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Somerset Council
Chard Access and Relief Road Strategy

Chard Access Strategy

2026-10-22

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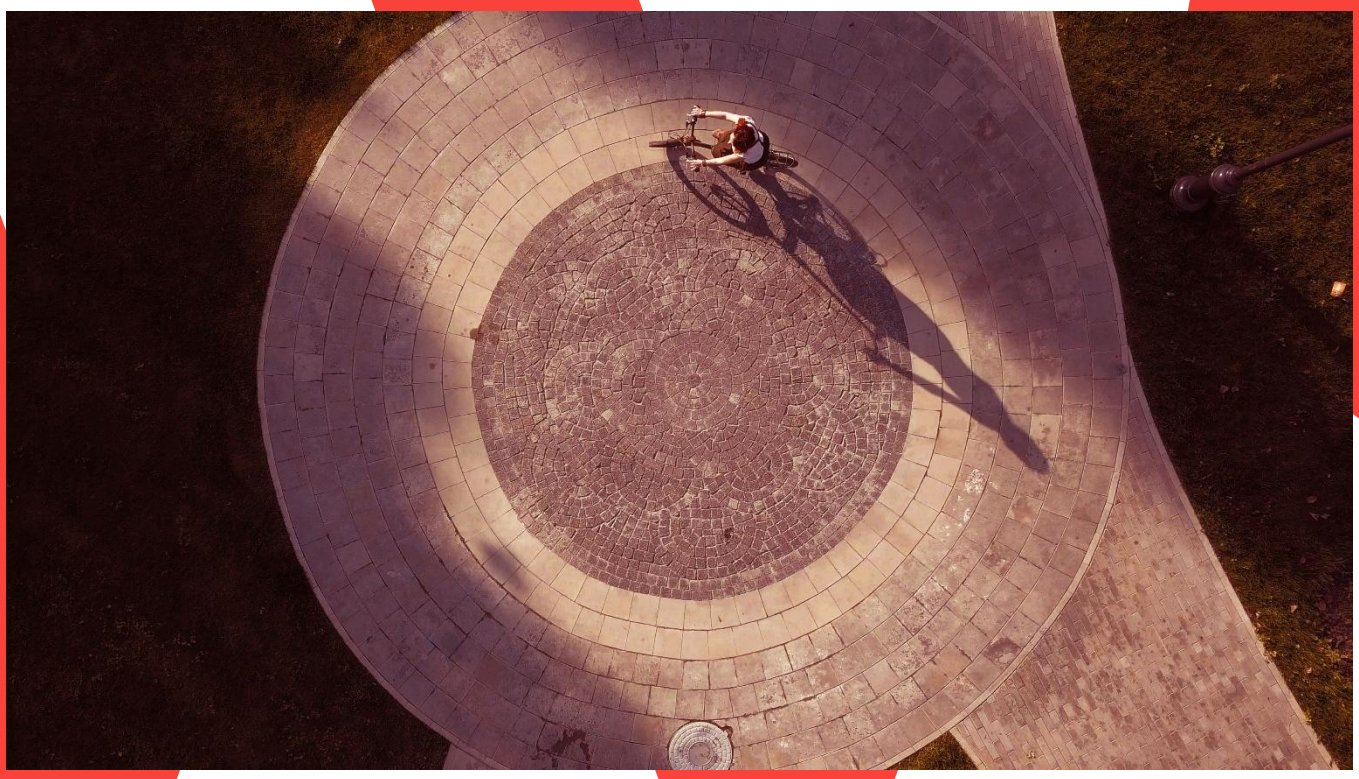

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Prepared for

Somerset Council

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2	2026-10-22	Revision in response to client feedback

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
CEDA	Chard Eastern Development Area
ERR	Eastern Relief Road
FCS	Future Chard Strategy
FRR	Full Relief Road
LCWIP	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
LTDP	Local Transport Delivery Plan
LTP	Local Transport Plan
MM	Mott Macdonald
SC	Somerset Council
PRR	Partial Relief Road
SSDC	South Somerset District Council
SSLP	South Somerset Local Plan
TMS	Transport and Movement Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Strategy

Chard is likely to experience significant future housing and employment growth over the coming years. This strategy seeks to identify suitable transport interventions to support sustainable development and enhance the accessibility, road safety and quality of life in Chard.

The Eastern Relief Road (ERR) has traditionally been promoted as a potential solution to support growth and reduce pressure on key routes within Chard. However, changes in local and national transport policy increasingly emphasise the importance of sustainable travel, integrated transport networks and reducing reliance on private car travel wherever practical alternatives exist.

In addition, the costs of the historic ERR options are well above what expected levels of development could realistically fund. Travel behaviour is also changing, with growing role of digital access and trips made by foot. Therefore, a consideration of a wider range of interventions, rather than simply increasing highway capacity, including improvements to walking, cycling and public transport is required.

Somerset Council has commissioned WSP to review previous work relating to the ERR, update the supporting evidence base and assess alternative transport interventions that could help address Chard's transport challenges.

This Chard Access and Relief Road Strategy summarises and updates that work previously undertaken and presents a recommended package of interventions intended to support sustainable growth, improve accessibility and provide a balanced approach to future transport investment in Chard.

1.2 Local Context

Chard is a principal market town in the south of Somerset. The town provides employment, education, retail and community services for both residents and surrounding settlements and is identified within the emerging Somerset Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) as a Mid-sized Transport Centre.

Whilst many residents live and work locally, there is also demand to larger centres including Taunton and Yeovil for additional services and jobs. Car travel remains the dominant mode for many journeys, walking/cycling plays an important role for local trips, but public transport usage is comparatively low.

Chard has been identified as an area with new large development sites. The principal growth area includes housing, employment land, schools, community facilities, open space and supporting infrastructure, is generally situated to the east of the town centre (the CEDA), which was identified through the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028. A map of the development can be found accompanying ERR options in 3.1 Overview.

Congestion is a longstanding concern on parts of the local highway network, particularly around the recently upgraded Convent traffic signals and more generally the area surrounding where the A358 and A30 meet. The town centre environment can be dominated by vehicles during peak periods, and the transport network is expected to come under greater pressure as future development is built.

New development presents additional demand and requirements, but also an opportunity both to deliver improvements that can encourage and enable more sustainable travel patterns through improved walking, cycling and public transport provision.

1.3 History of ERR Studies

The concept of a relief road on the eastern side of Chard emerged from proposals to accommodate strategic growth within the Chard Eastern Development Area. Previous studies concluded that the existing highway network would be unable to accommodate future development traffic without significant transport investment, leading to the identification of a new route linking the A358 Furnham Road and A358 Tatworth Road.

Several studies have examined alignments, costs and potential benefits of the ERR. These are:

- The Chard Regeneration Framework: Strategic Transport Appraisal Report (PBA, 2010)
- Chard Regeneration Framework: Implementation Plan (LDA, 2010)
- Feasibility Report in respect of Chard Eastern Development Area (Thomas Lister, 2012)
- Chard Eastern Relief Road Design, Costing and High Level Analysis (MM, 2022)

Further to this the South Somerset Local Plan Review 2016-2036 Preferred Options document (SSDC, 2019) reflects the content of the reports produced prior to 2019.

In 2026 Somerset Council commissioned a further review of the evidence. The need for this commission reflected increasing construction costs, changes in travel patterns over the last decade (i.e. rising digital access), emerging transport policy (such as emerging LTP4 and the 2026 National Better Connected strategy) and a desire to understand whether an alternative package of interventions could deliver suitable mitigation. The commission is also set in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026) revision, which further embeds vision-led transport planning into the planning system. This study therefore reviews relief road options and a wider package of alternative transport measures.

1.4 Study Scope and Approach

The study was undertaken in three stages. The first stage involved reviewing and updating previous technical work, including the ERR design and costing information and the sustainable travel mode share evidence for Chard using the latest available data. Updated cost estimates were also produced for previously assessed alignments and an additional alternative ERR route option identified by Somerset Council.

The second stage comprised a review of national, regional and local transport policy, existing transport studies and development proposals and the generation of a range of multi-modal interventions and packages of complementary measures. These options were then assessed through a Strategic Options Appraisal (SOA) using criteria relating to transport outcomes, deliverability and cost.

The third stage involved pulling all this information together to create this Chard Access and Relief Road Strategy.

1.5 Structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 summarises the findings of the updated Sustainable Travel Mode Share Technical Note.
- Chapter 3 presents the transport options considered, including Eastern Relief Road alignments and alternative interventions, as well as an overview of costs.
- Chapter 4 sets out the access strategy for Chard.
- Chapter 5 outlines recommendations and next steps.

The updated Sustainable Travel Mode Share Technical Note and updated ERR costing information are also provided as Appendices.

2. Summary of Sustainable Travel Technical Note

A review of *Consideration of potential to increase sustainable travel mode share in Chard* issued by Mott MacDonald (MM) in 2021 was undertaken to support the up-to-date identification of transport improvements for Chard.

The review examined changes in the travel to work distances, methods and places travelled to work from the Census 2011 to the latest Census data in 2021 and an overview of current bus route provision and frequency. The *Updated Sustainable Travel Mode Share Technical Note* is provided as Appendix A.

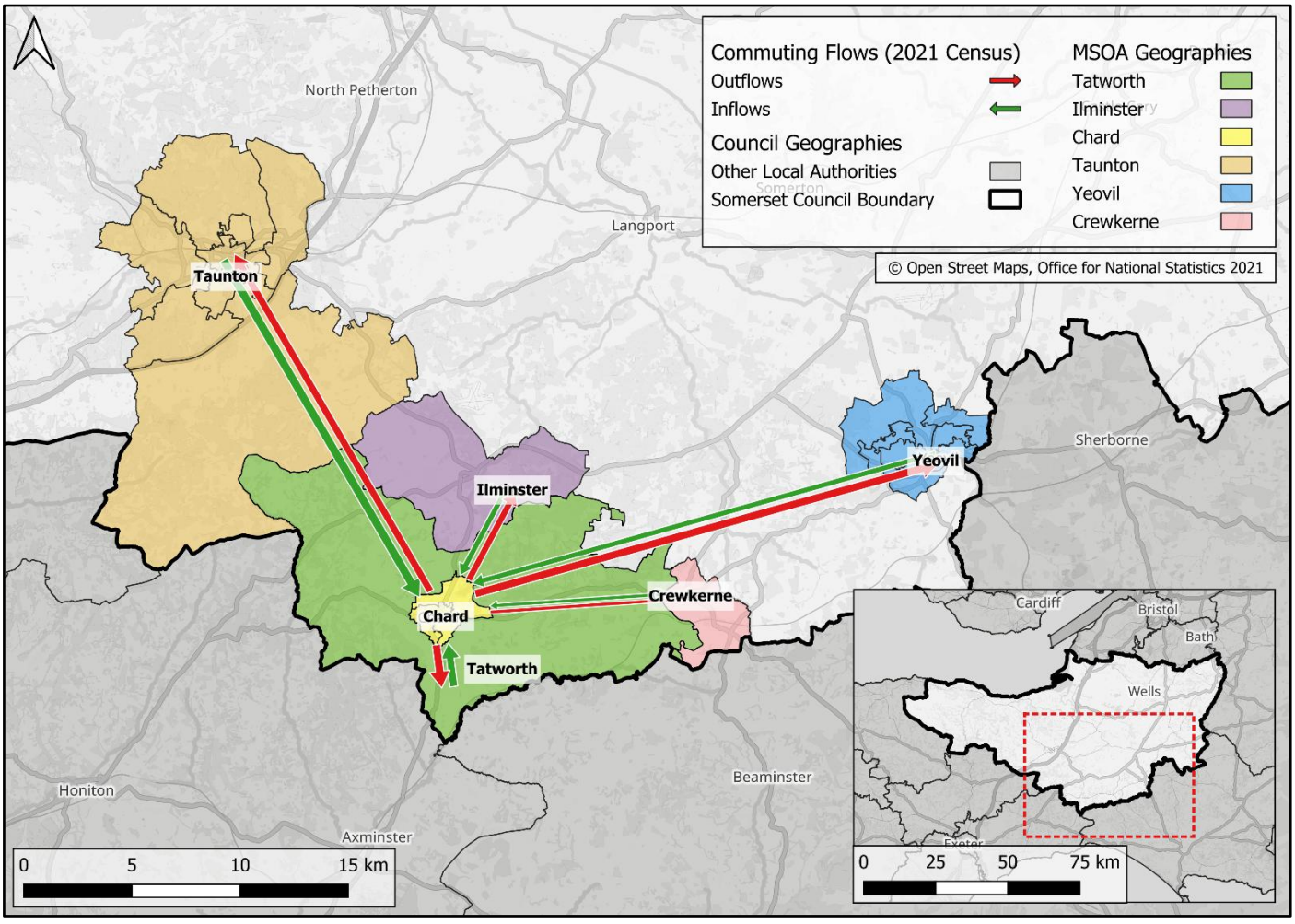

Figure 1 Map of primary 2021 Census travel to work movements

The headline findings from the *Updated Sustainable Travel Mode Share Technical Note* review were that:

- Travel demand in and around Chard is predominantly local in nature, with most commuting trips occurring within the town and its immediate surroundings (Figure 1).
- Walking and cycling play a significant role for short distance journeys; however, private car use remains the dominant mode of travel for trips of less than 10 km.
- For longer-distance journeys to key destinations such as Taunton and Yeovil, travel is predominantly car-based, whilst public transport mode share is very limited.
- Rail travel is negligible due to the distance to the nearest stations, albeit there are some trips made by rail (typically to/from nearby stations) and there are existing bus connections to enable these, albeit the bus and rail timetables do not always align.
- A growing prevalence of home working, which likely increases the workday population and may increase the importance of local services and town centre vitality.

The findings highlight opportunities to support a shift towards more sustainable travel patterns, particularly shorter distance journeys which start and end in Chard, the importance of enhanced public realm/placemaking initiatives in the town and the potential benefit of more frequent and reliable bus services connecting Chard with surrounding towns.

3. Eastern Relief Road Options

3.1 Overview

Several potential Eastern Relief Road (ERR) alignments have been identified to support planned growth and provide opportunities to reduce traffic pressures on the existing highway network. The options presented build upon work previously undertaken by MM in 2022 and include an additional alignment subsequently proposed by Somerset Council (Option 4). The route options comprise both full and partial relief road proposals:

- Option 1 (Full Relief Road) follows an alignment through the centre of the CEDA before connecting northwards via Touches Lane. The overall route length is approximately 3.5km. This alignment is broadly identified in the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028.
- Option 2 (Full Relief Road) follows an alignment to the east of the CEDA before connecting to Touches Lane. The route length is approximately 3.8km.
- Option 3 (Full Relief Road) follows a longer northern alignment east of Chard Reservoir rather than utilising Touches Lane, also following the alignment to the east of the CEDA in the south. The full route length is approximately 5.3km.
- Option 4 (Southern Partial Relief Road) comprises an alternative alignment between Oaklands Avenue and Henderson Drive, linked via Millfield. The route length is approximately 1km.

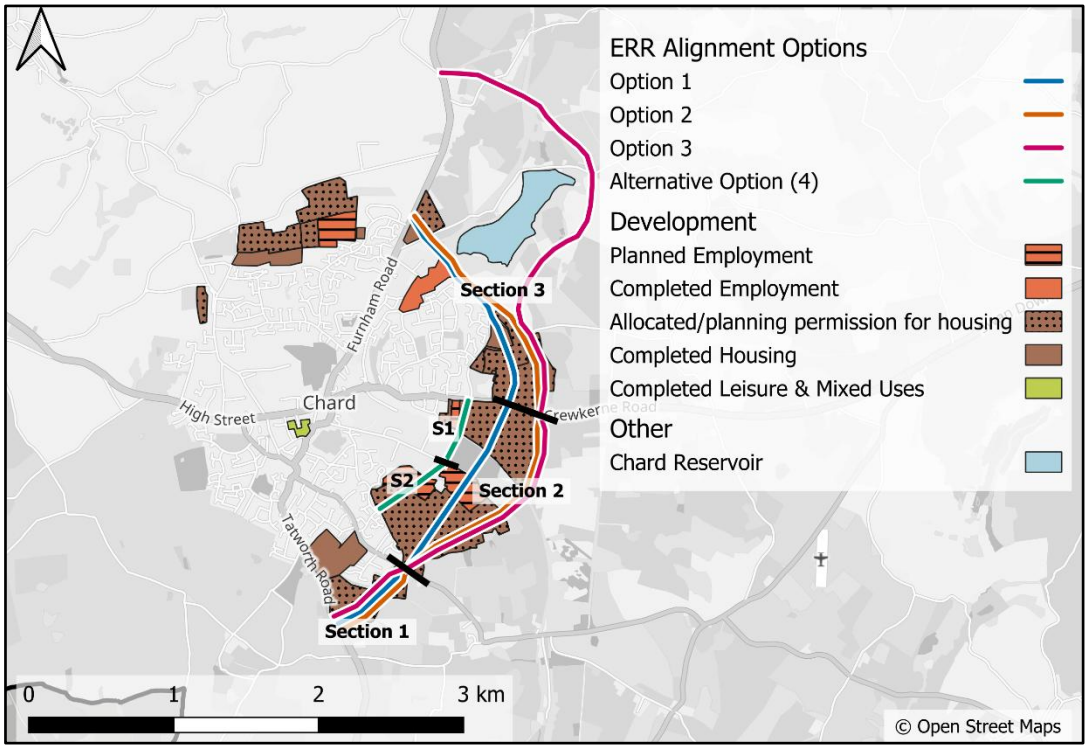

Figure 2 Eastern Relief Road alignments and emerging development extracted from MM, 2022.

3.2 Costs

Updated cost estimates have also been prepared as part of this study to reflect current market conditions, inflation and revised assumptions regarding indirect costs, risk, utilities, professional fees and contractor preliminaries. The estimates build upon the original MM work and provide an indication of the likely scale of investment required for each alignment option. **The estimates exclude items such as land acquisition, legal costs, planning-related costs, VAT and statutory processes.**

Overall scheme costs vary significantly, ranging from approximately £9.8 million for the southern Partial Relief Road (Option 4) in 2026 to approximately £94.4 million for the Full Relief Road in 2028 (Option 1). Key costing conclusions are:

- Updated construction costs are typically around one-third higher than the original 2022 estimates for schemes commencing in 2026.
- The highest-cost option assessed is the full relief road Option 3, with estimated costs of approximately £90.1m to £94.4m, depending on construction year.
- The lowest-cost option assessed is the southern partial relief road (Option 4), with estimated costs of approximately £9.3m.
- Construction costs are likely to continue to rise into future years.

Table 1 Summary of Eastern Relief Road Cost Estimates

Option	Route Sections	*2022 Construction Cost (£m)*	2026 Construction Cost (£m)	
Option 1 *FRR*	Section 1	5.4	6.8	
	Section 2	45.9	63.3	
	Section 3	10.5	13.9	
	Total Option 1	**61.8**	**84.1**	*+ 36%*
Option 2 *FRR*	Section 1	4.8	6.3	
	Section 2	31.1	42.7	
	Section 3	10.6	14.0	
	Total Option 2	**46.5**	**63.1**	*+ 36%*
Option 3 *FRR*	Section 1	4.8	6.3	
	Section 2	31.1	42.7	
	Section 3	30.9	41.1	
	Total Option 3	**66.8**	**90.1**	*+ 35%*
Option 4 *PRR (South)*	**Total Option 4**	**-**	**9.3**	**-**

* *Differences between totals and the sum of component values are attributable to rounding.*

Further information on the cost estimation methodology, assumptions and individual route sections is provided in Appendix B.

4. Chard Access Strategy

4.1 Strategy Overview

A long list of transport interventions has been considered and appraised to develop an access strategy for Chard and the surrounding area. Options were assessed against the objectives identified through the wider ambitions of the emerging LTP4, as well as intervention cost and land requirements, with the aim of identifying a package of deliverable measures to support sustainable development in Chard.

4.1.1 Chard Vision

A vision-led approach has been taken to developing the strategy. Drawing on the aspirations in the LTP and other documents, such as the BSIP, this vision is described below:

> *A thriving Chard where walking, wheeling and cycling are the natural choice for short journeys, supported by sustainable growth and attractive links to surrounding communities.*

The intervention options described below are organised according to the three strands of the vision:

- Making walking, wheeling and cycling the natural choice for travel in Chard
- Improving local traffic management, road safety and the town centre environment
- Hourly bus service frequency and better connected with nearby settlements

4.2 Making walking, wheeling and cycling the natural choice for travel in Chard

Four principal walking and cycling routes are identified in the Chard LCWIP (https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plans/), each extending from the town centre to the outskirts of Chard. To help support planned growth, those routes which enhance links to new development should be prioritised. This includes:

- **LCWIP Route 1: From Chard Business Park in the north to Town Centre**
- **LCWIP Route 2: From Town Centre to Holbear**

These routes will need to comprise a mix of dedicated facilities and sections where cycling is on carriageway with vehicles, particularly on quieter residential streets and/or where there are space constraints. Part of providing these roues, whilst also improving access for pedestrians, will be new formal crossing facilities.

The **Stop Line Way** is a multi-use trail, running through Devon and Somerset. In the context of Chard, further improvements to this trail will help to provide an attractive walking and cycling route with access to nearby settlements in Ilminster and Axminster. Measures to improve this include reducing traffic on sections of the route such as at Touches Lane, and providing new crossings, particularly where the route crosses main roads, such as A358 Tatworth Road.

In addition to the above priority routes, improvements to **active travel facilities between the town centre and Millfield Industrial Estate** are recommended. This would improve access to one of the town's principal employment areas and support commuting by sustainable modes. The wider access road means there could be space to provide enhanced active travel facilities, as well as improvements to crossing facilities at the roundabout with Furnham Road. Opportunities should be taken to enhance active travel provision with any future development within the Millfield area.

New developments across Chard will be expected to contribute towards delivery of these identified active travel routes, whilst also providing high levels of **pedestrian and cycle permeability** and/or connections into these routes to reduce travel distances and prioritise travel by foot or cycle.

Area-wide travel planning should support infrastructure delivery by encouraging behavioural change through personalised travel planning, workplace travel planning and school engagement. This would be particularly beneficial in new developments, as per the new Somerset Council guidance, but also targeted to follow particular infrastructure or public transport service improvements.

To complement improved active travel infrastructure, and boost cycle to bus integration, **additional cycle parking** should be provided at key destinations including the town centre, schools, employment areas and key bus stops. This represents a relatively low-cost intervention that complements wider investment in walking and cycling infrastructure and helps remove practical barriers to cycling.

4.3 Improving local traffic management, road safety and the town centre environment

The **A358 Furnham Road** extends northwards out of Chard is a busy route, with lots of parking, movement and several injury collisions over recent years. The **rationalisation of parking**, including sections of double yellow lines at locations where parking forces vehicles onto footways, would help to improve traffic flow, safety and accessibility, particularly for people reliant on mobility aids and/or using pushchairs.

To reduce vehicle travel demand through the town centre, the proposed **Option 4 Relief Road** alignment between Crewkerne Road and Forton Road should be investigated further. This could help to reduce traffic through the Convent junction and provide additional route choice that would benefit network resilience. Although this option represents the most feasible of the potential relief road options, based on cost, further investigation is required to confirm what could be feasible. Feasibility investigations should include an assessment of land availability, environmental and topographical factors, stakeholder views, and more detailed cost estimates to inform project development and delivery. This option would also require sections to be provided as part of new development to the south of Crewkerne Road and north of Forton Road.

With competing demands for space in the town centre, including on-street parking, which plays an important role for local businesses, it is recommended that a **town centre 20mph zone** be implemented. This would help make the town centre more attractive for pedestrians, cycling on carriageway and help to improve road safety. Additional changes to improve the environment for pedestrians, such as raised table side road crossings in conjunction with reducing junction radii to minimise pedestrian crossing distances on the carriageway, should also be progressed.

Delivering **EV charging facilities** would benefit town residents and visitors through Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure funding in Somerset, whilst supporting improved air quality and accelerating EV delivery across the county.

4.4 Hourly bus frequency and better connected with nearby settlements

Improving the operating hours and/or frequency of public transport provision would help provide realistic alternatives for longer-distance and more multi-modal journeys.

Consistent with the Somerset BSIP, **at least hourly bus service frequency to Axminster, Taunton and Yeovil** should be provided. A more frequent, and ideally clockface service, would provide a consistent standard of provision and improve the attractiveness of public transport to Taunton, Crewkerne and Yeovil and help make public transport a more convenient choice. **Connections to the rail network** would also be significantly improved, with an hourly bus service to Axminster aligning with the hourly mainline rail frequency. This would make multi-modal connections to the rest of the Southwest and/or east towards London easier and more attractive.

Longer operating hours for this service would also enhance accessibility, particularly for shift workers and those travelling outside conventional peak periods. Extending the time of the latest connections with Axminster to further boost bus-rail, should also be explored.

The existing Taunton–Ilminster–Chard–Axminster service has the potential to operate hourly with only one additional vehicle. **Contributions from new developments would be expected to facilitate enhanced bus frequency** this and support a growing population. Such contributions to enable enhanced frequency should be sought before development is fully built out to establish sustainable travel habits close to occupation.

Improvements to bus infrastructure should accompany service enhancements. Upgraded shelters, including real-time passenger information displays, the provision of cycle facilities in proximity to bus stops and in some locations improved pedestrian crossing facilities would improve the quality of the passenger experience and increase confidence in using public transport for travelling further.

Developers should provide high-quality bus stop facilities and align delivery with the Somerset Bus Stop Standards Public Note (2026). This guidance sets out the minimum requirements for infrastructure and information to be included at bus stops according to the frequency and types of routes served, alongside a stop's proximity to people and place. It is noted that the delivery of new development and enhanced services may increase the levels of provision required at existing bus stops.

To build upon enhanced bus frequency, a **new transport hub** in Chard should also be investigated, building on lessons learnt from the forthcoming rural hub at Langport. This would serve to better integrate enhanced bus provision with other types of transport, including new active travel routes.

To support connections to surrounding rural settlements not served by higher-frequency connections, **improvements to Slinky**, Somerset's **demand responsive transport service**, are recommended to fill gaps in serving key destinations. The South Somerset Slinky, which covers Chard, already operates a busy service and to accommodate additional demand there is expected to be a need to increase capacity and/or extend operating hours.

5. Recommendations and Next Steps

This Chard Access Strategy presents a recommended package of interventions intended to provide a balanced approach to future transport investment and support sustainable growth in Chard. With current local and national transport policy recommending a reduction in the reliance on private vehicle use, in combination with the relatively high proportion of local trips undertaken in Chard, the study recommends a package of interventions, rather than reliance on a single major highway scheme.

Given the Eastern Relief Road's growing costs, the deliverability of the project is more challenging since the previous studies in 2022. In the absence of the certainty of funding, this strategy has identified a package of alternative measures to support e and unlock development in Chard. This includes investigation of a shorter Option 4 relief road alignment, which is financially more feasible than other options. This option, combined with the delivery of a package of supporting transport measures, is recommended for progression. The delivery of Option 4 will be subject to further feasibility work to confirm deliverability, which should be considered an immediate next step. Funding should be sought initially through developer contributions before alternative funding sources are considered.

A package of transport measures is outlined in the table below, and their delivery would need to be supported by developer contributions, developer delivery, and external funding opportunities. These measures are also depicted on the Figure overleaf.

Table 2 Package of Transport Measures

Theme	Future Infrastructure Measure
Making walking, wheeling and cycling the natural choice for travel in Chard	Develop and Deliver LCWIP Route 1, Town Centre to Chard Business Park
	Develop and Deliver LCWIP Route 2, Town Centre to Holbear
	Further develop Stop Line Way, including new crossing of Tatworth Road
	Improved facilities between Town Centre and Millfield Industrial Estate
	Area Wide Travel Planning for new Development
	Improve Cycle Parking provision
Improving local traffic management, road safety and the town centre environment	Rationalisation of parking and improved safety on A358 Furnham Road
	Enhanced vehicle routes between Forton Road and Crewkerne Road.
	Town Centre traffic calming and potential 20mph speed limit
	Delivery of EV charging facilities
Hourly bus frequency and better connected with nearby settlements	Hourly bus service frequency from Taunton- Chard- Axminster
	Protect and enhance Chard to Axminster bus/rail integration
	Hourly bus service frequency to Yeovil
	Enhanced Bus Stop Infrastructure
	Chard Transport Hub (location TBC)
	Promotion and enhancement of Slinky demand responsive service

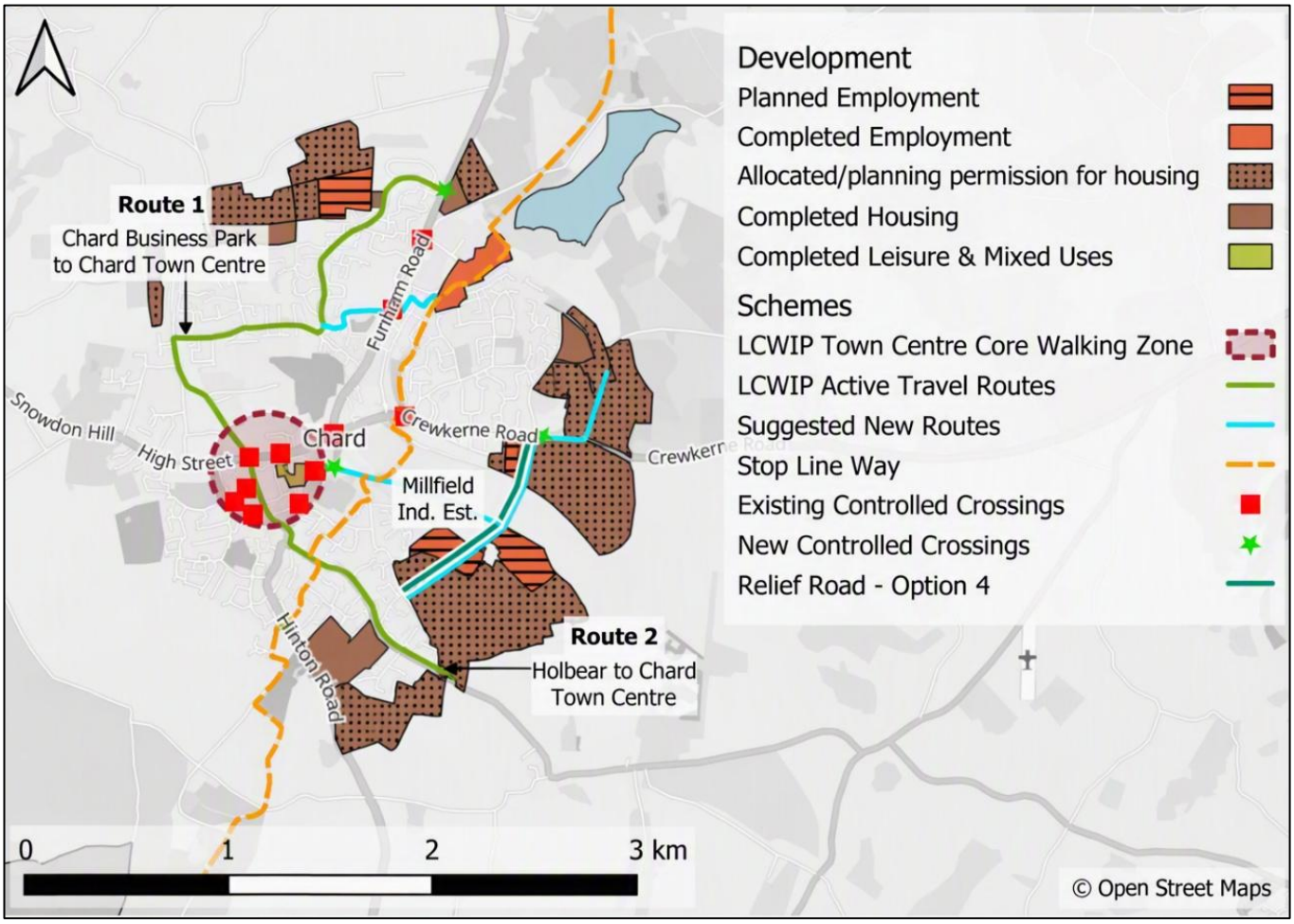

Figure 3 Map showing schemes and developments in Chard.

Appendix A – Updated Sustainable Travel Mode Share Technical Note

Updated Sustainable Travel Mode Share Technical Note

DATE:	31 July 2026	**CONFIDENTIALITY:**	Confidential
SUBJECT:	Updated Sustainable Travel Mode Share Technical Note		
PROJECT:	Chard Eastern Relief Road and Strategic Options (UK0028246.4262)	**AUTHOR:**	CB
CHECKED:	JM	**APPROVED:**	WP

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This Technical Note has been prepared to support the identification of transport improvements, including Relief Road options, for Chard. Drawing on up to date data, it provides an update of the November 2021 *Consideration of potential to increase sustainable travel mode share in Chard*, by Mott Macdonald (MM).

Overview of Collated Data

The update has considered the data from the previous note, including Census 2011, and provides an update including the latest available published Census data (2021) and a more granular analysis of travel distance and trends.

Census 2011 and 2021 data have been interrogated for Chard at Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) level for distances and methods travelled to work. Combining Chard North and East (E02006096) and Chard West (E02006097) allows for analysis of the whole of the settlement. A summary of bus services passing through or terminating at Chard is also provided.

It is worth noting that the 2021 Census took place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change. The national lockdown and associated guidance/measures may have affected the travel to work dataset. Equally, 2011 Census data, while collected under more typical circumstances, reflects travel behaviours from over 15 years ago and as such may not reflect current travel patterns, working practices and employment/residential sites.

Nevertheless, considered together, the two datasets provide insight into travel characteristics within Chard, and highlighting potential opportunities to support more sustainable travel choices.

Structure

The structure of the note is as follows:

- **Distances travelled to work**: Comparison of commuting distances in 2011 and 2021 Census', alongside more detailed analysis of 2021 Census travel to work distances
- **Methods used to travel to work:** Comparison of mode share in 2011 and 2021 Census', alongside more detailed analysis of mode splits for commuting distance bands
- **Travel to work movement patterns**: Spatial comparison of key commuting movement patterns
- **Bus provision**: Tabular overview of bus route provision and frequency
- **Summary**

DISTANCES TRAVELLED TO WORK

Figure 2 shows a comparison of travel distances in 2011 Census (as per the 2021 MM note) and the more recent 2021 Census, including those working from home, in no fixed place or outside the UK.

Travel to work trips under 10km remain the largest distance band of results (43%; 2,773) despite having decreased in proportion and number from 2011 (55%; 3,381).

Comparing 2021 and 2011 distance data indicates that the proportion of those working mainly at or from home doubled from 2011 to 2021 (8% to 16%), and those working in no fixed place or outside the UK (shown as 'Other' in the graph) also approximately doubled (7% to 16%).

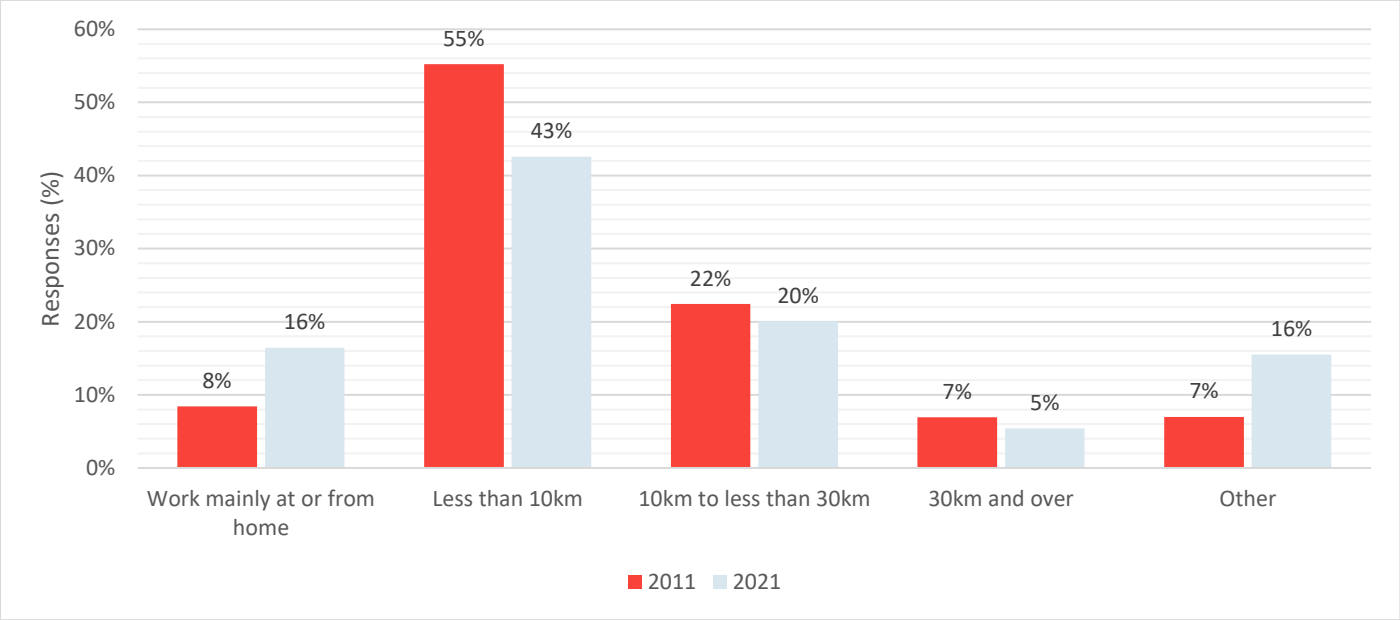

Figure 1 Comparison of travel to work distances (2011 and 2021 Census')

Figure 2 brings granularity to the 2021 Census data with smaller distance bands, excluding those working from home, in no fixed place or outside the UK.

This highlights the highest proportion of commuting trips are under two kilometres, and therefore primarily to a location within Chard. There is also a significant proportion of distances travelled to work in the 10-20km band (which likely reflects journeys Axminster, Crewkerne, Honiton and parts of Taunton) and those in the 20-30km band (including Yeovil and the rest of the Taunton).

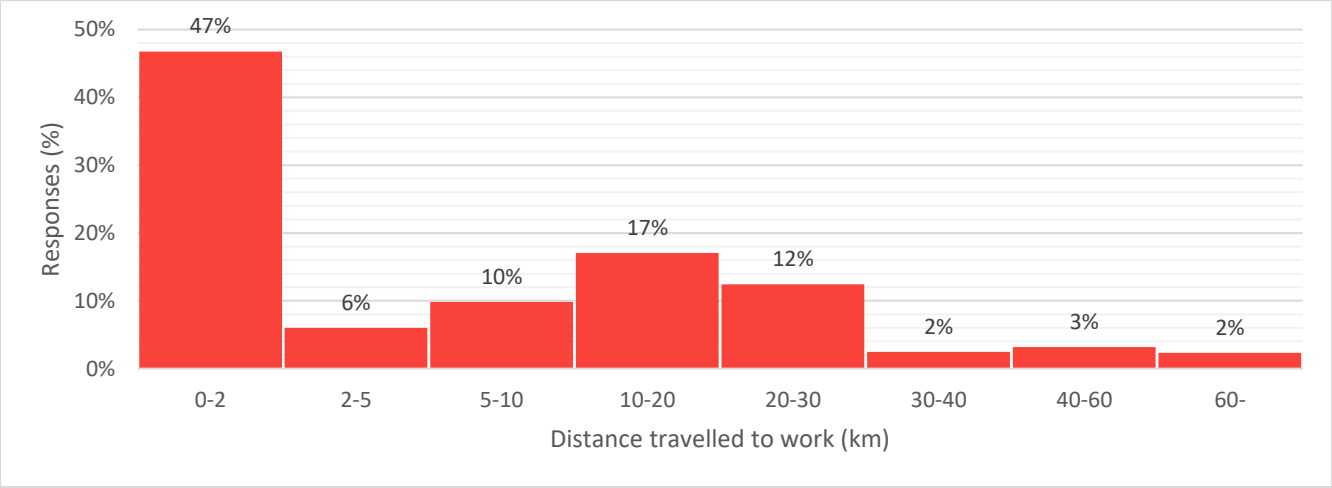

Figure 2 Census 2021 bar chart showing proportion of respondents' distances travelled to work

METHODS USED TO TRAVEL TO WORK

Figure 3 compares the travel to work mode split recorded in the 2011 and 2021 Census (excluding working from home).

Overall, methods used to travel to work are broadly comparable across the two datasets, albeit there are some small changes. Car and van use increased slightly as a proportion of all commuting trips (65% to 68%). However, given the overall reduction in commuting trips between the two Census years, the total number of car and van trips decreased (3,811 in 2011 to 3,712 in 2021).

Cycling and public transport remained saw slight reductions in mode share in 2021 than in 2011 (7% to 6% and 1.4% to 0.6% respectively). The lower Public Transport figure could reflect the short-term reduction that took place in public transport usage through the COVID pandemic.

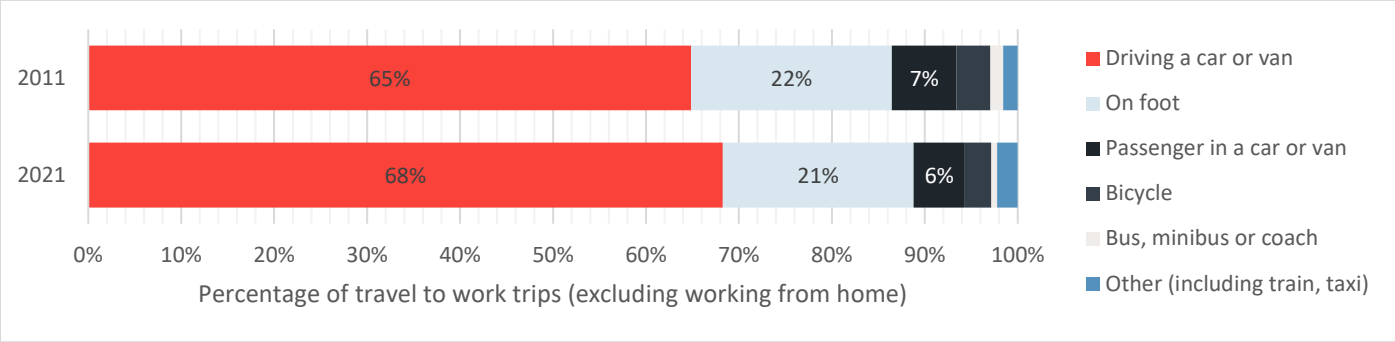

Figure 3 Bar chart comparison of 2011 and 2021 Census mode split

Figure 4 indicates the 2021 Census mode split for broad distance bands.

One third of trips under the 10km band occur on foot and 4% by bicycle. The number of active travel trips decreases with the increased distance travelled beyond this band, as expected.

Journeys to work by bus are small across all distance bands. Car travel, whether driving or as a passenger, remains dominant whether travelling 30km or less than 10km. Travel by train is negligible across all distance bands, reflecting the lack of rail provision in Chard.

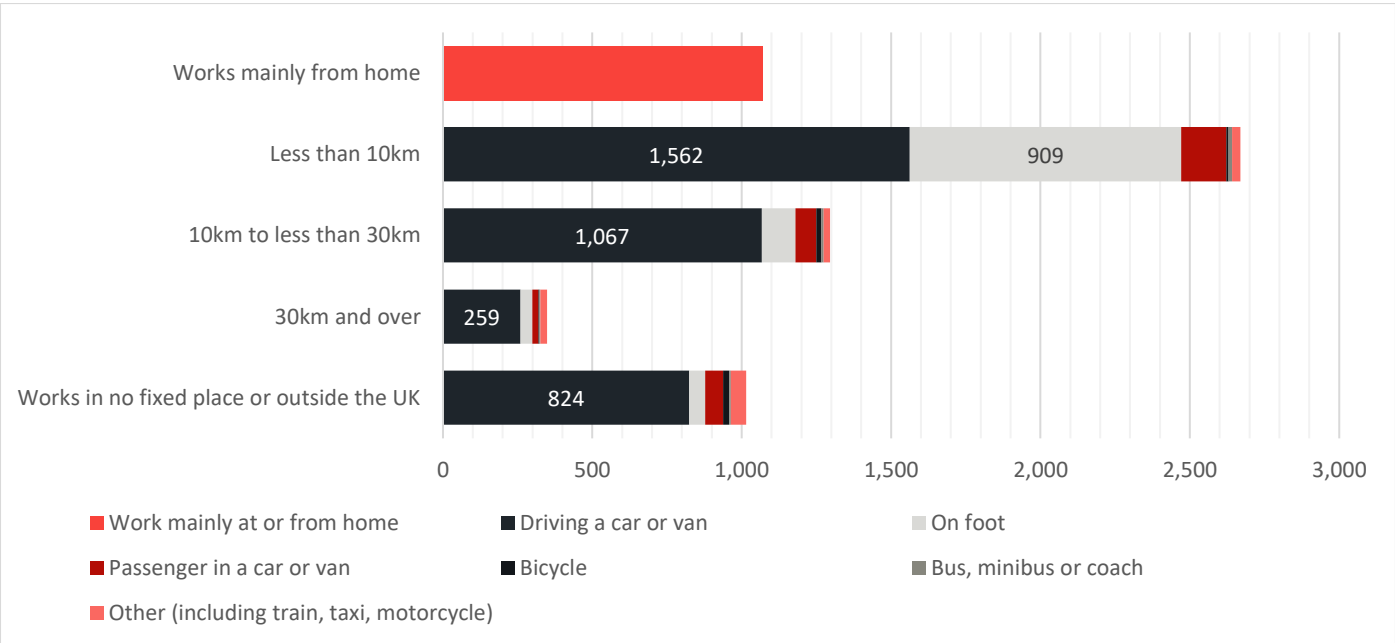

Figure 4 2021 Census data showing mode split for each travel to work distance band (2011 specification)

TRAVEL TO WORK MOVEMENT PATTERNS

Figure 5 and Figure 6 map the top 5 2011 and 2021 Census travel to work movements to and from Chard, respectively. Trips to Taunton and Yeovil are grouped according to their respective MSOAs.

There is a general decrease in the number of flows from 2011 to 2021 to and from all destinations. This is especially apparent in the inflow from Tatworth & Combe St Nicholas; the MSOA that encircles Chard. An exception is the inflow from Taunton to Chard, which has increased by 51%. In general, a high proportion of trips occur within the former boundaries of South Somerset and the county of Somerset – with relatively few regular movements to locations beyond the 25km radius to Yeovil.

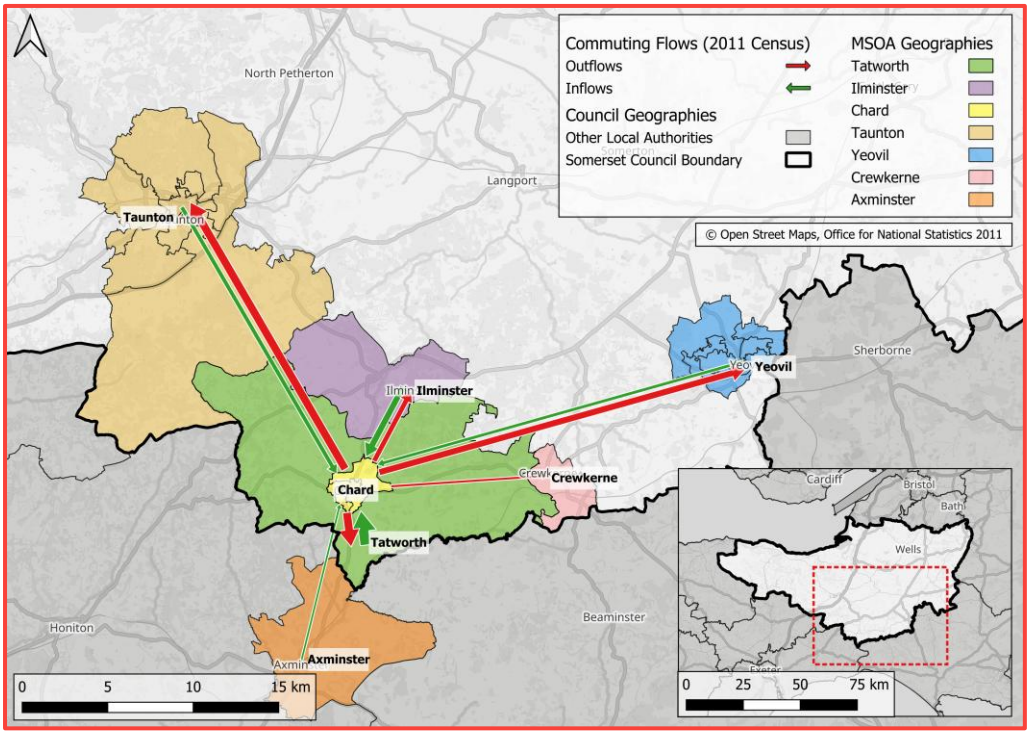

Figure 5 Map of primary 2011 Census travel to work movements

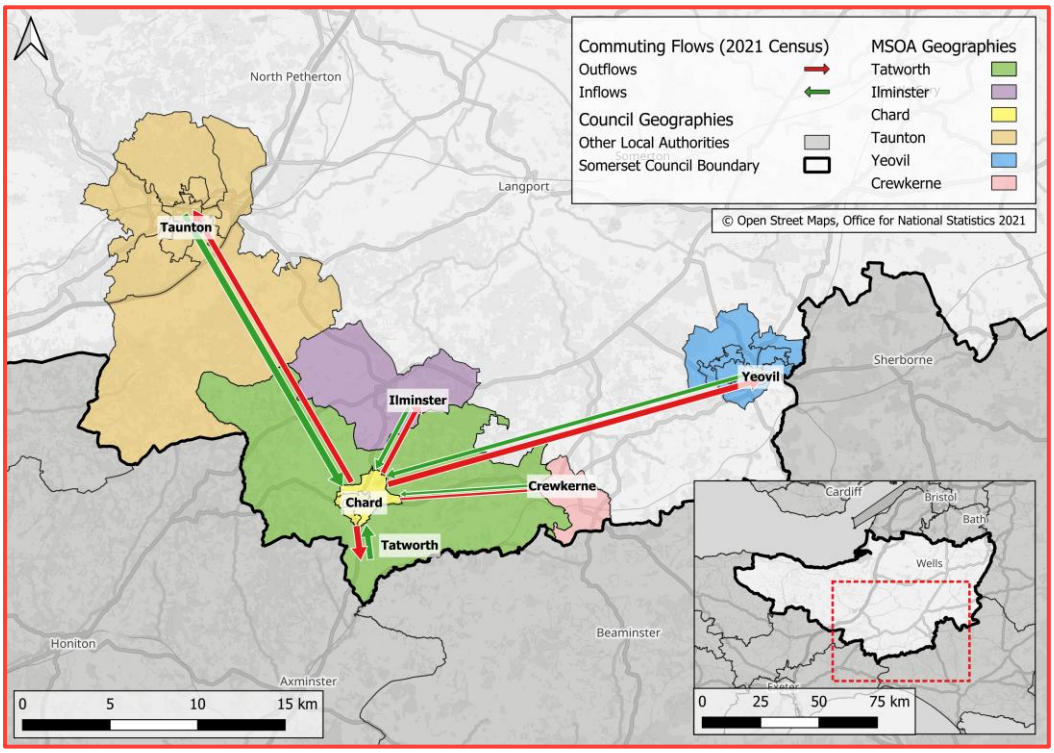

Figure 6 Map of primary 2021 Census travel to work movements

BUS PATTERNS

Bus data has been extracted from bustimes.org, providing information about all current services passing through or terminating at Chard. This is detailed in Table 1 and Table 2.

Three services (30, 96 and 99) account for 40 peak daily services, providing most of the bus provision in Chard and offering regular connections to the key regional centres of Taunton, Yeovil and Axminster. There are no bus services on a Sunday. Of note:

- 30 provides an early morning connection, leaving Chard at 06:00 to Axminster rail station. The last service from Axminster is at 18:45, although service to Taunton continue until later. The earliest bus to Taunton gets to Taunton Town Centre at 08:15.
- 96 links to Yeovil bus station, and access to rail network at Crewkerne. The earliest this gets to Crewkerne station is 10:20 and latest it leaves is 18:30.
- 99 connects to Richard Huish College and gets to Taunton by 8:30, with the latest buses leaving Taunton by 17:15.

The provision of bus services has not notably changed in comparison to the 2001 MM report, with the 30, 96 and 99 services continuing to provide most services to Chard. The exception is the removal of the 96C service, connecting Yeovil to Taunton akin to the 99.

Table 1 Summary of Most Regular bus services

Service	Route	Days run	Number of Daily Services (from Chard in one direction)	Effective Daytime Frequency	Operator	Notes
30	Taunton -Ilminster -Chard - Axminster	Weekdays, Saturdays	10	1h30	First Bus	Operates 06:00-23:00
96	Yeovil – Misterton-Crewkerne - Chard	Weekdays, Saturdays	6	1h45	South West Coaches	Operates 09:20-19:30
99	Taunton Chard	Weekdays, Saturdays	10	2h	Hatch Green Coaches	Operates 07:30-18:00

Table 2 Overview of less frequent Chard bus services

Service	Termini	Days run	Daily Services	Community/ School Service	Operator	Notes
96A	Yeovil Chard	Weekdays, Saturdays	3	Yes	South West Coaches	-
95	Taunton Crewkerne	Weekdays	2	Yes	Hatch Green Coaches	Term-time only
624	Chard Bridgwater	Weekdays	2	Yes	Hatch Green Coaches	School days only
R002	Stoke Sub Colyford	Weekdays	2	Yes	Rooster Bus	Pre-booked minibus service
14	Chard Thorncombe	Thursday	2	Yes	Dorset Community Transport	-

SUMMARY

The review has found that, consistent with the Mott Macdonald technical note based primarily on 2011 Census data,

- Almost half of commute trips by residents of Chard are a distance of under two kilometres, and likely to a destination elsewhere in Chard
- Approximately a third of trips under ten kilometres are made by foot or cycle, although car is still the dominant mode choice for these shorter journeys
- Most travel to work journeys greater beyond Chard's extent continue to occur by car, whether as a driver or passenger.
- Public Transport usage is generally low for commuting trips mode share is low, and likely focused on travel by bus to the larger settlements of Taunton and Yeovil.

The data does help to highlight some possible opportunities. Given the high proportion of short distance trips, enhancements be made in Chard to improve facilities, quality of place and safety for walking and cycling would likely benefit a large number of people

Similarly, the increase in the proportion of people working from home indicates a reduction in longer distance commuting demand and higher workday population in Chard. In this context, placemaking enhancements that improve the quality and vitality of the town centre would likely be beneficial.

Improvements to the frequency, reliability and/or attractiveness of bus services to Taunton and/or Yeovil may help to reduce private car travel for longer-distance journeys and support increased travel choice.

Appendix B – Updated ERR Costings Note

Updated Costings Technical Note

DATE:	16 September 2026	**CONFIDENTIALITY:**	Confidential
SUBJECT:	Updated Costings Technical Note		
PROJECT:	Chard Eastern Relief Road and Strategic Options (UK0028246.4262)	**AUTHOR:**	CB
CHECKED:	JM	**APPROVED:**	WP

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This Technical Note has been prepared to support the costings of Eastern Relief Road (ERR) options for Chard. It provides a partial update to the June 2022 *Design, Costing & High Level Analysis*, by Mott Macdonald (MM), with a focus on assessing costs in this initial estimate and checking rates in current prices (July 2026).

Background

South Somerset District Council (SSDC) commissioned MM to assess the potential delivery of the ERR, culminating in the production of the June 2022 *Design, Costings and High Level Analysis* report.

The report developed and costed individual route sections, allowing assessment of both Partial Relief Road (PRR) and Full Relief Road (FRR) options.

WSP has since been commissioned to update this work, including a review and update of the cost estimates to reflect current market rates and cost conditions as of July 2026. In addition, an alternative alignment was provided by Somerset Council for costing; this has been included in this updated note.

Structure

The structure of the note is as follows:

- Introduction
- Assumptions and Exclusions
- Overview of Route Options
- Cost Estimates and Comparison
- Summary

ASSUMPTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

The cost review has been undertaken based on the following **assumptions**:

- Quantities have been carried forward from the June 2022 MM estimates and have not been independently measured, verified or re-assessed by WSP.
- The review has focused on the suitability of rates, allowances, market conditions and overall cost build-up rather than the underlying quantity estimates.
- Any inaccuracies, omissions or revisions to the original quantities will directly affect the estimated scheme costs. The estimates should therefore be read alongside the original MM design information and quantity take-offs.
- Costs are based on the design information available at the time of preparation; future design development may result in changes to quantities, methodology and cost.
- Direct construction rates have been reviewed and updated, where appropriate, using current market benchmarks, comparable infrastructure projects and WSP cost databases.
- The approach to indirect costs has been revised from the original MM estimates to align with WSP's standard methodology for early-stage cost estimating.
- Indirect cost allowances have been applied as percentages of direct construction costs and include:
    - Contingency
    - Overheads and profit
    - Professional fees
    - Risk
    - Contractor preliminaries
    - Traffic management
    - Utilities
- While some of the above allowances were included within the original MM estimates, they have been separately identified and reassessed to provide a transparent and consistent cost build-up.
- The new alternative route option has been costed using the same methodology and structure as the original MM options to ensure consistency of comparison, whilst applying the updated direct and indirect cost assumptions set out above. It does however use the new rates for the direct construction costs and the indirect construction costs as itemised above.

The following items are **excluded** from the cost estimates presented within this Technical Note:

- Legal costs and associated legal processes.
- Value Added Tax (VAT).
- Land acquisition, compensation, and any Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) costs.
- Costs arising from planning conditions, approvals, or changes to planning requirements.
- Taxes, duties, levies, and other statutory charges.
- Licences, permits, consents and all associated application fees.
- Any future changes in legislation, policy, design standards, or regulatory requirements.
- Costs associated with the identification, management, mitigation, translocation or monitoring of invasive and/or protected species.

These exclusions should be considered when interpreting the estimated scheme costs and any future business case or funding assessments.

OVERVIEW OF RELIEF ROAD ROUTE OPTIONS

This initial work has considered several alternative options which could provide some form of Eastern Relief Road for Chard, as shown in Figure 1.

The southern section of alignment Option 1 passes through the centre of the Chard Eastern Development Area (CEDA) that surrounds Chard; Options 2 and 3 pass instead to the east. The northern sections of Option 1 and 2 pass along Touches Lane, whereas Option 3 passes to the east of Chard Reservoir to the northeast of Chard along a lengthened alignment. In addition, the new 'Alternative Option' runs from Oaklands Avenue to Henderson Drive in two sections linked at Millfield. Table 1 provides a summary of the Partial Relief Road (PRR) and Full Relief Road (FRR) options assessed.

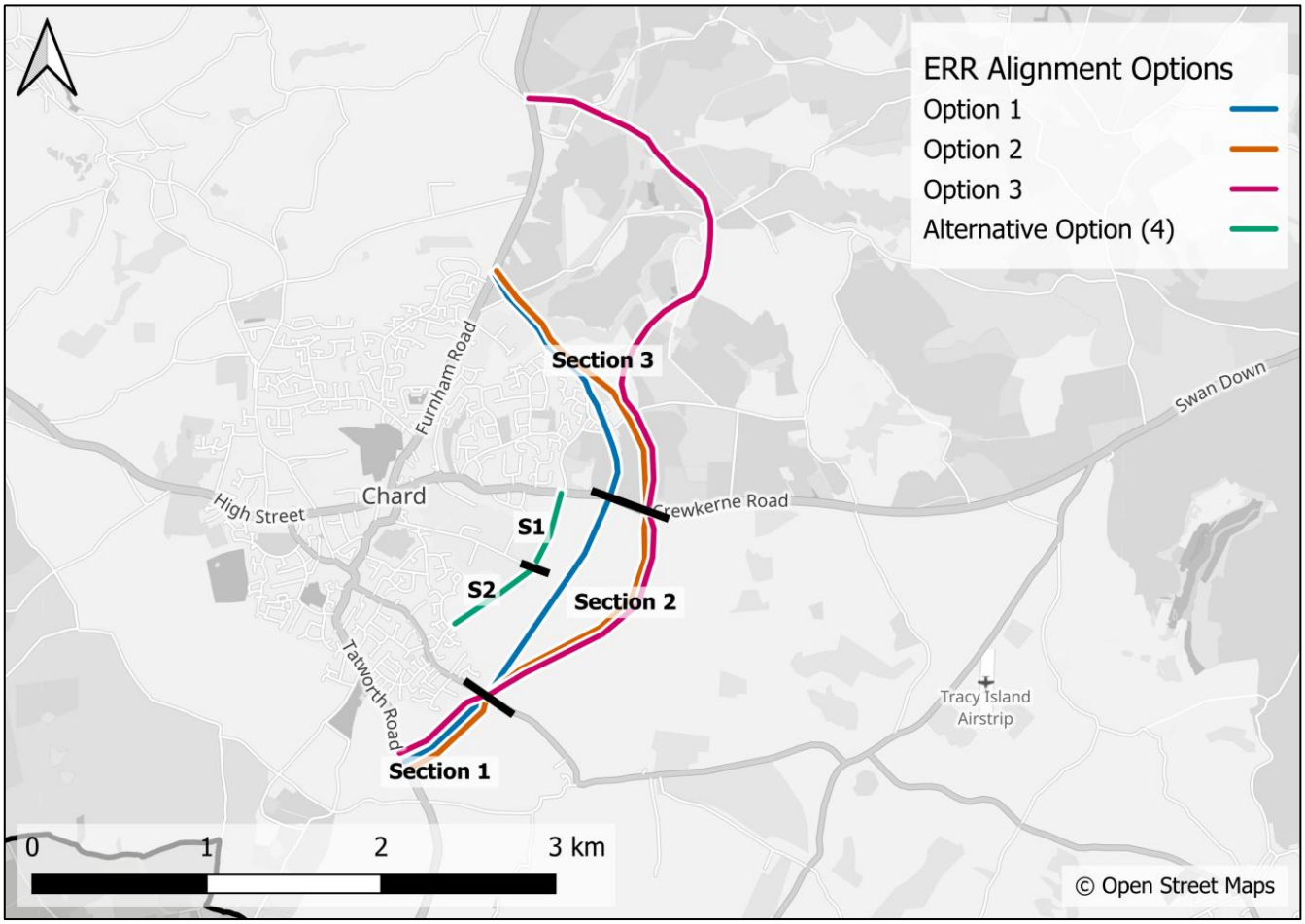

Figure 1 Map showing potential ERR alignments

Characteristic	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Alternative Option
South Alignment	Sections 1 & 2 through centre of CEDA	Sections 1 & 2 to east of CEDA	Sections 1 & 2 to east of CEDA	Sections 1 and 2 from Oaklands Avenue to Henderson Drive
North Alignment	Section 3 along Touches Lane	Section 3 along Touches Lane	Section 3 to east of Chard Reservoir	-
Length	3,524m	3,812m	5,324m	1,012m

Table 1 - Summary of key Options 1,2 and 3 and Alternative Option design characteristics (adapted from MM, 2022)

COST ESTIMATES AND COMPARISON

Table 2 below provides an estimate for July 2026 and 2028 inflation-adjusted construction costs for Options 1, 2 and 3 compared to original 2022 construction costings.

- An uplift of 35%-36% on Full Relief Road proposals (Options 1, 2 and 3) for 2026 construction.
- An uplift of 43%, 42% and 41% on Options 1, 2 and 3 Full Relief Road proposals, respectively, for 2028 construction.

Table 2 - Summary of cost estimates of Options 1,2, and 3.

Option	Route Sections	*2022 Construction Cost (£m)*	2026 Construction Cost (£m)		2028 Construction Cost (£m)	
Option 1 *FRR*	Section 1	5.4	6.8		7.1	
	Section 2	45.9	63.3		66.4	
	Section 3	10.5	13.9		14.6	
	Total Option 1	**61.8**	**84.1**	*+ 36%*	**88.1**	*+ 43%*
Option 2 *FRR*	Section 1	4.8	6.3		6.7	
	Section 2	31.1	42.7		44.7	
	Section 3	10.6	14.0		14.7	
	Total Option 2	**46.5**	**63.1**	*+ 36%*	**66.1**	*+ 42%*
Option 3 *FRR*	Section 1	4.8	6.3		6.7	
	Section 2	31.1	42.7		44.7	
	Section 3	30.9	41.1		43.0	
	Total Option 3	**66.8**	**90.1**	*+ 35%*	**94.4**	*+ 41%*
Option 4 *PRR (South)*	**Total Option 4**	-	**9.3**	-	-	-

N.B. Percentage increases are based on 2022 construction costs.
Additional note: Limited programme information is available for Option 4; therefore 2028 construction costs cannot be reliably estimated.

SUMMARY

This technical note builds on the original MM calculations; costs are built up instead of verified and re-assessed.

Three groups of updated cost estimates are presented. Uplifts of approximately 35% are expected for 2026 construction, compared to 42% for 2028 construction, relative to the original 2022 construction costs.

The updated cost estimates indicate expected intervention option costs ranging from £9.3 million for the Alternative Option in 2026 to £94.4 million for Option 3 in 2028. These cost estimates may need to be revised further if a different construction year were likely.

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