

Position Statement

Improving highway network resilience at Chippenham

1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1. Chippenham is identified as a Principal Settlement in the Wiltshire Core Strategy.¹ This is the continuation of a policy for growth that has been directed towards the town for many years.² With the Government's agenda to support housing growth at sustainable settlements such as Chippenham this policy direction is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. It can therefore be anticipated that Chippenham will continue to grow beyond the current Plan period (to 2026).
- 1.2. Transport evidence prepared to support the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan indicates the relative benefits of link roads.³
- 1.3. With the prospect of further growth in subsequent Plan periods it is important, therefore, to consider an approach to the longer term network resilience of the town. This statement therefore considers the options available to safeguard the long term resilience of the highway network in Chippenham. It also addresses a number of matters raised by the Inspector during the Examination of the Plan.
- 1.4. As part of the Schedule of Work⁴ submitted to the Inspector to address his concerns the Council committed to preparing a statement on the role and delivery of an ELR should it remain a proposal of the Plan once the Sustainability Appraisal and Site Selection Process has been completed. This position statement therefore also responds to the Inspectors concerns⁵ by:
 - Drawing together existing evidence on the character and purpose of a link road;
 - Providing an update in relation to options on delivery;
 - Clarifying the benefits of an ELR;
 - Addressing the need identified by the Inspector to include a dedicated policy within the Plan and an amendment to the policies map to illustrate the policy (footnote to paragraph 3.4, Notes of the Progress Meeting 21 January 2016)
 - Addressing the point raised by the Inspector in relation to landscape sensitivity to the north of the North Rivers Route and at the eastern end of Stanley Land, and the need to consider the impact of the ELR on surrounding countryside character (footnote to paragraph 3.6, Notes of the Progress Meeting 21 January 2016)

¹ Wiltshire Core Strategy, January 2015, Core Policy 2, (CWCS/01)

² North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011, North Wiltshire District Council, 2006

³ Evidence Paper 3 : Transport and Accessibility Part 1, (CEPS/04)

⁴ Letter of response to the Inspector from the Council, 30 November 2015 and supporting appendices (EX12, EX12a, EX12b)

⁵ List derived from paragraphs 3.4-3.6 of Notes of Progress Meeting, January 2016

- 1.5. An Eastern Link Road and Southern Link Road are being considered as part of the Alternative Development Strategies being considered at Step 6 of the Schedule of Work. In evidence⁶ already before the Examination, reference is made to both:

“A north/east development focus, with eastern link road, is forecast to lead to average journey times which are approximately 30-50% shorter than journey times under Scenario 1, or 15-20% shorter than under Scenario 3. Time spent queuing on approaches to The Bridge Centre is also forecast to be considerably lower than it is under both Scenarios 1 and 3.”

“A southern development focus, with southern link road, is forecast to lead to average journey times which are approximately 15-40% shorter (depending on the time of day) than journey times under Scenario 1. However, journey times under Scenario 3 are 20-25% longer than those under Scenario 2.”

- 1.6. Both options presented an improvement to the current situation. These initial conclusions have been further refined again in new evidence to the Examination.⁷

2. Function of Link Roads

- 2.1. The Eastern Link Road (ELR) is characterised as a 'distributor road', the purpose of which is to provide access to individual development sites. It will also provide relief primarily for north-south east movements and vice versa. The aim will be to provide a good quality, local link between the A4 and A350, consistent with its function and location.
- 2.2. A Southern Link Road (SLR) would also be characterised as a 'distributor road', the purpose of which would be to provide access to development sites between the A350 and the A4 at Pewsham Way.

3. Design principles

- 3.1. It is not intended that either road would be an eastern or southern version of the A350, which is part of the Primary Route Network (PRN) and bypasses Chippenham town centre. A bypass predominantly acts to carry traffic that does not have an origin or destination in the town. Primary routes form a continuous link between primary destinations in Wiltshire comprising Chippenham, Marlborough, Salisbury, Swindon, Trowbridge and Warminster.
- 3.2. An ELR or SLR would not be built to capture high levels of through traffic such as that on the A350. They would be built to accommodate newly generated traffic or traffic with an origin or destination in the town although it may of course be used by those without an origin or destination in the town, but this is not its primary aim.

⁶ Evidence Paper 3 Transport and Accessibility Part 1, paragraph 7.11. Scenario 1 is development without additional infrastructure, scenario 2 is development with an eastern link road and scenarios 3 is development with a southern link road.

⁷ Supplement to Evidence Paper 3 Transport and Accessibility Part 2a: Assessment of Alternative development Strategies (CEPS/05a)

- 3.3. The design of a new distributor road would be dependent on its relationship with the development in the vicinity. There are two design approaches that could be taken.
- 3.4. For example, the ELR section through the North Chippenham approved site is based on Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) standards. DMRB includes current standards, advice notes and other documents relating to the design, assessment and operation of major roads. At this location, the road has a clear boundary on one side, so these type of standards are considered the most appropriate.
- 3.5. In other locations, such as at Rawlings Green, where the submitted masterplan indicates the ELR passing through the development, it will be appropriate to base the design partly on Manual for Streets principles. Manual for Streets provides guidance for practitioners involved in the planning, design, construction and approval of new streets, and modifications to existing ones. A street is typically described as a highway that has other functions other than just carrying traffic.
- 3.6. The ELR and SLR have been modelled as 30mph single carriageway roads, with major junctions assumed to be standard roundabouts. The lower speed limit (compared to Pewsham Way for instance) reflects the likelihood that the road will have more active building frontages.
- 3.7. As is normal practice, Wiltshire Council will consider road alignments and speeds that best serve the development. This can be best achieved at the early master plan stage. Therefore, development(s) will lead the design of new roads.
- 3.8. However, in relation to the design of the ELR through the Rawlings Green and the East Chippenham sites, this should be in line with what has been agreed as part of the North Chippenham development.
- 3.9. Such roads will however be generally characterised by a standard single carriageway width of 7.3 metres with no carriageway margins where pedestrian and cycle crossings can be easily accommodated. Provision will be made for pedestrians on both sides of the carriageway, except where it is judged that they would serve little purpose, e.g. where there is no frontage development or limited potential demand for walking. Provision will also be made for cyclists along the entire length of the road, either contiguous with or close to the line of the road.
- 3.10. In order to maintain the joint functional objectives of such roads, it is intended that frontage development be dealt with by way of restricting numbers of shared access points with facility for turning movements, to discourage reversing from or onto the road. Parking and servicing arrangements will be designed to be away from the road.

4. An Eastern Link Road

- 4.1. Appendix A illustrates the following:

- Eastern link road option 1
- Eastern link road option 2

4.2. The components of the ELR⁸ include:

a) North Chippenham permitted site

A single-carriageway link road connecting the A350 at an enlarged Malmesbury Road Roundabout to the B4069 Maud Heath's Causeway. The link road is an integral part of the North Chippenham development site to gain access to the site.

b) Rawlings Green (Strategic Site Option B1)

This site can be accessed from the B4069 to the north-west via Parsonage Way and a new bridge over the railway line, and from the south-west via a new link to Darcy Close and Cocklebury Road. These two access points are connected within the development site, providing a through route known as the Cocklebury Link Road. This connection is required to gain access to the site and support the number of homes proposed.

c) East Chippenham (Strategic Site Options C)

The East Chippenham Site Options can be accessed from the south via a new junction on London Road, in the same approximate location as the current Stanley Lane junction but requires a second point of access to support the scale of development proposed. The second point of access is via a new crossing of the River Avon connecting to development at Rawlings Green.

In combination the three elements provide a link road around the eastern side of the town which connect the A4 at Pewsham to the A350 at Malmesbury Road roundabout.

5. Main components of the Eastern Link Road

5.1. Atkins has undertaken work to establish the main components of the ELR, such as bridges and junctions, and have provided cost estimates for these. This work is attached in Appendix A and Appendix B and includes 2 options for a section between the crossing of the River Avon and its connection to the London Road. The ELR has been divided into three separate sections as part of this work, which should assist in identifying a suitable delivery schedule.

5.2. Appendix B indicates cost estimates for each alternative road alignment.

6. Traffic Impacts – Eastern Link Road

6.1. The transport evidence papers prepared by Atkins and submitted as part of the Examination in Public in November 2015 (references CEPS/04 and CEPS/05), as well as the supplements to these evidence papers that have been prepared since as part of the Schedule of Work, (CEPS/04a and CEPS/05a), outline the predicted

⁸ Taken from Supplement to Evidence Paper 3: Transport & Accessibility : Part 2a - Assessing Alternative Development Strategies' as illustrated in Figure 2-2 and described in Table 2-2, ADS11 (CEPS/05a)

increase in traffic flows and journey times in different development scenarios with a 2026 forecast year. They also identify the impacts with and without wider highway improvements.

- 6.2. In the context of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan and the scale of growth proposed in the Wiltshire Core Strategy traffic modelling shows that the highway network will operate much more favourably with the inclusion of an ELR as part of the development strategy.
- 6.3. Development strategies that include an ELR, the number of vehicles passing through the town centre is forecast to reduce by about 13%, delays will generally be reduced on the A4 Pewsham corridor and junctions close to town centre whilst average journey times across the network are forecast to remain similar to current journey times during peak periods despite considerable levels of housing and employment growth (Table 4.1, CEPS/05a).

7. A Southern Link Road

- 7.1. Appendix A illustrates the following:
 - Southern link road option 1
 - Southern link road option 2
- 7.2. It relates to land within Strategic Areas D and E and Strategic Site Options within the areas.
- 7.3. As with the ELR, Atkins has undertaken work to establish the main components of the SLR, such as bridges and junctions, and have provided cost estimates for these. This work is attached in Appendix A and Appendix B and includes 2 options for the SLR.

8. Main components of the Southern Link Road

- 8.1. The main components of a Southern Link Road (SLR) would involve completing a road around the south of the town between the A350 and the A4 Pewsham Way, via a new crossing of the River Avon. A SLR is included when development occurs in Strategic Area E and Strategic Area D in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan.
- 8.2. D7 can be accessed from the north-east by connecting a fourth arm into the existing A4 Pewsham Way/Canal Road roundabout. To the south, there would be a new roundabout junction with the A350, approximately 200m south of the railway line. It is assumed it would be a 30mph single carriageway road.

9. Traffic Impacts – Southern Link Road

- 9.1. Traffic modelling shows that with the SLR in place, there would be an increase of 42% in average peak journey times across the Chippenham network, particularly to areas west of the A350/B4528 and to the south west of the town. However, there would be some reduction in peak hour traffic through the town centre (Table 4.1, CEPS/05a).

10. Landscape Impact of alternative road alignments

- 10.1. In addition to the engineering components of any proposed road it is important to understand the potential landscape impact of alternatives considered. A detailed assessment is attached at Appendix C. The conclusions are set out below.

10.2. Eastern Link Road Options

- 10.3. The introduction of new road infrastructure and urban development into Strategic Area B is considered likely to generate the most landscape and visual harm out of all Strategic Site Option proposals, which is considered to be difficult to mitigate in landscape and visual terms. This is due to the elevated nature and orientation of the land, and the existing remote, rural, tranquil character of the area, including remote, rural outlying settlements.

- 10.4. Within Strategic Area C, the proposed Option 1 (Section 2b & 3) road alignment is likely to generate slightly less harmful landscape and visual effects compared to Option 2 (Alternative Section 2b & 3). This additional landscape and visual harm is considered to result from extending the road alignment north of New Leaze Farm, and from introducing urban development north of the cycleway.

10.5. Southern Link Road Options

- 10.6. The introduction of new road infrastructure and urban development in Area D is considered likely to generate greater harm than Area E. This is due to the closer proximity of Area D to the Limestone Ridge, and also the special rural qualities identified within Area D.

- 10.7. Within Strategic Area D, the proposed Section 4 road alignment is likely to generate substantially less harmful landscape and visual effects compared to Section 5. This is largely due to the overall greater length of the proposed Section 5 road through this area, resulting in many more fields and field boundaries being impacted, but also the greater prominence of the Section 5 route over higher land, compared with Section 4 which is much shorter in length and utilises a shallow valley landform allowing the crossing at lower level, which is likely to be able to be more effectively mitigated in the longer term. Any enabling urban development to facilitate this short section should be resisted in Area D.

- 10.8. Within Strategic Area E, the proposed Section 4 road alignment is considered likely to generate slightly less harmful landscape and visual effects compared

to Section 5. Section 5 proposes a 70m bridge crossing the River Avon from a highly prominent landform south of Lower Lodge Farm, viewed from the south and the Limestone Ridge, while Section 4 passes to the immediate north of the sewage works requiring only a 35m bridge crossing the Avon, at lower level and with substantial lengths of the proposed new road screened from the north and south by existing linear belts of woodland. This is despite the proximity of Rowden Manor and Rowden Conservation Area, although it is acknowledged that this is a landscape opinion, and specialist conservation, ecology and archaeological opinion may alter the overall balance of impacts and ultimately any final planning balance.

11. Delivery

11.1. In general terms there are different approaches to the delivery of new road infrastructure:

- Through condition attached to a planning application where the new road infrastructure is an integral part of development and required to make a development acceptable;
- Through Section 106 Agreements to mitigate the impact of the proposed development and can be used on and off site;
- Through the use of Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Through the intervention of Wiltshire Council via the Local Enterprise Partnership (Growing Places or Local Growth Funds) or national funds

11.2. By way of example, the 'first section' of an ELR has been secured through the planning application for the North Chippenham site, which identified the proposed new road as an integral part of the proposal. This has been secured through condition on the planning application as follows:

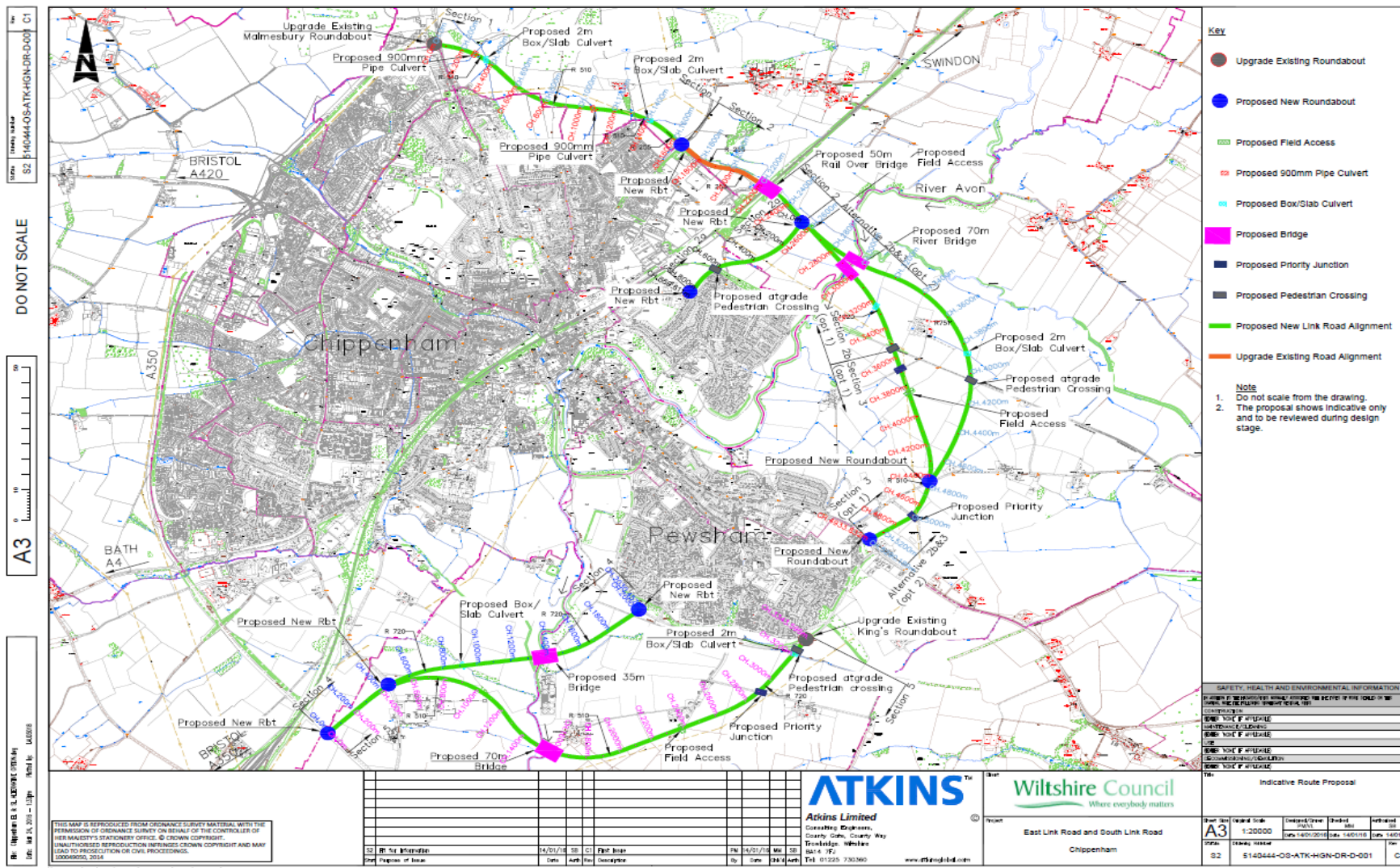
"No development shall commence on the site unless and until a phasing plan for the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority in relation to highway infrastructure. The phasing plan shall include, inter alia, full details in relation to the completion of the road junctions at Pew Hill, Malmesbury Road and Hill Corner Road, and the connecting distributor road. The development shall be completed in accordance with the approved phasing plan."

11.3. Given the potential for Conditions, planning permissions can make sure that road alignments are protected and unfettered access to land beyond the current phase of growth at Chippenham is retained.

11.4. The main issue in relation to either a SLR or an ELR is the co-ordination of their long term delivery. Various land ownerships, including the Council, have an interest over different sections of either road. New allocations at Chippenham will need to safeguard the potential for the longer term growth of the town and the options for new road infrastructure indicated in Appendix A.

- 11.5. Policies within the Plan will need to ensure that the design and layout of development enables the potential for future road infrastructure to be connected where appropriate.
- 11.6. The Council will support the establishment of an infrastructure delivery group to co-ordinate various landowners and manage risks. In implementing the Plan, the Council will monitor the delivery of the allocations to ensure that development comes forward in a timely and co-ordinated fashion and use its powers to support delivery.
- 11.7. For example, if a situation was to arise at a critical point in delivery where a developer is temporarily unable to fund the provision of part of the road, the Council would seek to use its ability, either via the Local Enterprise Partnership (e.g. Growing Places Fund) to resolve any financial imbalances. There are examples elsewhere in the county, such as the Calne Northern Relief Road, where the Council has previously provided early funding to accelerate the provision of infrastructure.
- 11.8. In circumstances where delivery is significantly delayed and there are no other options, the Council will consider the use of its compulsory purchase powers.

Appendix A: Indicative Link Road Proposals



Appendix B: Indicative Link Road Proposals Cost Estimates

Chippenham Site Allocations Plan																	
Eastern Link Road Route Options (Sections 1, 2, 2a and 3) and Southern Link Route Options (Section 4 and Section 5)																	
	East Link Road Route Option 1								East Link Road Route Option 2			Southern Link Road Option 1			Southern Link Road Option 2		
	Section 1	Section 2	Section 2 Rail Bridge	Section 2a	Section 2b	Section 2b River Bridge	Section 3	East Link Road Totals	Section 2b & 3 Alternative Route	Sections Common to Route Option 1	East Link Road Totals	Section 4	Section 4 River Bridge Only	Southern Option 1 Totals	Section 5	Section 5 River Bridge Only	Southern Option 2 Totals
Preliminaries	£210,000	£210,000	£50,000	£210,000	£210,000	£50,000	£210,000	£1,150,000	£234,000	£730,000	£1,024,000	£840,000	£30,000	£870,000	£840,000	£30,000	£870,000
Site Clearance	£26,240	£19,680	£1,312	£14,104	£9,512	£1,312	£22,960	£95,120	£44,887	£62,648	£107,535	£33,308	£1,312	£34,620	£54,842	£1,312	£56,154
Fencing	£43,552	£8,166		£23,409	£15,788		£38,108	£129,023	£74,501	£75,127	£149,628	£55,283		£55,283	£91,024		£91,024
Road Restraint System	£20,870	£16,329	£18,714	£12,468	£9,289	£18,714	£18,599	£114,983	£33,780	£87,095	£120,875	£25,764	£13,100	£38,864	£40,672	£26,200	£66,872
Drainage and Service Ducts	£422,626	£301,750		£216,254	£145,846		£352,041	£1,438,517	£688,241	£940,630	£1,628,871	£510,712		£510,712	£840,876		£840,876
Earthworks	£505,536	£192,404	£2,724	£466,309	£551,183	£2,724	£245,289	£1,966,169	£729,990	£1,169,697	£1,899,687	£382,656	£6,783	£389,439	£677,910	£6,783	£684,693
Pavements	£991,451	£314,668		£532,905	£360,111		£1,030,964	£3,230,119	£1,699,351	£1,839,024	£3,538,375	£1,258,523		£1,258,523	£2,072,133		£2,072,133
Kerbs, Footways and Paved Areas	£231,664	£173,748		£124,519	£83,978		£202,706	£816,615	£396,290	£529,931	£926,221	£321,698		£321,698	£484,178		£484,178
Traffic Signs and Road Markings	£94,452	£70,839		£50,788	£34,239		£82,645	£332,943	£161,572	£216,059	£377,631	£119,895		£119,895	£197,404		£197,404
Street Lighting	£22,098	£16,573		£11,877	£8,010		£19,335	£77,893	£37,801	£50,548	£88,349	£28,050		£28,050	£46,184		£46,184
Electric Work	£128,360	£96,270		£68,394	£46,531		£112,315	£452,470	£219,577	£293,624	£513,201	£162,938		£162,938	£268,273		£268,273
Piling and embedded retaining walls			£45,830			£45,830		£91,660		£91,660	£91,660		£33,364	£33,364		£33,364	£33,364
Structural Concrete	£48,588		£431,081		£109,580	£1,052,688		£1,641,937	£54,790	£1,532,357	£1,587,147	£24,294	£414,357	£438,651	£24,294	£608,419	£632,713
Waterproofing			£31,498			£42,414		£73,912		£73,912	£73,912		£22,803	£22,803		£39,298	£39,298
Landscape and Ecology	£3,032	£2,532		£2,855	£1,926		£4,648	£14,993	£9,087	£8,419	£17,506	£6,443		£6,443	£11,089		£11,089
Service Diversions	£10,000	£10,000		£10,000	£10,000		£10,000	£50,000	£10,000	£30,000	£40,000	£10,000		£10,000	£10,000		£10,000
TRD Costs		£25,000						£25,000		£25,000	£25,000			£0			£0
Construction Total	£2,758,469	£1,457,959	£581,159	£1,744,462	£1,595,993	£1,213,662	£2,349,630	£11,701,354	£4,453,867	£7,755,731	£12,209,597	£3,779,584	£921,718	£4,301,282	£5,658,879	£745,376	£6,404,255
Design (Preliminary inc surveys)								£0		£0	£0			£0			£0
Design (Detail)	£21,313	£21,313	£42,096	£21,313	£21,313	£42,096	£21,313	£190,756	£42,626	£148,131	£190,756	£60,250	£42,096	£102,346	£60,250	£42,096	£102,346
Surveys (Detail)	£5,213	£4,838	£16,271	£2,813	£4,838	£16,271	£4,613	£54,857	£7,275	£45,406	£52,681	£13,650	£16,271	£29,921	£12,650	£16,271	£28,921
Supervision	£67,828	£67,828	£45,219	£60,931	£67,828	£45,219	£67,828	£422,681	£135,656	£287,025	£422,681	£67,828	£45,219	£113,046	£67,828	£45,219	£113,047
Business Case Fees								£0		£0	£0			£0			£0
Design & Professional Fees Total	£94,354	£93,979	£103,586	£85,057	£93,979	£103,586	£93,754	£668,294	£185,557	£480,561	£666,118	£141,728	£103,585	£245,313	£140,728	£103,586	£244,314
Sub-Total	£2,852,823	£1,551,938	£684,745	£1,829,519	£1,689,972	£1,317,268	£2,443,384	£12,369,648	£4,639,423	£8,236,292	£12,875,715	£3,921,292	£625,303	£4,546,595	£5,799,607	£848,962	£6,648,569
40% Optimism Bias Land Purchase, Compensation, Public Consultation, General Risks and Unforeseen Circumstances	£1,141,129	£620,775	£273,898	£731,807	£675,989	£526,907	£977,353	£4,947,859	£1,655,769	£3,294,517	£5,150,286	£1,568,517	£250,121	£1,818,638	£2,319,843	£339,585	£2,659,428
Total	£3,993,952	£2,172,713	£958,642	£2,561,326	£2,365,961	£1,844,175	£3,420,737	£17,317,507	£6,495,192	£11,530,809	£18,026,001	£5,489,809	£875,424	£6,365,232	£8,119,450	£1,188,547	£9,307,997

Appendix C: East Link Road and South Link Road, Chippenham - Indicative Route Proposals Landscape Comments

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The following comments are based on the indicative route proposal options prepared by Atkins Limited, on behalf of Wiltshire Council as illustrated on Dwg. No. 5140444-OS-ATK-HGN-DR-D-001 Rev:C2.
- 1.2. These comments make reference to the 'Chippenham Landscape Setting Assessment' (CLSA) prepared by TEP (Dec 2014). The CLSA has been prepared to inform the preparation of the 'Chippenham Site Allocations Plan'. Its aim in broad terms is to identify the key landscape and visual characteristics of land around Chippenham and highlights key landscape and visual sensitivities for each of the identified strategic areas and considers the role and function of land in relation to the setting of the town and its transition with countryside including outlying rural settlements.
- 1.3. The CLSA has been prepared with reference to and consideration of the relevant published Local Landscape Character Assessments which comprise the Council's landscape evidence base supporting the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) 'Core Policy 51: Landscape.'

2. Eastern Link Road Proposals

Summary (Sections 1, 2, 2b & 3 options 1 & 2)

- 2.1. Section 1 proposes a new 1.65km link road from the A350 roundabout junction with Malmesbury Road (B4158) at the north of Chippenham east through 'Strategic Area A1' to link with a proposed new roundabout on Maud Heath's Causeway (B4069) with the south west corner of 'Strategic Area A2'. Section 1 has been granted Outline planning consent (N/12/00560/OUT) pending final s.106 agreements, so is not discussed further in this report.
- 2.2. Section 2 proposes an upgrade of the existing Parsonage Way road serving Parsonage Way Industrial Estate, extending from the proposed new roundabout on Maud Heath's Causeway (B4069) extending south east for a distance of 0.55km to join a proposed 0.35km section of new road crossing the Great Western Railway into 'Strategic Area B'.
- 2.3. Section 2b and 3 (Option 1) proposes a new 2.38km road linking 'Strategic Area B' with 'Strategic Area C' across the River Avon on an alignment south east of New Leaze Farm, crossing Stanley Lane close to Abbeyfield School to a new roundabout proposed on the A4 London Road, north east of Pewsham.

- 2.4. Section 2b and 3 (Option 2) proposes a slightly longer new 2.74km road linking 'Strategic Area B' with 'Strategic Area C' across the River Avon on an alignment north and west of New Leaze Farm, crossing Stanley Lane close to Abbeyfield School to a new roundabout proposed on the A4 London Road, north east of Pewsham.

3. Section 2 - Route alignment description

Section 2 (CH.1650m – CH.2550m)

- 3.1. This eastern link connects the proposed new roundabout on Maud Heath's Causeway (B4069) which has already been granted planning consent as part of Planning application N/12/00560/OUT to Parsonage Way, which is likely to require upgrading for its 0.55km length extending to the Swindon to Bristol (GWR) railway which is in deep cutting at this point.
- 3.2. Parsonage Way is currently a no through road servicing industrial employment uses typical of a small/medium industrial Estate. The existing industrial uses and Parsonage Way itself are reasonably well screened from the north east by a mature woodland lining both sides of a small tributary watercourse which runs parallel to Parsonage Way on its northern side and from the east by tree belts running along the top of cutting slopes both sides of the railway.
- 3.3. Parsonage Way is already a generous width to suit HGV use so the proposed upgrade will not require the widening of this existing road to any great extent and the linear woodland adjoining Parsonage Way will not be at risk from the proposed upgrade. Parsonage Way is also currently lit, but an upgrade to existing highway lighting is likely to be required along this existing urban section.
- 3.4. From the bend at the eastern end of Parsonage Way the proposed link road extends across the railway cutting with a proposed new 50m bridge. The eastern bridge landing will require the removal of part of a linear mound and some trees growing on it located at the western edge of Strategic Area B.
- 3.5. The proposed alignment then extends from the proposed new railway bridge south east across farmland currently laid to pasture, approximately 200m north east of Rawlings Farmhouse (Grade II Listed Building) and links to a proposed new roundabout at Chainage 2550m on the southern side of a shallow valley landform which is partially screened from land to the north of Area B, and Upper Penkingell Farmhouse, located approx. 400m to north east, by mature hedgerows and a linear tree belt. The existing farmland pasture slopes from west to east from the 65m contour at the top of the railway cutting down to the River Avon flood plain on the 50m contour.
- 3.6. This land is visually prominent viewed from the east. And views from the area are extensive over the River Avon floodplain, with views of Bencroft Hill and in the far distance Cherhill Monument visible on the elevated North Wessex Downs AONB

through a gap in the limestone ridge, formed by the River Marden Valley. The area is also visually influenced by a single line of overhead electricity transmission lines and associated pylons extending into area B across the River from New Leaze Farm in Strategic Area C. This section of new road crosses a single public footpath linking Cocklebury Lane to Upper Penkingell, crossing area B on the mid slope broadly following contour.

- 3.7. The existing housing areas in Monkton Park are unlikely to share any visibility with Section 2 due to the mature woodland vegetation growing on the cutting slopes of the North Wiltshire Rivers Route (disused railway).

4. (Option 1) Section 2b (CH.2550m – CH.3525m) and Section 3 (CH.3525m – CH.4933m)

- 4.1. From the proposed new roundabout at Chainage 2550m on the southern side of a shallow valley landform, the proposed alignment continues on a south east alignment, sloping down pastoral fields to cross the river Avon approximately 150m south of the River Marden's confluence with the Avon. The alignment proposes a new 70m bridge crossing the River Avon. The bridge will require approach embankments to be constructed on both sides of the river to reduce road gradients and to lift the bridge crossing out of the floodplain.
- 4.2. The proposed route continues on a south east alignment across low level floodplain land to meet the higher rolling lowland approx. 200m south west of New Leaze Farm. At this point the route is screened from the River Marden Valley and from wider floodplain areas to the north and Tytherton Lucas by an intervening rolling ridge on 60m contour at New Leaze Farm. The route crosses the NWRR cycleway/disused railway at Chainage 3525m, just south of New Leaze Farm with a proposed new pedestrian crossing.
- 4.3. The route continues in a south east direction crossing rolling farmland between the 50m and 55m contours. The alignment passes within approx. 400m of Hardens Farm (Grade II Listed building) to the west at its closest point where the route crosses the single lane farm access road leading to New Leaze Farm with a proposed new priority junction.
- 4.4. The route alignment then broadly follows the existing route of the single line of overhead electricity transmission lines and associated pylons towards Stanley Lane continuing on a south east alignment. South of the disused railway line the area is visually influenced by the existing residential areas at Hardens Mead and Pewsham to the south west and Monkton Park to the west.
- 4.5. The prominence of Abbeyfield School on high ground also exerts an urban influence. The landscape structure in this area is not particularly strong, as field boundary hedgerows often lack hedgerow trees, while other fields are defined by stock fencing and gappy hedgerows. The landscape structure becomes stronger approaching Stanley Lane. As the alignment approaches Stanley Lane it passes

within approx 450m at its closest point to Hither Farm (Grade II Listed Building), located to the east along Stanley Lane.

- 4.6. The route crosses Stanley Lane with a proposed new roundabout. From this new roundabout the route turns south and heads south west across some small fields, west of Jay's Farm where another new roundabout is proposed to complete the new link road with the A4 London Road.

5. (Option 2) Alternative Section 2b and Section 3 (CH.2550m – CH.5290m)

- 5.1. From the proposed new roundabout at Chainage 2550m on the southern side of a shallow valley landform, the proposed alignment continues on a south east alignment, down sloping pastoral fields to cross the river Avon, approximately 75m south of the River Marden's confluence with the Avon.
- 5.2. The alignment proposes a new 70m bridge crossing the River Avon. The bridge will require approach embankments to be constructed on both sides of the river to reduce road gradients and to lift the bridge crossing out of the floodplain.
- 5.3. The proposed route continues on a south east alignment slightly north of Option 1, across low level floodplain land to meet the higher rolling lowland approx. 200m north of New Leaze Farm.
- 5.4. At this point the route is exposed to the River Marden Valley and is visible from wider floodplain areas to the north, and from the Tytherton Lucas direction. The new road is likely to require a slightly longer length of embankment to cross the Avon's floodplain to the north of New Leaze Farm, before it joins and follows the 55m contour from the west of New Leaze Farm extending through arable farmland to the east of New Leaze Farm.
- 5.5. The route crosses the NWRR cycleway/disused railway at Chainage 4050m with a proposed new pedestrian crossing approx. 325m west of New Leaze farm access road. The route continues in a south westerly direction crossing pastoral farmland between 55m contours rising to 60m contour south of Stanley Lane.
- 5.6. The alignment passes within approx. 750m of Harden's Farm (Grade II Listed building) to the west at its closest point. The route alignment then continues in a South westerly direction towards Stanley Lane. South of the disused railway line the area is slightly less visually influenced by the existing residential areas at Harden's Mead and Pewsham to the south west and Monkton Park to the west than Option 1.
- 5.7. As the alignment approaches Stanley Lane it passes within approx 400m at its closest point to Hither Farm (Grade II Listed Building), located to the east along Stanley Lane. The route crosses Stanley Lane with a proposed new roundabout. From this new roundabout the route rejoins Option 1 alignment to the A4.

6. Landscape and Visual Quality

- 6.1. The TEP report makes a series of judgements in relation to landscape and visual quality for the relevant strategic areas which are applicable to the Eastern route options as follows;

Strategic Areas A2, B & C

- 6.2. In terms of Landscape quality the TEP report judges that all three strategic areas generally represent 'attractive' landscape character with 'Mostly consistent' and 'Some key characteristics present' that are representative of the wider Avon Open Clay Vale / Avon Valley Lowland landscape character. It also judges that in terms of remoteness and tranquillity all areas are 'peaceful'.
- 6.3. In terms of visual quality the TEP report judges that visual prominence of Area A2 is 'Moderate-Low', while Areas B & C have 'High visual prominence'. The nature of the existing urban edge is judged to be 'Partially visible' in Area A2, while Areas B & C are considered as 'Soft well vegetated urban edges with limited views of principally rooflines'. All areas have some public views, and judges the 'settlement setting and views of settlement' to have few attractive features or views for Area A2 with 'some attractive features & views' for Areas B and C.
- 6.4. The TEP report identifies that due to the higher elevation of land and the high visual prominence of the east facing slopes, that development on 'Strategic Area B' would increase the prominence of the town and reduce the rural and remote character of Tytherton Lucas which will be difficult to mitigate, which is contrary to guidance in the published landscape character assessments.
- 6.5. The TEP report highlights the following landscape qualities to be safeguarded within 'Strategic Area A2' as;
Wooded character created through the woodland around Kilvert's Parsonage and along the edge of Chippenham; Retention of mature hedgerows throughout the landscape; Visual separation between Langley Burrell and Chippenham; Strong containment and wooded framework to the employment area; Landscape setting and network of PRoW between Chippenham and Maud Heath's Causeway.
- 6.6. Within 'Strategic Area B' as;
Network of mature hedgerows and linear woodland on sloping ground; Distinctive easterly views from public rights of way across the River Avon to the limestone ridge of Bencroft Hill and Wick Hill; Wooded railway line providing a wooded horizon in westerly views; Remote and rural character to the landscape to the east around the River Avon floodplain; Remote and rural character to Peckingell and Upper Peckingell Farm; Distinctive built form and rural setting around Rawlings Farm and Peckingell and Upper Peckingell Farm; Remote and rural character of Tytherton Lucas.

6.7. Within 'Strategic Area C' as;

Remote rural character of the land to the north of the North Wiltshire Rivers Route (disused Calne to Chippenham Great Western Railway branch line) characterised by large arable fields bounded by tree lined watercourses and onward views over the expansive river floodplain flanked by the wooded limestone ridge to the east; Remote rural character of Tytherton Lucas; Setting of listed buildings at Harden's Farm, Hither Farm and Middle Farm; Rural wooded valley slopes with housing at Chippenham appearing nestled in woodland and St Paul's visible on the skyline viewed from PRow (BREM39) and crossing point across the River Marden; Prominence of St. Pauls Church in views of Chippenham from PRow to the east; Trees and hedgerows which combine with riparian trees along watercourses to provide a strong landscape structure and wooded setting to views across the landscape; Rural character to Stanley Lane interspersed with isolated properties; Filtered edge of Chippenham along Riverside Drive with River Avon providing a distinctive setting; Rural character of small scattered settlements and with distinctive vernacular using local stone.

7. Potential landscape and visual effects from implementing the eastern link road options

7.1. Section 2

The potential landscape and visual effects likely to arise from implementing Section 2 are likely to include;

- From upgrading Parsonage Way the resulting effects are likely to include an increase of road lighting, traffic and noise for adjacent receptors, which are not considered to be particularly harmful, due to the existing width and function of this road and existing employment uses each side of the road.
- The new railway bridge will require the removal of trees on the eastern landing within Strategic Area B, which will open up views along Parsonage Way for long distance elevated receptors from the east (Bencroft Hill).
- The new road, new roundabout and urban development on the elevated east facing slopes within Strategic Area B will breach the existing settlement containment provided by strong screening vegetation growing along the route of the disused railway. All development will be highly visible from the north and east, and difficult to mitigate.
- The remote, rural, tranquil character of Tytherton Lucas with the edge of Chippenham appearing generally distant and wooded is likely to be reduced, including an increase of traffic noise. The introduction of lighting and the movement of traffic will be evident from elevated distant eastern receptors.
- Existing rural PRow crossing the site and route will be screened, contained and channelled by development, lessening their rural character, distinctiveness and overall value.
- The setting to Rawlings Farmhouse will change from rural to urban and lose its agricultural association.

7.2. (Option 1) Section 2b and Section 3

The potential landscape and visual effects likely to arise from implementing Section 2b & 3 (Option 1) are likely to include;

- The new road, and urban development on the elevated east facing slopes within Strategic Area B will breach the existing settlement containment provided by strong screening vegetation growing along the route of the disused railway. All development will be highly visible from the north and east, and difficult to mitigate.
- The new River Avon Bridge crossing will require the removal of sections of riparian vegetation along the river.
- The new River Avon Bridge crossing and associated embankment will enclose the existing open views of the floodplain and river corridor from Black Bridge (and its associated viewing platform), from the adjacent cycleway lengths and from the proposed new Riverside Park land looking north.
- The remote, rural, tranquil character of Tytherton Lucas with the edge of Chippenham appearing generally distant and wooded will be reduced, but slightly less than Option 2, as the route will follow an alignment further south, partly in cutting.
- Existing rural PRoW crossing the road route, along the cycleway, and south of the cycleway will be screened, contained and channelled by development, lessening their rural character, distinctiveness and overall value.
- Option 1 proposes to enclose and urbanise less agricultural land, and utilises New Leaze farm buildings and its associated trees, existing local rolling ridges at New Leaze Farm and south west of Scott's Mill to limit visual and noise impacts towards Tytherton Lucas, East Tytherton and within the River Marden Valley.
- New Leaze farm and the rural footpaths to the north of the cycleway crossing the Marden Valley retain their rural agricultural associations and settings.
- The immediate setting to Hardens Farm will change from rural to urban.
- Existing eastward views of rural farmland and the elevated limestone ridge in the distance currently experienced from Monkton Park and from public rights of way within Area C will be screened, contained and channelled by urban development, lessening their rural character distinctiveness and overall value.
- The road alignment of option 1 is approx. 0.4km shorter than option 2 and subdivides less individual fields and impacts less field boundaries.

7.3. (Option 2) Alternative Section 2b and Section 3

The potential landscape and visual effects likely to arise from implementing Alternative Section 2b & 3 (Option 2) are likely to include;

- The new road, and urban development on the elevated east facing slopes within Strategic Area B will breach the existing settlement containment provided by strong screening vegetation growing along the route of the disused railway. All development will be highly visible from the north and east, and difficult to mitigate.
- The new River Avon Bridge crossing will require the removal of sections of riparian vegetation along the river.

- The new River Avon Bridge crossing and associated embankment will enclose the existing open views of the floodplain and river corridor viewed from Black Bridge (and its associated viewing platform), adjacent cycleway lengths and from the proposed new Riverside Park land looking north.
- The remote, rural, tranquil character of Tytherton Lucas with the edge of Chippenham appearing generally distant and wooded is likely be reduced, to a far greater extent than Option 1, as the route will follow a proposed alignment further north following contour along the River Marden Valley slope which is likely to generate greater visual impacts and traffic noise.
- Existing rural PRoW crossing the route, along the cycleway, and to the south and north of the cycleway will be screened, contained and channelled by development, lessening their rural character, distinctiveness and overall value.
- Option 2 proposes to enclose and urbanise a greater amount of agricultural land, and does not utilise New Leaze farm buildings and its associated trees, existing local rolling ridges at New Leaze Farm and south west of Scott's Mill to limit visual and noise impacts towards Tytherton Lucas, East Tytherton and within the River Marden Valley.
- New Leaze farm and the rural footpaths to the north of the cycleway crossing the Marden Valley will not retain their rural agricultural associations and settings.
- The immediate setting to Harden's Farm and New Leaze Farm will change from rural to urban.
- Existing eastward views of rural farmland and the elevated limestone ridge in the distance currently experienced from Monkton Park and from public rights of way within Area C will be screened, contained and channelled by urban development, lessening their rural character distinctiveness and overall value.
- Existing northward views of rural farmland from the cycleway, and rural views of the wide expansive lower floodplain from the public footpaths west of New Leaze Farm within Area C will be screened, contained and channelled by urban development and associated new screen planting, lessening their rural character distinctiveness and overall value.
- The road alignment of option 2 is approx. 0.4km longer than option 1 and subdivides a greater number of individual fields and impacts more field boundaries.

8. Southern Link Road Proposals

8.1. Summary (Sections 4 & 5)

Section 4 proposes a 2.03km link road providing a link through 'Strategic Area E' from the A350 south west of Chippenham to the A4 south east of Pewsham through 'Strategic Area D'.

8.2. Section 5 proposes a new 3.34km link road providing a link through 'Strategic Area E' from the A350 south west of Chippenham to the A4 south west of Pewsham through 'Strategic Area D'.

9. Section 4 - Route alignment description

Section 4 (CH.00m – CH.400m)

- 9.1. This southern link proposes a connection from the A350 with a new connecting roundabout located on the A350 just to the south of the Swindon to Bristol (GWR) railway bridge crossing. The route extends in a north east direction through the middle of the proposed employment land allocation in Strategic Area E, to a new roundabout proposed on the Paterdown Road north of Showell Farm Nurseries.
- 9.2. This land is a mix of arable and pasture enclosed by hedgerows, consisting of a number of medium and smaller size fields on 55m to 50m contour, some of these fields are smaller due to their sub-division by the original construction of the A350.
- 9.3. The area is subject to urbanising influences of the A350 and its associated traffic movement and noise to the south, by the railway on high embankment to the west (soon to be electrified) and by Patterdown Road traffic to the east.
- 9.4. The area is also visually influenced by 2 lines of overhead electricity transmission lines and associated pylons on farmland between the A350 and Thingley to the south west.
- 9.5. This short section does not cross any Public Rights of Way (PRoW) but does pass within approx. 200m north and west of Showell Farm (Grade II Listed Buildings).

Section 4 (CH.400m – CH.2030m)

- 9.6. From the proposed new Patterdown Road roundabout the indicative route extends eastwards across land to the north of Showell Farm Nurseries. From Patterdown Road the land slopes gently towards the river from the 50m to 45m contour and to slightly lower levels within the floodplain further east.
- 9.7. At CH.900m the route crosses Holywell Brook which requires a culvert crossing. This farmland largely comprises medium irregular sized fields laid to pasture and is enclosed by strong landscape structure consisting of tall mature hedgerows and small linear blocks of woodland with strong riparian vegetation along the river and small tributary watercourse.
- 9.8. The alignment extends eastwards and crosses the River Avon over a proposed new 35 metre long road bridge located north of the sewage treatment works and just south of Moretimores Wood, an Ancient Woodland and remnant of a Royal Hunting Forest known as Pewsham Forest. The bridge crossing is also likely to require a section of road constructed on rising embankment on the western side of the river to link with land to the east on the 45m contour, just north of the sewage works.
- 9.9. The proposed road alignment crosses two rural PRoW located on the western side of the river and passes through the southern tip of Rowden Conservation Area on both sides of the river. The route then follows an alignment over farmland to the north east along a shallow valley landform along the 50m contour to the west of a small tributary water course, and then crosses the Sustrans Cycle Network (Route

4), before rising up to the 55m contour to join the A4 (Pewsham Way) with a proposed new roundabout.

10. Section 5 - Route alignment description

Section 5 (CH.00m – CH.400m)

10.1. The first part of this route shares the same alignment as Section 4 between Chainage 00m and Chainage 400m (see Section 4 above).

Section 5 (CH.400m – CH.1800m)

10.2. From the proposed new Patterdown Road roundabout the indicative route extends eastwards across land to the north of Showell Farm Nurseries before it curves south towards the River Avon heading towards the higher ground south of the sewage works and Lower Lodge Farm. From Patterdown Road the land slopes gently towards the river from the 50m to 45m contour and to slightly lower levels within the floodplain further east.

10.3. This farmland largely comprises medium irregular sized fields laid to pasture and enclosed by strong landscape structure consisting of mature hedgerows and small linear blocks of woodland with strong riparian vegetation along the river.

10.4. The proposed alignment will require a new 70m long road bridge crossing the river, which is also likely to require a section of road constructed on rising embankment on the western side of the river to link to the higher rolling farmland to the east on the 50m and 55m contours. The bridge and embankment will be highly visible from the south.

10.5. The proposed alignment crosses two rural PRoW located on the western side of the river and passes within 100m of the southern boundary of Rowden Conservation Area. A single line of overhead electricity transmission lines suspended from pylons is clearly visible to the south.

Section 5 (CH.1800m – CH.3343m)

10.6. East of the proposed new river bridge, the alignment extends into 'Strategic Area D' further east and then slightly north to link with the southern edge of Pewsham at the existing A4 (Pewsham Way) Kings Roundabout which is proposed to be upgraded.

10.7. The indicative road alignment broadly follows a route parallel to, but slightly offset from the line of overhead electricity lines and pylons located just to the south of Lower Lodge Farm and Lower Lodge Cottages which are accessed off Forest Lane (No through Road). The route passes through undulating mixed farmland between the 50m and 55m contour, enclosed by strong landscape structure with high quality hedgerow Oak trees located within a strong hedgerow structure.

10.8. The route crosses 2 public footpaths, one of which is along a narrow farm road access leading to Middle Lodge Farm.

- 10.9. The proposed route passes over a small watercourse, requiring a culvert road crossing and also passes through the middle of a fine small linear belt of woodland containing some high quality mature oak trees lining the route of the Sustrans Cycle Network (Route 4), which is a permissive route leased from private landowners by the Council just before the route joins Kings Roundabout on the A4 Pewsham Way to the north.

11. Landscape and Visual Quality

- 11.1. The TEP report makes a series of judgements in relation to landscape and visual quality for relevant strategic areas which are applicable to the southern route options as follows;

Strategic Areas D & E

- 11.2. In terms of Landscape quality the TEP report judges that the area generally represents attractive landscape character with 'Mostly consistent' and 'Some key characteristics present' that are representative of the wider Avon Open Clay Vale / Avon Valley Lowland landscape character. It also judges that in terms of remoteness and tranquillity both areas are peaceful, and judges that the southern and eastern parts of Area E has higher landscape quality than the northern and western parts, while the southern part of area D is judged to be more consistent with wider landscape character, more remote and visually connected with the River Avon and the limestone ridge.
- 11.3. In terms of visual quality the TEP report judges that visual prominence of Area E is Moderate-Low while Area D is Moderate-High. The nature of the existing urban edge is judged to be 'Partially visible' in Area E and as a 'Soft well vegetated urban edge with limited views of principally rooflines' in Area D. Both areas have some public views and judges the setting of the settlement and views of settlement to have few attractive features or views.
- 11.4. The TEP report highlights the following landscape qualities to be safeguarded within 'Strategic Area D' as;
The integrity of the River Avon valley, the network of mature intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees; the setting of Rowden Manor (Grade II* Listed Building) and Rowden Conservation Area, expansive views of the wooded limestone ridge of Naish Hill and Bowden Hill; Visual separation between the limestone ridge (Naish Hill); Rural Character of the south eastern approach to Chippenham using Pewsham Way; Rural character of Area D despite its proximity to Chippenham.
- 11.5. Within 'Strategic Area E' as;
Integrity of River Avon valley and functioning floodplain; Strong network of mature intact hedgerows which create an enclosed wooded character to the southern part of the area; Some views towards the limestone ridge of Naish Hill and Bowden Hill; Setting to Rowden Manor and associated buildings; Views of roofline/skyline of Chippenham's historic core, including St. Paul's and St. Andrew's church spires; Undulating landform of the area, with smaller tributary valleys linking with River Avon Valley; Moretimore's Wood and strip of woodland north of Showell Farm

Nurseries; Higher level of southern approach compared with Area E, maintaining a separation between the road and proposed development and maintaining views from the road across the wider landscape; Rural character of southern approach.

- 11.6. It also identifies that Area E has a high potential for archaeological interest in the vicinity of Showell Farm Nurseries (Roman) and in the vicinity of Rowden Farm (Medieval) and highlights that Area D is within a former royal hunting forest and the Lodges within the area reflect this historic association.

12. Potential landscape and visual effects from implementing the southern link road options

Section 4

- 12.1. The potential landscape and visual effects likely to arise from implementing Section 4 are likely to include;
- The introduction of the new road bridge and associated elevated road embankment crossing the southern part of Rowden Conservation Area will reduce the physical and visual associations of Rowden Conservation Area from the rural farmland extending further south in Area E.
 - The new River Avon Bridge crossing will require the removal of sections of riparian vegetation along the river.
 - The route will introduce elevated vehicle noise, vehicle movement and light into this peaceful landscape which is likely to impact upon the southern extent of Rowden Conservation Area and the proposed riverside park land, reducing rural and riverside amenity for users.
 - The integrity of the River Avon corridor and the green finger of countryside associated with the floodplain will be physically and visually severed by the bridge crossing (similar to how the existing river bridge crossing on Avenue La Fleche separates Rowden Conservation Area from the town to the north east of Area E, although the new crossing will benefit from some existing landscape screening, provided by Moretimores wood and linear belts of Woodland along tributary watercourses in Area E).
 - The route breaches the existing high quality landscape edge containing the existing settlement to the south of Pewsham in Area D, locally undermining the effectiveness of this existing high quality settlement transition with countryside and high quality rural settlement approach and setting to the town.
 - The introduction of development on the higher ground of Area D (east side of the river) will reduce the sense of separation between Pewsham and the Limestone Ridge, and be highly visible from southern directions.
 - The shorter length and more direct route of Section 4 (approx 1.3km less compared to Section 5) impacts a lesser number of fields which reduces the amount of field subdivision and the associated loss of characteristic landscape structure (hedgerows, trees and woodland belts).

Section 5

12.2. The potential landscape and visual effects likely to arise from implementing Section 5 are likely to include;

- The introduction of the new road bridge and associated elevated road embankment from the western approach may physically and visually detach Rowden Conservation Area from its rural countryside setting further south in Area E.
- The new River Avon Bridge crossing will require the removal of sections of riparian vegetation along the river.
- The route will introduce vehicle noise, vehicle movement and light into this peaceful landscape which negatively impacts upon the existing rural footpath network and the southern extent of the proposed riverside park land, reducing rural and riverside amenity for users.
- The integrity of the River Avon corridor and the rural green finger of countryside associated with the floodplain will be physically and visually severed by the river bridge crossing.
- The route breaches the identified high quality landscape edge containing the existing settlement edge to the south of Pewsham in Area D, undermining the effectiveness of this existing high quality settlement transition with countryside and high quality rural settlement approach and setting to the town.
- The introduction of development on the higher ground of Area D (east side of the river) would reduce the sense of separation between Pewsham and the Limestone Ridge and would be highly visible from southern directions.
- The longer length of section 5 (approx 1.3km longer compared to Section 4) impacts a greater number of fields, increasing the amount of field subdivision and the associated loss of characteristic landscape structure (hedgerows, trees and woodland belts) which undermines the identified valued rural landscape quality of Area D.

13. Conclusion

Overall Comparison of Southern link road and Eastern link road options

Eastern Link Road Options

13.1. The introduction of new road infrastructure and urban development into Strategic Area B is considered likely to generate the most landscape and visual harm out of all Strategic Site Option proposals, which is considered to be difficult to mitigate in landscape and visual terms. This is due to the elevated nature and orientation of the land, and the existing remote, rural, tranquil character of the area, including remote, rural outlying settlements.

13.2. Within Strategic Area C, the proposed Option 1 (Section 2b & 3) road alignment is likely to generate slightly less harmful landscape and visual effects compared to Option 2 (Alternative Section 2b & 3). This additional landscape and visual harm is considered to result from extending the road alignment north of New Leaze Farm, and from introducing urban development north of the cycleway.

Southern Link Road Options

- 13.3. The introduction of new road infrastructure and urban development in Area D is considered likely to generate greater harm than Area E. This is due to the closer proximity of Area D to the Limestone Ridge, and also the special rural qualities identified within Area D.
- 13.4. Within Strategic Area D, the proposed Section 4 road alignment is likely to generate substantially less harmful landscape and visual effects compared to Section 5. This is largely due to the overall greater length of the proposed Section 5 road through this area, resulting in many more fields and field boundaries being impacted, but also the greater prominence of the Section 5 route over higher land, compared with Section 4 which is much shorter in length and utilises a shallow valley landform allowing the crossing at lower level, which is likely to be able to be more effectively mitigated in the longer term. Any enabling urban development to facilitate this short section should be resisted in Area D.
- 13.5. Within Strategic Area E, the proposed Section 4 road alignment is considered likely to generate slightly less harmful landscape and visual effects compared to Section 5. Section 5 proposes a 70m bridge crossing the River Avon from a highly prominent landform south of Lower Lodge Farm, viewed from the south and the Limestone Ridge, while Section 4 passes to the immediate north of the sewage works requiring only a 35m bridge crossing the Avon, at lower level and with substantial lengths of the proposed new road screened from the north and south by existing linear belts of woodland. This is despite the proximity of Rowden Manor and Rowden Conservation Area, although it is acknowledged that this is a landscape opinion, and specialist conservation, ecology and archaeological opinion may alter the overall balance of impacts and ultimately any final planning balance.