

Colley Lane Southern Access Road (Squibbers Way)



The primary purpose of the new road was to provide an alternative link from the M5 to the Colley Lane Industrial Estate and ease congestion by taking lorries off two residential roads to improve the lives of local people through reduced noise and air pollution. The road scheme also included much improved walking and cycling links and unlocking contaminated brownfield land for development.

- **Date of completion: Dec 2019**
- **Cost: £18.4m**
- **Location: Bridgwater, Somerset**

Challenges and solutions

The scheme included a number of key engineering innovations in order to build on the valued piece of brownfield land situated between the river and canal. The site was contaminated with cellophane waste and prone to flooding. It also contained a former brickworks, which had been backfilled but with pockets of water still present. To overcome this by minimising loading, the design used 9,000m³ of high and low-density polystyrene blocks for embankments. This reduced the number of lorry movements by 90 per cent, saving around 500 truck deliveries.

A second innovation was the Somerset Bridge – the longest single span bridge in the county. This needed to be specifically designed without piers in the River Parrett which would have increased flood risk and affected the river morphology, potentially leading to unacceptable erosion.

Elsewhere, a bespoke embankment solution to avoid substantial overhead power lines was developed using tubular steel bottom-driven piles and lightweight aggregate. Other notable Somerset firsts for the project included the use of biodegradable whip protectors on planted trees to reduce plastic waste.



Benefits and achievements

It is estimated the road will provide peak-hour economic benefits of £36m over the next 60 years through improved journey time reliability and cost savings for businesses. It has substantially reduced noise levels at 398 residential properties and is projected to cut air pollution by 5,230 kilotonnes of CO₂ per year by reducing unnecessary journeys.

Another social benefit was improved access to residential properties, with one home provided with vehicular access for the first time, and improved accessibility along the canal by removing the old swing bridge, repairing embankment damage, and upgrading links along the towpath.

The road was completed on time, within budget and was named Squibbers Way by the community following a public vote run online and through social media. This was crowned by a spectacular fireworks or 'squibbing' display by carnival volunteers to celebrate the opening. In total more than £3,945,000 – a third of the construction value – was paid to local suppliers and subcontractors during the project (not including spend by employees).

During construction, the contractor, Whitemountain, provided a wealth of benefits for the local community, from upgrading the nearby Brainwave Centre's sensory garden to a sponsored skydive raising £2,782.



Fascinating facts

- ❑ The name, Squibbers Way celebrates Bridgwater's famous handheld firework tradition of squibbing, which is unique to the town and traditionally takes place on Carnival Night.
- ❑ The Somerset Bridge measures 52m long and is the longest single span bridge in Somerset.
- ❑ Over 9,000m³ of low-density polystyrene blocks were used in the project with the material ranging from 25 – 55 kg/m³, that's less than 10% self-weight of the alternatives.

People who made it happen:

- Employer and Principal Designer: Somerset County Council
- Main Contractor: Whitemountain
- Project Manager: AECOM

More about this project:

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