

Dear Stakeholder

I write to you as a key representative of your organisation involved in the A417 Missing Link project, to provide a progress update following the feedback received to the supplementary public consultation that closed on the 12 November 2020.

After carefully considering the feedback received from the consultation, we fixed our design for assessment on 18 December 2020. This assessment of the preliminary design will inform our Development Consent Order (DCO) application, which we intend to submit in the first half of 2021. The design fix has involved some further changes to the scheme, to help address stakeholder feedback and suggestions for improvements to the proposals that we consulted on in Autumn 2019 and Autumn 2020. Highways England is minded to carry these design changes into the submission.

It is important to note that the scheme is at preliminary stage of design, and that there is an opportunity for continued liaison together and further design refinement as we move from a preliminary to a detailed design and as the scheme proceeds to construction.

In parallel to our Autumn 2020 consultation, we also held collaborative meetings with environmental groups to discuss the design of our project. As a result of these discussions, we've agreed together the following changes:

- Introduce steppingstones to improve calcareous grassland connectivity and, subject to agreement with landowners, we propose to incorporate a route north-west from the Gloucestershire Way crossing to Emma's Grove, extending to an area approximately 3.5ha in size. It would then extend around the eastern and southern margins of Emma's Grove, connecting into the northern end of Barrow Wake. Woodland planting between Emma's Grove and Barrow Wake has been reduced to allow better connectivity of grassland habitat.
- Amend the design of the Gloucestershire Way crossing to provide:
- An area of calcareous grassland of 25m in width; and
- Two 3m width hedgerows as essential bat mitigation; and
- A 3.5m bridleway to accommodate people, which would also function as a maintenance strip on the southern boundary of the crossing; and

- A 1.5m pathway known as maintenance strip on the northern boundary of the crossing to enable safe working for highways operatives should repairs be required on the structure.

The final design of the crossing will be determined at the detailed design stage, with further opportunities for stakeholder and landowner discussion to help inform decisions on surfacing and aesthetics. Further discussions are also needed on the aesthetics of the Cotswold Way crossing and these will similarly be considered through the detailed design stage of the project.

- We have also received feedback to consider our position on the reduction, removal or relocation of the Barrow Wake car park. Highways England are considering that feedback and are continuing to talk to Gloucestershire County Council, the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the National Trust and Cotswold National Landscape about the car park.

Below is a list of design changes that we've agreed at the design fix for assessment, with a description and reason for the change provided. These design changes incorporate feedback from our public consultations in 2019 and 2020, further work undertaken by the project team and discussions held with environmental groups, local authorities and parish councils. I also attach a plan to illustrate the locations of the design changes corresponding to the reference number provided for each design change.

#### Amendments to the scheme during preliminary design

Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
<b>Highways</b>			
1	B4070 alignment	Reroute the B4070 to Birdlip via the entrance of Barrow Wake to re-use existing underbridge.	Improved design and reduces new infrastructure in the landscape.
2	Cowley Lane stopping up to traffic	Restrict vehicular access from Cowley junction to Cowley Lane. Access to residential properties will be retained.	Responding to consultation and landowner feedback.

Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
3	Move western Shab Hill roundabout	Move roundabout away from Shab Hill barn.	Responding to landowner consultation feedback.
4	Eastern Shab Hill roundabout redesign for traffic projections	Detailed traffic modelling was undertaken, and the assessment identified queuing. The roundabout design was changed to accommodate the traffic.	Traffic modelling results required design change.
5	Ullenwood junction and alignment	Redesigned to allow for projected traffic flows and improved safety.	Improved design, safety and response to traffic modelling.
6	Rushwood Kennels alignment change	Realignment to move road away from the properties and provide room for noise bunding and planting screening.	Responding to landowner consultation feedback.

Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
7		Passing place on access road to Rushwood Kennels, Cuckoopen	

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Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
8	Parking space for Air Balloon Cottages	Roadside bay added and positioned to avoid National Trust access point.	Responding to landowner consultation feedback.
9	Road layout improvements around Shab Hill junction	Southbound merge changes to include parallel lane instead of direct merge.	Responding to road safety audit feedback
10	Vertical alignment change at Cowley Lane overbridge	Change of vertical alignment to reduce height.	Improved design and reduces impact on the landscape.
N/A	Amendments to carriageway widths	Side road width alterations to align with Gloucestershire County Council requests.	Responding to consultation feedback.
11	Byway open to all traffic south west of Shab Hill junction	New section of Byway open to all traffic to address severance of existing unclassified road.	Responding to consultation feedback.
12	Parking for Air Balloon Way	Parking provision for accessing the Air Balloon Way restricted byway adjacent to Golden Heart Inn. Disabled parking located adjacent to the Stockwell Farm turning. See also Ref 51 below.	Responding to consultation and Technical Working Group feedback.
13	Cowley overbridge verges	Cowley overbridge verges improved to accommodate planting of a continuous native species-rich hedgerow.	Design refinement.
14	Stockwell overbridge lane verges	Stockwell overbridge verges improved to accommodate planting of two continuous native species-rich hedgerows.	Design refinement.
15	Grove Farm underpass	To provide additional vehicular crossing of the A417 and access to land and properties. Provides a new right of way (bridleway).	Design refinement, improved safety and responding to consultation feedback.

Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
16	Removal of mainline access to Grove Farm	Removal of previously proposed access to Grove Farm to improve safety and accommodate mainline alignment changes, with alternative access provided by Grove Farm underpass.	Design refinement and responding to consultation feedback.

Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
17	Mainline vertical alignment change	Mainline alignment changed from current 10% gradient to 8% gradient on Crickley Hill (instead of previously proposed 7% gradient).	<p>Design refinement and responding to consultation feedback. This change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces cutting required;</li> <li>• Eliminates structures and retaining walls;</li> <li>• Reduces cost;</li> <li>• Creates an earthworks balance and reduces off-site disposal of waste; and</li> <li>• Improves buildability and reduced construction time.</li> </ul>

Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
18	Mainline horizontal alignment change	Mainline horizontal alignment modified in the vicinity of Cold Slad Lane on Crickley Hill.	<p>Design refinement and responding to consultation feedback. This change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improves buildability and reduced construction time;</li><li>• Improves traffic management and improves safety during construction;</li><li>• Eliminates retaining walls;</li><li>• Reduces cost; and</li><li>• Improves earthworks balance.</li></ul>



Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
19	A436 alignment	Vertical and horizontal alignment amended to reduce footprint and facilitate the Gloucestershire Way crossing.	Design refinement and responding to consultation feedback.
20	Gloucestershire Way crossing	A new 37m wide multi-purpose crossing to provide essential mitigation for bats and for landscape integration. It would also further benefit from accommodating the Gloucestershire Way long distance footpath and provide an improved visitor experience.	Design refinement and responding to consultation feedback.
21	Cotswold Way crossing	A new crossing near Emma's Grove for walkers, cyclists and horse riders including disabled users, which would accommodate the Cotswold Way National Trail.	Design refinement and responding to consultation feedback.
22	Cold Slad alignment amendment	The horizontal and vertical alignment at Cold Slad has been amended to reduce impact on Crickley Hill ridge and incorporate passing places.	Design refinement and responding to consultation feedback.
23	Access to Crickley Hill Country Park	Access to Crickley Hill Country Park formalised.	Design refinement.
N/A	Provision of field accesses	Provision of additional accesses to fields.	Response to landowner consultation feedback.
24	Access to track on northwest side of Cowley Lane	Provision of access to track on northwest side of Cowley Lane.	Design refinement.
N/A	Accesses added to all drainage basins	Provision of access track to drainage basins to facilitate maintenance.	Design refinement.
N/A	Minor changes to redline boundary	Minor amendments to reduce land take.	Design refinement.

Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
NA	Minor changes to land take	Small amendments to change permanent land take to temporary land take at various locations	Design refinement and responding to consultation feedback.
25	Cricket club access re-located	Cricket club access relocated to the west to minimise vegetation loss and improve visibility of oncoming traffic.	Design refinement.
26	Access road to Birdlip Radio Station from B4070 widened	Widened to allow two-way vehicle movements.	Response to landowner consultation feedback.
27	Cowley Junction westbound diverge extended	Westbound diverge extended.	Design refinement.
28	Shab Hill junction roundabout geometry	The geometry of Shab Hill junction roundabouts have been amended to perform more efficiently under revised design year flows.	Design refinement and responding to traffic modelling results.
<b>Drainage</b>			
N/A	Drainage basin amendments	Various drainage basins changes resulting in additional, relocated and/or reshaped basins.	Design refinement due to changes in drainage, landscape integration and reduction in earthworks.
29	Drainage cascade	Drainage cascade added in vicinity of Grove Farm underpass.	Design refinement.
30	Additional outfall	Additional overflow route north Ullen Wood to accommodate road drainage.	Design refinement.

Reference No.	Design change	Description	Reason
31	Relocate drainage pipe in land plot and re-use the A417 existing drainage pipe	Relocate drainage pipe from centre of plot to eastern edge and re-use the existing drainage A417 drainage adjacent to Bentham Lane	Design refinement.
<b>Structures</b>			
32	Stockwell overbridge skew change	Make structure more perpendicular. Improved design and reduced span.	Design refinement.
33	Minor Cowley Lane realignment	Make structure more perpendicular. Improved design and reduced span.	Design refinement.
34	Minor vertical alignment change to Cowley Lane	Lower the structure in the landscape. Improved design and minimise impact on the landscape.	Design refinement.
35	Bat underpass east of Fly-Up	Bat flight path mitigation required east of bike park across Crickley Hill.	Responding to bat survey results.
36	Shab Hill underbridge span	Span of Shab Hill underbridge reduced.	Design refinement.
37	Removal of green bridge	Green bridge removed at Crickley Hill.	Responding to landowner and consultation feedback.  Responding to ecological survey results.
<b>Public Rights of Way (PRoW)</b>			
38	Rights of way through Fly-Up consolidated	Remove proposed bridleway through property and realigned rights of way along new access with footpath connection.	Responding to landowner and stakeholder consultation feedback