

Bulford to Amesbury pedestrian and cycle route

Draft feasibility study

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Local residents have demanded a safe route between Bulford and Amesbury for pedestrians and cyclists for many years. Wiltshire Council has secured £150,000 in funding from the section 106 agreement in connection with the new Tesco development at Amesbury.
- 1.2 Sustrans has undertaken an initial study into the feasibility of a pedestrian and cycling route linking Bulford to Amesbury using the funding available from the Tesco development.
- 1.3 A route between Bulford and Amesbury, adjacent to Salisbury Rd, is feasible but would cost between £198 - £287,000, depending on the standard of path required.
- 1.4 An initial discussion has taken place with the farmer who leases the arable land between Bulford and Amesbury. He is willing to consider a proposal but has made it clear that any path must be on the east side of Salisbury Rd.

2.0 Current access between Bulford and Amesbury

- 2.1 There is a lack of safe access for pedestrians and cyclists between Bulford and Amesbury. There is no footway alongside Salisbury Rd and very little verge at the northern end. Local residents are concerned that pedestrians walk on the carriageway for 70 metres before trespassing on the adjacent field to reach Solstice Park.
- 2.2 The only pedestrian route which avoids Salisbury Rd is a footpath from Watergate Lane to Ratfyn Rd. While this is a direct route to Amesbury town centre it does not link to Solstice Park or Stonehenge School.
- 2.3 Cyclists have to use Salisbury Rd which is national speed limit along most of its length. It includes a steep gradient, going uphill, south from Bulford.

3.0 Route alignment

- 3.1 The recommended route alignment is shown on overleaf. The northern end of the proposed route starts at Double Hedges in Bulford and runs along the east side of Salisbury Rd. The route ends on the south side of London Rd, Amesbury where it meets the existing shared-use path.
- 3.2 The recommendation is based on an assessment of pedestrian safety, the cost of alternatives and the view of the main land owner. The rationale of the proposed route is as follows:-

Bulford to Amesbury Pedestrian/Cycle Link

Shared-use path



On road



On road links
through Bulford

New ramp con-
structed between
Double Hedges and

Access point to Sali-
sbury Rd and Bulford 4

Bulford 5 diverted to edge
of field. New path surface
constructed. New land-
scaping to screen path
from adjacent properties

Path constructed on high-
way verge in front of masts

New path constructed
inside field boundary

Existing informal crossings

New shared-use path
to be con-
structed by Tesco

Existing footway to be
widened and converted
to shared-use

Existing footpath to be
widened and con-
verted to shared-use in

On road link
to centre of

Existing shared-
use path

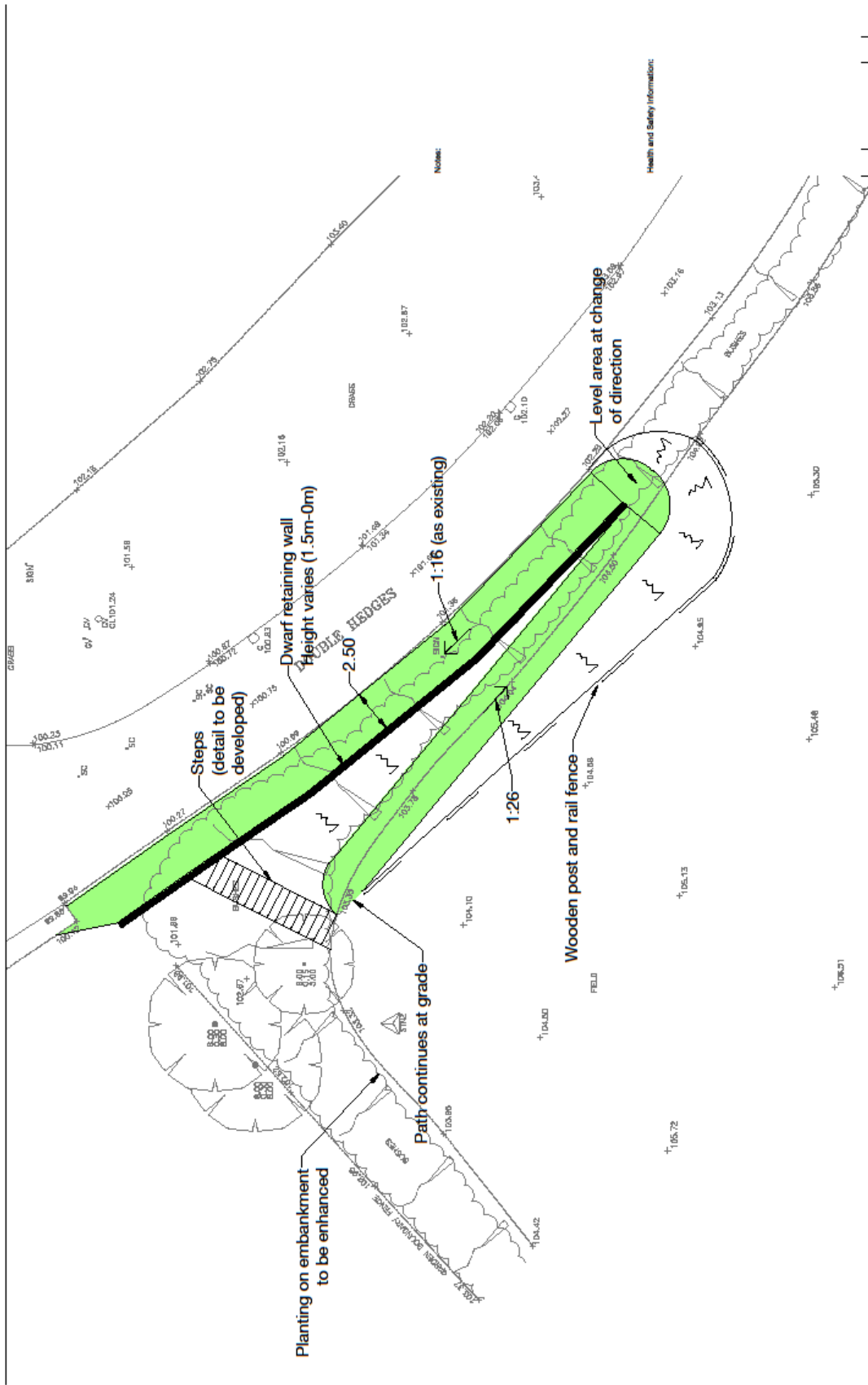
On road link to Leisure
centre and Stone-


AMESBURY

- 3.2.1 The Parish Council has made it clear that the route must run parallel to Salisbury Rd because access is needed to Solstice Park as well as Amesbury. A route which connects Bulford to the junction of Porton and London Rd in Amesbury will link to the existing cycle network. An extension to the shared-use path on London Rd will enable cyclists to reach the Solstice School avoiding busy roads. Next year a path widening/conversion scheme at Holders Rd will enable cyclists to reach the centre of Amesbury without cycling on London Rd.
- 3.2.2 The farmer who leases the land between Bulford and Amesbury has made it clear that he will not agree to a path which runs along the west side of Salisbury Rd. This means that the path must either be entirely on the east side or it must cross the road to the east side, in the vicinity of Bulford 4 bridleway before his ownership starts.
- 3.2.3 The option of a path which uses both sides of Salisbury Rd and crosses near Bulford 4 has been ruled out because firstly there is no safe place to cross. Vehicle speeds are too high and sight lines are inadequate. Wiltshire Council is very unlikely to agree to traffic calming or a formal crossing in this location. Secondly, although a path could be constructed on the western highway verge between Bulford and Bulford 4, it will be costly and require the removal of all the trees in this location.
- 3.2.4 Where it enters Bulford, the verge on the east side of Salisbury Rd, consists of an embankment approximately 4 metres in height. The cost of constructing a ramp in this location would be prohibitively expensive (in excess of £100,000). Access at this point would require significant excavation and a retaining structure. Traffic management costs would also be relatively high because of the time needed to construct. Costs would be saved if steps were constructed instead of a ramp. However steps would still require a retaining wall constructed to enable the footway leading out of Bulford to be extended. Moreover this solution would result in a considerable reduction in the value of the route because it could not be used by cyclists.
- 3.2.5 The remaining alternative is to extend the path to Double Hedges where a shallower embankment would enable a cheaper ramp to be constructed (see overleaf) at a cost of approximately £50,000). Even allowing for the additional cost of path construction this is a cheaper option than a ramp on Salisbury Rd and it maximises the potential use. Although this route does not follow the obvious desire line south from Bulford it is only approximately 100 metres longer than the options which start on Salisbury Rd. This is unlikely to have a significant impact on its use, particularly amongst vulnerable road users such as children. This option is recommended because it offers the cheapest and safest alignment as well as a reasonable possibility of agreement with landowners. The risks associated with delivering the recommended proposal are dealt with in section 7.

Costs

- 4.1 For the purposes of this report only the costs for the recommended alignment have been provided. Costs for the different path surface options are set out below. The budget cost estimates for all the path surface options along the recommended alignment exceed the currently available funding of £150,000. Some additional fundraising will be required. The possible sources of additional funding are set out in section 6. No consideration has been given at this stage to the possibility of the works being contracted through Wiltshire Council. This option would be VAT



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|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|------------------|
|  National Cycle Network Centre 2 Cathedral Square College Green Bristol BS1 5SD UK Tel: 0117 929 4173 Fax: 0117 929 4175 | Status: FOR DISCUSSION | Project: Bulford Link | Title: Double Hedges Ramp | Scale @ A3: 1:200 | Drawing Number: SW/ BUL/SK001 | Drawn Date: - |
| | Drawn by: FT | Checked by: | Health and Safety Information: - | | | |

4.2 Budget cost estimate – bitmac

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| 2.5m bitmac path (1000m @ £44 sq.m) | 110,000 |
| Footway widening (80 sq.m @ £50 sq.m) | 4,000 |
| Access ramp | 47,000 |
| Signage | 2,000 |
| Fencing | 12,000 |
| Sub total | 175,000 |
| Contingency (@10%) | 17,500 |
| Total construction cost | 192,500 |
| VAT (@20%) | 38,500 |
| Land | 7,000 |
| Surveys | 5,000 |
| Planning & RoW fees | 5,000 |
| Landscaping | 5,000 |
| Events/promotion | 1,000 |
| Public art/benches | 1,500 |
| Design & management fees (@12.5%) | 31,938 |
| Total | 287,438 |

4.3 Budget cost estimate – stonedust

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|--|----------------|
| 2.5m stonedust path (1000m @ £34 sq.m) | 85,000 |
| Footway widening (80 sq.m @ £50 sq.m) | 4,000 |
| Access ramp | 47,000 |
| Signage | 2,000 |
| Fencing | 12,000 |
| Sub total | 150,000 |
| Contingency (@10%) | 15,000 |
| Total construction cost | 165,000 |
| VAT (@20%) | 33,000 |
| Land | 7,000 |
| Surveys | 5,000 |
| Planning & RoW fees | 5,000 |
| Landscaping | 5,000 |
| Events/promotion | 1,000 |
| Public art/benches | 1,500 |
| Design & management fees (@12.5%) | 27,813 |
| Total | 250,313 |

4.4 Budget cost estimate – road planings

Budget Cost Estimate - road planings

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|--|----------------|
| 2.5m road planings path (1000m @ £20 sq.m) | 50,000 |
| N.B: Assumes free supply of road planings | |
| Footway widening (80 sq.m @ £50 sq.m) | 4,000 |
| Access ramp | 47,000 |
| Signage | 2,000 |
| Fencing | 12,000 |
| Sub total | 115,000 |
| Contingency (@10%) | 11,500 |
| Total construction cost | 126,500 |
| VAT (@20%) | 25,300 |
| Land | 7,000 |
| Surveys | 5,000 |
| Planning & RoW fees | 5,000 |
| Landscaping | 5,000 |
| Events/promotion | 1,000 |
| Public art/benches | 1,500 |
| Design & management fees (@12.5%) | 22,038 |
| Total | 198,338 |

Path construction

- 5.1 The recommended path width is 2.5 metres. This is the minimum width required to enable two cyclists or other path users to overtake. Reducing the path width below 2.5 metres leads to inconvenience, conflicts, near-misses and accidents. Often one user has to divert onto the verge. The minimum path verge should be 1 metre on either side between boundary fences or trees. This should be increased to at least 2.5 metres where access for horse riders is required.
- 5.2 The general requirement for path surface materials for cycle routes is that they should provide a smooth riding surface, good drainage properties, long-term durability and low maintenance. This is best achieved with a machine-laid bitumen-macadam (bitmac) surface on a sub-base of type one aggregate. A geotextile membrane is laid beneath the sub-base. This form of path construction ensures a consistent and compacted foundation for a level and durable surface. It also ensures that sufficient camber can be provided to avoid ponding on the path surface. To reduce the visual impact, a layer of dust or chippings can be rolled into the surface.
- 5.3 A cheaper alternative to a bitmac surface is to finish the path with a layer of limestone dust. This provides a level surface for approximately 2/3rds of the cost of bitmac. However, the life expectancy of this type of surface is roughly 1/3rd that of a bitumen-macadam surface. Sustrans always recommends bitumen-macadam path where funding is available. There are examples of paths on the National Cycle Network where there has been no funding for renewal of limestone dust surfaces and, after 10 years, they have begun to deteriorate to a condition that is unsuitable for cycling. They are particularly vulnerable in locations where there is a tree canopy because autumn leaf fall provides a good mulch for grass and weeds to establish themselves. Stone dust paths are also unsuitable for routes where access is required for horse-riders. The path surface is easily damaged if horses stray onto the path to avoid overgrown vegetation.
- 5.4 Another alternative surface is to finish the path with a layer of recycled road planings. When rolled these give a semi-sealed surface which is good for cycling on. The life expectancy is not as good as a bitmac path but is better than stonedust. The surface can be dressed with stonedust to soften the visual impact. The main advantage of using road planings is that Wiltshire Council can, if the path is considered a priority, supply the planings for free from road maintenance schemes. Sustrans recently completed the construction of a new path near Calne using recycled road planings. Wiltshire Council have also supplied road planings to the main landowner between Bulford and Amesbury for maintenance of the Ratfyn footpath.

Funding

- 6.1 Funding for walking and cycling routes is available from a range of sources. In due course a funding strategy will need to be developed. The aim should be to bring the project costs down to a level where the balance of funding can be secured from one main source. If additional, smaller, sums can be raised they can be used to deliver specific elements of the scheme. The following are a list of the main sources of funding that are applicable to this route.
- 6.2 Community Spaces: This programme is managed by the Groundwork UK on behalf of the Big Lottery fund. Amongst its objectives the Community Spaces programme aims to create better local environments and increase people's access to quality local spaces for interaction, play and recreation. Community Spaces is open to community groups to apply for small (£10,000 - £25,000) and medium (£25,001 - £49,999) grants. We understand that the Big Lottery Fund is keen to encourage more bids from the Wiltshire area.
<http://www.community-spaces.org.uk/>
- 6.3 Plain Action (up to £50,000): This is a rural development scheme operating across Salisbury Plain until December 2013. The scheme is administered by Community First. One of its objectives is to support projects which contribute to creating cohesive, stable and sustainable communities throughout the area by addressing current imbalances and geographical and social isolation. In 2009 Sustrans submitted an unsuccessful expression of interest to Plain Action for delivering walking and cycling links between Amesbury, Durrington and Bulford. The feedback was that Plain Action would be interested in an educational or marketing scheme which encouraged military families to cycle more but not a path construction project. It is worth bearing in mind that at that time Sustrans had no firm relationship with the local community and path proposals were in outline only. It is possible that Plain Action could be more supportive of this scheme if the proposals have more certainty of delivery and clear support from the local community.
- 6.4 Links to School (up to £150,000): This is a funding stream from the Department for Transport administered by Sustrans. It funds new paths and other infrastructure to enable children to cycle safely to school. This project would be eligible for funding because it offers an excellent link to Stonehenge School when combined with the improvements mentioned in 3.2.1. The current programme is due to end in March 2011 and currently there is no indication as to whether funding will be renewed. If it is renewed Sustrans would be keen to support this project when there is certainty over the delivery timescales.
- 6.5 Connect2: Sustrans is currently delivering a £50 million lottery funding programme of 79 walking and cycling routes across the UK. These are schemes which are designed to overcome severance between communities such as Bulford and Amesbury. The programme is due to run until March 2013. There is a possibility that there will be a need for reserve schemes between now and the end of 2012 to cover other projects which are not completing within the available timescale. If negotiations with the landowners prove successful it is possible that this scheme could be offered as a reserve scheme.

- 6.6 Landfill Tax Communities Fund (up to £10,000): This can be used to fund projects which provide and maintain public amenities and parks (this includes traffic-free cycle routes and providing artworks along them). Funding is for a wide range of community projects. Typically projects need to be within a fixed distance of a landfill site (usually 10 miles) and there are none in this range of Bulford. However Hills Group allocate grants across the whole county. Their total grant allocation per annum is £100,000 so individual grants are not likely to exceed £10,000. In Wiltshire this fund is administered by Community First.
<http://www.communityfirst.org.uk/landfill.htm>
- 6.7 Awards for All (up to £10,000): This programme is administered by the Big Lottery Fund and is a simple small grants scheme making awards of between £300 and £10,000. It aims to help improve local communities and the lives of people most in need. This includes improving the rural environment and giving communities better access. It also includes encouraging people and communities to be more active. Given the small size of the maximum sum the grant would be useful to deliver a small component of the scheme such as signing and publicity or perhaps a bridge. A decision can be made within six weeks of receipt of an application.
<http://www.awardsforall.org.uk/england/index.html>
- 6.8 Higher Level Stewardship scheme (varies): Under the scheme land owners are able to apply for annual and one-off payments for providing improved access across agricultural land. The annual payment is £350 plus a further £90 for every 100 metres of route. In addition a one-off capital payment of £15 per square metre can be paid where a tarmac surface is provided. Currently none of the land owners along the route are part of the higher level stewardship scheme but this may change as existing agreements come to an end. Although this may offer a useful means of securing agreement with a land owner it needs to be borne in mind that agreements only last for 10 years so they are risky where there is no guarantee of future support from the land owner.
- 6.9 Wiltshire Council: From discussions with the Local Authority during the past 12 months it is apparent that very little funding is available for the delivery of new cycle or footpaths. This situation is likely to remain for the next few years. Where funding is available, Sustrans is committed to delivering other routes in the county with Highways and the Countryside Access Team. However there are two potential Local Authority grant sources which may assist:-

Parish Improvement Grants (up to £5000): Parish and Town Councils can bid for funding to create new paths. The budget was under-subscribed in 2009-10.

Area Board Grants (up to £5000): Community groups can apply for up to £5000 or more in exceptional circumstances to meet local priorities.

7.0 **Risks**

- 7.1 The initial challenge will be to secure an agreement with the landowner(s) on the proposed path alignment. To date there have only been discussions with the farmer and not the freeholders. The path alignment is, in part, a response to the farmer's wishes. He is concerned that people are already walking in his field to avoid the road so a path should reduce damage to his crops. Reaching an agreement could be a matter of detailed design and financial terms.

- 7.2 The proposal of extending the path to Double Hedges has not been discussed with the farmer. He will wish to minimise the loss of field area and may be reluctant to agree to this. However, Bulford 5 footpath currently runs diagonally across this field and was ploughed at the time of the site visit. It is possible that the farmer will agree to a permissive route for cyclists along the field edge in return for Bulford 5 being diverted.
- 7.2 The proposed path will probably require planning approval. Residents on Salisbury Rd and Double Hedges may object to the proposed path alignment because of concern about loss of safety and privacy. These concerns need to be addressed early in the project otherwise objections may become hard to overcome. Soft landscaping can be planted to screen back gardens more effectively and offer additional security. If the Parish Council accepts the recommendation of this report it will need to work with Sustrans to consult with residents in the vicinity of the path and ensure that the design minimises their concerns while keeping the project within a deliverable budget.
- 8.0 Next steps
- 8.1 The views of Bulford Parish council are needed at this stage before further time is expended on development the project. Is the recommended alignment acceptable and is the Parish Council willing to support the necessary statutory agreements to develop this route?
- 8.2 If the Parish Council supports the initial recommendations, Sustrans will identify and contact all the parties with an interest in the land, seeking their initial views. From Land Registry searches and discussions with the farmer it is understood that up to four parties either have a freehold, leasehold or a tenancy along the proposed route, including the Ministry of Defence.
- 8.3 Once the views of landowners have been sought the feasibility can be concluded, including a project plan and fundraising strategy. The Parish Council and Wiltshire Council will need to review this and agree the proposal before the project can be formally launched.

Alistair Millington
Area Manager—Wiltshire
8th November, 2010