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Subject: TR010036 - Written representation for Deadline 3
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Dear PINS

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling – Project TR010036

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Written Representation for Deadline 3

Expressways or not?

In reply to the ExA written question 1.7.2 HE reply that

The applicant will upgrade this section of the A303 to a high-quality dual carriageway as part of the scheme in future Road Investment Periods. HE has a longer-term aspiration to upgrade the busiest A-roads to provide a motorway-quality and consistent journey experience with improved safety compared to All Purpose Trunk Road routes. The case for these upgrades will be established on a case-by-case basis, with need and value for money taken into consideration. The term “Expressway” is used only to differentiate a new design standard for new and upgraded A roads from other types of road improvement, which is awaiting publication. This section of the A303 has taken cognisance of this standard. HE will not be introducing the term “Expressway” as a concept to road users and they will not have to learn new signs or rules.

I feel this reply is disingenuous and duplicitous. HE have already introduced the concept in their released publications. (see my written representation for Deadline 2)

In their publication PR155/16 “**Creating an Expressway to the South West – The case for the A303/A358 Corridor**” they state:

In 2014 the Government announced £2 billion to start transforming the Corridor into an Expressway to the South West. The long term aim is to create a road where “mile-a-minute” travel is the norm.

Expressways are a new idea for England’s roads. They will be strategic A-roads that are as reliable and as safe as motorways.

On many occasions HE continues to use the word “Expressway” in their submissions.

Taking into account HE’s new policy and their new design standards, in their response to your question they suggest that HE “**has taken cognisance of this standard**”. **What does this mean? The design is either to the new standard or it is not.**

Maintaining a Parallel Link road.

From an examination of the Statements of Common Ground there is overall support for the project in principle but with the need for minor adjustments, such as the benefits for maintaining a parallel link road.

Nowhere in the submission for deadline 2 can I find any additional material arguments from HE with regard to the lack of providing a parallel link road.

Powerful arguments in support of such a link road are made by the local Parish Councils and also by individuals, Mr BG Norman and Mr AK Tingey, who support their submissions with significant detailed evidence.

In their original scoping assessments HE clearly listed the benefits and issues of each of their route options. Over recent months Mott MacDonald have continued to develop the preferred option addressing many of the issues but it is my submission that most of the remaining weaknesses of the preferred route, identified by HE themselves, can be dealt with directly and economically by maintaining a Parallel Link road.

Quotes from HE previously published reports indicated that they recognised the benefits of a parallel link road even at an early stage in the development of this project.

From the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling – Stage 2, Scheme Assessment Report

2.3 Scheme Brief (Document Ref: TR010036 /APP-034/5.12 Annex K – page 175 of 680)

Transport and operational objectives

2.3.6 Throughout the design and delivery stages, the scheme should ensure that customers and communities are fully considered. Specially, this should include:

- Understanding the needs of all segments of customers (including vulnerable users), stakeholders and partners.
- Responding to those needs such that the end product delivers an improved customer experience.
- Assessing the impact of works on road users and communities, minimising disruption and delivering appropriate mitigation measures. This assessment should also look at issues through customers' eyes.

5.11 Buildability (Document Ref: TR010036 /APP-034/5.12 Annex K – page 211 of 680)

5.11.2 (using the services of a Delivery Partner) Principal findings from this work are summarised in the following sections

Option 1

- As a result of this option being essentially online, there is a risk that full closures of the A303 may be necessary for items such as traffic management changes and lifting bridge beams over existing carriageways. If this is necessary the diversion routes, which will need to follow roads of similar or better class to the A303, may cover considerable distances. Full road closures will therefore need to be minimised or, if possible avoided.
- Traffic management will be more complex than for option 2, and is likely to involve a number of phases resulting from construction of the new dual carriageway along both sides of the existing road. This is likely to complicate construction elements such as earthworks and statutory undertakers' diversionary

works.

- The construction programme is highly dependent upon the early establishment of a haulage route to enable material to be moved from the main area of excavation in West Camel Hill to the main area of fill at Hazlegrove Junction. An online haulage route (i.e. adjacent to the existing A303 carriageway) is considered possible although will require sequential construction which would prolong the overall construction duration.
- Flexibility of construction sequencing is particularly constrained at the 2 pinch-points highlighted earlier in this chapter. The impact of these pinch-points on the construction programme would be minimised by the adoption of the offline haulage route.
- Work space will be at a premium along much of the site, due to the adjacent property and live traffic.
- The proposed horizontal and vertical alignment of the proposed road will be influenced not only by geometric design standards but also by the requirement to ensure the scheme is buildable in close proximity to the existing road. At locations where the proposed road is being constructed close to live traffic this may place constraints on the vertical alignment of the proposed road which will need to be similar to the existing road levels

7 Operational Assessment. (Document Ref: TR010036 /APP-034/5.12 Annex K – page 221 of 680)

7.1.4 The only distinguishing aspect between the 2 options identified at this stage is that the existing A303 could be used as a diversion route when maintenance activities necessitate a carriageway or full road closure of any part of option 2. This would not be possible with option 1 and any diversion would be considerably longer in order to keep traffic on major county roads thus avoiding minor roads.

In the **A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme, Technical Appraisal Report** the route options were being narrowed down to a preferred route. In the summary HE identify both the benefits and the issues of the route options considered.

5.2 Option A2 (this becomes option 1 which is developed into the preferred route)

5.2.7 Summary of issues. (page 55 of 129)

- This route may require two grade separated junctions
- Based on correspondence from utility companies, this option would affect the largest amount of existing services compared with other route options and is also likely to require the relocation of the telecommunication masts adjacent to Traits Lane.
- It would also require the greatest amount of side road modifications compared with the other options including the removal of the connection to the A303 at Gason Lane and Traits Lane.
- **It would impact on the existing businesses at Camel Hill services and Crusty Cottage bakery**

- There would be difficulty in managing traffic during construction
- It would have the largest earthworks requirement.
- Unless a suitable parallel local route could be developed this option may not be as resilient as the offline options in terms of providing a temporary diversion route in the event of incidents of maintenance works that would require the closure of the main carriageway.

8 Safety Assessment

Table 8.1 Route Option A2 road safety review comments (page 86 of 129)

- **Upgrading of the existing A303 alignment with no parallel local access road provision limits opportunities for east-west movement by local traffic. This may encourage “junction hopping” by local traffic between the two proposed junctions with its associated adverse safety implications due to excessive merging/weaving on the mainline, or else use of inappropriate local roads, many of which are of very low standard. (Note: the local traffic model shows traffic re-assigning to the new dual carriageway) this contrasts with the other three options which retain the existing A303 alignment for use by local traffic and those road users prohibited from using an expressway (if that is what this scheme becomes). Additionally, the relatively short distance between slip road of 1.4km is just acceptable for an all-purpose trunk road but may not be acceptable for an expressway. Consider providing a local access road or an easily identifiable east-west route made up of existing links and suitable for local and prohibited traffic.**

In my opinion an element of traffic flow not yet considered, is the use of the new dual carriageway by local slow moving agricultural traffic, travelling west joining the road at the Hazlegrove junction and travelling uphill before turning off at the Downhead junction, or if travelling east joining the road at Podimore roundabout and again travelling uphill to turn off at the Downhead junction. This questions the safety (as well as the economics) of providing a Downhead Junction.

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

Phil Gamble

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