

## **Moor Lane Roundabout Improvements, Exeter: Approval to Construct**

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 Cabinet;**

- (a) approves the construction of a highway junction improvement at Moor Lane Roundabout, as outlined in Appendix A, at an estimated cost of £2,226,578;**
- (b) delegates authority to the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Development & Waste and relevant local Members, to make minor amendments to the scheme details.**

### **1. Summary**

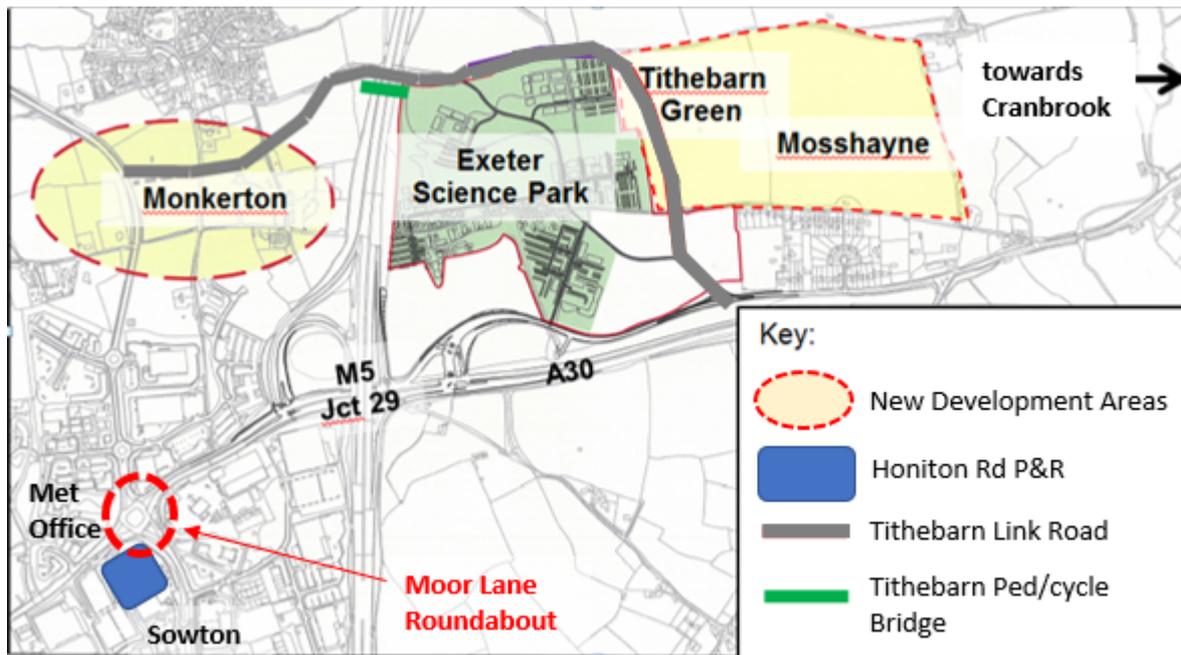
Moor Lane junction, on the east of Exeter, experiences congestion on most of the approach arms during peak periods due to a mix of through traffic and traffic leaving Sowton Industrial estate. This report seeks approval to construct the Moor Lane Roundabout improvement scheme aimed at relieving this congestion. Improvements to Moor Lane roundabout are identified in the Devon County Council Transport Infrastructure Plan, Exeter City Core Strategy and East Devon Local Plan as one of the measures required to accommodate the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point.

The Moor Lane roundabout improvement, along with Park and Change at the Science Park, and Exeter Cycle routes, form the East of Exeter National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) package. The NPIF package is part grant-funded by the Department for Transport and an additional £618,500 of grant funding towards Moor Lane roundabout has also been secured from the Highways England Growth and Housing Fund.

### **2. Background/Introduction**

Situated on the eastern edge of Exeter, Moor Lane roundabout is a main point of access into the city from M5 Junction 29 and A30 of the Strategic Road Network and for new development to the East of Exeter, such as the new town of Cranbrook. Moor Lane Roundabout also provides access into the Honiton Road Park and Ride and one of two highway access/egress points into Sowton Industrial Estate.

Moor Lane Roundabout currently experiences significant queuing in peak periods. In particular, the queues on the A30/Honiton Road westbound approach to Moor Lane Roundabout often extend back to the adjacent M5 J29 in the AM peak, creating a safety issue on the M5.



Members may recall that the new Tithebarn Link Road has provided an alternative east west link over the M5. However, as development continues in the Exeter & East Devon Growth Point further improvements will be required to provide additional capacity to accommodate that demand. As a result, Highways England has identified Moor Lane improvements as necessary to support future growth. The development of Cranbrook beyond 6,500 homes has a planning condition requiring an improvement scheme.

This report seeks approval for the construction of the Moor Lane Roundabout improvement. Completion of the scheme would help manage the current safety issues that arise from queuing on the Honiton Road westbound approach to the junction, improve egress from Sowton Industrial estate and the Honiton Road Park and Ride and upgrade pedestrian and cyclist facilities on Ambassador Drive providing benefit for local businesses and residents.

### 3. Proposal

The proposed improvements are to widen the Moor Lane approach (from Sowton Industrial estate) by a lane to provide an additional lane into Moor Lane Roundabout and increase vehicular capacity at the junction.

The northbound exit of the Ambassador Drive / Emperor Way will be widened for a short length to safely provide for the movement north onto Ambassador Drive/Cumberland Way. The lane markings on the Honiton Road westbound approach and circulatory will also be amended to permitting two lanes to turn right into Ambassador Drive and reduce the queuing that currently occurs on this approach.

In addition to the vehicular improvements, facilities for pedestrians and cyclists will be enhanced. This will include localised widening of shared use paths, removal of current obstructions and widening of the refuge islands on the western arms of the Emperor Way and Oberon Road roundabouts.

An overview of the design for the Moor Lane Improvement Scheme is shown in Appendix A. Appendices B1, B2 and B3 show the 3 main areas of works in greater detail. These are described below;

#### **A. Moor Lane Approach – Appendix B1**

The Moor Lane approach will be widened into the existing highway verge and embankment to the west to provide an extra lane for vehicles between Avocet Road and Moor Lane roundabout. Lanes will be remarked to improve lane allocation for traffic exiting Sowton. The left-hand lane will be left turn only, and right-hand lane right turn only. The two centre lanes will be ahead, and ahead and right. This will be supported by changes to the markings on the roundabout.

Similarly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> lane on the Honiton Road westbound approach will be remarked from ahead, to ahead and right. This lane is only lightly used for ahead movements to Honiton Road and the proposed change will enable the right turn movement to Ambassador Drive to be made in two lanes. The right turn movement to Ambassador Drive is particularly high in the morning peak period, leading to queuing. The ability to make this turn from two lanes will help to increase capacity and reduce queuing, reducing queuing for this movement.

The widening of Moor Lane will require the removal of a number of trees. Although dense in nature, are of limited ecological value. In consultation with local members a planting scheme on the edge of the Park and Ride including a number of new trees and shrubs has been produced to mitigate the tree loss.

#### **B. Ambassador Drive Widening, pedestrian and cycle enhancements on west of Ambassador Drive and Emperor Way refuge island – Appendix B2**

Ambassador Drive will be widened at its southern end to a northbound merge lane and retain a two lane southbound approach to the Emperor Way roundabout. The existing shared use path and refuge island will be moved east to accommodate this widening.

There will be improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities including: improved refuge island, improved crossing facilities and the usable width for pedestrians and cyclists will be increased.

#### **C. Oberon Road Roundabout Refuge island improvements – Appendix B3**

The existing refuge islands on the western arms of Oberon Road and Emperor Way roundabouts will be widened to improve crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The increased width will also provide sufficient space to accommodate larger cycles.

The existing shared use path on the north western side of Oberon Road roundabout will be widened to provide a consistent width from the crossing point to the shared use facilities further up Cumberland Way that lead into the E4 cycle route and verge on the eastern side of Ambassador Drive will also be surfaced to increase the width of shared path.

### **4. Consultations/Representations/Technical Data**

The Moor Lane Roundabout improvements scheme is identified in the infrastructure delivery plans that were linked to the Local Plans for Exeter and East Devon District Councils. The infrastructure requirements to support the planned growth were scrutinised through the Examination in Public process.

Information on the proposed design of the scheme was sent out to local businesses, Chamber of Commerce and key stakeholders including Exeter and East Devon District Councils and Stagecoach in early March 2019.

Supporting comments have welcomed the improvements to reduce queuing. Although some disappointment was raised that the scheme does not improve vehicular access out of Grenadier Road, which like many employment areas can be congested at peak periods, this is not one of the objectives of the scheme.

The proposed improvements to refuge islands have been positively received. It was noted that widening of northbound exit from Ambassador Drive roundabout, may make crossing here more difficult. The Civic Society highlighted some additional improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. Many of these are now included, including localised widening of shared use paths and removing street clutter which can reduce usable width.

A number of businesses have also provided contact details to be kept aware of the construction program.

## **5. Financial Considerations**

The overall construction cost of the proposal is estimated to be £2,226,578. A significant portion of the costs, approximately £850,000, relates to the cost of utilities diversions.

The project forms part of the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) Government Grant package, which has funded parts of the E4 route in the past 12 months.

This element of the package will be funded by

- £692,786 from NPIF grant
- £618,520 grant received from Highways England Housing and Growth Fund
- £915,272 from S106 contributions received from Hill Barton Farm (£750,000 plus indexation).

The total package, which will also see delivery of parts of the E4 cycle route and a new Park and Change site near Exeter Science Park, is now estimated at £9.039m, comprising £4.155m grant and £4.884m match funding.

## **6. Environmental Impact Considerations**

Ecological surveys have been undertaken for areas where trees are to be removed and vegetation clearance is required. No protected species are to be affected by the works and the trees are identified by the County Ecologist as being of limited ecological value. It is proposed that trees will be removed outside of the bird nesting season which is from March to September, although if any trees need to be removed inside the bird nesting season this will be undertaken under the supervision of a qualified ecologist.

To mitigate the slight decrease in biodiversity and loss of trees, a planting scheme of native shrubs and trees along the edge of the Honiton Road Park and Ride site has been prepared in liaison with local members.

The scheme will provide modest improvements to walking and cycling facilities in the vicinity, which will help to reduce severance at the two roundabouts and encourage physical activity.

## **7. 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.

In progressing this particular scheme element, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which has been circulated separately to Cabinet Members and also is available on the Council's website at: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/moor-lane-roundabout/>, which Members will need to consider for the purposes of this item.

Improvements to the roundabout approaches will:

- Unlock housing at Cranbrook
- Improve access to employment opportunities in the East of Exeter
- Improve journey time reliability for public transport users through the junction
- Improved crossing facilities on Ambassador Drive/Cumberland Way will improve accessibility across side roads for people who use wheelchairs or pushing prams, which may improve their experiences of travelling around the city.

The proposals have no adverse impact on a specific audience, regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation and religion / belief.

It is anticipated that some negative impact will be realised as a result of traffic management during the construction works. This negative impact will be mitigated as far as possible by liaising with Devon County Council's highway co-ordination, local businesses and traffic management groups.

## **8. Legal Considerations**

The lawful implications/consequences of the proposals/recommendations/proposed course of action have been considered and taken into account in the preparation of this report and formulation of the recommendations set out above.

This includes Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 that states that it is the duty of a local authority, so far as practicable, to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic and provision of parking facilities.

There are no traffic orders required for these works and the junction does not fall within the Exeter Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

## **9. Risk Management Considerations**

The key risks for such infrastructure projects relate to land acquisition, planning, environmental impact, funding and cost overruns during construction.

The land to enable the widening north of Ambassador Drive roundabout has now been secured and dedicated as highway. The proposed project is entirely within highway and therefore planning consent is not required.

The vegetation within the areas of widening is of limited ecological value and no protected species are impacted by the works. The timing of works and planting scheme along the edge of the Park and ride site will minimise the impact on birds and mitigate the loss of vegetation.

A funding gap on this project previously arose due to higher than expected utilities costs being identified in the stats returns from the utility companies. This has now been resolved through securing grant funding of £618,520 from Highways England. The grant monies have now been received. Similarly, two of the three instalments of £250,000 from development at Hill Barton have been received and the third has been invoiced and is due imminently.

There have been positive discussions with Statutory Undertakers and traffic management and we expect the risks to be managed within the total cost of the project.

## **10. Public Health Impact**

The impact on public health is expected to be neutral. The scheme will however improve public transport reliability and walking and cycling facilities in the vicinity. The latter will help to reduce severance at the two roundabouts and encourage physical activity.

The scheme has been subject to Stage 1 and Stage 2 road safety audits.

## **11. Options/Alternatives**

A number of options to improve the junction have been considered. Consideration of the costs, level of disruption and impact on non-motorised users were considered before deciding on a preferred scheme.

Early stages of design considered widening of other approaches, including Ambassador Drive or the Honiton Road westbound approach were considered but were rejected due to utilities, construction difficulties and extensive traffic management requirements.

### *Moor Lane*

Options were explored for the length of widening between the exit from the Park and Ride site and Moor Lane roundabout. Each of these gave rise to safety issues at the Avocet Road junction. Therefore, the current option where widening starts north of the Avocet Road junction was progressed.

### *Non-motorised users*

An approach was made to acquire the land to the East of Ambassador Drive to enable further widening along the length between Oberon Road and Emperor Way roundabouts. This would have provided sufficient space for a 2-way segregated cycle route to the same standard as that of Phase 1 of E4 route on Cumberland Way. However, the land could not be secured.

## **12. Discussion**

The construction of the proposed Moor Lane Roundabout improvements supports economic growth and continued growth in the East of Exeter Growth Point and reflects the adopted documents of the County and local District Councils.

Concern was raised by a Local Member with regards the merits of highway improvement schemes in a constrained city and inconsistency with the emerging Exeter Transport Strategy. It is noted that in isolation additional highway capacity will not solve the city's transport challenges, however this project represents approximately a quarter of the total cost of the multimodal transport package improvements in the East of Exeter NPIF project.

The project also has the following benefits:

- It is a planning requirement of Highways England
- It provides improved egress from Sowton Industrial estate to roads that have available capacity and where there are localised capacity problems
- It provides additional capacity from the A30/Honiton approach relieving queuing extending back onto the M5

The junction is also at the heart of the East West corridor. Its operation is critical to the performance of the city's network, including those bus routes that pass through it. The improvement does provide benefits to sustainable users, notably exit to the Park and Ride site, and pedestrians and cyclists on the western side of Ambassador Drive.

### **13. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion**

The Moor Lane roundabout improvements are required to accommodate further growth in the Exeter and East Devon Growth Point. The proposed improvement scheme will provide additional highway capacity at the junction and localised upgrades of pedestrian and cycle facilities in the vicinity.

Time limited funding towards the improvements has been secured from both Highways England and the National Productivity Investment Fund. The improvements will support economic growth, improve accessibility in the East of Exeter and form an integral part of the multimodal East of Exeter transport package.

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

### **Electoral Divisions: All in Exeter**

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

*Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment and Prosperity, Dr Virginia Pearson*

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Will Pratt

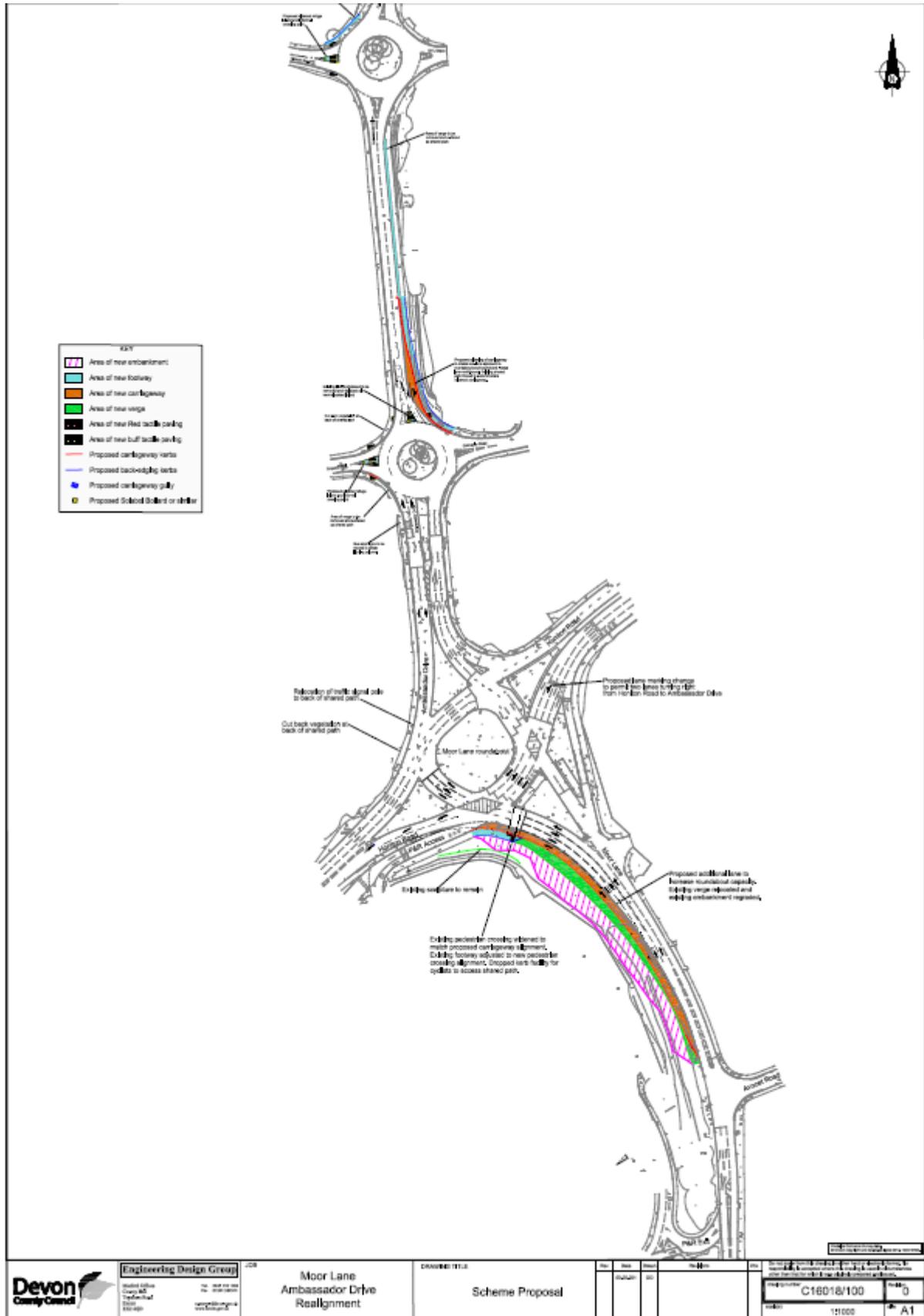
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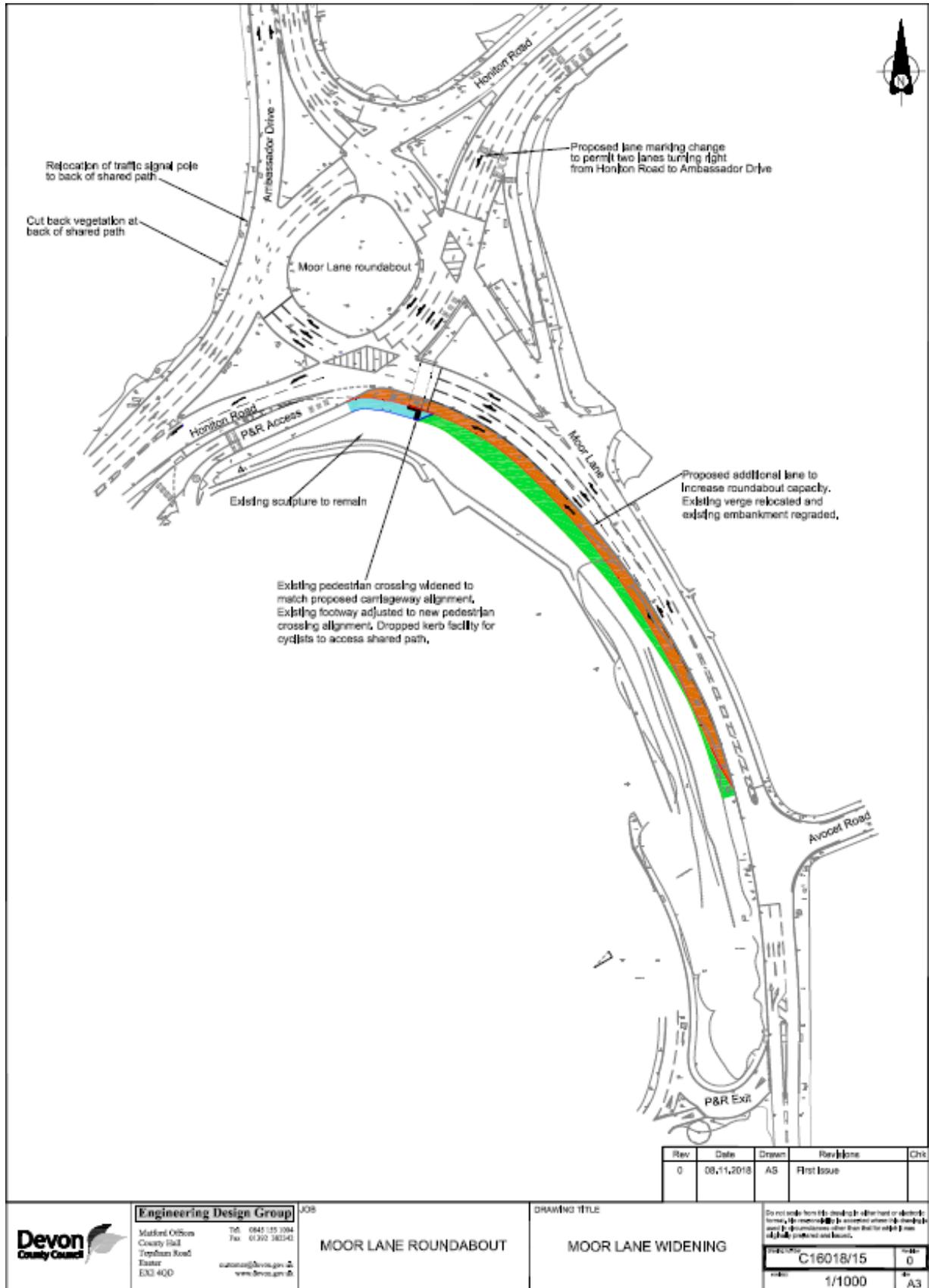
Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Impact Assessment	17 April 2019	<a href="https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/moor-lane-roundabout/">https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/moor-lane-roundabout/</a>

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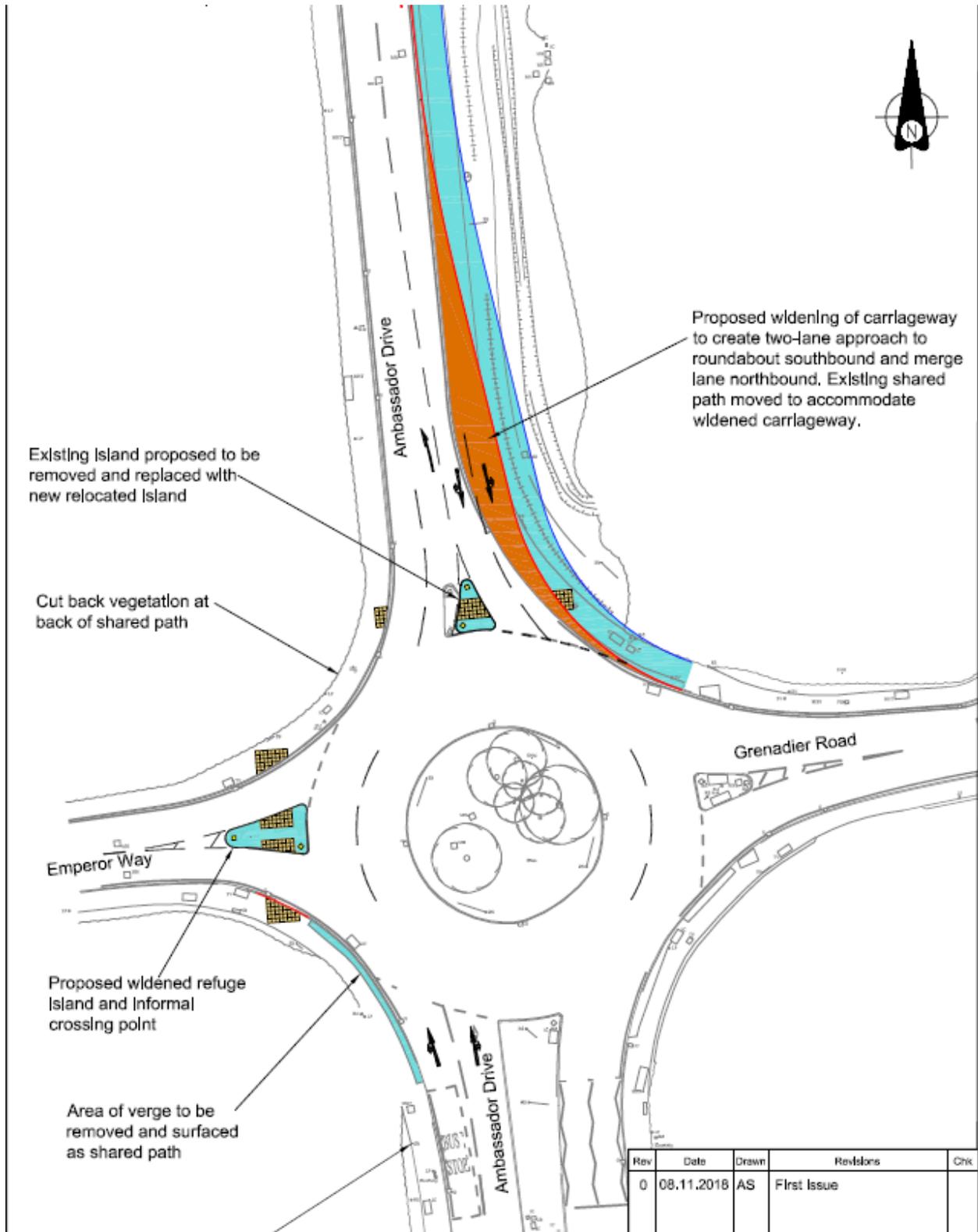
General Layout



Moor Lane Widening



Ambassador Drive Widening



Rev	Date	Drawn	Revisions	Chk
0	08.11.2016	AS	First Issue	



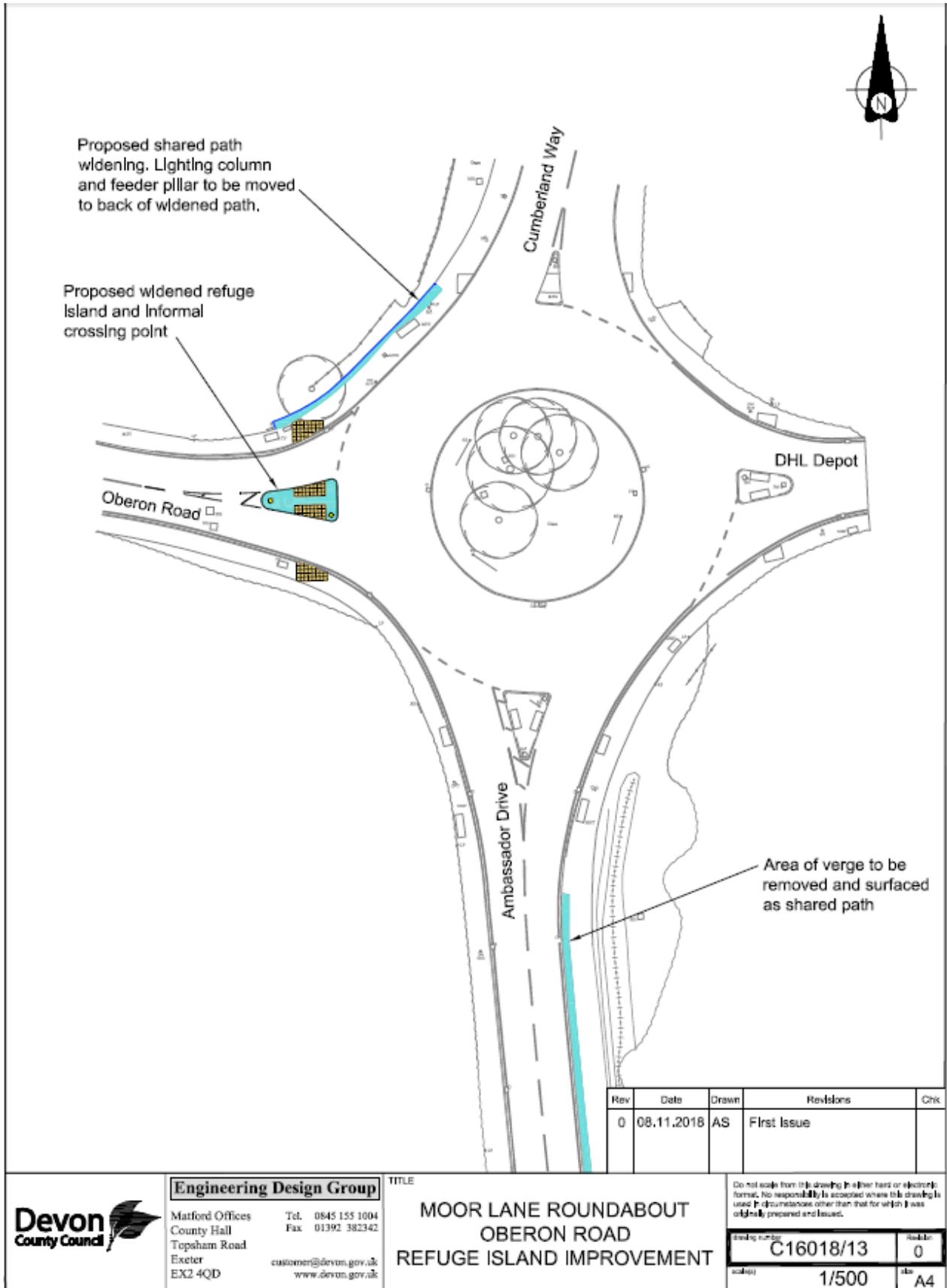
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TITLE  
**MOOR LANE ROUNDABOUT  
 AMBASSADOR DRIVE AND  
 EMPEROR WAY  
 REFUGE ISLAND IMPROVEMENT**

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Drawing number	C16018/14	Revision	0
Scale	1/500	Sheet	A4

Oberon Road Roundabout Refuge Island Improvements



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TITLE  
**MOOR LANE ROUNDABOUT  
 OBERON ROAD  
 REFUGE ISLAND IMPROVEMENT**

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Scale	Size
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