



Okehampton Town Access Road Review

Devon County Council

Okehampton Town Centre Access Road Summary Report

B2300415/R3 | 1

07 April 2017

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Project Manager: Chris Shipway
Author: Ben Guilbert

Jacobs U.K. Limited

Renslade House Bonhay Road
Exeter
EX4 3AY
United Kingdom
T +44 (0)1392 219 340
F +44 (0)1392 214 438
www.jacobs.com

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Appendix A.

1. Introduction

This study investigates the feasibility of the proposed access road in the centre of Okehampton. It builds upon the Devon County Council Feasibility Study completed in May 2010 which investigated options for a new Okehampton Relief Road. The proposed scheme connects Market Street/Lodge Hill to North Road (see approximate location in Figure 1.1), providing a road connection between new development sites to the east of Okehampton and the town centre, avoiding the Market Street/Fore Street junction. This is a high level assessment of the proposal following the technical review ‘Okehampton Town Centre Access Road Review Report’ (Ref. B2300415/R1) that was produced by Jacobs in January 2017. A detailed drawing of the proposed access road is presented in Appendix A.

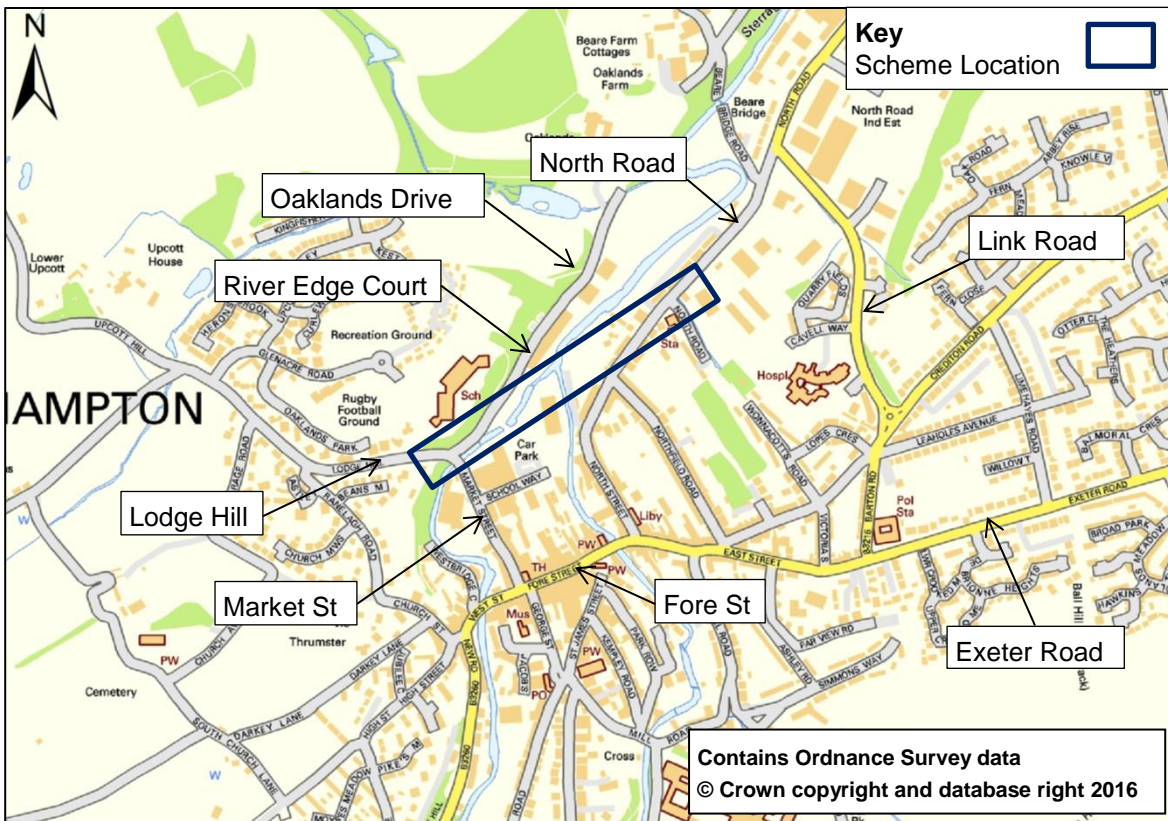


Figure 1.1 : Access Road location.

Following Section 2, which provides a brief background to the proposal, this study has been split into two sections. Section 3 covers aspects which affect the whole length of the proposed access road and Section 4 covers aspects related to more specific elements along the route.

2. Background

The access road has been proposed due to congestion issues in the town centre, primarily at the junction between Fore Street and Market Street. In the centre of the town, the junction between Fore Street and Market Street is understood to have a large influence on the flow of vehicles through the town. Many of the amenities in Okehampton such as the supermarkets and the primary school are accessed via this junction.

The largest turning movements at the Fore Street/Market Street junction are between Fore Street and Market Street. During a morning traffic count, a peak flow of 215 vehicles per hour was recorded turning right from Fore Street on to Market Street and 201 vehicles in the opposite direction. The stop lines on Fore Street and Market Street are set back from the junction, meaning there is a long wait between traffic light changes for traffic to drive away. This causes delays and queuing. The flows recorded in the traffic count are present in Figure 2.1.

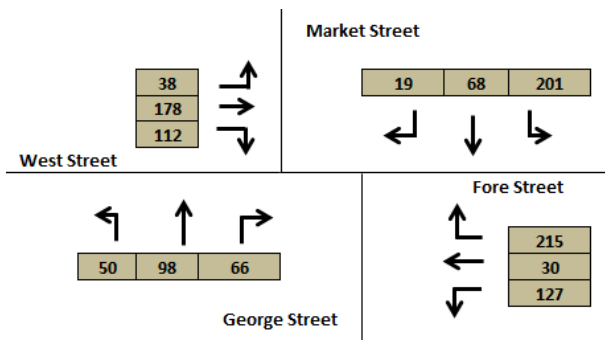


Figure 2.1 : Morning peak traffic count (vehicles).

Traffic flows remain at a consistent level throughout the day at this junction, suggesting that delays at the junction are not limited to the peak periods. As there are few alternatives to bypass this junction, the 2010 feasibility study was conducted to determine options for reducing the congestion. The route between North Road and Lodge Hill was chosen as it provides relatively direct access from the east, especially the proposed developments, to one of the main locations for shopping in the town centre.

In the 2010 study, different options for the access road were considered, including those passing over the river to the north of the location discussed in this study. However, the options to the north passed through a flood plain and were discounted as suitable options. The extent of the flood plain is shown as grey hatching in Figure 2.2.

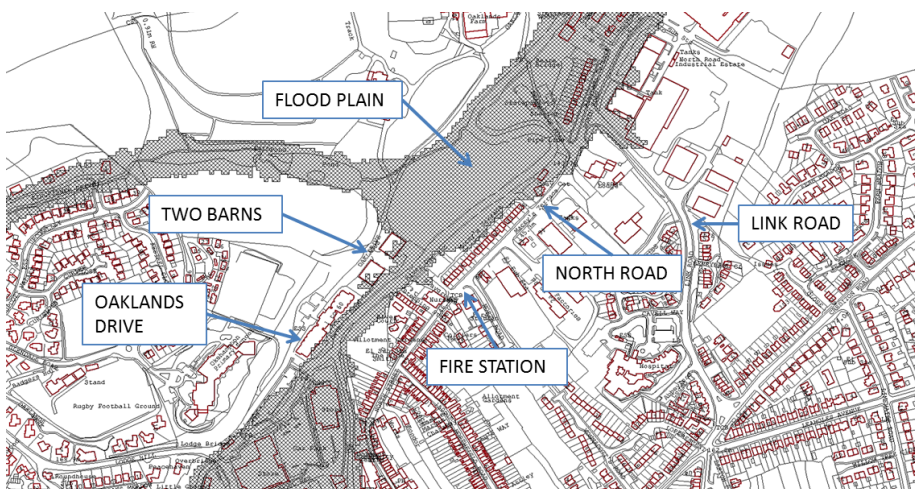


Figure 2.2 : Flood plain extent (Devon County Council, Structures Management System Database).

3. General Observations

The access road will provide a link between Lodge Hill/Market Street and North Road. At the north end, a give-way junction is proposed between the access road and North Road. Moving west along the access road, a bridge will be required to cross the River Okement and four barns will need to be demolished before turning south to pass in front of the River Edge Court (retirement homes) and then leading further south to the proposed mini-roundabout between Oaklands Drive and Lodge Hill/Market Street.

It is assumed that the road will be street lit and governed by a 30 mph speed limit.

In order to construct the proposed access road, there are a number of general aspects that will need to be considered to progress the proposal. These aspects are listed below:

- The access road should relieve some of the congestion in the town centre but it may not be favoured by all motorists due to its length. From Crediton Road (adjacent to the new developments) to School Way, where a number of shops are located, the route via the access road is approximately two thirds longer than through the centre of town. If travelling from Exeter Road, the distance via the access road is approximately double if starting at the Exeter Road/B3215 junction (by the Police station).
- The estimated cost of the delivering the scheme has been revised from £5.79 million in the 2010 evaluation to a total of £13.2 million in the 2017 review.
- Amenities in the town such as supermarkets attract people and traffic to Okehampton, which is beneficial to the local economy. However, congestion in the town centre is detrimental to the town and its users.
- There are currently no cycle facilities along the proposed access road. A shared use pedestrian/cycle path could be included on one side of the road, but this would lead to additional costs as the path would need to be wide enough to accommodate both pedestrians and cyclists.
- It is understood that no consultation with the public has taken place for the proposed access road. It is anticipated that there will be a great deal of opposition from the residents on both North Road and Oaklands Drive, the nursery (and respective parents) at the north end of the access road, the primary school (and respective parents) and residents on North Road if the on street parking in front of their houses is removed.

4. Site Walkthrough

In addition to the general aspects listed in Section 3, there are a number of specific aspects along the access road which will require careful consideration. Starting from the north and moving south along the proposed route, more specific observations are listed below:

- There is currently on street parking on both sides of North Road which reduces the road width that drivers can use. If the access road were to be constructed, the on street parking from at least one side of the road would need to be removed to provide a suitable road width leading to the access road. A view up North Road is shown in Figure 4.1



Figure 4.1 : View of parking on both side of North Road.

- The section of North Road between Link Road and the proposed access road is part of the National Cycling Network Route. It does not appear that any provision has been made for this cycle route in the plans, which may need to be considered if the design is progressed (depending on traffic flows).
- The fire station opposite the northern junction of the access road would benefit from improved access to the west, but the additional traffic past the station may hinder access to/from the station. Consultation with the fire station should be undertaken.
- At the proposed junction between the access road and North Road, the visibility is limited due to the proximity of the nursery and the adjacent housing but it does meet that specified by Manual for Streets guidance. In order to maintain the required visibility, the on-street parking on the west side of North Road to the north of the junction would have to be removed, see Figure 4.2.



Figure 4.2 : Parked cars on North Road obscuring view from proposed access road junction.

- To align the access road between the housing and the nursery, it would be necessary to purchase land from the nursery and remove a significant amount of their outside space. The road will increase the number of vehicles passing the nursery; thus, there are likely to be safety concerns as there will be a greater number of interactions between vehicles and children. Also, the levels of noise and air pollution will increase.
- From the junction with North Road, a bridge will be required to cross the River Okement. Consultation with the Environment Agency will be required for at least the river crossing and the removal of trees either side of the river. Given the size of the flood plain to the north of the proposed bridge location, the bridge may require a clear span to avoid increasing the size of the flood plain upstream. Overall, this aspect is environmentally challenging.
- Oaklands Drive is currently a private road so this would have to be adopted or bought from the owner(s). The associated costs for this adoption or purchase have not been investigated.
- There are four barns on the west side of the river that would need to be demolished in order to align the road as detailed. In order to demolish the barns, the land would need to be first purchased from the owner. Depending on the use of the barns and final design of the access road, it may be possible to use a priority junction instead of curving the road so that that the barns could remain; however, suitable access to and from the barns would need to be provided and a priority junction would not be efficient in terms of traffic flow.



Figure 4.3 : Two barns on the west side of the Okement River (northern barns on the left, southern on the right).

- South of the barns, the access road continues south along Oaklands Drive and is routed through the car park for River Edge Court (retirement homes, see Figure 4.4). It is likely that the provision of parking will still be required so an agreement will be needed as to whether the number of parking spaces can be reduced or relocated. The options to re-locate the parking are limited due to the route of the proposed access road.



Figure 4.4 : Parking opposite River Edge Court.

- Between River Edge Court and the mini-roundabout to the south, there is a footpath on the west side of Oaklands Drive which leads up to the primary school. It was observed during a site visit around 8:30am, that many children access the school by crossing Oaklands Drive to access the footway which indicates that a pedestrian crossing would be required in this location. An at-grade crossing such as a pelican or zebra crossing would disrupt traffic flow but graded crossing (i.e. a bridge) would increase the cost of the project.
- Further south, near South Lodge (a Grade II listed building, see Figure 4.5), Oaklands Drive narrows which necessitates the excavation of the bank to the west in order to achieve the road width required. The excavation works are considered to have a significant impact on the overall cost of the project.
- The detailed design will have to account for the plan to retain South Lodge and detail how access to the building will be maintained. Given the proximity of the Lodge to the proposed mini-roundabout, consideration will have to be given to how it will be protected from any vehicles that become errant on the proposed roundabout.



Figure 4.5 : South Lodge at the junction between Market Street and Oaklands Drive.

- On the west side of Oaklands Drive all of the trees are subject to Tree Preservation Orders, meaning opposition to the necessary tree removal near the Lodge in order to construct the road is likely. The area of trees that is protected is shown in Figure 4.6.



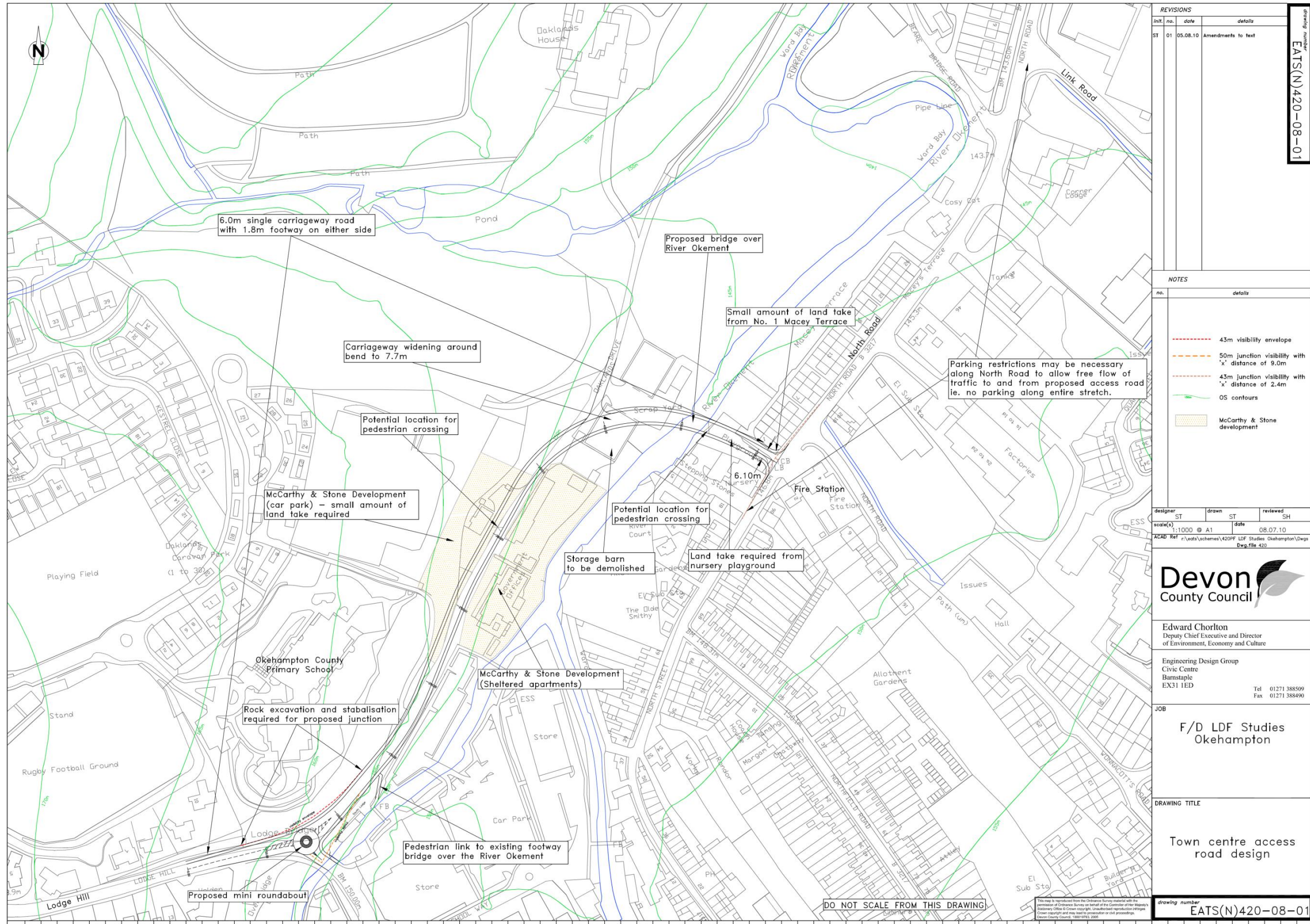
Figure 4.6 : Tree Preservation Order area (N16).

- The visibility at the proposed roundabout is likely to be poor, which may lead to safety issues for vehicles using the roundabout from Lodge Hill and Market Street or additional works in the area will be required. Any additional works would increase the estimated cost of the works.
- A further safety concern at the roundabout is the steep gradient of Lodge Hill. It is considered that at such a gradient, vehicles may struggle to stop on or before the give-way line of the junction, potentially causing collisions on the mini-roundabout. Due to the topology in this area, it is impractical to eliminate this issue without relocating the mini-roundabout.

5. Conclusion

The review has indicated that the cost of the scheme has increased significantly from £5.79 million in the 2010 study to £13.2m in the 2017 revised estimate. The high cost of the scheme and limited journey time savings mean the project does not represent good value for money. Furthermore, there are a wide range of constraints and aspects that makes delivery of the road extremely challenging. There will be significant land acquisition costs, as the route affects multiple landowners and properties, and there are likely to be objections to the proposal by local residents, users and conservationists for issues such as, pollution increase (noise and air), parking removal, tree removal and construction near a flood plain.

Appendix A.



REVISIONS			
int. no.	date	details	
ST 01	05.08.10	Amendments to text	

drawing number: EATS(N)420-08-01

NOTES	
no.	details
	43m visibility envelope
	50m junction visibility with 'x' distance of 9.0m
	43m junction visibility with 'x' distance of 2.4m
	OS contours
	McCarthy & Stone development

designer	ST	drawn	ST	reviewed	SH
scale(s)	1:1000 @ A1	date	08.07.10		
ACAD Ref	r:\vada\ schemes\420\DF LDF Studies Okehampton\Draws Dwg file 420				

Devon County Council

Edward Chorton
Deputy Chief Executive and Director
of Environment, Economy and Culture

Engineering Design Group
Civic Centre
Barnstaple
EX31 1ED
Tel 01271 388509
Fax 01271 388490

JOB

F/D LDF Studies
Okehampton

DRAWING TITLE

Town centre access
road design

drawing number: EATS(N)420-08-01

DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING