

The A417 Missing Link

Route options consultation
15 February - 29 March 2018



Queuing traffic along the A417 causes frequent delays for the many people who use the road every day



Contents

Foreword.....	2
About Highways England.....	3
About the A417.....	4
About this consultation.....	6
The story so far.....	7
Identifying our proposed options.....	8
Our assessment of route options.....	13
Our proposed route options: an overview.....	16
A further assessment of our proposed options.....	18
Delivering our proposals in sections.....	24
What our proposals mean for you.....	26
What happens next.....	28

Foreword



A safer and more reliable future for the Cotswolds, Gloucester and Cheltenham.

The stretch of the A417 between the

Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout in Gloucestershire, dubbed the 'Missing Link', is one of seven road improvement schemes we're working on in the south west. These will ensure that England's road network helps move people and goods from A to B as safely and efficiently as possible.

The A417 provides an essential link to the M5 at Gloucester and the M4 at Swindon – two of the region's top growth areas. It helps businesses in the south west connect with markets and opportunities in the midlands and the north, and attracts investment for Gloucestershire and its neighbours by linking them to London and the south east.

Like all the roads we manage, the A417 plays a vital role in the daily lives of the many people who use it every day. With unpredictable delays, motorists often divert onto local roads to avoid tailbacks, causing difficulties for neighbouring communities. Queuing traffic means that the sight and smell of idling traffic is common in the area. Add to this the poor visibility caused by sharp turns and steep climbs along this part of the A417, and the journey becomes more than an inconvenience – it can be a hazard.

The Cotswolds is also one of the UK's most beautiful landscapes. It's a tourist hotspot and the area is frequented by numerous walkers every year, who are attracted by a series of well-established footpaths famed for their stunning scenery and tranquil settings. Any improvement to the A417 needs to take into account the sensitive environment of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This, coupled with the challenging shape of the landscape in this area, means there is no straightforward upgrade for this stretch of road.

People in this area care deeply about improving the A417 corridor, and it's easy to see why. We want to upgrade this stretch of road to improve safety, support the economy and ease congestion and pollution, making it more convenient for its regular users, and improving the wellbeing of those who live near it.

We are consulting on our proposed route options to find the right solution. This is your chance to have your say on the scheme, so please let us know what you think.

Nick Aldworth
Regional Director (South West)

About Highways England

Highways England operates, maintains and improves England's motorways and major A-roads, also known as the strategic road network. Our network totals around 4,300 miles. While this represents only 2% of all roads in England by length, these roads carry a third of all traffic by mileage and two-thirds of all heavy goods traffic.

England's strategic road network forms the economic backbone of the country, is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is relied on by communities and businesses to get around. Our ambition is to ensure all our major roads are

more dependable, durable and, most importantly, safe. In pursuit of that aim, we are delivering £15 billion of investment on our network as described in the Government's Road Investment Strategy 2015 - 2020 (see <http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-investment-strategy>).

As part of this strategy, the Department for Transport has made money available to develop a scheme to upgrade the remaining single carriageway section of the A417, with the aim of constructing the project in the next road investment period (2020-2025). Highways England is responsible for delivering this scheme.



About the A417

Together, the A417 and A419 through the Cotswolds make up one of the south west's most important road corridors, helping people get to work and school and visit family and friends.

But there's a problem. While most of the route is dual carriageway, there's one section that isn't. Known as the Missing Link, this three mile stretch of single carriageway on the A417 between the

Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout, incorporating Crickley Hill and Air Balloon roundabout, restricts the flow of traffic, causing congestion and pollution.



Figure 1. The route of the A417 through the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Fast facts:

- With usage set to increase by between 9% and 13% by 2024, already heavy congestion is only likely to increase
- Over the course of five years (November 2011 to November 2016), there were 57 collisions along this stretch of road, tragically resulting in five fatalities. Since then, there have been a number of other incidents along this stretch of road, including two fatalities in November 2017
- In 2015, an average of 37,000 vehicles per day used the single carriageway stretch of the A417 between Crickley Hill and Air Balloon roundabout, a volume of traffic that already exceeds the recommended traffic for this type of road

Congestion can be unpredictable, so some motorists often rat run along local roads, affecting the communities along these routes. These local roads were not designed to accommodate this level of traffic and collisions often happen.

The south west has to continually fight the perception that it is hard to access. Traffic delays on roads like the A417 make it difficult for the region to attract more business and for existing businesses to expand in the area. The constraints on this section of road have a knock-on impact on the whole area's economic performance.

The existing A417 runs through the Cotswolds

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and crosses the highly sensitive Cotswolds escarpment (an escarpment is a long, steep slope between land at different heights) at Crickley Hill. This steep change in the landscape means that finding a suitable solution for upgrading the A417 Missing Link is extremely challenging.

However, without an upgrade, the A417 Missing Link will not be able to support the future increases in traffic likely to be generated from new housing and jobs being created in the area.

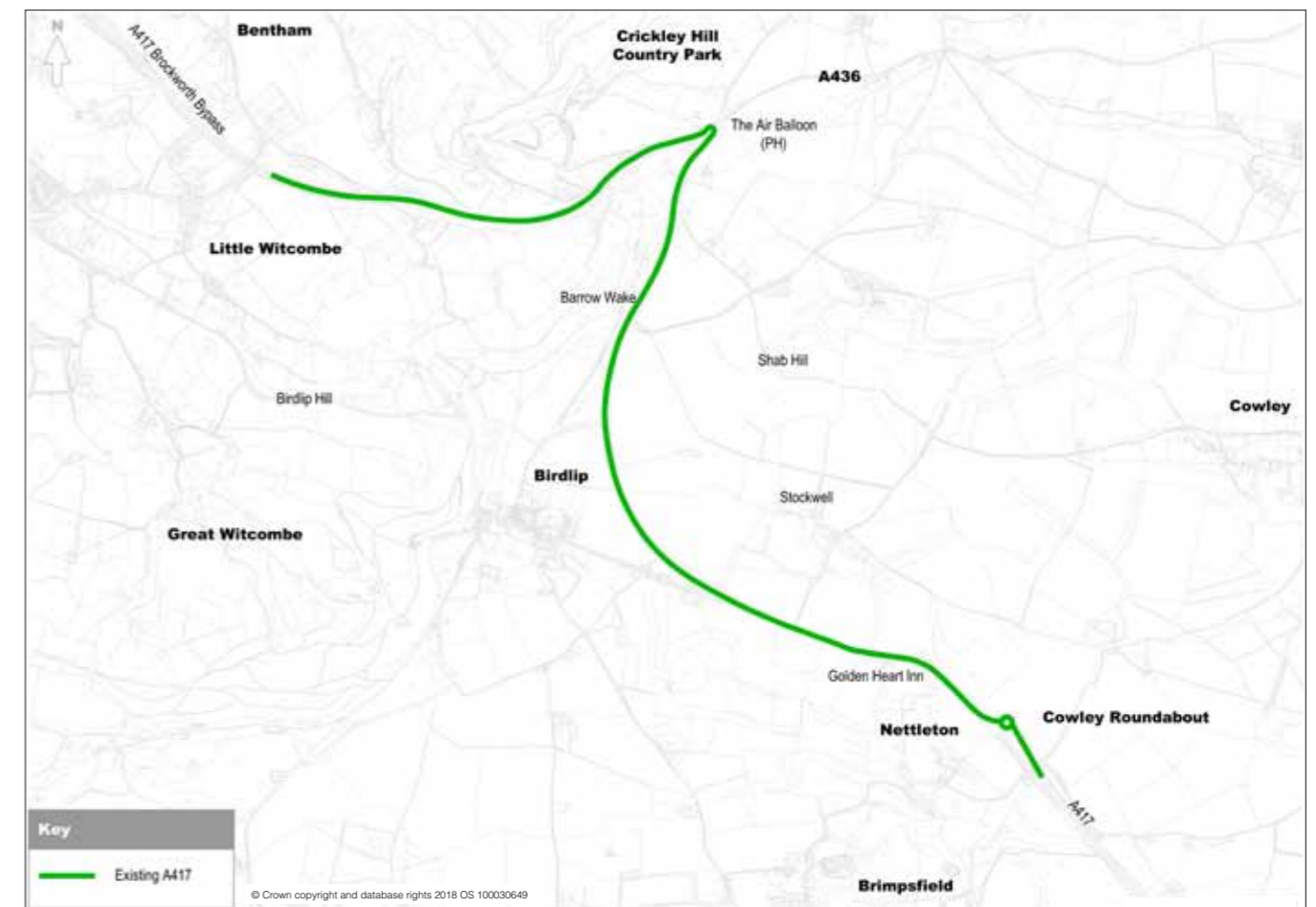


Figure 2. The route of the A417 through the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Fast facts:

- Economic productivity in the south west is 24% lower than the national average. Latest statistics show that tourists spent over £9 billion in the south west
- Through its Strategic Economic Plan, GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership hopes to bring an additional £493 million to Gloucestershire by 2022 and create more than 33,900 jobs

About this consultation

We are seeking your views on our proposed route options for a solution for the A417 Missing Link.

This booklet provides information on our proposals, how we chose them and how to share your views. We would encourage you to read this booklet, attend a public exhibition and provide your thoughts by completing a feedback form. You can either complete a feedback form online (www.highways.gov.uk/a417-missing-link) or download and print it and return it to:

FREEPOST A417 MISSING LINK

(the address must be written in capital letters and you do not need a stamp)

You can pick up a feedback form from a public exhibition or at an information point, the details of which are available on our website.

Please send us your feedback form by 29 March 2018.



The A417 is located in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

If you have any further questions or would like to find out more, you can attend one of our exhibitions (see our website for the dates, times and locations) or you can contact us by phone or email.

Website: www.highways.gov.uk/a417-missing-link
Email: A417MissingLink@highwaysengland.co.uk
Telephone: 0300 123 5000

Your feedback is important to us in shaping a solution for this section of the A417. We will consider all the comments we receive and use them to help us develop our proposals further.

This is your opportunity to give your views and the information we receive will help us develop a preferred route.

To learn more about our proposals, see page 8.

The story so far

Over the years, there have been numerous attempts to improve the A417 Missing Link. For various reasons, including affordability and changes in investment priorities, these have never come to fruition. However, in recent years, the case for improvement has become more compelling – to improve safety, support the economy, ease congestion and reduce pollution.

The Government's Road Investment Strategy acknowledges that any new solution for the A417 Missing Link would need to take into account *"both the environmental sensitivity of the site and the importance of the route to the local economy."*

The challenging shape of the landscape, and the highly sensitive nature of the Cotswold escarpment, means that there is no easy solution for improving this section of road.

Over the last 18 months, we have been looking at a number of route options, including proposals which have been put forward in the past. We have assessed them against our vision and objectives which were developed in partnership with stakeholders, such as the Cotswolds Conservation Board and Gloucestershire County Council.

More information on how we identified our proposed options can be found on page 8 of this booklet.

The scheme's vision: a landscape-led highways improvement scheme

We want to create a landscape-led highways improvement scheme that will deliver a safe and resilient free-flowing road while conserving and enhancing the special character of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; reconnecting landscape and ecology; bringing about landscape, wildlife and heritage benefits, including enhanced visitors' enjoyment of the area; improving local communities' quality of life; and contributing to the health of the economy and local businesses.

Objectives for the scheme

- **Transport and safety:** to reduce delays, create a free-flowing road network and improve safety along this stretch of the A417
- **Environment and heritage:** to reduce the impact on the landscape, natural and historic environment of the Cotswolds and, where possible, enhance the surrounding environment
- **Community and access:** to reduce queuing traffic and pollution, improve access for local people to the strategic road network and support residents and visitors' enjoyment to the countryside
- **Economic growth:** to help boost growth and prosperity by making journeys more reliable and improving connectivity

Identifying our proposed options

Over the last 18 months, we have considered a wide range of options and gradually narrowed them down using four broad steps:



Step 1: Identifying route options

Around 18 months ago, we started early assessment work to identify possible route options. For this, we used four sources:

- a review of historic work completed by Gloucestershire County Council and the then Highways Agency
- outputs from initial scoping work carried out by Highways England to see if any viable solutions could be developed

- outputs from a workshop carried out with stakeholders, including representatives from environmental and economic groups, and local authorities
- the refinement of alternative routes by the project team

This work identified 30 possible route options.

More information

If you would like to find out more specific technical information about certain aspects of the scheme or the route options selection process, then please see our Technical Appraisal Report which is available online.

The shape and physical features (also known as topography) of the area present a major challenge for developing appropriate solutions. Challenging terrain and the highly sensitive Cotswolds

escarpment limit route options through the area. This meant that any options that we took forward to Step 2 needed to take into account where they crossed the Cotswolds escarpment.

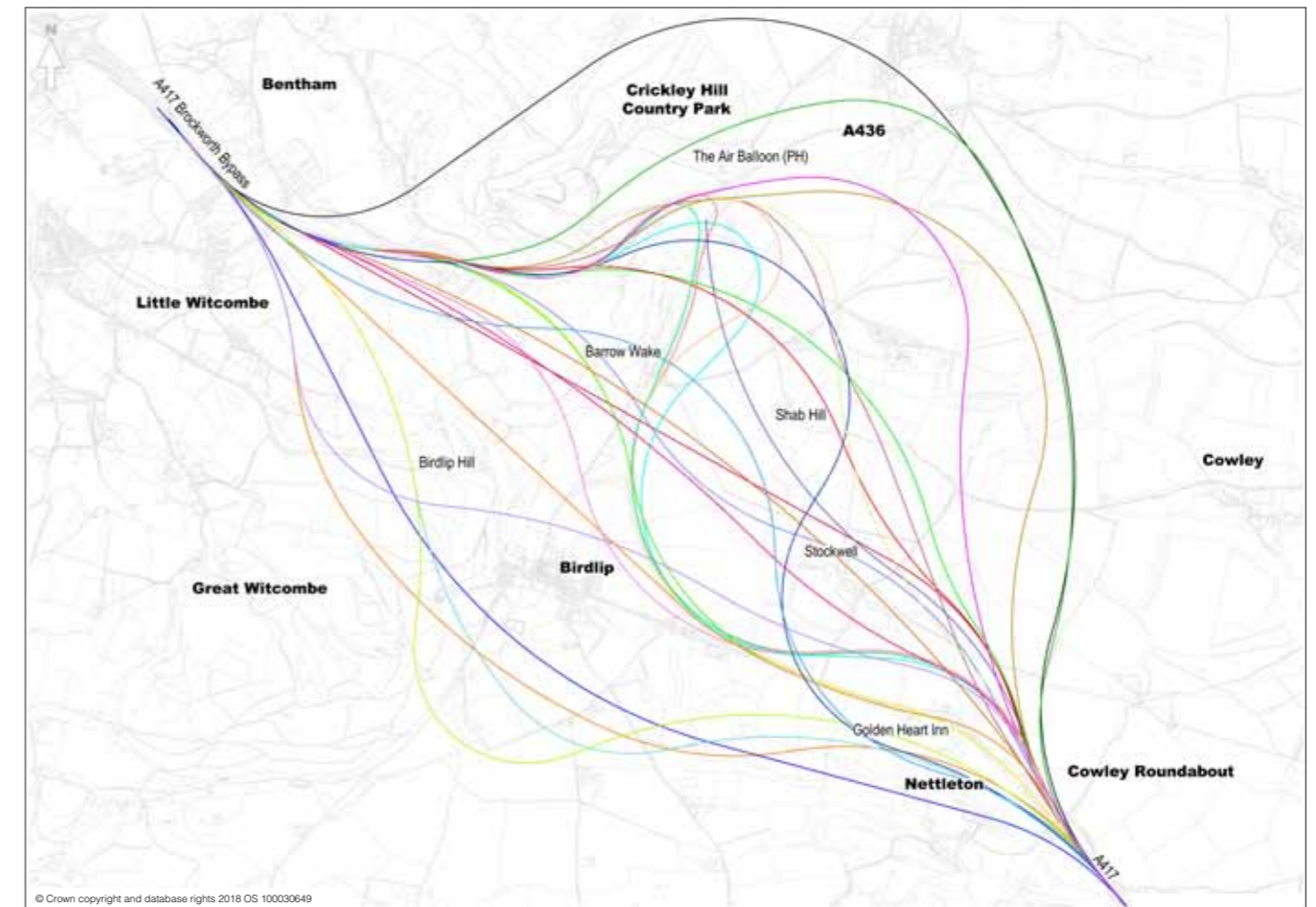


Figure 3. The initial 30 route options between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout

Step 2: Assessing route options: the engineering test

The next step was to review the 30 options in engineering terms to ensure we only took forward options which improved on the quality of the existing road and can be realistically delivered.

If a route had bends that were too sharp or slopes that were steeper than the existing A417 at Crickley Hill, they were discounted.

As a result of this test, 10 of the initial 30 route options were discounted and 20 moved on to Step 3.

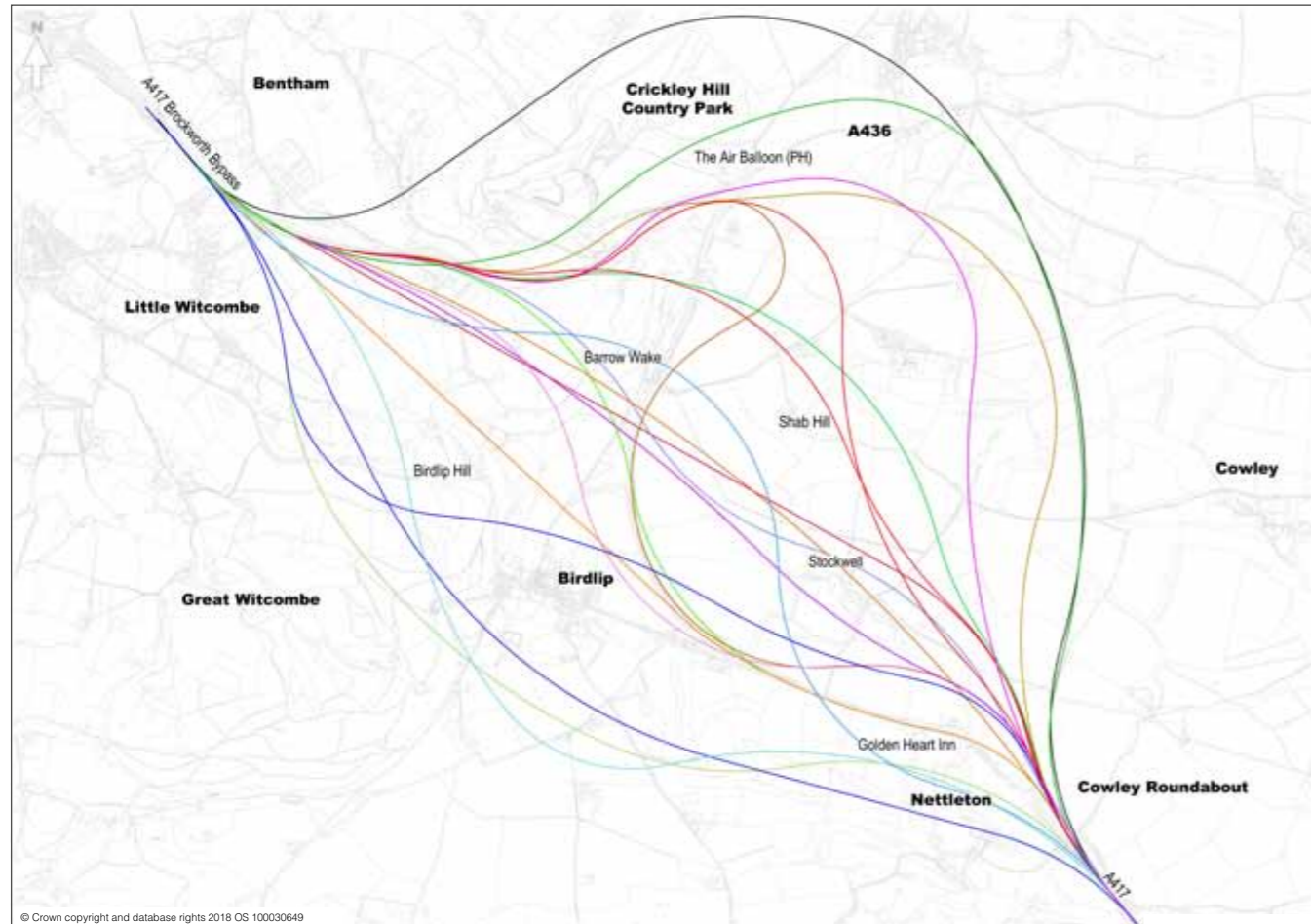


Figure 4. The 20 route options between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout, taken forward to Step 3

Step 3: Assessing route options: the sift

We then assessed each route against a series of five factors, which are part of a Department for Transport approved assessment method. These factors are:

- **Strategic** – assessing what each option is trying to achieve and how it will address the problem
- **Economic** – reviewing each option's economic, environmental and social impact
- **Managerial** – assessing the deliverability of a route in terms of construction and management throughout its lifespan

■ **Financial** – assessing the cost to build and affordability of each option

■ **Commercial** – assessing the value for money, or benefit to cost ratio, of each option

This method, however, did not allow for the scheme's 'landscape-led' vision and objectives to be taken into account. We therefore adapted this method so that we could rank each option and score it against how strongly it meets the vision, objectives and factors above.

As a result of this assessment, five options were taken forward for further assessment work. These were Options 3, 21, 24, 29 and 30 (see figure 5).

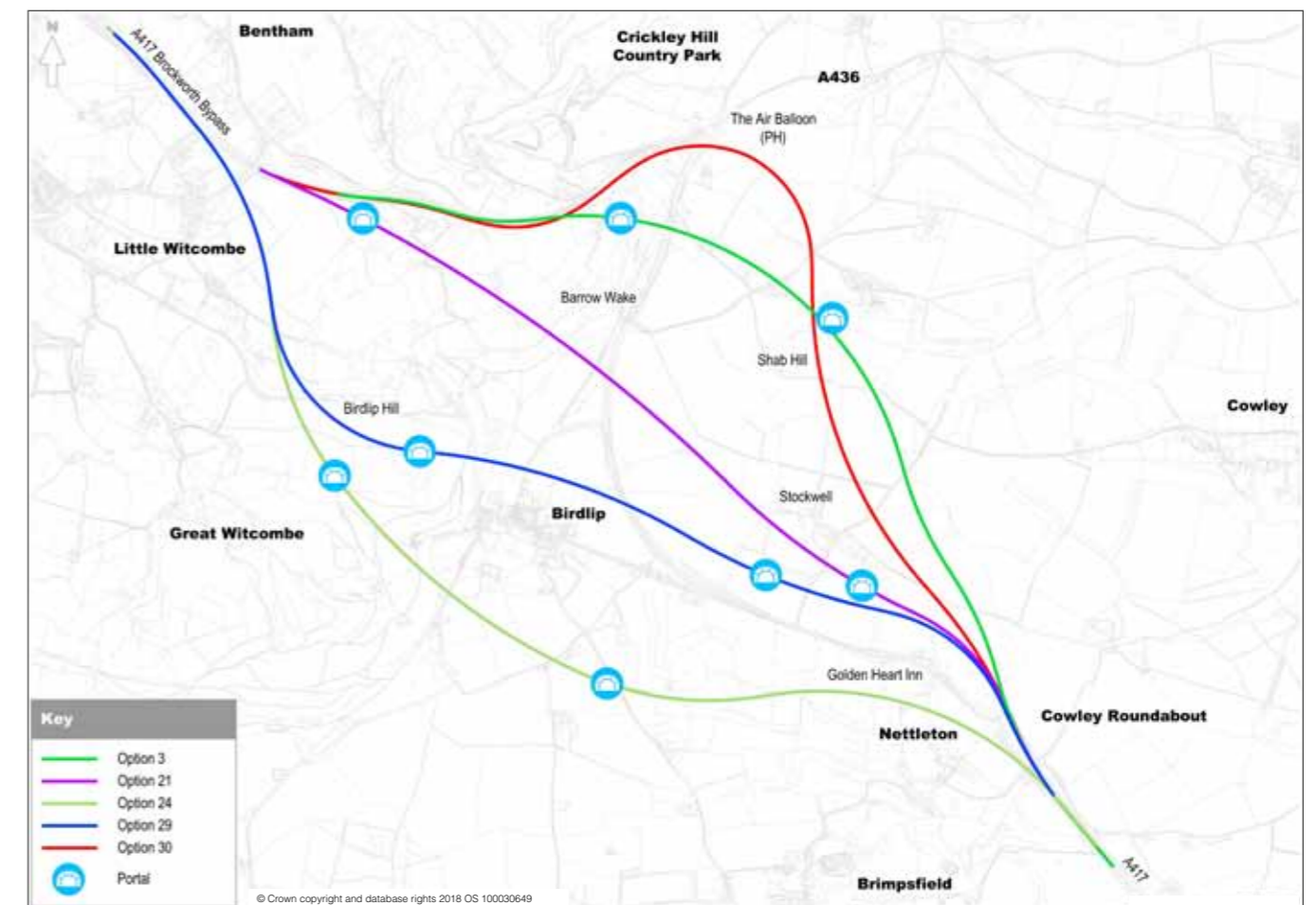


Figure 5. The five route options at the end of Step 3

More information

If you would like to find out more specific technical information about certain aspects of the scheme or the route options selection process, then please see our Technical Appraisal Report which is available online.

Step 4: Assessing value for money and affordability

Results from Step 3 suggested that the tunnel options (Options 3, 21, 24 and 29) would bring greater landscape benefits, but would not offer value for money and be over the cost range allocated for the scheme (£250 million - £500 million). The surface option (Option 30) was the most affordable of the five options.

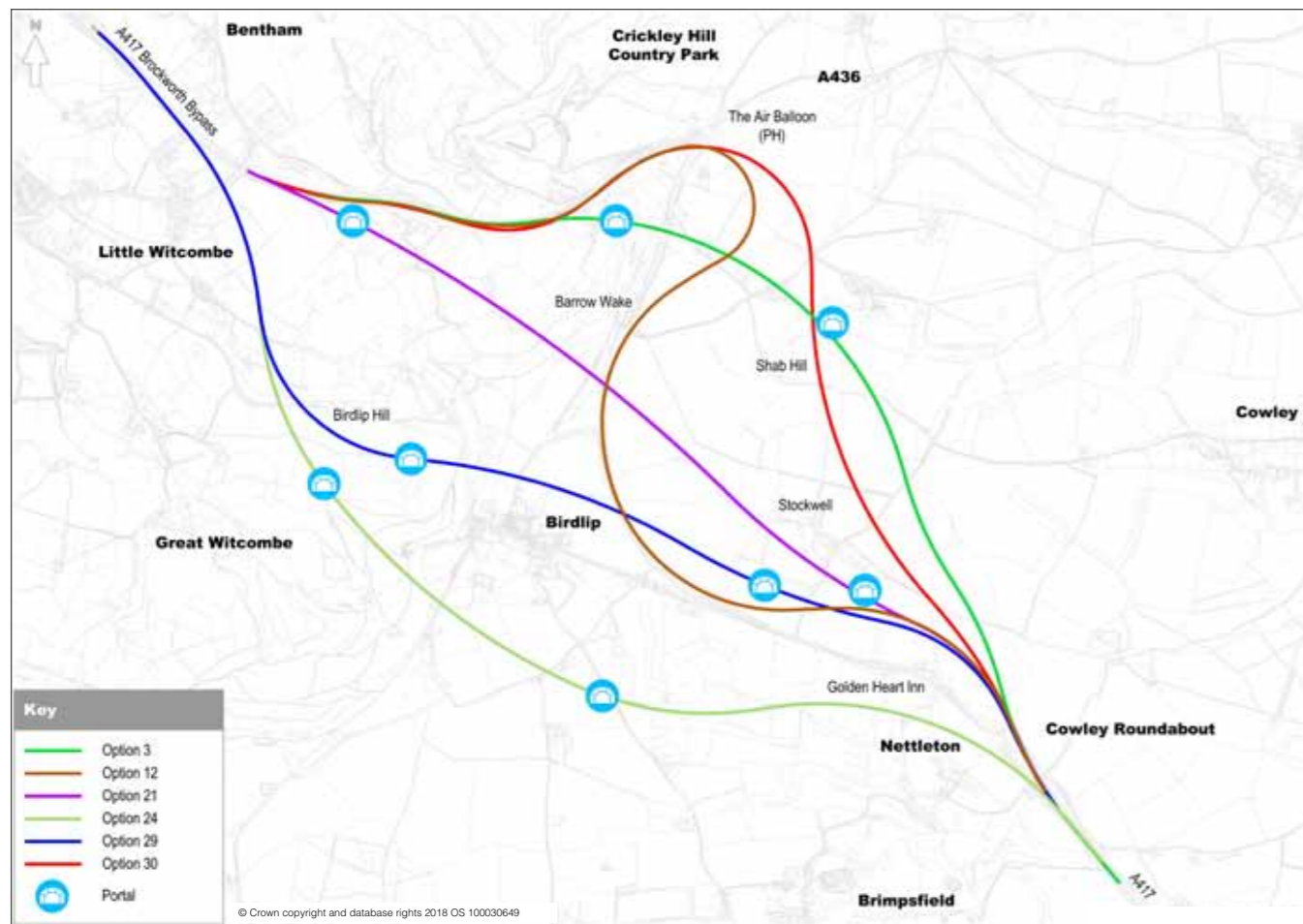
As a result of this, we then assessed the other surface options to see if there were any other more affordable options that may be deliverable within the scheme's cost allocation.

Two of the surface routes were discounted because of the visual impact they would have on the landscape. After this assessment work, it was clear that surface route Option 12 met the scheme's objectives and affordability criteria.

This process left us with six shortlisted options:

- **Option 3** – a 0.6-mile tunnel option (green route on map)
- **Option 12** – a 4-mile surface option which has also been called the Brown Route under previous attempts to find a solution for improving this stretch of road (brown route on map)
- **Option 21** – a 1.8-mile tunnel option (purple route on map)
- **Option 24** – a 0.9-mile tunnel option (light green route on map)
- **Option 29** – a 1-mile tunnel option (blue route on map)
- **Option 30** – a 3.4-mile surface option (red route on map)

Figure 6. The six route options



The Brown Route (Option 12)

When improving the A417 Missing Link was assessed in 2003, the Brown Route, or A417 Loop, was presented as a possible solution for an upgrade. The then Highways Agency worked to develop this route and in 2006 declared that it did not have funding to progress an improvement to this stretch of road.

Our assessment of route options

To understand the opportunities and impacts of each of our six options, we assessed:

- **Traffic impact**
- **Road safety**
- **Environmental impact and opportunities**
- **Social impact**
- **Value for money and cost analysis**

This section summarises each of these outputs.

Traffic impact

We measured traffic volumes locally and within the region to understand the journeys people who use the route make. We used data from the south west of England, which included south Wales, the west midlands and southern England up to the west of London.

Result: To varying degrees, this showed that all six options would reduce delays, and improve journey times and reliability along the A417.

Road safety

We carried out a road safety assessment on all six route options.

Result: We would expect them all, to varying degrees, to have a positive impact on road safety and help us to reduce the number of incidents on the strategic road network.

Environmental impact and opportunities

We undertook an environmental assessment for the six options, which included reviewing potential effects on landscape, air quality, noise, greenhouse gases, the historic environment, the water environment and biodiversity.

In recognition of the sensitive landscape of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, we carried out an additional study to identify how the different options could provide opportunities for enhancing the landscape and how the landscape could accommodate possible route options.

Result: Surface options have more of a visual impact on the landscape when compared with tunnel options. However, the landscape benefits brought about by tunnel options were not as great as expected because of the need to keep the existing A417 open for the connection with the A436 and tunnel portals.

Social impact assessment

We undertook a social impact assessment to understand what impact each route could have on commuters and the wider public in terms of journey times and reliability, collisions and accessibility.

Result: All six route options are forecast to have a positive impact on journey times and reliability, as well as reducing the number of collisions and improving overall journey quality.

By retaining existing routes, or providing new ones for non-motorised road users, such as pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists, we expect all six options would have a positive impact on physical activity and wellbeing compared with the existing A417.

Value for money and cost

We prepared estimates to understand how much it would cost to build each route. We also carried out a value for money appraisal to estimate the economic impact of the six routes, considering journey times, impact or benefits to the environment, and the cost of road closures brought about by incidents and roadworks.

Result: Option 30 is the only route to offer positive value for money, meaning that the return on investment is estimated to be higher than the initial cost. All other options would see us make a loss on taxpayers' investment. The table below contains further information.

	Option 3 (tunnel)	Option 12 (surface)	Option 21 (tunnel)	Option 24 (tunnel)	Option 29 (tunnel)	Option 30 (surface)
Most likely cost	£875m	£465m	£1,625m	£1,210m	£1,240m	£485m
Return on investment*	79 pence	68 pence	47 pence	54 pence	56 pence	£1.04
Value for money rating	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Low

* for every £1 spent improving this stretch of road, this is the amount the taxpayer would expect to get back.

Overall conclusions on sifting and assessment

After the four step process of identifying and refining possible route options, we have concluded that the tunnel options provide better opportunities to minimise the impact on the landscape.

Tunnel options would, however, still have an adverse environmental and visual impact due to the need for tunnel portals and link roads to the existing A417 and A436. The existing A417 would be retained.

Tunnel options demonstrate poor value for money. That means that when their benefits are weighed against their significant cost, they would not offer a return on their investment for taxpayers.

All of the tunnel options are also above the allocated cost range for the scheme of £250 million to £500 million. While Option 12 (a surface route) also offers poor value for money, it falls within the cost range for the scheme.

To ensure that affordable routes that fall within the allocated cost range for the scheme are taken forward, we are presenting Option 12 and Option 30 as our proposed route options.

Congestion on the existing A417 causes people to rat run along local roads and through communities that neighbour the route



More information

If you would like to find out more specific technical information about certain aspects of the scheme or the route options selection process, then please see our Technical Appraisal Report which is available online.

Our proposed route options: an overview

This section provides a high-level description of our two route options.

Option 12

A four mile surface route reusing sections of the existing A417 on Crickley Hill and Birdlip. New sections of road will be built at Nettleton and Emma's Grove. This option would include three

new junctions – one at Cowley roundabout, one on the existing A417 close to the B4070 junction at Birdlip and one to the north of Barrow Wake. There would be three lanes of carriageway going up Crickley Hill and two lanes coming down.

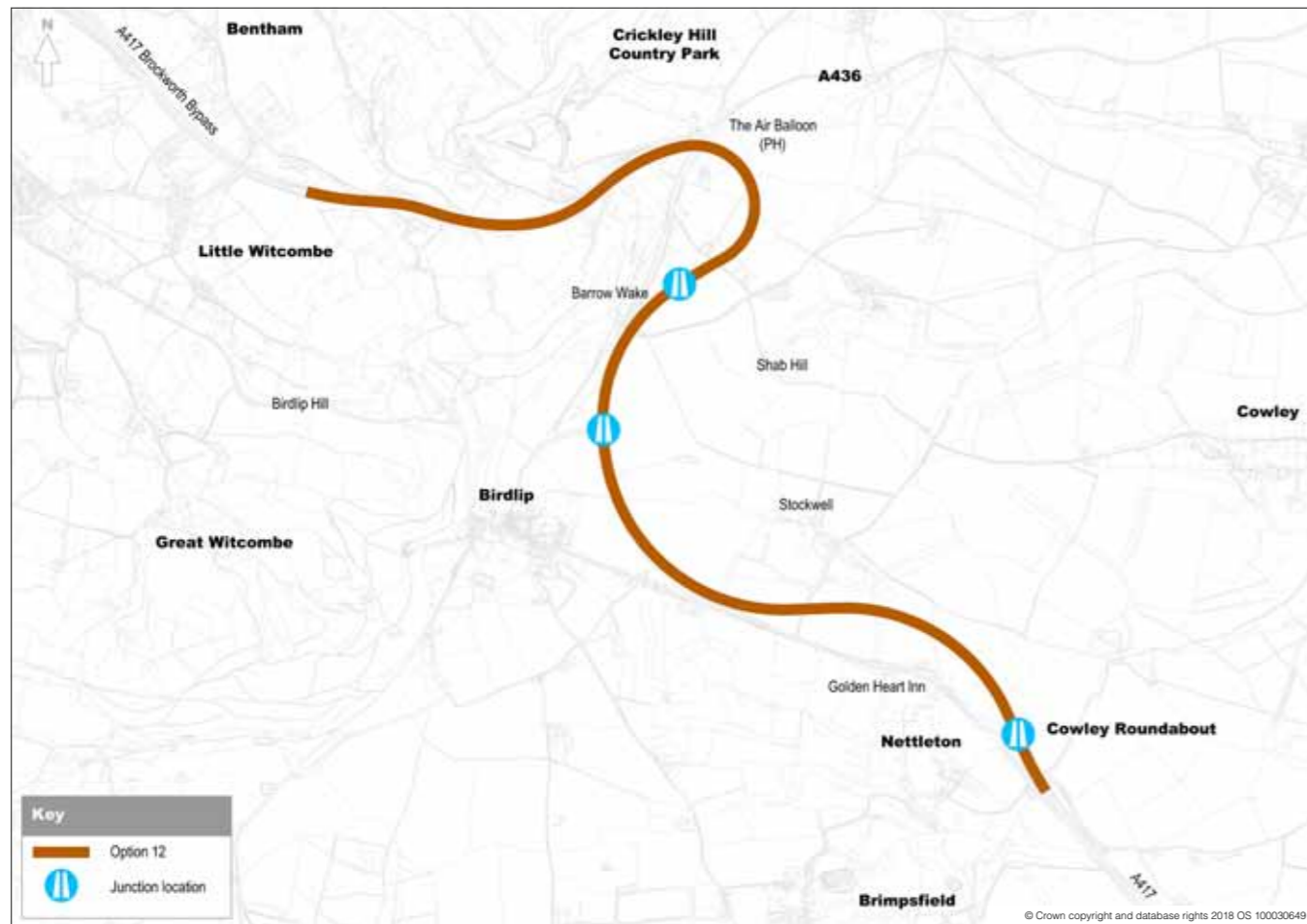


Figure 7. Option 12

Option 30

A 3.4-mile surface route following the alignment of the existing A417 at Crickley Hill with less of a slope. A new section of road will be built through Shab Hill to the east of the existing A417, re-joining the existing road near Cowley roundabout.

Option 30 would include two new junctions – one at Shab Hill and one on the existing A417 close to Barrow Wake with a link road in-between. There would be three lanes of carriageway going up Crickley Hill and two lanes coming down.

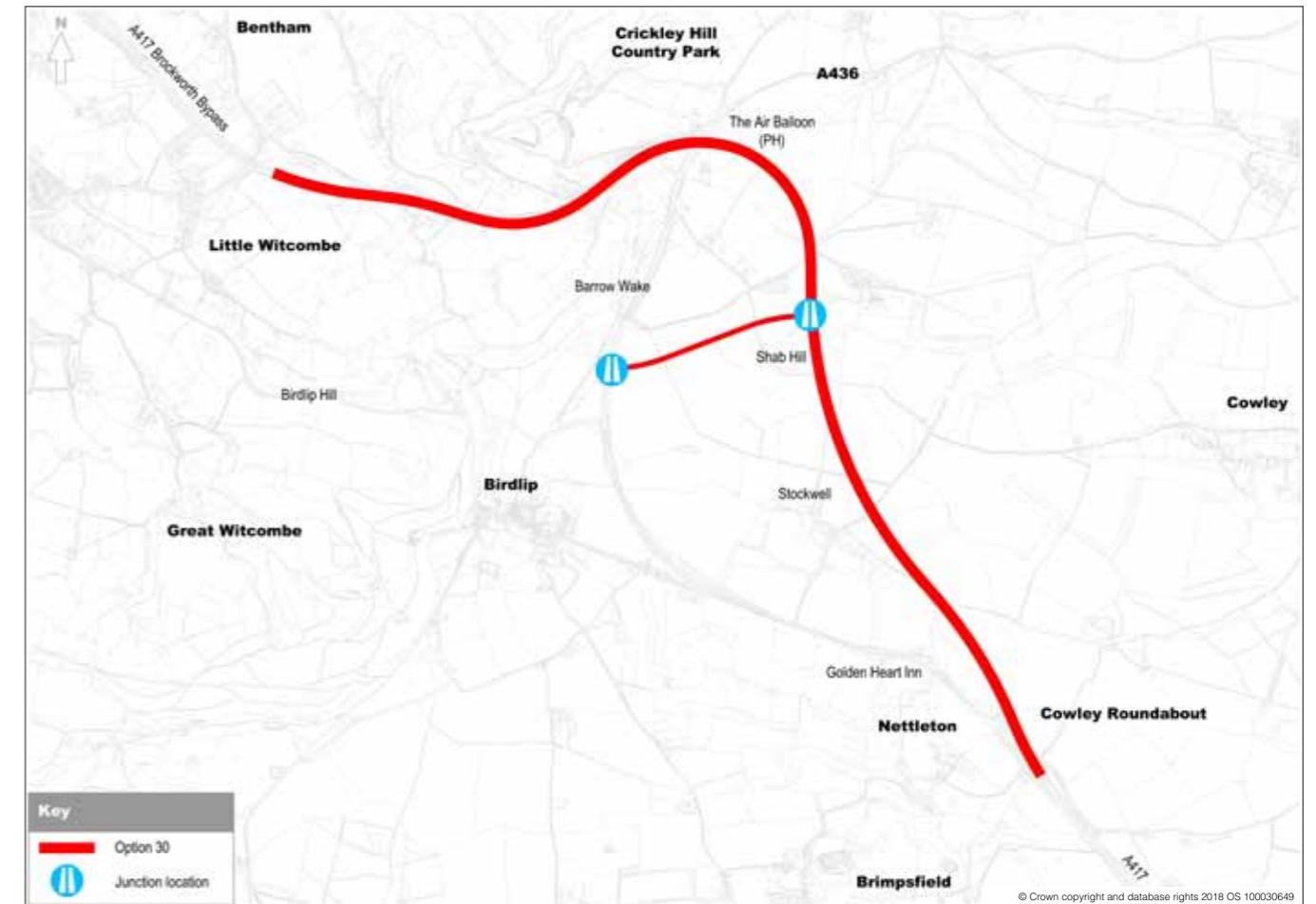


Figure 8. Option 30

More information

If you would like to find out more specific technical information about certain aspects of the scheme or the route options selection process, then please see our Technical Appraisal Report which is available online.

A further assessment of our proposed options

Results of further assessment against transport objectives			
Objective		Option 12	Option 30
Transport and safety: to reduce delays, create a free-flowing road network and improve safety along this stretch of the A417 incidents and injuries	Journey time savings	Option 12 is four miles long, just over half a mile longer than Option 30, resulting in marginally longer journey times and increased travel costs.	Option 30 is a 3.4-mile surface route and would bring about significant savings to journey times.
	Capacity	Both routes will increase capacity on this section of the A417, helping to improve journey times and reliability.	
	Safety	Both routes would improve visibility compared with the existing A417 which should result in a decrease in the number of collisions along the route.	
		Option 12 includes a very sharp bend to the east of Emma's Grove Scheduled Ancient Monument. Combined with a steep slope, this is likely to require a reduced speed limit (potentially 40 or 50mph) and other measures to manage safety, such as average speed cameras.	Option 30 includes one sharp bend to the east of Emma's Grove Scheduled Ancient Monument, but this would not impact the speed limit for the dual carriageway. Option 30 would have a 70mph speed limit. This will need to be considered further as part of the next stage in the project's development.
	Connectivity and junction arrangements	Option 12 has two new split level junctions and one standard junction along the route (see the map on page 16 for an indication of their positioning). These will ensure access to the A417 for neighbouring communities is maintained.	Option 30 has one new split level junction along the route and a second junction to connect the new route to the existing one close to Barrow Wake (see the map on page 17 for an indication of its positioning). These will ensure access to the A417 for neighbouring communities is maintained.
Disruption during construction	During construction, both route options will require traffic management along the existing A417 and other local roads. This is likely to include temporary speed limits, lane width reductions and overnight carriageway closures. We will develop a full traffic management plan once the scheme has progressed further and would aim to keep the existing A417 open. At this early stage in the development of the scheme, it is anticipated that Option 12 would create more disruption compared with Option 30 because of the length of carriageway that uses the existing route, together with the construction of an additional split level junction close to the B4070 junction at Birdlip.		

Results of further assessment against environment and heritage objectives				
Objective		Option 12	Option 30	
Environment and heritage: to reduce the impact of any improvement on the landscape, natural and historic environment of the Cotswolds and, where possible, enhance the surrounding environment	Noise	It is anticipated that both options would have a positive impact on reducing noise compared with the existing A417, but there would likely be some negative effect on other areas along the route. Option 12 performs slightly better than Option 30 in terms of noise reduction.		
	Air quality	Both options are predicted to improve air quality at properties within the Birdlip Air Quality Management Area.		
	Visual impact	There would be a slight increase in greenhouse gas emissions within the overall area as a result of an increase in vehicle numbers, but Option 30 would have less of an impact than Option 12 because it is shorter.		
	Land take	Options 12 and 30 are both surface routes which mean they will have an adverse effect on the landscape and impact the overall scenery in this area. Widening the existing route corridor through the sensitive escarpment at Air Balloon roundabout will minimise the impact on the escarpment elsewhere.	Option 12 would require less land than Option 30 because it follows the existing A417 more closely.	There is an opportunity to remove parts of the existing A417 with Option 30 which would bring some environmental benefits. Further work will need to be undertaken to assess this opportunity at a later stage of the project.
	Historic environment	The setting of important historic features would be largely unaffected by both options, but there could be adverse effects on undiscovered archaeological remains during construction works.		
	Biodiversity	Option 12 and 30 have the potential to impact Emma's Grove scheduled monument during construction, the setting of Crickley Hill Camp scheduled monument and the rural setting of some other listed buildings to the east of the existing A417. Further work will need to be undertaken to assess the extent of this impact and identify any possible mitigation.		
Both options could negatively impact wildlife populations, including nesting birds and bats, in the area and reduce available habitat. They also have the potential to adversely affect the Crickley Hill and Barrow Wake Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Further work will need to be undertaken to assess the extent of this impact and identify any possible mitigation.				

Results of further assessment against community and access objectives			
Objective		Option 12	Option 30
Community and access: to reduce queuing traffic and pollution, improve access for local people to the strategic road network and support residents and visitors' enjoyment to the countryside	Impact on neighbouring communities	Both options are likely to have a positive impact on journey times and reliability overall because they convert an existing single-lane carriageway into a modern dual carriageway with free flowing junction improvements. This should have a positive impact for neighbouring communities by reducing rat-running and providing better access from local roads to the strategic road network.	
	Impact on pedestrians, cyclists and horseriders	Both options provide opportunities to improve crossings for people using both the Cotswold and Gloucestershire Ways.	
We would seek to maintain existing rights of way and, where possible, explore opportunities for providing new ones for pedestrians, horse riders, cyclists and other non-motorised road users.			

Results of detail assessment against economic growth objectives			
Objective		Option 12	Option 30
Economic growth: to help boost growth and prosperity by improving the reliability of journeys and connectivity to the area	Cost to build	£465m	£485m
	Return on investment	68 pence	£1.04
	Value for money rating	Option 12 would not offer a positive return on investment, meaning it has a poor value for money rating.	Option 30 would deliver a positive return on investment but it is still considered to offer low value for money.
	Support economic growth	<p>Option 12 would provide a free-flowing, reliable route which would help support the economy in Gloucestershire and the wider region.</p> <p>However, Option 12 will have a reduced speed limit at the top of Crickley Hill which will result in slightly longer journey times.</p>	<p>Option 30 would provide a free-flowing, reliable and safe route which would help support the economy in Gloucestershire and the wider region.</p>

* for every £1 spent improving this stretch of road, this is the amount the taxpayer would expect to get back.

Conclusions

Having looked at Option 12 and Option 30 in detail, Option 30 presents greater opportunities to meet the objectives for the scheme by improving safety, supporting the economy, easing congestion and pollution, making the route more convenient for its regular users, and improving the wellbeing of those who live near it. Option 30 also offers value for money for taxpayers' investment. The assessment shows that Option 30 performs better than Option 12 and is therefore our proposed solution for the A417 Missing Link.

Have your say

As part of this consultation, we are seeking your views on the A417 Missing Link. To share your thoughts, please complete a feedback form by 29 March 2018. You can either complete a feedback form on our website (www.highways.gov.uk/a417-missing-link) or download, print it and return it to: **FREEPOST A417 MISSING LINK** (the address must be written in capital letters and you do not need a stamp).



Steep slopes and poor visibility mean that lots of collisions are seen along this stretch of existing A417

Delivering our proposals in sections

It may be necessary to consider building the scheme in sections. Further assessment work still needs to be undertaken to understand the feasibility of doing this. We welcome your views

at this stage to inform the route options selection process. The maps below provide a high level indication of how Options 12 and 30 could be delivered in sections.

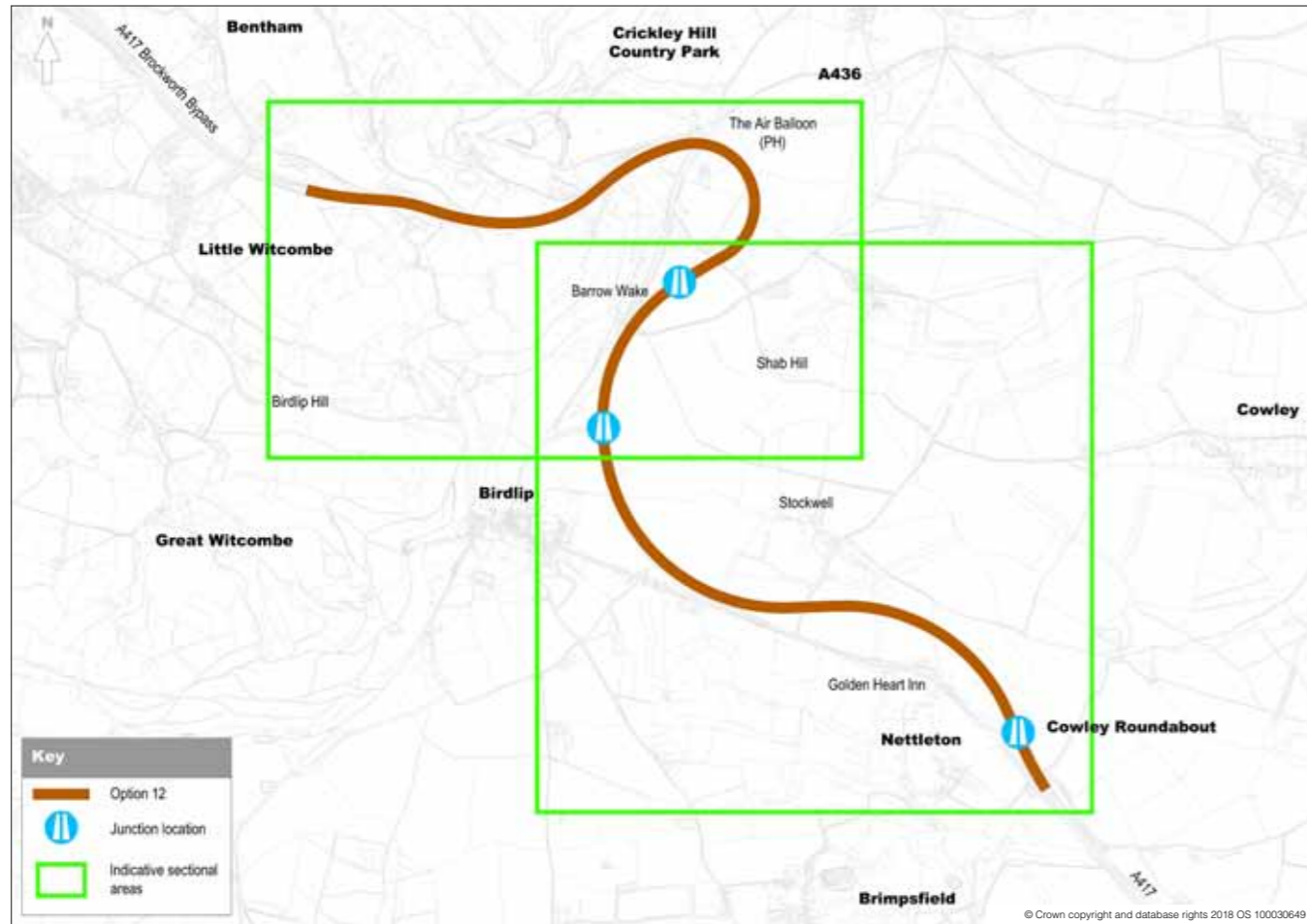


Figure 9. Option 12 in sections

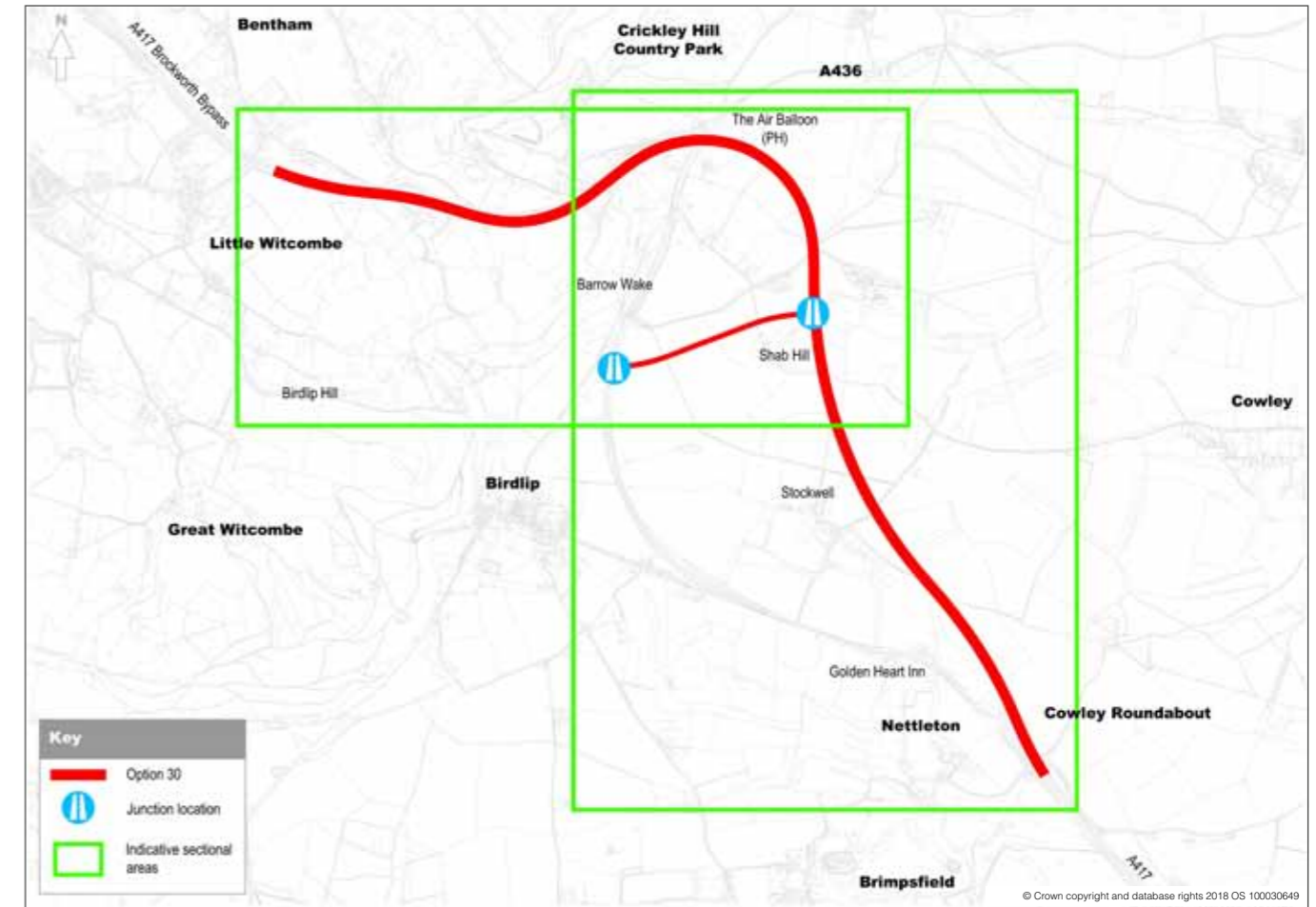


Figure 10. Option 30 in sections



The sight of queuing traffic is common along the existing A417

What our proposals mean for you

Transport: Upgrading this stretch of road to a modern dual carriageway will:

- Reduce congestion and boost road safety by increasing the road's capacity for free-flowing traffic and creating a high quality strategic route
- Create a safer road, making it easier to travel in and around this part of the Cotswolds and causing fewer road closures due to incidents or collisions
- Make it safer and easier for drivers, walkers and other local road users to get around by rat-running traffic from roads and nearby villages
- Make access to local villages, towns and cities hassle and hazard free, ensure communities and businesses are properly connected and enhance the environment, wellbeing in communities, and the economy
- Make journey times more predictable, reducing the cost and inconvenience of unexpected delays on businesses and other road users

“The Missing Link has been a problem for our county for more than 20 years. It is the worst congestion hotspot in the county and frequent delays have a major impact on commuters and businesses. There are also frequent traffic collisions resulting in even more delays and congestion and far too many casualties, which over the years has included, very sadly, a number of fatalities.”

Councillor Mark Hawthorne, Leader of Gloucestershire County Council

Environment and heritage: Upgrading this stretch of road to a modern dual carriageway will:

- Improve landscape and ecological connectivity through landscape and habitat restoration and provision for a green bridge
- Improve air quality in the area by reducing pollution caused by idling vehicles
- Reconnecting habitats and making life safer for wildlife
- Meet our vision for a landscape-led scheme and conserve and enhance the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

“The A417 project must set the highest environmental standards. That means not just a scheme that minimises or compensates for unavoidable damage, but one that creates a much better environment than exists now.”

Adrian Phillips, Chair, Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership

Improving community life and access:

Upgrading this stretch of road to a modern dual carriageway will:

- Ease local congestion and make it easier and safer for people to reach local facilities like schools, shops and surgeries on foot by reducing rat-running traffic in neighbouring villages
- Reduce severance by encouraging the safe passage of people and enhancing the experience and safety of visitors to the area and locals alike
- Improve access to public footpaths, including the Cotswold Way National Trail and the Gloucestershire Way, helping more people to enjoy them safely
- Improve quality of life and encourage greater integration between town, village and city life



Queuing traffic along the A417 makes it difficult to join the strategic road network, including here at Leckhampton Hill junction

Economic growth: Upgrading this stretch of road to a modern dual carriageway will:

- Support growth across the south west region by making trips quicker and safer, and journey times easier to predict
- Enable businesses to move goods and services around more easily and help staff get to and from work more quickly and safely

- Help show that the south west is open for business by making it an easier place to visit and do business with
- Help boost productivity in the south west through improved connections to other UK regions
- Further enhance the attractiveness of the Cotswolds as a tourist destination
- Support the predicted growth in jobs and housing by increasing the capacity of the strategic road network

“The Missing Link is of crucial importance to the economy of Gloucestershire and a number of neighbouring areas, as it provides connectivity to local, national and international markets, and is a major strategic route from the Midlands to London, Thames Valley, key airports and the south coast ports. It is also a major tourist route gateway to the Cotswolds, Cheltenham and Gloucester, and the Forest of Dean that already attracts around 2 million tourists spending over £1 billion every year. The Missing Link is regarded by businesses as hampering economic growth across the region.”

David Owen, Chief Executive, Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership

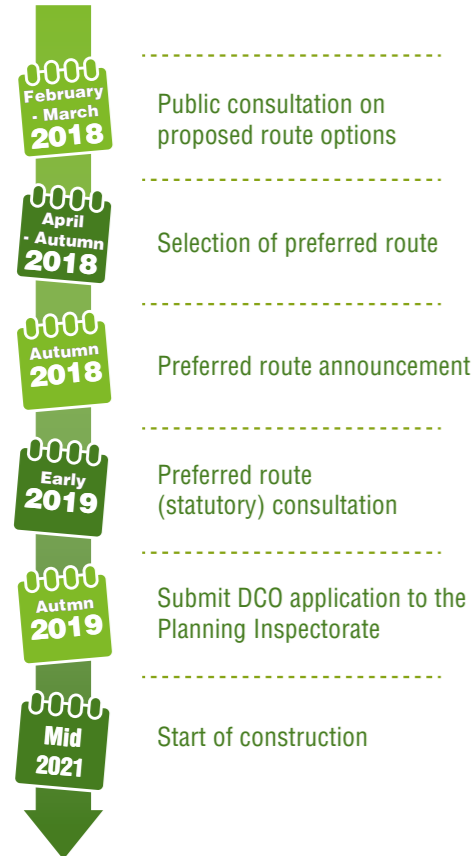
What happens next

We are committed to making sure our proposals bring long-term benefits for local communities and all road users. This consultation is your first opportunity to give us your views on our proposals.

We will use feedback from this consultation to help us choose a preferred route. After we have selected our preferred route and before we submit an application to build the scheme, we will hold a second consultation to get your views on more refined proposals.

To share your thoughts on our proposed route options, please complete a feedback form by 29 March 2018. Instructions for how to do this can be found on page 6 of this booklet.

Timeline for project:



A nationally significant project:

Because of its size, the A417 Missing Link scheme is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). NSIPs are major infrastructure developments, and include projects such as power plants, large renewable energy projects, new airports, airport extensions and major road projects.

Applications to build these types of projects are submitted to the Planning Inspectorate who examine the application on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport, rather than the local planning authority. The Secretary of State for Transport makes the final decision on consent, and consent is granted by a Development Consent Order.

We will ask for feedback at certain stages during the development of the project. We have already had discussions with some environmental bodies and elected members in the area. This public consultation on route options is the first opportunity to input into the project.

For more information, please contact:

Website: www.highways.gov.uk/a417-missing-link

Email: A417MissingLink@highwaysengland.co.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 5000

If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.

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