

## **Lee Mill Eastbound Off-slip Improvements**

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: that the Cabinet be asked

- (a) To give approval for the scheme to proceed towards outline design and securing planning consent;
- (b) The Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the Local Member and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste, be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the scheme design.

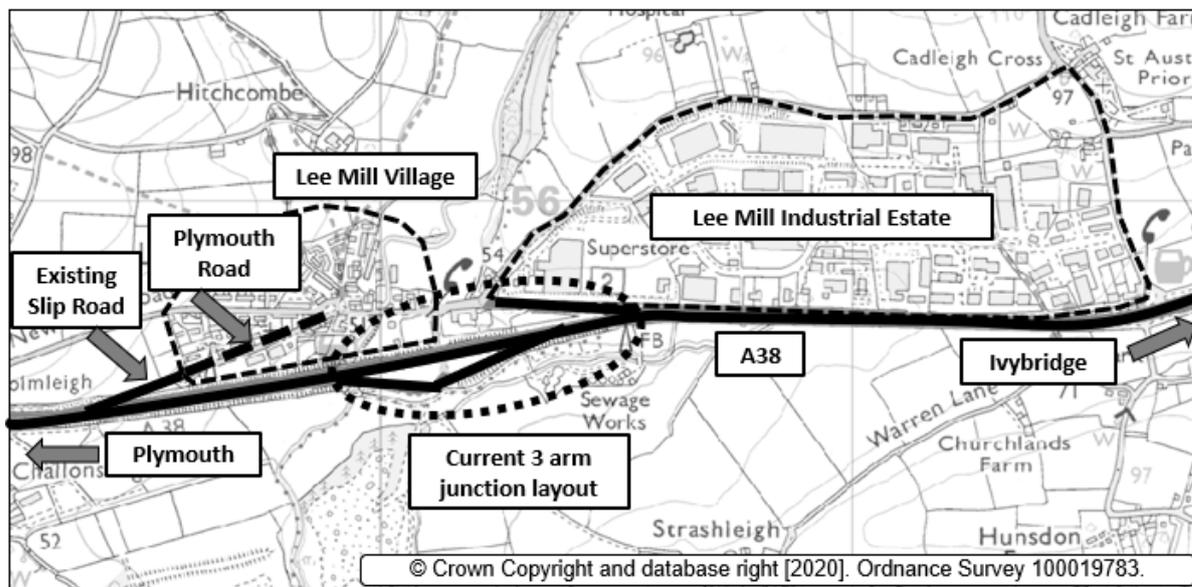
### **1. Summary**

The evolution of Lee Mill has resulted in substantial development which is accessed off the Strategic Road Network (A38) from a junction layout which lacks a conventional full all-movement junction, in particular it utilises a road (Plymouth Road) with village features as the eastbound off-slip. This report seeks approval to progress proposals for the provision of a new A38 eastbound off-slip at Lee Mill to the next stage of design and towards the submission of a planning application. Initial design has been undertaken on a preferred option, which informed the proposals presented during a public consultation held between 17 November and 18 December 2020. The consultation demonstrated strong support for the scheme and as such it is recommended that the project continues to progress through the next stages of design and to a planning application.

### **2. Introduction**

Lee Mill is a village located in the South Hams, immediately to the north of the A38 and approximately 6 miles east of Plymouth (see Figure 1). The dwellings are located in the west of the village, with a large industrial estate located in the east.

In recent years, Lee Mill has evolved as a bigger and more sustainable Devon village and the large industrial estate has gradually increased in size. The estate has approximately 400,000 sqm gross of employment, including a Tesco Extra with approximately 700 parking spaces. As a result, Lee Mill has emerged into an 'out of city' employment and retail centre in close proximity to Plymouth. This is served predominantly by an existing eastbound off-slip that is not fit for purpose.



**Figure 1: Local Geography**

When the A38 Lee Mill junction was built, a formal eastbound off-slip was not constructed. Instead, the historic Plymouth Road has been used for access. This road has village features such as frontage development on both sides with a mixture of private and commercial premises, traffic calming and narrow pavements. It is inappropriate for slip road traffic, leading to concerns over noise, air quality and safety.

These effects are exacerbated by the fact that Plymouth is the main traffic generator for Lee Mill, providing employment opportunities for the residents and important connections for the businesses located in the village and industrial estate.

A number of traffic counts have been undertaken in Lee Mill to understand the travel patterns in the area. These have demonstrated that Plymouth Road currently carries approximately 5,400 vehicles per day. In the AM peak only 5% are accessing the village itself. In the PM, this rises to 16% as commuters return at the end of the working day. Nearly two thirds of all trips associated with the industrial estate traffic utilise the Plymouth Road slip road. In addition, 25% of the daily vehicles along Plymouth Road are Heavy Goods Vehicles. This is significantly higher than would be expected along what would otherwise be a minor urban road in both character and function.

This data demonstrates the significant volume of traffic demand travelling along the Plymouth Road off-slip which are not directly associated with the village of Lee Mill. The village features of the road is designed to operate a different function to that of a slip road connecting to the Strategic Road Network. As future developments come forward, these issues will be further exacerbated.

### **3. Proposal**

The problems at Lee Mill have been under consideration for a number of years, but any scheme development was constrained by a land ownership issue. Following the purchase of a key land parcel, it is proposed to construct a new A38 eastbound off-slip to the east of the existing slip road, this would connect vehicles exiting the A38 to the industrial estate and village, whilst avoiding unnecessary trips through Lee Mill Village. The objectives of these proposals are included in Devon County

Council's Transport Infrastructure Plan (March 2020), which seeks to improve Strategic Road Network access to the Lee Mill industrial estate.

Initial design work has been undertaken and an early annotated drawing may be found in Appendix 1. These are indicative designs of the type of scheme that is intended to be delivered, further detailed design work will be required at a later date.

Under these designs, the new slip road would leave the elevated A38 and descend towards a new roundabout, providing a tie-in with the existing local road network. The existing slip road would be stopped up, with access along Plymouth Road retained. This would allow Plymouth Road to return to an appropriate function. The impact of local public transport, including the strategic South West Falcon coach service would need to be considered to ensure that an adequate solution is found at the next stage of design.

The National Cycle Network Route 2 currently crosses the access to the industrial estate at Beech Road. This represents a strategic active travel corridor which Devon County Council will seek to protect and improve as part of these proposals. Further design work and consultation with local stakeholders will be undertaken to identify a solution which enhances cycle connectivity and safety at the location.

The timescale for delivery is yet to be determined; approval of the preferred option will enable further design work to be undertaken and for the scheme to progress towards securing planning approval.

#### **4. Options/Alternatives**

##### Alternative Option: Link Road

A similar scheme seeking to address the issues with the existing eastbound off-slip at Lee Mill was previously considered as part of the New England Quarry planning application. As well as the current scheme for a new slip road in the vicinity of Beech Farm, it also included an alternative option which retained the existing eastbound slip road and provided a new link road between the turning head and Beech Farm. Whilst this option would divert slip road traffic away from Plymouth Road and minimise impact on public transport services, it has been rejected due to the significant additional land take required and resultant environmental impact.

##### Do Nothing

Should a scheme not progress to address the issues with the eastbound off-slip at Lee Mill, the existing slip road via Plymouth Road will continue to be a constraint on the highway network. In addition, the expected highway impact of any local planning applications is likely to exacerbate any existing issues such as air quality, noise and road safety.

#### **5. Consultations**

##### Consultation Method

A public consultation was held between 17 November and 18 December 2020. The consultation was posted on the Have Your Say website (<http://devon.cc/leemill>) and residents/businesses were notified via a letter drop to approximately 450 addresses. Additionally, an advert was placed in the Ivybridge & South Brent Gazette and a DCC press release was issued. Stakeholders were contacted separately and included Highways England, public transport providers, South Hams District Council, Lee Mill Industrial Estate Group and Sparkwell Parish Council.

Consultation materials set out an explanation of the current problem, a summary of work to date and an overview of proposals. Responses could be given via an online questionnaire, by email, post or phone. A virtual webinar was hosted by the project team which included a short presentation of proposals and a question and answer session. A recording of this presentation was later published online. A separate virtual “drop-in” event was also delivered to create a forum for further questions.

### Consultation Representation

A total of 147 online questionnaire responses were received, alongside 5 emails and 2 phone calls with the public. Separate meetings were held with Stagecoach and Plymouth City Bus and 5 emails were received from stakeholders. Approximately 60% of the online responses were given by those in Lee Mill Village (excluding the Industrial Estate) and a further 20% from Ivybridge, demonstrating that the consultation was comprehensive in its representation of local opinion.

### Consultation Feedback

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive; 93% of respondents recognise the need for a new eastbound off-slip at Lee Mill and 89% supported the proposals. Support increases to 98% for Lee Mill Village online responses. This demonstrates overwhelming public support to progress the preferred option to further design.

The consultation highlighted a number of issues which would need further consideration at the detailed design stage. The continued provision of local bus services and the strategic South West Falcon coach service is critical to both the public and service providers. The next stage of design will consider how to incorporate suggestions of how to achieve this into the scheme.

Responses also highlighted the importance of improving National Cycle Network Route 2 connectivity at Beech Rd. Sustrans support the scheme and welcome the opportunity improve provision. There were also concerns about environmental issues, particularly relating to any impacts on the River Yealm. These issues will be given further consideration at the detailed design stage.

Highways England also provided comment as proposals impact the Strategic Road Network, and gave their conditional support subject to design compliance, safety, capacity, environmental assessment and funding.

## **6. Financial Considerations**

The scheme is at an early stage of design and construction cost estimates will be produced as the scheme proceeds.

The scheme is included in the current Transport Capital Programme, funds for scheme development will be allocated as the Programme rolls forward. Subject to the approval of the preferred option, this funding, plus developer contributions, will be used to undertake the further progress of the preferred option, incorporating suggestions and amendments received during public consultation.

## **7. Legal Considerations**

There are no specific legal considerations.

## **8. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)**

The delivery of a new slip road connecting the A38 to Lee Mill will require planning approval. As part of the next stage of design, environmental surveys will be commissioned to better understand the likely environmental impact of the scheme and identify potential mitigation opportunities.

Fundamentally, the scheme seeks to address environmental concerns related to the existing slip road arrangement such as air quality, noise and safety. This will bring significant benefits to the Lee Mill village environment by the removal of through traffic, whilst also offering travel time and efficiency benefits to those using the slip road. The environmental benefits will be balanced against the impacts of constructing the road.

Whilst primarily a highway scheme, the next stage of design will also explore what enhancements can be delivered as part of the scheme to the active travel network. The National Cycle Network is located in close proximity to the proposed roundabout, and opportunities to include cyclist and pedestrian facilities will be considered. This would encourage potential modal shift towards active travel modes for short distance trips to the village or industrial estate.

## **9. Equality Considerations**

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment / Impact Assessment or other form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective.

In progressing this particular scheme/proposal, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which has been circulated separately to Cabinet Councillors and is also available alongside this Report on the Council's website at: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/lee-mill-slip-road/>, which Councillors will need to consider for the purposes of this item.

The Impact Assessment reports that the scheme will have a number of environmental, social and economic impacts. Of particular note, whilst the relocation of the eastbound off-slip will result in slightly longer journey lengths to Lee Mill village, the locality will benefit from reduced traffic noise and pollution and improved road safety on Plymouth Road. In addition, the improved access to Lee

Mill Industrial Estate will create improved employment opportunities and the potential for improved associated active travel elements will be explored at the next stage of design.

It should be noted that the Impact Assessment highlights the importance of ensuring that there are suitable provisions incorporated within the next stage of scheme design to enable bus services to continue serving Lee Mill.

## **12. Summary**

The current conditions of the A38 eastbound off-slip at Lee Mill are incompatible with the village nature of the road, with high levels of traffic travelling along Plymouth Road. An improvement scheme is required to provide a suitable off-slip from the Strategic Road Network, as identified in Devon County Council's Transport Infrastructure Plan. Following the purchase of a key land parcel, a preliminary scheme was designed which seeks to provide a new slip road to the east of the village, removing significant volumes of traffic from the village and improving access to the industrial estate. A public consultation was undertaken in November and December 2020 which demonstrated overwhelming support for the proposed scheme and it is therefore recommended that the preferred option proceeds to further design and seeks to secure planning approval.

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Electoral Divisions: Bickleigh & Wembury, South Brent & Yealmpton

Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development and Waste: Councillor Andrea Davis

### **Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers**

Contact for Enquiries: Hannah Clark

Tel No: 01392 383000

Room: County Hall, Exeter. EX2 4QD

<b>Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>File Reference</b>
-------------------------	-------------	-----------------------

Nil

Lee Mill Eastbound Off-slip Improvements - Final

# Proposed slip road and roundabout design

