

## A358 Taunton to Southfields Improvement

### Final response to Second Non-Statutory Public Consultation on Route Options

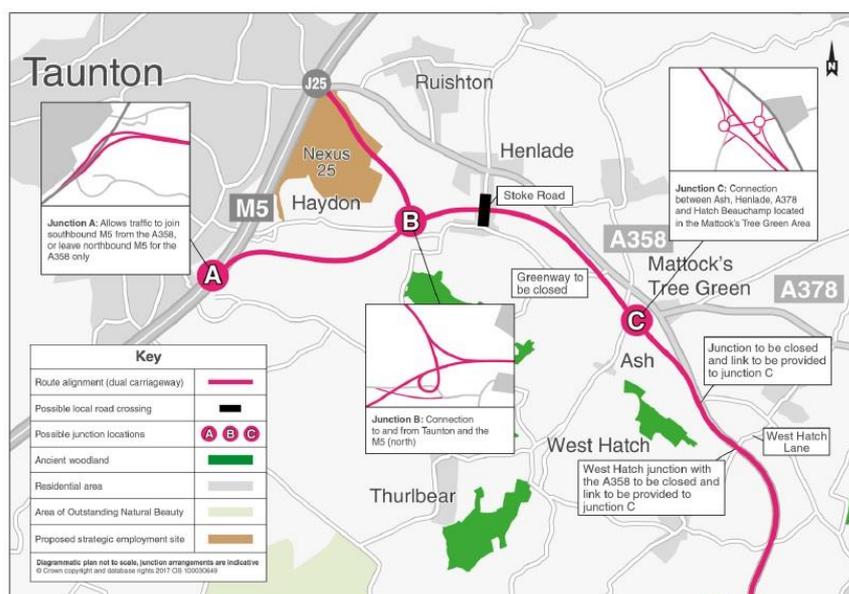
#### Response by: West Hatch Parish Council 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2018

#### **1) West Hatch Parish Council Overall Comments on Highways England Strategy for A358 Expressway.**

- a. West Hatch Parish Council (WH PC) maintains its objection to the concept of an expressway from Southfields to Taunton as a solution to improving traffic flow into the South West of England ( M3/A303 corridor) on the basis that the restrictions of the Southfields roundabout, Ilminster Bypass and M5 Junction 25, are not alleviated by any of Highways England's (HE) proposals. In view of the recent closures of the M5 between J25 and J29, WH PC believes Highways England should acknowledge the pressure on this part of the M5 and the fact that it will be the only major road artery to the south west and press UK Government to review dualling the A303 from Southfields to Honiton.
- b. WH PC questions why this fundamental change is outside HE's terms of reference from the Transport Minister.
- c. WH PC offers the following observations to the options presented at the second consultation.

#### **2) West Hatch Parish Council Preferred Option from those presented at the second consultation.**

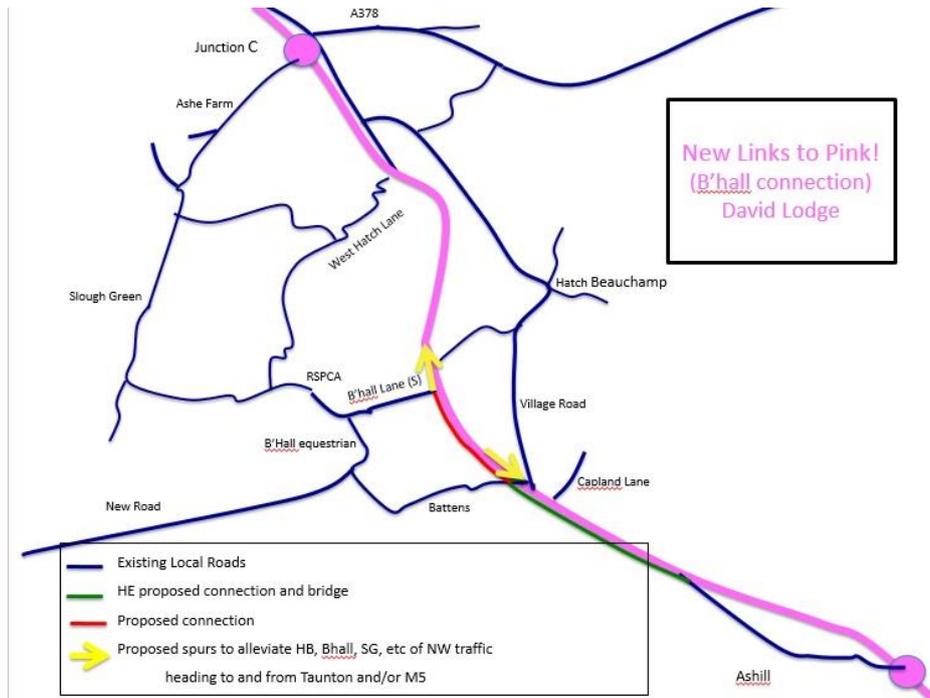
- a. Following initial consultation with our parishioners WH PC wishes HE to be aware that unanimously the parish sees the Pink option as the only acceptable solution for the A358. The HE technical assessment shows this option has the best Benefit-to-Cost Ratio and lowest environmental impact.



- b. WH PC advises HE that the key determining advantages of the Pink proposal compared with Blue and Orange as seen by our Parishioners and Council alike are:
  - i. The main intermediate **junction** is moved to **Mattocks Tree** and reduces **environmental impact to Meare Green, Lower West Hatch and Huish Woods** while **removing** the inevitable consequences of a direct route from the A358 to the **unsuitable Lower West Hatch Lane**.
  - ii. The Pink Option provides a **feasible Henlade avoidance route** for all but the most local traffic and fully **supports** the key **industrial development site at J25**.
  - iii. Retaining the Junction at Mattocks Tree **protects** the future of **our only village shop** which is the Spar Shop attached to the fuel station at Mattocks Hill.
  - iv. The Pink option reduces the amount of virgin countryside through which the revised roads run so protecting the Environment and the agricultural economy.
  - v. WH PC questions the HE response to the question of traffic increases on the North Curry road with the Pink Option (TAR 12.4.3) as they believe this is applicable to all options and in addition the argument of A361 to M5 traffic avoiding Taunton seems to neglect the Creech St Michael routes.

**3) West Hatch Parish Council issues requiring further clarification from HE concerning the Pink Option and Southern Route Proposals.**

- a. WH PC has reviewed the proposed A358 crossing points in the HE consultation papers and has compared these with the current traffic flows as measured in the two separate samples of 2017. WH PC is alarmed that the proposed crossing points are not reflective of current traffic usage.
- b. WH PC asks that HE performs a full assessment of the suitability of all the lanes running in and out of the A358 considering the size of modern agricultural plant and the number of blind bends. WH PC is aware of many minor accidents already occurring on these rural lanes which will be made dramatically worse by HE proposals. WH PC believes current traffic flows are driven by suitability of the lanes and that the limited local traffic North/South transit routes and crossing points offered in the proposals by HE will have a detrimental effect on traffic flows and accident rates over many square miles east and west of the A358.
- c. WH PC further requires HE to fully assess these traffic flow changes with respect to the many NMUs (Horse Riders, Dog walkers and Cyclists) who use the lanes around the A358. WH PC believe that crossing points should be by underpass for the minor roads used by NMUs for safety and require HE to justify any bridges.
- d. **As a simple but effective solution to improving local traffic flows, WH PC requests HE costs, assesses and integrates into their plans retention of the existing carriageway from Capland to Bickenhall Lane with a single on ramp north at Bickenhall Lane and an off ramp south at Capland as a solution to retaining as near as possible current traffic flows. The diagram below details the proposal but Village Lane and Capland Lane should also be connected.**



**Keith Read CBE**

**Chairman West Hatch Parish Council**