

Alderbury and Wilton Cycle Link

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Salisbury District Council: Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Alderbury & Wilton Cycle Link Scrutiny Review Paper

Introduction by Councillor Chris Devine

Lead Member: Alderbury & Wilton Cycle Link Scrutiny Review Group

For ten years the lead cycling organisations in Salisbury District and Sustrans have been campaigning for a joined up cycle route from Alderbury to Salisbury and Wilton to Salisbury. Currently the major parts of both routes come along the A36 which is a national trunk road and as such is highly dangerous for cyclists to use. It should also be noted that there has been a recent tragic pedestrian fatality, whilst crossing the A36 on the Alderbury route.

Despite the endeavours of Salisbury District Council, Wiltshire County Council, the Highways Agency and Sustrans over the last few years, neither of these routes has developed beyond the paper planning stage.

One of the main reasons given for not building the cycle routes was the planned (anytime in the next five years) de-trunking of the A36.

This review group was set up to specifically find out why neither of these routes have got beyond the planning stage and whether they ever will.

In order to understand the current situation, the following meetings with those involved at all levels in cycling in Salisbury took place:

5th July 2006 – a public meeting for interested members of the public and cycling groups.

18th July 2006 – a meeting was held with Jeff Scholefield – Sustrans Voluntary Liaison Ranger, Peter Durnan – Sustrans Voluntary Liaison Ranger, Geoff Hobbs – Transportation Planner – Salisbury District Council, Eric Teagle – Head of Forward Planning and Transportation – Salisbury District Council, Alan Feist – Assistant Director of Environmental Services – Wiltshire County Council.

26th July 2006 – a meeting was held with Robert Key MP – Member of Parliament for Salisbury Constituency, Councillor Mrs Fleur De Rhé Philipe – Cabinet member for Transport at Wiltshire County Council, Councillor Dennis Brown – Cabinet member for

Environment and Transport at Salisbury District Council, Inspector Mike Ashford-Smith – Traffic Office for Wiltshire Constabulary.

18th May 2006 – Visit to Cycling Officers at Bristol City Council.

28th September 2006 – A meeting was held with the Estate Manger for Wilton Estates. A follow up meeting was held on 12th October 2006.

The Highways Agency was invited to attend a meeting but declined the invitation, despite the fact that they are the responsibility authority for the A36.

The report is structured in a series of questions and answers which are drawn from the findings of this review. **It will demonstrate that given some political support and direction at County Council and District Council level, the majority of both routes can be achieved in the next 1-3 years.**

Overwhelmingly the people of Salisbury District have asked for these routes, and rely on the politicians and agencies to deliver them and this report offers some solutions.

Owing to intense public interest, the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Review Group will review and publicise the progress of the review in one year's time.

Alderbury & Wilton Cycle Link Scrutiny Review Paper

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Terms of Reference and Scope of the Alderbury & Wilton Cycle Link Scrutiny Review

1. The Review Group was commissioned by the Council's Environment & Transport Overview & Scrutiny Panel in April 2006 to undertake a review of why the Alderbury/Salisbury and Wilton/Salisbury sections of national cycle route 24 had not yet been achieved, despite having been identified as a priority ten years ago by interested parties.
2. The terms of reference of the review group was:
 1. To identify the barriers to the achievement of the agreed cycle-way.
 2. To identify the authorities responsible for the delay and those in a position to get things done.
 3. To examine possible funding opportunities for the cycle route.
 4. To seek a solution and a timescale to ensure that the cycle-way is achieved at the earliest opportunity.

Membership of Alderbury & Wilton Cycle Link Scrutiny Review Group

3. Councillor Chris Devine (Conservative, Winterslow Ward) was appointed by the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Group to lead the Alderbury/Wilton Cycle Route Review. Councillors Ian McLennan (Labour, Laverstock and Clarendon Park Ward), Paul Sample (Liberal Democrat, St Edmund & Milford Ward) and John Walsh (Labour, Fisherton & Bemerton Village Ward) were appointed to serve on the Review Group.

Sara Draper in the Council's Democratic Services Unit supported the Scrutiny work.

Consultation:

Councillor Chris Devine issued a press release and ran an advert in the Salisbury Journal inviting members of the public to attend a meeting on the proposed schemes to gather public views. He also encouraged anyone who could not attend the meeting to submit his or her views in writing. 28 people attended the meeting and a further 18 written representations were submitted. In addition COGS presented Councillor Devine with a petition of 954 signatures in support of the scheme that was subsequently supplemented by a further 52 signatures, taking the total to 1006. A full analysis of the consultation responses together with the comments received can be found in the background papers.

What are the current proposals?

4. The cycle route from Alderbury to Salisbury and Salisbury to Wilton are top of the priority list for cycling and walking schemes awaiting funding in the urban area of Salisbury and Wilton. At present the Joint Transportation Team (made up of transport officers from Salisbury District Council and Wiltshire County Council) and Sustrans have both drafted proposals for a cycle route from Alderbury to Salisbury and from Salisbury to Wilton. The proposals are broadly similar although at Petersfinger the Joint Transportation Team's proposals show the cycle route passing behind the new park and ride site whereas the Sustrans proposals follow the existing line of the A36, running through part of the landscaping buffer zone for the park and ride site, to the roundabout by Tesco. Both sets of proposals are attached at appendix 1 and 2 to this report.

5. The current schemes have been approximately costed however, these estimates do not take account of land purchase costs should this be necessary. The Alderbury/Salisbury route has been estimated at around £165,000 with the bulk of the cost being the provision of the Toucan/Pelican crossing on the A36 (although this crossing has been separately costed at only £40,000). The Salisbury/Wilton scheme is currently costed at approximately £120,000.

6. The Joint Transportation Team has assessed the above cycle schemes and has identified the following issues:
 - i Wiltshire County Council made a decision during the creation of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) to focus investment in cycle schemes in towns with a population over 10,000. This was because the County Council has to achieve a modal shift in people choosing cycling/walking over car use. By creating cycle links in densely populated areas, they would be used by a greater number of people than in sparsely populated rural areas and therefore the modal shift would be easier to prove. Therefore cycle schemes on the edge of urban areas such as the Alderbury/Salisbury and Salisbury/Wilton routes have not been prioritised. As the County Council is not even half way through providing the urban links that have been identified as the highest priority, there is little prospect that this priority system at the County Council will change.
 - ii The County Council only has one year to achieve the schemes that it puts in the Local Transport Plan otherwise it does not meet government targets. Failure to meet government targets leads to a reduction in funding in future years. At present County Council and District Council officers do not

believe the Alderbury/Wilton schemes could be achieved in one year because of risks associated with the projects. Therefore the chances, under current criteria, of either scheme receiving funding are zero at the present time.

- iii Finance – Are the schemes too expensive to ever be achieved? In 2006/7 the whole budget for walking/cycling schemes in Salisbury District was £75,000. The Alderbury scheme is costed at approximately £165,000 and the Wilton scheme is costed at approximately £120,000. However, funding is allocated based on the schemes in the Local Transport Plan for each year. Therefore once the risks associated with these routes could be managed out then they would be put in the Local Transport Plan and funding potentially could be aligned to them. However, Councillor Brown, the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport at Salisbury District Council, expressed doubts that these schemes would ever be viewed as good value for money by the County Council when considered against all the other schemes which could be done as they are relatively expensive.

Therefore neither scheme is deemed to meet this latter criteria and again, the chances of approval for finance are zero.

7. The risks stated were:

1. **Landowner issues** – At both Petersfinger and Wilton the current proposed routes require land being purchased from third parties or the landowners granting permission for a route to be placed on their land. These third parties could be up to seven at Petersfinger and twelve at Wilton depending on how many tenants currently occupy land owned by the Earl of Pembroke. Sustrans have considerable experience in the successful negotiation of permissive routes with landowners elsewhere in the country. The Joint Transportation Team is relying on Sustrans to successfully gain agreement from landowners along the route before officer time can be devoted to detailed design work and preparing bids for Local Transport Plan funding. Sustrans have not reached this stage, despite previous attempts with landowners. New approaches are in the process of being made.
2. **Park and Ride Issues** - The uncertainty of the Petersfinger Park and Ride site. The Alderbury/Salisbury scheme design produced by the Joint Transportation Team depends on the delivery of the Petersfinger Park

and Ride site. If this site was not to be progressed it would mean a new scheme would have to be drafted, with consequent delay.

3. **De trunking of the A36** – At present the Highways Agency own both the stretch of road from the Alderbury bypass on the A36 to Salisbury and the stretch from Wilton to the Park Wall corner. The Highways Agency will not fund any improvements or safety measures on either stretch because it is not deemed a “core-route”. *The only work that will be funded is essential maintenance work and the installation of new cycle schemes does not meet this criteria.* There are plans to de-trunk the A36 which will hand control of the road over to Wiltshire County Council. *However, these plans are 3-5 years away from fruition.* The representatives of Wiltshire County Council who were interviewed for the review have indicated that the County Council will not embark on either of these routes until the A36 is de-trunked because whilst the road is under the control of the Highways Agency, any plans for cycle routes would have to meet its design standards. These are higher than the County Council’s own, therefore making delivery of the sections of the route on the A36 more expensive than if Wiltshire County Council was able to design the entire scheme itself. *Therefore Wiltshire County Council do not see the option to progress the schemes immediately as good value for money.*
4. **Maintenance of the routes in the future.** Sustrans have recently asked Wiltshire County Council to take over the maintenance of certain stretches of cycle routes away from the highway however Wiltshire County Council will not use public funds to maintain any stretches of cycle routes which have not been dedicated. The members and officers interviewed considered this to be low risk as it is not a preventative issue but it does need to be addressed.
5. **Highway Agency design standards** - Not only are Highway Agency design standards more exacting than Wiltshire County Council’s, the Assistant Director of Environmental Services at Wiltshire County Council has also expressed doubts about whether the proposed toucan crossing located on the A36 at Petersfinger would be acceptable to them as cars coming from the A36 towards Salisbury will be decelerating from 70mph at this point and therefore a toucan crossing at this point may not be deemed as safe. Note: In reality the toucan crossing would be located well within the 40mph zone and Wiltshire County Council indicated that additional warning signs and other road safety measures could be

installed at the end of the dual carriageway section of the A36 before the Alderbury junction to provide further warnings to motorists to slow down.

Officers and councillors are of the opinion that the risks will take 3-5 years to manage out before the schemes can begin. The officers felt that the three-year time was quoted as an optimistic assessment and five years is the more realistic assessment.

Having gathered this information the members of the review group turned to addressing six key questions.

Question 1 - Does Salisbury need a cycle route from Wilton to Salisbury and from Salisbury to Alderbury?

Answer: The answer is overwhelmingly YES.

- A) Overwhelmingly the citizens of Salisbury District support the provision of the cycle routes. The public meeting held on 5th July and the letters received conclusively demonstrated that the routes were needed. COGS have collected a petition containing 1006 signatures in support of the routes to date and this demonstrates a serious demand for these routes in the local area. In fact all of the communication Councillor Chris Devine received for the review was fully in favour of the routes, not a single piece of correspondence was received in objection.
- B) Cycling has many proven benefits including; *environmental benefits, tourism/economic benefits, health benefits, better access to schools for children*. In an interview, Robert Key, MP for Salisbury, submitted a paper on cycling to the review group which outlined all the health benefits of cycling attached as appendix C. The paper outlines how cycling improves people's health and can reduce cardiovascular disease by a quarter, has economic benefits as employees that cycle to work take fewer sick days, it increases the attractiveness of the city as a tourist destination, reduces congestion and pollution from car emissions and helps to address social exclusion issues and issues of access to services for those people without a car. It should be noted that as an ex government Roads Minister, he can be considered an expert witness.
- C) Because these routes are missing links in the Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 24 and Salisbury has two of the worst remaining gaps in the network across the entire Country.
- D) The Alderbury route would provide a dual function as a pedestrian access to Salisbury from the Marshmead Close area of Petersfinger. There has already been a fatal pedestrian accident on the A36. In his report into the death the Coroner said that he was concerned that such a busy road had no crossing facilities and he intended to write to the Highways Agency to see what could be done. Note: *The interviews with the public and the letters received demonstrated a clear link between uptake of cycling and safe cycling provision.*
- E) Salisbury is behind other comparable areas in terms of cycling levels within the UK, but, has one of the highest proportions of journeys undertaken by bicycle in Wiltshire. Figures produced by COGS showed that 4.4% of those in employment in Salisbury cycle to work whereas 12% of people travelling to work in York cycle and 26% in Cambridge.

Question 2 – So why has neither of these routes been put in place ten years after first inception?

Answer:

- A) Both Salisbury District Council and Wiltshire County Council have allowed the issue of provision of the routes to stagnate within the Salisbury District Joint Transportation Committee. There is no impetus behind overcoming the inherent risks within the cycle schemes.
- B) The approach to risk assessment for these schemes has only been carried out on a piecemeal basis by The District and County Council, rather than as a fully defined project with an agreed timeline. Both schemes are still at the feasibility and preliminary design stage. Once land issues are resolved by Sustrans (which could take years), and a timetable for de-trunking agreed with the Highways Agency (3 to 5 years) then Joint Transportation Team officer time can be allocated that will allow them to be progressed as full projects to the point where they can be delivered subject to the necessary funding being available.
- C) The current assessment means that these schemes have zero chance of achieving funding until the A36 is de-trunked and there is no timetable currently set for this. Whilst both schemes have obtained a high priority assessment score, the internal processes followed by Wiltshire County Council to take transport schemes forward requires that schemes are not recommended to have funding allocated towards them until all the necessary preparatory work has been completed. In the case of the Alderbury to Salisbury and Wilton to Salisbury schemes, neither project has yet reached this point. Once land negotiations have been concluded and once there is more clarity over the de-trunking process, then all the outstanding preparatory work can be completed. At this point both schemes would be deemed to be “ready” to be delivered. Note: However, it is already accepted by the major Politicians and Officers involved that such schemes will not meet the assessment criteria and as such will never be funded.

However, there are people and organisations that are taking steps to realise the achievement of the routes:

- D) Sustrans and the cycling community have always supported the routes and have made efforts to overcome the obstacles. Sustrans has put effort into land negotiation, employing a member of COGS in 2002 to attempt to progress this aspect. Unfortunately his efforts were unsuccessful. With the tasking of Jon Usher to oversee Route 24 development in 2005, fresh attempts are now underway. Sustrans was willing to spend up to £35,000 to purchase land in the Petersfinger area. They have also met with the Highways Agency at Director level and are arranging a meeting with the Earl of

Pembroke to open negotiations over creating a permissive route across his land.

However, without funding from the Local Transport Plan process, the schemes cannot be delivered

- E) Salisbury District Council has an officer in the Joint Transportation Team who is co-ordinating discussions with Sustrans and the Highways Agency on behalf of the Joint Transportation Team to further the planning and delivery of these schemes and the team has drawn up route plans. ***However, the current District and County Council stance is to await the outcome of Sustrans' efforts to negotiate with landowners along part of the route and for a timetable for de-trunking in order to ensure that the costs of both schemes are reduced, and therefore would offer better value for money.***

Question 3- Why have politicians and relevant agencies not acted until now?

Answer:

- A) In general the relevant politicians believe that there are insurmountable obstacles in regard to the routes and ultimate funding for these cycle schemes. This can be summarised as follows:
- The routes cost too much to be completed in a single year and sufficient money is not available in one year nor can funding be split over two years under current criteria.
 - At Wiltshire County Council the problem becomes progressively worse. The criteria for approving and delivering such a scheme is so demanding that it will ensure that these schemes are unlikely to be approved, particularly in respect of value for money criteria and this is accepted without challenge by the County Council Cabinet.

It is the opinion of this Review Group that there is no political will to achieve these schemes at Wiltshire County Council and historically there has been minimal support at Salisbury District Council, they are just seen as two out of many other projects.

This means that there is no desire to challenge the basic criteria and tackle the barriers to delivery, in the knowledge that this lack of challenge, means these schemes will never come to fruition. The lack of direct local control over the A36 also contributes to this problem.

Question 4 - Who is responsible for these schemes?

Answer:

- A) The Joint Transportation Team, Sustrans, and, at present, the Highways Agency. Both schemes follow (in part) the A36 which is a major trunk road owned by the Highways Agency. All work done on a trunk road, has to be to a high (costly) Highways Agency standard. However, the Highways Agency has no interest in, or intention of, progressing either of these schemes (as routes that are to be de-trunked no longer qualify for funding for “accessibility” improvements). Both Wiltshire County Council and Salisbury District Council are unwilling to commit funding to cycle schemes on the A36 due to the need to “manage out” the risks identified earlier. Sustrans need to progress the negotiation of permissive routes through landowners’ property, in order that a continuous route can be constructed. However it is the opinion of this review group that, Wiltshire County Council and Salisbury District Council are using the planned future de-trunking of the A36 (and hence lower costs of cycle schemes) at some unspecified future date, as a reason to delay implementation and funding of the schemes.

Question 5 – Despite the Issues Outlined Above, Can Anything Be Achieved In Relation to the Two Cycle Schemes In the Near Future?

Answer:

Alderbury to Salisbury:

- A) *The A36 crossing at Alderbury - Yes* this is an achievable short-term gain. It is the main blocker for this route because of its cost. However, as there was a fatality on this stretch of road in 2003, it is extremely important for road safety reasons. It is supported by the Police, Clarendon Park Parish Council and the Coroner’s office. Technically, the Highways Agency should pay for this crossing as a safety measure on the A36, but, pragmatically this will not happen. However, R2 money from Clarendon Park Parish Council, totalling almost £18,000 could be used to offset the cost. Sustrans had some funds that were going to be used to purchase a piece of land at Petersfinger to contribute towards the cycle routes. Whilst it was not possible for Sustrans to purchase this piece of land, these funds may be available as a contribution towards the route in the future. It would also be possible to ask the Southern Area Committee to use discretionary grant money to help fund this crossing. If the Highways Agency refuses to fund this work, then Wiltshire County Council should allocate the money from within the annual Local Transport Plan budget (taking into account the R2 monies outlined above). There is also £15,000 from the Tesco store

extension on Southampton Road for road traffic measures, which could also be put towards the achievement of the cycle routes.

- B) *Although Wiltshire County Council consider that this does not meet their value for money criteria they must challenge this at the highest political level.*
- C) There is little else that can be achieved at present. However, the proposed combining of the route with the Park and Ride build (subject to this project receiving the necessary statutory permissions) should be implemented as a project with Local Transport Plan funding allocated by the Salisbury Area Joint Transportation Committee funds. **This should be progressed whether or not the A36 is de-trunked.**
- D) Whilst the Alderbury scheme is expensive, costed at approximately £165,000, the additional funds above would offset the amount to be funded from the Local Transport Plan budget, £75,000 for Salisbury District in 2006/7.
- E) The other aspects of the route which cannot be achieved in the short-term should be put into project management format with agreed timescales for implementation and named responsible individuals from the relevant organisation (Sustrans, the Joint Transportation Team or the Highways Agency).

Wilton to Salisbury

- A) *Yes* – The main issue on the Wilton link has always been with the inadequate width of the pavement running alongside the Wilton Estate boundary wall and provision for pedestrians to cross at Park Wall junction. Such a path, if wide enough would form a safe shared use path. The Highways Agency has recently surveyed the route and believes that it is feasible to widen the pavement from the Garden Centre entrance to Park Wall junction for a very reasonable £40,000.
- B) In addition the Wilton Estate has indicated a willingness in principle to allow a cycle way to be constructed on its land and used as a permissive right of way down Netherhampton Road from Park Wall junction run a cycle way on its land down Netherhampton Road from Parkwall junction behind an existing hedge. This would be subject to detailed proposals but would ensure a comprehensive safe cycle route from Wilton to Lower Bemerton.
- C) *As such Wiltshire County Council and Salisbury District Council through the Salisbury Area Joint Transportation Committee could choose to factor this work into the 2007/8 Local Transport Plan budget also utilising existing developer contributions.*
- D) The other aspects of the route which cannot be achieved in the short-term should be put into project format with agreed timescales for implementation.

Conclusions

The review group is proposing that the schemes themselves should be broken down into more manageable elements to make each section easier and cheaper to provide rather than trying to achieve each route as one complete project. This would reduce the risk of not being able to deliver the project on time, if at all. This policy of “build what we can, when we can”, is an approach employed by authorities recognised as providing best practice in terms of cycling provision such as Bristol City Council.

The Alderbury route crossing should be the first project as it is achievable, most wanted by the public **and vital on safety grounds**, there already having been a pedestrian fatality at this point. It should also be noted that in the Coroner’s inquest into this pedestrian fatality, he recommended to the Highways Agency that a safe crossing be installed as a priority. Having a crossing at this location also opens up the possibility of school children walking and cycling from Alderbury to the Laverstock schools. Once the children have crossed the A36 and walked to the Petersfinger Road junction there is a safe footpath/Bridleway route to the Laverstock campus.

The Wiltshire Police fully support the proposed routes and consider that they are safe including the provision of the crossing at Alderbury.

Robert Key, the MP for Salisbury has recently tabled a series of Parliamentary questions in relation to the Highway Agency’s plans to reduce congestion on the A36 from College Roundabout to Tesco. Once he has received answers to his questions he has stated that this can be the beginning of the discussions with the HA about de-trunking and the achievement of the cycle route at Petersfinger could be included as part of these discussions. This political support is crucial to the achievement of these two routes. **However, nothing this report recommends should be frozen awaiting A36 de-trunking.** Delaying the implementation of these schemes based on an unspecified timetable for de-trunking the A36, would be no less than a “do nothing” charter.

The budgets for the next three years have not yet been proposed. However, in December 2006 Wiltshire County Council will be putting forward the proposals for the division of transportation funding for the next financial year. In February/March 2007 this will be put before the Salisbury Joint Transportation Committee to decide how the funds will be spent in its area. ***The review group believes that this opportunity should be grasped to commit funding to these schemes.***

In the immediate future for all developments along these stretches of road, a sizeable proportion of

any available “developer” contributions should be ring-fenced by Salisbury District Council specifically for the achievement of these two routes.

The review group believes that this report shows how Wiltshire County Council can meet its value for money criteria by utilising other contributions to help fund the routes and phasing of these schemes into sub-components. **It should also be noted that the crossing at Petersfinger gives the County Council an opportunity to put the safety of its citizens at the forefront of its transportation plans!** Although Wiltshire County Council may consider that after the A36 has been de-trunked, its contribution could be lower than at present, this is not necessarily the case as the additional monies such as R2, S106 funds and Sustrans money may not be available in the future to overcome this cost differential and therefore the opportunity to achieve these routes should be grasped now.

The review group recommends that Wiltshire County Council Portfolio Holder actively seeks to deliver these two projects listed as cycling/walking scheme’s priority numbers one and two for Salisbury and Wilton urban area using the contributions and directions as outlined in this report.

Bibliography

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Scheme Diagram of Proposed Alderbury/Salisbury Cycle Route. 1a is drafted by the Joint Transportation Team, 1b is drafted by Sustrans.

Appendix 2 – Scheme Diagram of Proposed Wilton/Salisbury Cycle Route.

Appendix 3 – Paper on cycling produced by COGS for Robert Key MP and presented to the review group.

Background Papers

Notes from interviews and public meetings

Letters received from the public as evidence for the review

Notes on visit to Bristol City Council.

All the papers listed in the Bibliography above are available on request.