

## Wiltshire Council

### Cabinet

14 March 2017

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**Subject: A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down Road Scheme**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philippe**

**Key Decision: Yes**

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#### **Executive Summary**

The single carriageway section of A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down can no longer accommodate the traffic at peak hours. This has an adverse impact on safety, local economy, local communities, and the World Heritage Site (WHS). The Council has been encouraging government to improve this road, and therefore now welcomes the proposal from Highways England to bring substantial improvements to A303 by building a dual carriageway and a tunnel.

Following a three stage options appraisal of the approximately 60 historic routes for the dualling of the Amesbury to Berwick Down section of the A303, Highways England have identified two routes as the better performing and more deliverable options for this road improvement scheme. These are:

- Route option D061 – 2.9km length tunnel with route running north of Winterbourne Stoke, the eastern tunnel portal located east of The Avenue and the western tunnel portal located west of Normanton Gorse
- Route option D062 – 2.9km length tunnel with route running south of Winterbourne Stoke, the eastern tunnel portal located east of The Avenue and the western tunnel portal located west of Normanton Gorse

Both options would include improvements for the existing junctions between the A303 and the intersecting A345 and A360.

A public consultation was launched by Highways England on 12<sup>th</sup> January and will run until 5<sup>th</sup> March 2017, for public and key stakeholders to comment on their proposals and identify any areas of concern or opportunities for further improvement.

Council officers from a variety of technical services have reviewed the public consultation material and their analysis is collated within Appendix 1. This is intended to be submitted to Highways England as the Council's formal response to the consultation.

Subject to the successful resolution of the issues identified within the main body of this report and in Appendix 1, it is recommended that the proposed routes for the scheme are supported. Where there is a preference in relation to options for the section at Winterbourne Stoke, this is included under various headings in

Appendix 1. Whilst it is recognised that the design proposals are still at a very early stage in the development process, it is necessary for further information to be made available to the Council in order for it to fully assess the proposals. Therefore, the Council should retain the ability to refine its position once the additional information is available.

## **Proposals**

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report
- Agree the proposed response to Highways England for this options appraisal and route selection public consultation
- Note the additional potential financial implications arising as a result of this scheme, which will require more detailed discussion as the preferred route is established.

## **Reason for Proposals**

The case for dualling the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down has long been established through promoting economic growth in the South West, increasing safety, improving connectivity with neighbouring regions and protecting and enhancing the environment

Highways England have assessed approximately 60 historic routes and identified the 2.9km tunnel with a bypass either North or South of Winterbourne Stoke as the better performing and more deliverable route. Whilst there are several issues which will require resolution as the design is further developed, on the whole officers believe that both options are capable of addressing the transport, economic, heritage and community issues associated with the A303. They will also enable the timeframe dictated by the Development Consent Order (DCO) process to be met, achieving start on site by March 2020.

**Dr Carlton Brand (Corporate Director)**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To inform Members of the route options appraisal methodology and outcome selected by Highways England to take to public consultation
2. To confirm the Council's response to the public consultation
3. To note the resource and financial implications for the Council with regard to this road improvement scheme

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

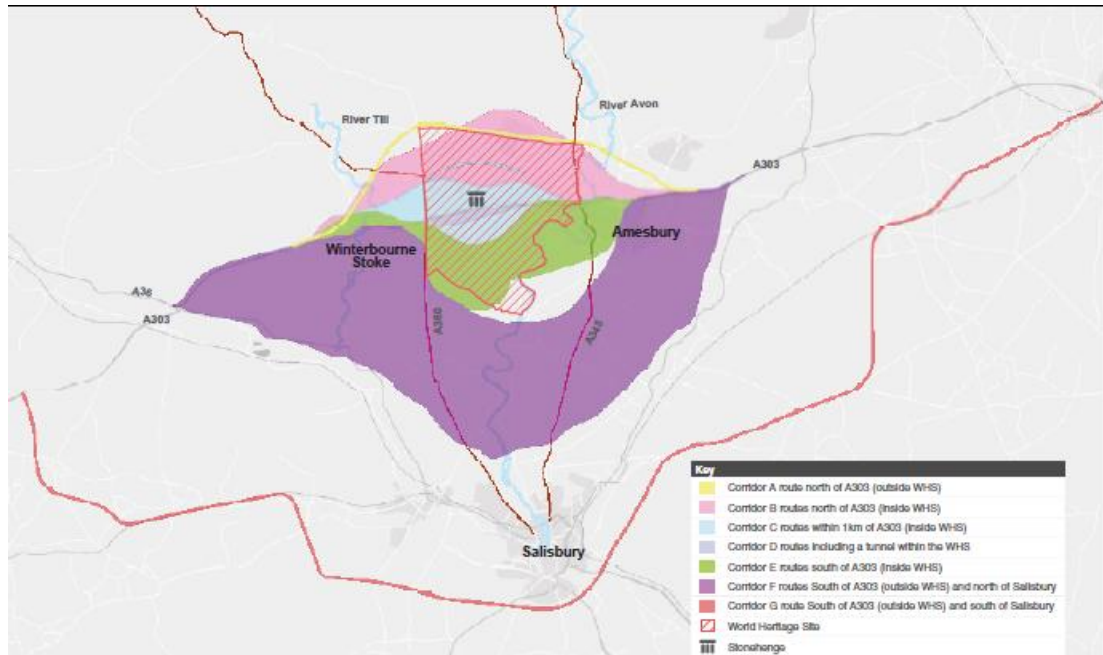
4. Improvements along the A303 help meet the priorities of the Council's Business Plan, including:
  - Outcome 1 – Wiltshire has a thriving and growing local economy
  - Outcome 2 – People in Wiltshire work together to solve problems locally and participate in decisions that affect them
  - Outcome 3 – Everyone in Wiltshire lives in a high quality environment
  - Outcomes 6 – People are as protected from harm as possible and feel safe

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

5. During the past year, Highways England have been assessing all potential routes for dualling the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down. Approximately 60 routes had historically been proposed by Government, stakeholders and the public. These options were grouped into 8 corridors which contained route options with similar characteristics as follows:
  - Corridor A – Surface routes north of the existing A303 (wholly outside WHS)
  - Corridor B – Surface routes north of the existing A303 (partially inside WHS)
  - Corridor C – Surface routes within 1.0km of the existing A303 (as the route options pass through the WHS)
  - Corridor D – Routes including a tunnel (at least partially within the WHS)
  - Corridor E – Surface routes south of the existing A303 (at least partially inside WHS)

- Corridor F (North) – Surface routes south of the existing A303 (wholly outside WHS) and north of Salisbury
- Corridor F (South) – Surface routes south of the existing A303 (wholly outside WHS) and north of Salisbury, further south than Corridor F (North)
- Corridor G – Surface routes south of the existing A303 (wholly outside WHS) and south of Salisbury.

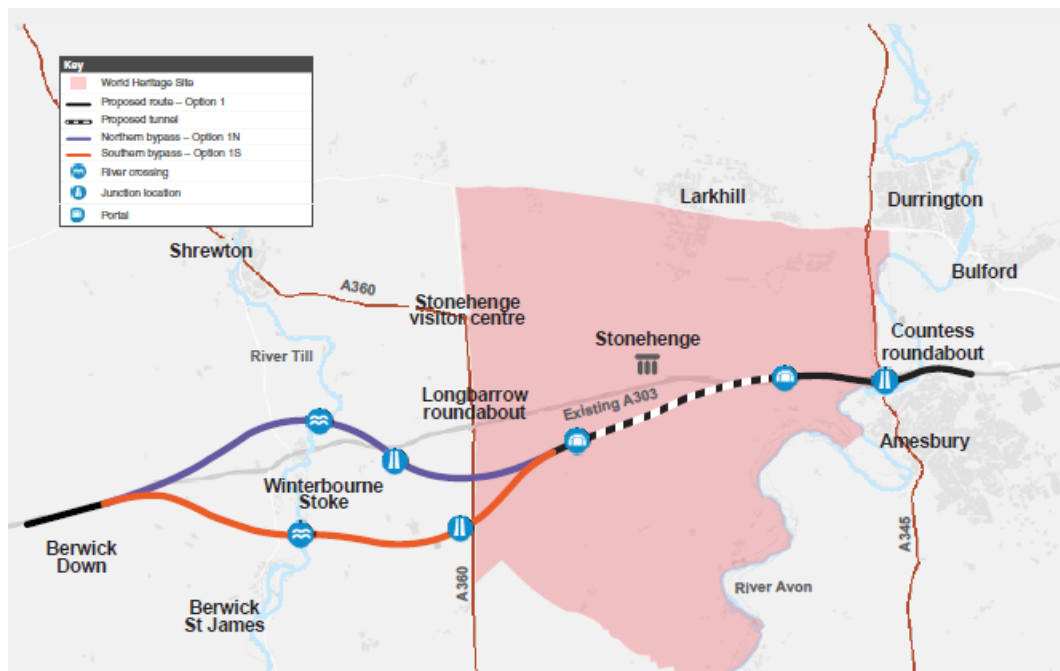
These are shown diagrammatically below:



6. These corridors were assessed against three criteria, being the Client Scheme Requirements (CSRs), the Web-based Transport Appraisal Guidance's (WebTAG) Early Assessment and Sifting Tool (EAST) and the National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) environmental aspects. Following this initial assessment, Corridor D, Corridor F (North) and Corridor F (South) were taken forward for further consideration.
7. Four routes within Corridor D and three routes within Corridor F (North and South) were assessed against the Options Assessment Framework contained within the WebTAG Transport Appraisal Process, which is based around the Transport Business Case Five Case Model criteria. Primary considerations at this stage were the Strategic Fit assessment (fit with policy and CSRs) and the Value for Money assessment which includes the impact on the economy and the environment. As a result, three routes (two in Corridor D and one in Corridor F) were identified as the better performing routes.
8. Further analysis of these three routes was undertaken which included assessment of the following areas: traffic and journey times, scheme costs, economic, social impact, safety, operational, technology and maintenance, environmental, programme compliance and the Client Scheme Requirements (CSRs).

9. Two route options within Corridor D were selected for public consultation to further develop the design and undertake further appraisal to determine the preferred route for the scheme. These are:
- Route Option D061 – 2.9km length tunnel with route running north of Winterbourne Stoke, the eastern tunnel portal located east of The Avenue and the western tunnel portal located west of Normanton Gorse
  - Route Option D062 – 2.9km length tunnel with route running south of Winterbourne Stoke, the eastern tunnel portal located east of The Avenue and the western tunnel portal located west of Normanton Gorse.

The proposal is illustrated diagrammatically below:



10. The public consultation was launched on 12<sup>th</sup> January and ran until 5<sup>th</sup> March 2017. All consultation material is available from the Highways England website (<https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/cip/a303-stonehenge/>), with the full suite of hard copy documents available in 3 Council libraries for review and feedback forms available from a further 14 libraries. Highways England have also held 10 public exhibition events in the surrounding locality, including one in London. Promotional activity has appeared on the national and local news television programmes, in newspapers and journals, on the radio, through social media, in local amenity locations such as food stores and local schools, and in service stations along the M4 and M5 corridor.
11. Highways England have asked the public and key stakeholders for views on the proposed route and junctions, any perceived issues to be considered, and any opportunities for legacy improvements resulting from this scheme.
12. Council officers from a variety of technical services have been reviewing the consultation material to identify any concerns or opportunities and any

further information required. These have been collated in Appendix 1, which is intended to be submitted to Highways England as the Council's formal response to the consultation.

13. The key issues identified by officers include:

Highways and Transport:

- Impact of the scheme on the local road network, including any Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to regulate use of the former A303, and agreement under s59 highways Act 1980 in relation to non-A303 haul routes
- Design of local road elements of the scheme, including appropriate alterations of junctions as appropriate
- Surface water drainage
- Rights of way and access, including segregated crossings
- De-trunking and transfer of former Highways England assets to Wiltshire Council
- Improvements to and signing for tunnel and route diversions
- Requirements for local TROs

Public Health and Public Protection:

- Impact of noise and vibration from both the construction of the road and tunnel, and its operation on local residents
- Protection of private water supplies and associated hydrology and land drainage
- Construction impact and long term traffic related pollution at residential properties
- Dust impacts arising from construction phase, particularly during the summer months
- Impact of artificial lighting during the construction phase

Ecology:

- Effects on a number of European nature conservation designations which require detailed assessment and mitigation
- Presence of phosphatic chalk geology in the general area which the tunnel will pass through and its disposal or re-use
- Impact of Winterbourne Stoke bypass on River Till and Parsonage Down NNR / SAC
- Impacts on locally important County Wildlife Sites, priority habitats and protected / priority / notable species.
- Opportunities for ecological enhancement to be sought where possible

Landscape:

- Community and landscape severance of southern bypass route for Winterbourne Stoke
- Adoption of sufficient acoustic and visual mitigation methods for affected communities

Public Rights of Way (PROWs):

Retention and supplementation of the existing public rights of way network (subject to point 4 below) to enable walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers a legal right of access through the WHS. This would include:

- New or existing east-west routes to connect with north-south public rights of way to ensure that continuous access is available. These to include a connection between byways open to all traffic Amesbury 11 and 12 in order to retain through access for mechanically propelled vehicles between Larkhill and Lake
- Connectivity where the rights of way would cross the new A303 route
- Consider the opportunities provided by public rights of way for people with disabilities to explore the landscape in sustainable ways – e.g. riding for the disabled, mobility buggies – and the need and cost of appropriate maintenance to facilitate their access
- Appropriate Public Path Orders where alterations would be beneficial to path users

#### Archaeology:

- The Eastern portal location and design are developed to minimise proximity and visual impact on the Avenue and King Barrow Ridge
- The design and location of the Western portal, expressway and junctions are developed/amended to avoid the current predicted major adverse impact on heritage and Outstanding Universal Value especially in relation to the Scheduled Barrow Groups and other attributes of Outstanding Universal Value
- The expressway and junction alignments do not adversely impact on Solstitial alignments
- On present evidence, the southern bypass routes appears to be preferable to the northern one, although there is still much more evaluation and assessment needed on the southern route
- All required archaeological evaluation within and outside WHS is completed in time to feed into the assessment work prior to route approval and submission of the DCO. This work should be done in time to help inform the preferred route decision and the detailed design of the Scheme
- Mitigation measures will be in place to offset potential adverse impact on Outstanding Universal Value and other significant heritage assets.

#### Built Heritage:

- Significant impact on Countess Farm, comprising six grade II listed buildings, from proposed flyover at Countess Roundabout
- 'Less than substantial harm' to grade II listed stone bridge over the Avon and Diana's House, a grade II\* listed former lodge to the Abbey
- Access to A303 using Stonehenge Road from the upper Woodford valley will need to be considered
- The potential increase in noise levels affecting the Winterbourne Stoke Conservation Area will need to be monitored, with appropriate mitigation through surfacing materials and detail of cuttings and embankments

- In the event that the Southern Bypass route was selected, the significance of 'The Park' should be explored. The introduction of a dual-carriageway across the open landscape of the river valley between the Winterbourne Stoke and Berwick St James Conservation Areas would have a significant adverse visual and aural impact on both and several listed buildings. Consideration should also be given to noise impacts on Asserton Farm. The tranquil rural setting of an unlisted thatched cottage (C19 or earlier) lying to the south of the bridge would be severely compromised
  - Both bypass options would offer significant improvement to the setting of the grade II\* listed Manor House, Winterbourne Stoke.
14. Subject to successful resolution of the issues identified above and in Appendix 1, on the whole officers recommend that the proposed routes for the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down scheme are supported. Where there is a preference in relation to options for the section at Winterbourne Stoke, this is included under various headings at Appendix 1.
  15. However, whilst it is recognised that the design proposals are still at a very early stage in the development process, it is necessary for further information to be made available to the Council in order for it to fully assess the proposals.

## **Background**

16. Dualling the A303 and A358 is a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP) as defined by the Planning Act 2008.
17. This NSIP will be promoted by Highways England under the requirements of the Planning Act to secure a Development Consent Order (DCO) to allow work to begin. This process will involve detailed engagement with the general public, local communities and stakeholders.
18. The DCO process and the role of Local Authorities within this process was the subject of a previous Cabinet report on 15 March 2016 ([Cabinet Papers Item 39](#)).
19. The timetable for the development of this road improvement scheme, the Council's involvement and governance arrangements established to fully engage and manage this project, and the estimated resource implications for the various professional areas were detailed in a Cabinet report considered on 11 October 2016 ([Cabinet Papers Item 118](#)).

## **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

20. Whilst no specific Overview and Scrutiny activity has been undertaken to date, quarterly Stakeholder Engagement Meetings are being held to ensure that local Members are involved in the development of this road scheme.
21. Presentations are also being delivered at the relevant Area Board meetings in Amesbury, Mere and Warminster when requested by the Chair.



22. Furthermore, the Community Area Managers are employing the model used in the Army Rebasing Programme for communication and engagement. The Community Area Manager for Amesbury is co-ordinating all activity with the other Community Area Manager's across Wiltshire.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

23. None

### **Public Health and Public Protection Implications**

24. A key outcome of the scheme is to improve safety along the corridor. By creating an "expressway" dual carriageway, which is designed to high safety standards, it will increase capacity on the route, which will reduce the accident prevalence.
25. Furthermore, there are a number of issues which will need to be addressed to minimise the impact that the construction and operational phases of the scheme may have on the local area in terms of environmental health. This would include noise and vibration, air quality, dust control and light nuisance. Further detail is required to fully assess any proposed mitigating measures to minimise the impact of the scheme. It is expected that this will be available during the development of the DCO application and in advance of the statutory consultation planned for the end of 2017.

### **Procurement Implications**

26. None

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

27. Council officers have engaged with Highways England's appointed consultants to ensure the consultation is adequately promoted within local communities, including any identified hard to reach groups.
28. Whilst some analysis of the social impact has been undertaken to date, a full equality impact assessment will be undertaken by Highways England as part of the DCO process.
29. Equality impact considerations will also be referenced within the Council's report on the appropriateness of the consultation, which is required to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate following the DCO submission.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

30. As a signatory to the World Heritage Site (WHS) Management Plan (2015) and a member of the WHS Partnership Panel, the Council and its partners have a responsibility to protect the outstanding universal value of the site and any decisions relating to this will be monitored by UNESCO. A second mission by ICOMOS / UNESCO was held between 31<sup>st</sup> January and 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017.

31. A preliminary assessment of the implications for heritage, archaeology and ecology of the proposed route has been undertaken and is included as part of Appendix 1. However, further information is required in order for the Council to fully assess the implications and as such we will continue to work with Highways England and other key stakeholders to undertake this.
32. Whilst it is anticipated that the scheme will provide benefits through improved traffic flows, thereby reducing delays and a consequential reduction in noise and excessive fuel consumption and emissions associated with slow moving or stationary traffic, further information is required to confirm this.

### **Risk Assessment**

33. It is anticipated that engagement in this project will be controversial and it is likely that there will be conflicting views amongst the service areas involved and by Members. The Council will be required to formulate a corporate position on many of the issues considered and it is anticipated that this will be set by Cabinet following recommendations from officers.
34. Whilst these proposals are being developed, the Council may need to reserve judgement on some matters until further information is available in order for the Council to make a fully informed decision on certain key aspects.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

35. The DCO submission may be delayed which may jeopardise the current central government funding agreement.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

36. The Council will continue to work closely with Highways England and other key stakeholders to manage the inputs required for the DCO submission.
37. Members will be regularly updated and agreement sought at each of the key stages of the DCO process.

### **Financial Implications**

38. An indicative figure of £300,000 has been included in 2017/18 in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as part of budget setting to cover the additional resource requirements. Highways England have now indicated that resource expenditure may not be recovered, however Wiltshire Council are continuing to challenge this.
39. Appendix 2 of the October 2016 Cabinet report shows an initial assessment of the additional resource requirements for this programme before any potential recovery of costs from Highways England.

40. The Council will have additional resource implications for the period post consent whilst the scheme is being delivered, if applicable. These will be identified in a future report to Cabinet.
41. As outlined in the main body of the report, both options being consulted on will have future financial implications in terms of maintenance and running costs as a result of the de-trunking of the A303 as part of the DCO process. Initial assessment is that Wiltshire Council would take on a stretch of new road, a junction and a roundabout, which may include new traffic signals and street lighting. Historically when roads have been de-trunked, Highways England have compensated Local Authorities for the additional maintenance burden the roads would present. At this stage future financial implications cannot be quantified. This would be done later in the DCO process.

### **Legal Implications**

42. Section 22 of the Planning Act 2008 sets out criteria for Highway schemes to be considered as nationally significant infrastructure projects and therefore capable of being dealt with under the Development Consent Order (DCO) process.
43. This process was introduced with an aim that it would be a one stop shop for any significant infrastructure project (including some processes which normally the Council may have been the decision maker). The Stonehenge project falls into this category.
44. It is Highways England who will be the lead body in any application for a DCO.
45. The role of the Council within this process is as a statutory Consultee (and one of the principal consultees). It is inevitable that there will be a number of Council facets that will be engaged.
46. We are currently at the pre-application stage whereby Highways England are seeking at an early stage comments on a 1.8 mile (2.9 kilometer) tunnel under part of the World Heritage Site (WHS), a bypass for Winterbourne Stoke and improve the existing junctions between the A303 and the intersecting A345 and A360.
47. As part of the consultation documents they have included a technical appraisal report setting out the background to the proposals. Part of that appraisal considered options which took the A303 outside the world heritage site completely (F10).
48. This option scored highly on cultural heritage but less strongly on the other aspects (transport, economic growth and environment and community) and therefore Highways England have identified as their preferred option two options (D061 and D062) which both include the tunnel.

49. It is correct that the design proposals are still at a very early stage in the development process, it is necessary for further information to be made available to the Council in order for it to fully assess the proposals. Therefore, the Council should retain the ability to refine its position once the additional information is available.
50. However for the purposes of the pre-application consultation stage Legal Services are satisfied that the draft report fairly and professionally reflects the multi facets that the Council are involved with in this proposal.

### **Options Considered**

51. None

### **Conclusions**

52. The case for dualling the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down has long been established through promoting economic growth in the South West, increasing safety, improving connectivity with neighbouring regions and protecting and enhancing the environment.
53. Highways England have undertaken an option appraisal of approximately 60 historical routes and identified a 2.9-kilometre tunnel under part of the World Heritage Site, a bypass for Winterbourne Stoke (either to the North or to the South), and improvements for the existing junctions between the A303 and the intersecting A345 and A360 as the better performing and more deliverable option.
54. Following assessment of the proposals by Council officers, it is recommended that support is given to Highways England to develop a preferred route and address the identified issues contained above and in Appendix 1. However, whilst it is recognised that the design proposals are still at a very early stage, the Council must retain the ability to refine its position once the additional information is available.
55. Members are asked to:
  - Note the contents of this report
  - Agree the proposed response to Highways England for this options appraisal and route selection public consultation
  - Note the additional potential financial implications arising as a result of this scheme, which will require more detailed discussion as the preferred route is established.

**Dr Carlton Brand (Corporate Director)**

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Date of report: 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Wiltshire Council Non-Statutory Consultation Response to Highways England for A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (Stonehenge) Road Improvement Scheme

### **Background Papers**

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:  
None