area wishing to travel east on the A303, or north on the A359 or just fetching and carrying school children to North Cadbury, Hazlegrove or Ansford will no longer travel through Queen Camel because they will be able to safely turn right onto the link road to get to Hazlegrove roundabout and then beyond.

The link road would also provide economic benefits to a rural community. There are several business enterprises, employing local people, whose survival is put at risk if the local link between Hazlegrove and Podimore roundabouts is removed. Mattia's Diner and Take Away, the Shell Fuel Station (and a newly proposed drive through coffee shop), the Walnut Tree Hotel and Restaurant, Crusty Bakery, Wayne's Bistro and the Podimore Inn all benefit heavily from passing trade from the current A303 location. Whether they will survive as viable businesses, providing much need employment, if a link road is not provided is a major issue in the local communities.

With the longer term ambitions of Highways England of Expressway status, with the consequential traffic restrictions, then the needs for maintaining links for local communities should be considered at the design stage. If this does not happen then local communities become disrupted and local enterprises are allowed to fail unless huge amounts of money are made available to remake links that could and should have be considered at the design stage. And we all know that this will not happen.

Kind Regards

Phil Gamble

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