

## A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme TR010036

### 9.14 Topic Paper: Right of Way Y30/28 (Eastmead Lane)

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Planning Act 2008

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(Applications: Prescribed Forms and  
Procedure) Regulations 2009**

**A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling  
Scheme**

Development Consent Order 201[X]

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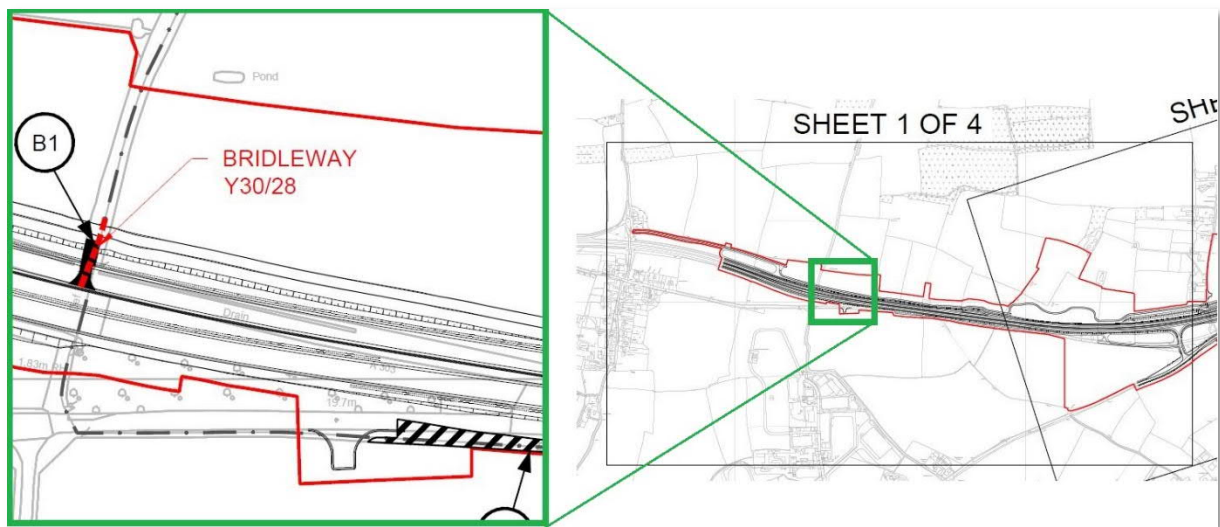
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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this topic paper

- 1.1.1 Right of Way Y30/28 (also known as Eastmead Lane) is scheduled in Part 1, Schedule 4 of the draft Development Consent Order (DCO) [APP-017] to be stopped up over a distance of 27 metres northwards from its junction with the existing A303. The extents of the closure are shown as a red dotted line in inset C of sheet 1 of the Rights of Way and Access Plans [APP-007]. An extract of this sheet, showing the extent of closure, can be seen in Figure 1.1

Figure 1.1 Location of Eastmead Lane and extent of stopping up



Source: Rights of Way and Access Plans [APP-007]

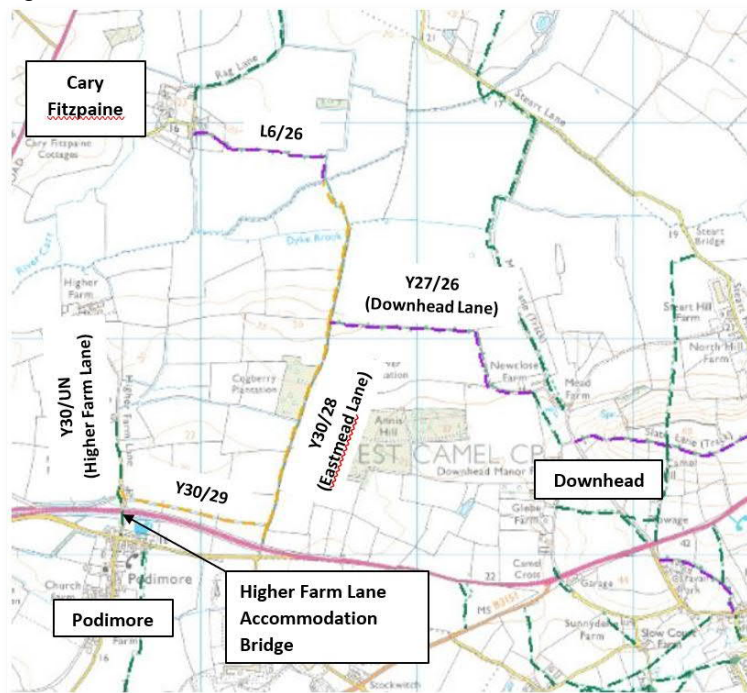
- 1.1.2 Somerset County Council (SCC), South Somerset District Council (SSDC) and the South Somerset Bridleways Association (SSBA) have all raised concerns in their Relevant Representations [RR-040, RR-041 and RR-026 respectively] regarding the impact of the closure of this link, and have submitted descriptions of an alternative which they believe should be included in the scheme. Further details of that alternative are included in section [4] below. Further submissions including a Written Representation by SSDC [REP2-016] and the Joint Local Impact Report by SCC and SSDC [REP2-049 and REP2-019] have all reinforced their position in this matter.
- 1.1.2 The purpose of this topic paper is to explain the rationale behind the closure of this link, the impacts on the rights of way network of this closure, the proposed mitigation and the reasons for selection of it. The paper will also provide an explanation as to why the alternative identified by SCC, SSDC and SSBA has not been adopted.

## 2 Description of the existing NMU network

### 2.1 Local context

2.1.1 Eastmead Lane is a bridleway running north from the A303 for a distance of approximately 2 kilometres. Its location within the context of the local RoW network, details of which were obtained from SCC's definitive map and statement, is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Extent of Eastmead Lane within the context of the local RoW network



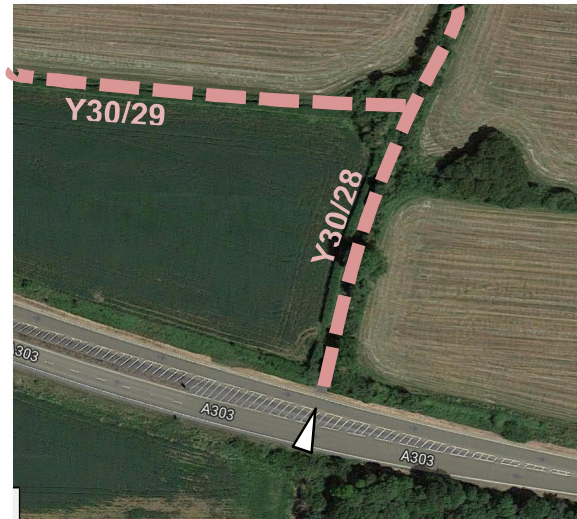
Source: Background mapping: Ordnance Survey, Rights of Way: SCC definitive map at <https://roam.somerset.gov.uk/roam/map>

- 2.1.2 At its northern end Eastmead Lane connects to the wider RoW network north to Cary Fitzpaine via RoW L6/26, and east to Downhead via RoW Y27/26.
- 2.1.3 A bridleway (Y30/29) runs westwards from Eastmead Lane to connect to a public footpath (Y30/UN) at Higher Farm Lane.
- 2.1.4 At its southern end, Eastmead Lane was severed by the construction of the A303 Podimore Bypass (in the late 1970s). Eastmead Lane is accessible from the eastbound verge of the A303 although there are no non-motorised user facilities in the verge of the A303 to facilitate this safely and comfortably.
- 2.1.5 Historically, Eastmead Lane is likely to have extended to the south of the existing A303 alignment, although this connection has not been available since the construction of the Podimore Bypass. There is no corresponding right of way on the south side of the A303 and therefore no option for NMUs to make an at-grade crossing of the A303 between Eastmead Lane and the existing

lanes to the south. Even if such a right of way did exist, an at-grade crossing of the A303 from north to south is considered unsafe and uncomfortable due to the width of the carriageway and speed of traffic. The junction of Eastmead Lane with the A303 is shown in Figure 2.2.

2.1.6 The quality of this section of Eastmead Lane has been assessed as 'very poor' in Table 12.10 of Chapter 12 of the Environmental Statement [APP-049].

Figure 2.2 Existing junction between the A303 and Eastmead Lane



(a) Aerial



(b) Looking north along Eastmead Lane from the A303 westbound carriageway (viewpoint shown by a white arrow in the aerial image)

Source: Google Maps

## **3 Description of the proposals**

### **3.1 Scheme development**

3.1.1 Mitigation measures and proposed new routes for NMUs have been determined using the approach set out in Chapter 3 of TA91/05 "Provision for Non Motorised Users" (in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges). This involves the following steps:

- Determine existing and future use
- Consultation
- Optimise convenience, safety, comfort and accessibility
- Selection of type of facility
- Audit
- Assessment

3.1.2 The following text outlines how this has taken place with regards to the proposed mitigation for the closure of Eastmead Lane.

### **3.2 Existing and future use**

3.2.1 Existing use of this part of Eastmead Lane was found to be reasonably low during NMU surveys that were conducted in 2016 [documented in APP-093]. Four pedestrians were observed using the route during the August survey, and no users were observed at all during the September survey. During a site visit in June 2018 this section of Eastmead Lane was observed to be impassable due to heavy overgrowth.

3.2.2 The low level of existing use is considered to be due to the poor quality access to the southern end of the bridleway. This suppression of demand is likely to prevail unless the southern connection is resolved and so it is difficult to assess the potential level of future use. However, liaison with SCC and SSBA has identified Eastmead Lane as a route with good potential due to the high quality access to the wider RoW network at its northern extents. If the poor connection at its southern end could be resolved, then this will integrate Eastmead Lane with the surrounding rights of way network much more comprehensively than the present situation.

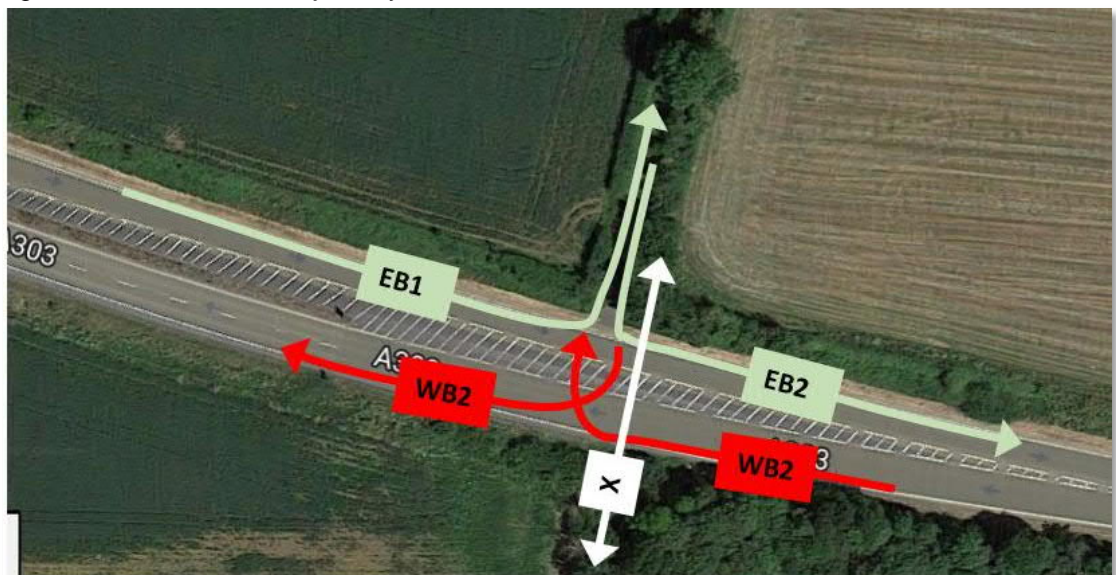
### **3.3 Consultation**

3.3.1 Non-statutory and statutory consultation exercises were held early in 2017 and 2018 respectively. In addition a Technical Working Group (TWG) has been established between SCC and Highways England's technical advisors, Mott MacDonald-Sweco JV, throughout 2018 and discussions have been held with SCC's rights of way service manager. Proposed rights of way facilities were discussed at a number of TWG meetings.

### 3.4 Convenience, safety, comfort and accessibility

- 3.4.1 The design is required to appropriately mitigate for the adverse impacts of the DCO scheme on public rights of way in terms of convenience, safety, comfort and accessibility. In respect of the closure of the short section of Eastmead Lane, the potential impact on journeys indicated as EB1, EB2, WB1, WB2 and X in Figure 3.1 was considered during scheme development.
- 3.4.2 Journeys involving the eastbound A303 (EB1 and EB2) are currently possible by NMUs although uncomfortable and unsafe due to the speed of traffic and lack of NMU provision in the verge. In particular EB1 would involve travel along the dual carriageway Podimore Bypass from the Podimore Roundabout. However, since these journeys are possible and would be impacted upon by the scheme it is considered that mitigation is required.
- 3.4.3 Journeys involving the westbound A303 (WB1 and WB2) would involve crossing central hatched road markings that road users should not enter unless forced to do so. These journeys are therefore not considered to be possible in the current layout and do not require mitigation.
- 3.4.4 Journeys involving crossing the existing A303 from north to south and vice versa (indicated by X in Figure 3.1) are not possible as there is currently no right of way leading to the southern verge of the A303. These journeys are therefore not considered to be possible in the current layout and do not require mitigation.

Figure 3.1 Assessed NMU journeys



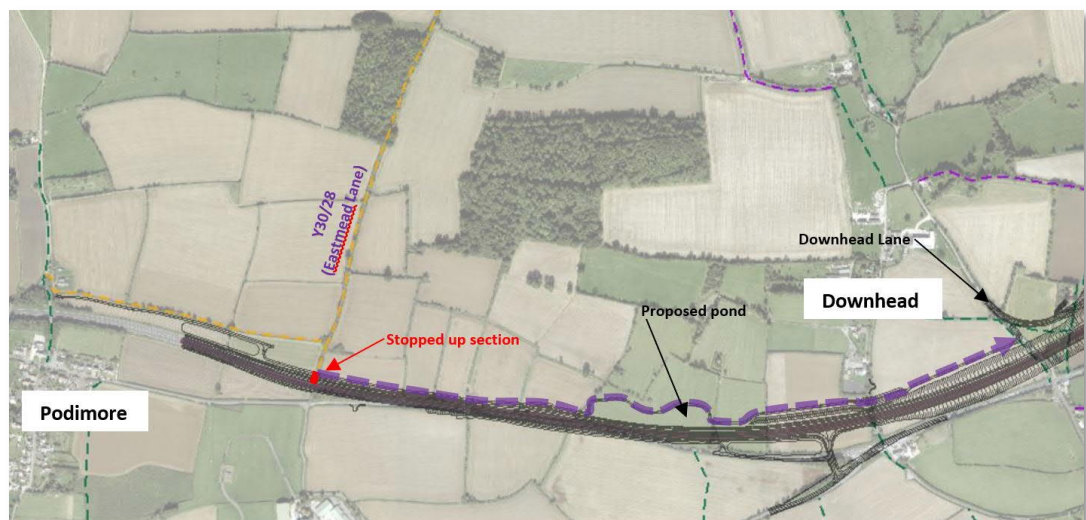
- 3.4.5 Based on the above assessment it was considered most appropriate to reconnect the stopped up southern end of Eastmead Lane by providing a



diversion to the east. This will provide a safe, convenient and comfortable alternative to the most likely existing journey, EB2. It will follow a proposed accommodation track which runs parallel to the proposed A303 between Eastmead Lane and Downhead Lane – a new local road proposed as part of the scheme approximately 1800 metres to the east. This connection is illustrated in Figure 3.2. From Downhead Lane other NMU links provide access across the A303 to the south via the proposed Steart Hill Overbridge, and then onwards to Sparkford.

- 3.4.5 This route will be off carriageway and therefore safe and comfortable. It will follow designed and newly constructed accommodation tracks which will be level and wide enough to be accessible.

Figure 3.2 Proposed route for mitigation of closure of Eastmead Lane



### 3.5 Selection of facility

- 3.5.1 It was determined that, since Eastmead Lane has bridleway status, the new connection from it to Downhead Lane should also be a bridleway. Restricted byway status was briefly considered, although this would have resulted in a 'dead end' for byway traffic.

### 3.6 Audit

- 3.6.1 An NMU audit undertaken by Highways England's advisors Mott MacDonald Sweco JV in December 2016 identified the potential benefits of an upgrade to Higher Farm Lane from footpath to bridleway status. This work would require modification to the existing order and also physical works to increase the height of the bridge parapets in line with modern standards for equestrian use. The audit, along with feedback from SCC, prompted the identification of this connection as a potential separately funded scheme which is discussed in the following section of this paper.

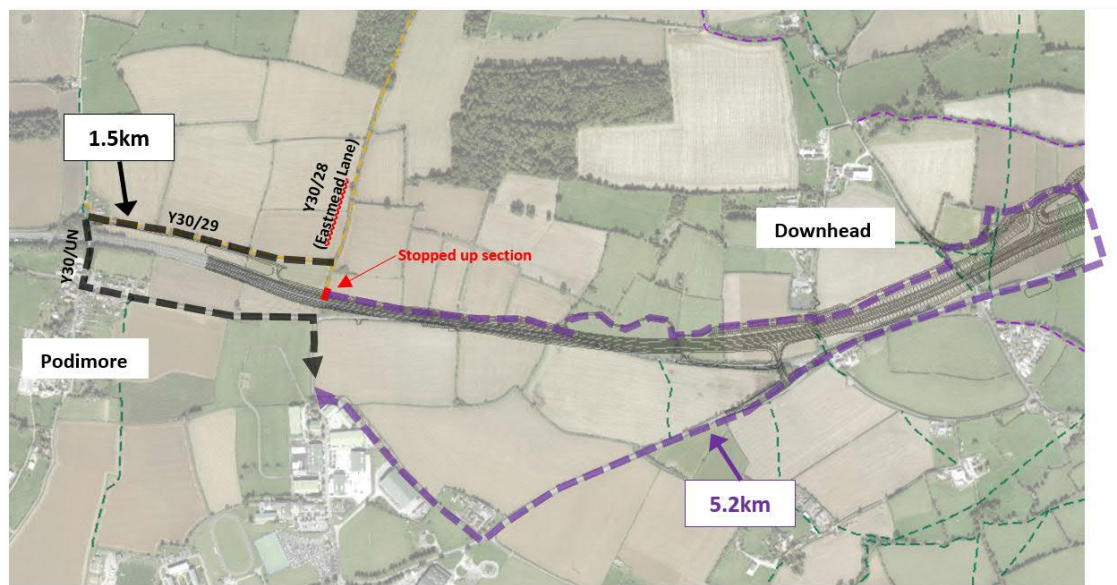
## **3.7 Assessment**

- 3.7.1 An operational safety review and a Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding assessment, both undertaken early in 2018, identified the lack of a current safe west-east NMU route and recommended that the potential for a west-east NMU route be explored. This was a factor in the decision to select the proposed route between Eastmead Lane and Downhead Lane as this would facilitate such a route.

## 4 Alternative proposal suggested by SCC, SSDC and SSBA

4.1.1 In their relevant representations SCC, SSDC and SSBA [RR-040, RR-041 and RR-026 respectively] have all stated that the scheme proposals involve a diversion of over 5 kilometres and that a westerly alternative through Podimore via RoW Y30/UN would be more appropriate. The benefit of their alternative would be to re-connect Eastmead Lane with its historically severed southern projection. The route of the alternative proposal is illustrated with a black dashed line in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Alternative proposed by SCC, SSDC and SSBA



- 4.1.2 This alternative would follow bridleway Y30/29 for approximately 700 metres until it reached Y30/UN at Higher Farm Lane. The existing Higher Farm Lane Accommodation Bridge could then be used to cross the A303 into the village of Podimore. The main street through Podimore is very lightly trafficked. The total distance of this route is 1.5 kilometres as indicated in the RRs.
- 4.1.3 The distance of 5 kilometres quoted in the RRs relates to the distance that would be travelled, using Highways England's mitigation route, in order to reach the same southern destination. This is shown as a purple dashed line in Figure 4.1.
- 4.1.4 The alternative route would enable the resolution of concerns over the existing legal status of Y30/29 and Y30/UN that have been raised during liaison with SCC and SSBA.

- 4.1.5 Y30/UN was created as part of the construction of the Podimore Bypass in the late 1970s, although was only dedicated as a public footpath. This currently prevents use by horse riders and cyclists.
- 4.1.6 Y30/29 was created as a bridleway in the orders of a proposed scheme to dual the A303 in 1996. The orders were made by the Secretary of State, although the scheme was never constructed. However Y30/29 was recorded on SCC's definitive map and statement.
- 4.1.7 Because the 1996 scheme was never constructed, the validity of the order is in doubt. Discussions have been held with SCC to resolve this although so far have not been conclusive. As such the scheme has been assessed as if Y30/29 does exist.
- 4.1.8 The limitations of the public footpath over Higher Farm Lane (i.e. its restriction to use as a public footpath and not a bridle or cycle way) have been raised by SCC and SSBC throughout scheme development as an ongoing concern that they expect to be remedied.
- 4.1.9 As stated above, there is currently no RoW connection over the A303 between the southern section of Eastmead Lane and the existing local road on the other side of the A303. Therefore, the Applicant should not be expected to remedy this missing link as part of its DCO scheme. The impacts from the DCO scheme have been identified and mitigated through the provision of a new west-east bridleway from the southern end of Eastmead Lane towards Downhead. The proposed project will not affect the ability of NMUs to access and use the existing Y30/29 bridleway, which provides a connection east-west from the southern end of Eastmead Lane. Therefore, there is no reason for the Applicant to provide the alternative requested by SCC and SSBA as mitigation for the DCO scheme.
- 4.1.10 Highways England is willing to consider the potential upgrade of the Higher Farm Lane overbridge to bridleway status and is investigating whether funding could be made available for this but this will be considered outside of the DCO process as it is not required as mitigation for the DCO scheme and does not form part of the current design.

## 5 Conclusions

- 5.1.1 The current section of Eastmead Lane that is scheduled to be stopped up has been assessed to be of a very poor quality. However, the potential importance of Eastmead Lane in the future network is acknowledged.
- 5.1.2 An easterly link from the southern end of Eastmead Lane to Downhead Lane has been selected as the most appropriate mitigation for the stopping up of Eastmead Lane.
- 5.1.3 A westerly connection (as advocated by SCC, SSDC and SSBA) has not been identified as required mitigation for the DCO scheme and does not form part of the current design. However, Highways England is willing to consider this outside of the DCO process and is investigating whether funding could be made available for the upgrade of the Higher Farm Lane Bridge.