

Consultation launches on new designs for A358 Taunton to Southfields upgrade

The planned upgrade of the A358, a key route linking the south west and London and south east, will see a single lane stretch of carriageway between the M5 at Taunton and the Southfields roundabout, upgraded to dual carriageway.

The proposed scheme would considerably benefit road users, local communities and businesses.

Katherine Liddington, Senior Project Manager for the A358 scheme, said:

We plan to build approximately 8.5 miles of new dual carriageway, which will considerably improve road safety, reduce traffic congestion and improve connectivity for road users and local communities, while unlocking economic growth in Somerset and beyond.

Since announcing our preferred route for the project in 2019 we have been working to refine the preliminary design for the new road. We've made some improvements to our proposals, which will improve access safety to local roads and reduce the impact on communities, the environment, and the local landscape.

As part of the planning process, we would like to hear your thoughts on our proposed design. This will help refine our preliminary design before we submit our planning application in 2022.

Rebecca Pow MP added:

The A358 upgrade has been a long time coming and a great deal of progress has been made to reach this stage.

It is as important as ever that the A303/A358 corridor is improved as this is vital to unlocking the region. I hope as many people as possible will take part in the consultation.

In delivering the scheme, we're aiming to:

- improve the capacity of the road to reduce delays and queues that occur during peak hours and at key times of the year i.e. the height of summer.

- support economic growth, facilitating growth in jobs and housing by providing a free-flowing and reliable connection between the south east and the south west
- make the road safer, by providing additional capacity and reducing driver stress. We'll also improve routes for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders in the area
- protect the environment and look for opportunities to improve it, minimising any unnecessary impact of the scheme on the surrounding natural and historic environment and landscape
- work with local communities to reduce the impact of the road, and look for ways to improve local people's quality of life
- make journey times more reliable and resilient; by providing more capacity it will become easier to manage traffic when incidents occur

Paula Hewitt, Somerset County Council's Lead Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure, said:

The A358/A303 is an incredibly important main transport artery for Somerset and this major project is vital for future growth in the county.

We'd encourage everyone to get involved in the consultation and have their say on the scheme – this is your chance to make your voice heard.

The consultation runs from today to Monday, 22 November 2021 with feedback helping National Highways develop its planning application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to be submitted next year.

A DCO is required for all nationally significant infrastructure projects and will allow for the Planning Inspectorate to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will decide on whether development consent should be granted for the proposed scheme.

One of the best ways to find out more about our proposals and have your say is to visit our online exhibition. You can access this [via the scheme website](#). There are dedicated times when you can chat with members of the project team who'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.

There will also be nine online question and answer events, and three public consultation events in line with government guidance:

- Taunton Racecourse – Tuesday 19 October, 2pm – 8pm
- Monks Yard – Saturday 23 October, 11am – 6pm
- Holiday Inn Taunton – Wednesday 3 November, 11am – 6pm

If you do not have access to the internet, you can request a free copy of our consultation booklet, feedback questionnaire and non-technical summary of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report by calling 0300 123 5000 or emailing A358TauntontoSouthfields@highwaysengland.co.uk

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.