

## A350 Melksham Improvement Scheme

Melksham Area board 23rd June 2021

Advanced written questions / comments received ahead of 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation launch.

	Written question / submission:	Received from:	Response:
1	Why are we left with just the one choice 10c to go forward with?	Mr D Robinson	<p><i>The development of a solution for the A350 improvement scheme is being undertaken in accordance with DfT requirements and methodology, and is based on a number of factors including landscape, archaeology, ecology, air quality, flood risk, environment, cost and benefits and indeed how well options respond to the stated scheme objectives. Recent technical work has progressed sequentially and logically through the option assessment process.</i></p> <p><i>Option 10c is identified as the most viable route, although there are alternative alignments at the northern end, which are being consulted on.</i></p> <p><i>Other potential options have been discounted as the scheme has evolved for a range of reasons including not addressing the scheme objectives, design constraints, costs leading to limited value for money, technical deliverability matters, local impacts, and environmental matters.</i></p> <p><i>It is important that the scheme progressing through to the outline business case represents the best identified solution possible. If any of the other options had scored as well as Option 10c against the criteria, they would have been included in the second round of consultations.</i></p>
2	Why was 7a rejected when it had more support than any other route?	Mr D Robinson	<p><i>Option 7A was the improvement of the existing road north of Farmers Roundabout and the A365 Bath Road junction.</i></p> <p><i>Dualling the existing route south of Farmers Roundabout would be possible, but improvements to the existing road through Beanacre and at the northern end of</i></p>

			<p><i>Melksham to the standards required to meet the needs of the major road network would have extensive adverse impacts on the built up area.</i></p> <p><i>Compared to the likely scale of benefits that might be possible given the constrained nature of this section of the existing route, it was considered that 7A would offer lower overall value for money than other options and was not a viable option.</i></p>
3	<p>Will the traffic data be updated to take account of the new post COVID traffic flows and the enhancements to the Farmers roundabout?</p>	Mr D Robinson	<p><i>Yes. As part of the development of the Outline Business Case, the emerging scheme will be assessed in accordance with the Department of Transport's ( DfT) <a href="#">Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG)</a>. This methodology and guidance are the standard approach to assessing major transport schemes of this type, and the information is regularly updated by DfT.</i></p> <p><i>The traffic assessment will include recent changes to the highway network.</i></p> <p><i>It is anticipated that the DfT will issue revised traffic and economic forecasts shortly, and additional work and analysis will be undertaken to reflect these.</i></p>
4	<p>Will you and your team engage and take account of the messages on the following Facebook groups 'Bowerhill', 'Melksham Discussions' and 'Stop the Melksham Bypass'? These sizeable groups provide a good insight into the strength of public opinion! Perhaps we could start with a formal invite to the Groups members to the upcoming Melksham Area Board Meeting on the 23/6.</p>	Mr D Robinson	<p><i>We welcome all feedback and responses to the consultations during the preparations for the Outline Business Case, and we would like to hear the views from members of these Facebook groups, along with all other viewpoints from the local community, to ensure we are capturing comments from as wide a demographic as possible.</i></p> <p><i>Anyone is welcome to attend the Area Board meeting and the upcoming webinars to hear more about the proposals, to ask questions about the project, and to take part in the consultation to let us know their views.</i></p> <p><i>We have also published all information on the scheme on our website at <a href="http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-a350-melksham-bypass">www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-a350-melksham-bypass</a></i></p>

5	Will the footfall data for the usage of the public paths from Bowerhill and through Giles Wood be revisited, given the only data used to date was that taken on a cold wet January day earlier this year!	Mr D Robinson	<p><i>As part of the scheme development works, a Walking, Cycling, and Horse riding Assessment (often referred to as WCHAR) has been undertaken. This is a piece of work which will be developed as the scheme moves forward through future design stages.</i></p> <p><i>The surveys undertaken in January 2021 supplement other information collected previously to reflect walking and cycling activity and to highlight key routes.</i></p> <p><i>It is expected that additional surveys will be needed to help inform the ongoing WCHAR study and these will be undertaken as appropriate.</i></p>
6	Will access via the existing footpaths to the Canal, Giles Wood and the picnic area be protected both during and after construction?	Mr D Robinson	<p><i>Yes</i></p> <p><i>We recognise the key linkage between the Bowerhill Area and the various facilities close to the Kennet &amp; Avon Canal.</i></p>
7	What will be done to protect the wildlife? Our garden has nightly visits from Fox's, Badgers, Deers, Hares, Bats etc. I have hundreds of photos using our night camera to support this.	Mr D Robinson	<p><i>Any scheme coming forward will require a full Planning Application and Environmental Impact Assessment, which would consider impacts on the local environment and habitat.</i></p> <p><i>Mitigation measures may be required specifically in connection with local wildlife. It is not uncommon for features such as badger access tunnels and bat hop-overs to be included as part of the design on scheme such as this.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, drainage attenuation ponds are likely to be required and these will provide opportunities to develop and enhance the local wildlife habitat and environment combined with landscape planting areas.</i></p>
8	What assurances can be given to Bowerhill and Seend residents that significant additional house build will not be permitted on current green space, that currently falls	Mr D Robinson	<p><i>The recent consultation held between January – March 2021 on the Wiltshire Local Plan Review proposed a requirement of 3950 new homes at Melksham and Bowerhill for the plan period 2016 – 2036. When the number of homes already built and in the pipeline is deducted it leaves a further 2585 homes to be accommodated.</i></p>

	<p>outside the village boundaries but will then border the new bypass?</p>		<p><i>17 greenfield sites – including some adjacent to Bowerhill - were outlined which the Council will need to assess to find the most suitable locations for these homes and no decisions have yet been made on these.</i></p> <p><i>The Melksham neighbourhood plan will also be able to allocate sites for development in their neighbourhood area.</i></p> <p><i>For the village of Seend, there is a proposed housing requirement of 30 dwellings over the plan period 2016 - 2036. Sites for these will not be allocated in the Local Plan but can be allocated by the neighbourhood plan.</i></p> <p><i>As individual planning applications come forward, these will be decided against relevant planning policies in place at the time of the decision and it is not possible to give assurances on what decisions may be made on these in the future.</i></p>
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p>Why did WC mislead everyone over its options process and waste so much time/money over a decision it had already made? The Route 10C was what it asked the DfT to fund as is shown in the submission form obtained by FOI, which only mentioned 3 options, with one discounted (B), effectively leaving A (10a) and C (10c). With C clearly identified as the only one that WC wanted to have funding to pursue.</p>	<p>Mr P Chipper</p>	<p><i>The consultation and recent assessment work considered all options, and they were reviewed on the same basis. There was no preference for any of the options as it is important to identify the most suitable option that would meet the objectives and be likely to obtain funding.</i></p> <p><i>It is appreciated that there has been discussion about a potential eastern bypass of Melksham since at least the 1990s. The Strategic Outline Business Case prepared in 2019 identified a potentially viable long eastern route, and the viability of the route corridor has been confirmed by the options appraisal work carried out since.</i></p> <p><i>If any of the other options had scored as well as Option 10c against the criteria, they would have been included in the second round of consultations.</i></p> <p><i>A summary of the reasons why various options have not been taken forward is included in the current consultation information pack at Appendix A, and is further explained in the draft “Option Assessment Report” (OAR) which will be available through the project webpage. <a href="#">A350 Melksham bypass - Wiltshire Council</a></i></p>
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p>What are the actual and specific benefits of such</p>	<p>Mr P Chipper</p>	<p><i>Please refer to our FAQ “What benefits could the scheme bring?”, which is available through the project website <a href="http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-a350-melksham-bypass">www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-a350-melksham-bypass</a>.</i></p>

<p>scheme? A realistic high level cost/benefit analysis to justify the enormous expense of the project, and it's dramatically negative impact on Melksham and the surrounding area. NB an answer of "This will be answered in the Business Case", is not acceptable, as by now there should be a substantive and credible answer in order to make a decision to proceed.</p>	<p><i>We anticipate the scheme delivering a range of strategic benefits including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Creating a more reliable, less congested, and better-connected transport network that works for the users who rely on it.</i></li> <li>• <i>Providing a well-connected, reliable and resilient transport system to support economic and planned development growth at key locations.</i></li> <li>• <i>Supporting and helping to improve the vitality, viability and resilience of Wiltshire's economy and market towns.</i></li> <li>• <i>Providing transport infrastructure to support new housing in the western Wiltshire corridor.</i></li> <li>• <i>Assisting the efficient and sustainable distribution of freight in Wiltshire to build a stronger, more balanced economy by enhancing productivity and responding to local growth priorities.</i></li> <li>• <i>Supporting and promoting a choice of sustainable transport alternatives.</i></li> <li>• <i>Reducing the level of air pollutant and climate change emissions from transport.</i></li> <li>• <i>Improving safety for all road users and reducing the number of casualties on Wiltshire's roads.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>The local benefits are likely to include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Improving access to the railway station from the town and residential areas.</i></li> <li>• <i>Improving walking and cycling routes from the town to the south and Semington.</i></li> <li>• <i>Improving air quality and reduced traffic noise on the existing A350 through Beanacre and Melksham.</i></li> <li>• <i>Improving access to local services, shops, amenities and schools with the removal of through traffic.</i></li> <li>• <i>Reducing severance impacts on communities in Beanacre and northern Melksham caused by high traffic volumes.</i></li> <li>• <i>Creating opportunities for town centre regeneration</i></li> </ul> <p><i>A cost benefit analysis was undertaken in connection with the Strategic Outline Business Case, which established that the scheme could have economic benefits, and these are being refined for the Outline Business Case.</i></p>
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11	When will WC admit that the scheme is part of overall house building plans for the next twenty years? NB Because, as with the “route selection choice”, reality will catch up with WC, and confirm this anyway.	Mr P Chipper	<p><i>The scheme is an improvement of the strategically important A350 north-south route. It was one of nine priority schemes identified by the Western Gateway Strategic Transport Body, and development funding has been provided by the Department of Transport. It is an improvement to the Major Road Network.</i></p> <p><i>Traffic growth is expected as a result of economic and population growth within the A350 corridor. Growth is also expected from increased housing as a result of government targets and this is being considered in the Local Plan Review currently underway. There has been substantial growth in recent years especially at Chippenham and Trowbridge.</i></p>
12	Why are WC putting the safety and well-being of Bowerhill’s residents, and more, at risk?	Mr P Chipper	<p><i>One of the stated primary transport objectives for the scheme is to reduce personal injury accident rates and severity for the A350 and Melksham as a whole, to make the corridor safer and more resilient.</i></p> <p><i>The scheme will be designed and constructed in accordance with the appropriate highway standards and guidelines, and, as with all major schemes, will be the subject of a multi-stage Road Safety Audit process.</i></p>
13	Why is WC using a route that will place Melksham Oak School next to yet another main road?	Mr P Chipper	<p><i>The emerging bypass would be approximately 750m east of Melksham Oak School. Some of the options would have been closer and introduced severance between the town and the school and would have had greater impact on and access to and from the school. These options have now been discounted.</i></p> <p><i>The effect on the school and other sensitive areas will be considered in the environmental impact study to be undertaken.</i></p>
14	How can this be part of a WC green strategy?	Mr P Chipper	<p><i>The current emerging bypass scheme provides opportunities for complementary walking and cycling measures which would assist in Wiltshire Council continuing tackling the climate emergency. The following proposals would encourage the use of active travel measures and the use of public transport to promote opportunities for people to lead healthier, active lifestyles with a greater sense of wellbeing.</i></p>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of parallel walking cycling routes where viable and where appropriate</li> <li>• Increased opportunity for a pedestrian friendly Town Centre</li> <li>• Better access to Melksham Railway Station</li> <li>• Possible use of the existing A350 corridor to link Melksham and Lacock with active travel modes</li> <li>• Potential northern / southern connections to the wider cycle network</li> <li>• Accommodation of changes in flood levels from future climate change</li> <li>• Any potential scheme would seek to use low carbon alternative materials and low carbon construction plant to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions</li> </ul> <p>The emerging bypass would align with Wiltshire Council's vision to support the natural environment and biodiversity within Wiltshire through the development of a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.</p>
15	Why do we need the vast number of houses that this road will enable to be located in Melksham, etc?	Mr P Chipper	<i>The scheme is an improvement to the Major Road Network. It does not include or require the construction of houses or other developments.</i>
16	In projects it's important to understand the sponsors motivations, therefore what is/are the reason(s) for, those (WC etc), supporting the proposal?	Mr P Chipper	<p><i>Please refer to our FAQ "What are the objectives of the scheme?", which is available through the project website <a href="http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-a350-melksham-bypass">www.wiltshire.gov.uk/highways-a350-melksham-bypass</a>.</i></p> <p><i>The transport objectives of the scheme were agreed by the council's Cabinet on 13 October 2020 and are to:</i></p> <p><i>(i) Reduce journey times and delays and improve journey reliability on the A350 through Melksham and Beanacre, improving local and regional north-south connectivity, and supporting future housing and employment growth in the A350 corridor.</i></p> <p><i>(ii) Reduce journey times and delays on and improve journey reliability on the following routes through Melksham and Beanacre:</i></p>

			<p>A350 South - A3102 A365 West - A365 East A350 South - A365 West</p> <p>(iii) Provide enhanced opportunities for walking and cycling between Melksham town centre and the rail station / Bath Road, and along the existing A350 corridor within Melksham and Beanacre, which will help reduce the impact of transport on the environment and support local economic activity.</p> <p>(iv) Reduce personal injury accident rates and severity for the A350 and Melksham as a whole, to make the corridor safer and more resilient.</p> <p>(v) Reduce the volume of traffic, including HGVs, passing along the current A350 route in northern Melksham and Beanacre to reduce severance, whilst avoiding negative impacts on other existing or potential residential areas.</p>
17	How many (just a number, no other details required) of all the council supporters of the project, live within 100 metres of the bypass route?	Mr P Chipper	<i>This information is not known. However, given that the emerging bypass route has, in part, been developed to avoid close proximity with residential areas wherever possible, we would anticipate this to be very small.</i>
18	Why is the Cleveland Bridge closure being mentioned?	Mr P Chipper	<i>The temporary closure of Cleveland Bridge in Bath is expected to cause some heavy goods vehicles to use the A350 as an alternative route</i>
19	We the residents of Bowerhill don't need a bypass! We have fresh air, green fields, picnic spots, canal walks and quality walks in the countryside.	Anonymous	<p><i>Thank you for your comment. Please could we encourage you to engage with the consultation process and complete the on-line questionnaire so that your views can be captured.</i></p> <p><i>We are aware of the importance of access to the countryside and on local facilities and amenities, and this is a matter that has, and will, help shape the scheme as it develops further.</i></p>



20	Whenever I drive from Chippenham to Melksham, I have no issues whatsoever with the time it takes.	Anonymous	<i>Thank you for your comment. Please could we encourage you to engage with the consultation process and complete the on-line questionnaire so that your views can be captured.</i>
21	We chose to live in Bowerhill, because it was a small village, away from busy roads and close to open fields.	Anonymous	<i>Thank you for your comment. We would encourage residents to complete the on-line questionnaire so that your views can be captured.</i>
22	<p>Those that are campaigning for the Bypass are predominantly</p> <p>A. Living on the Existing A350 (e.g. Residents of <b>Beanacre</b>), and chose to live there (yes, if you buy a house next to a busy road, that's your choice!) don't push your bad decision on us.</p> <p>B. Want to shorten their journey time, but don't live in the affected area.</p> <p>C. Likely to be getting back handers for pushing this through, and are completely unaffected by proposed changes.</p> <p>To that extent I would hope that a greater percentage of vote is taken into account for those that will be negatively impacted.</p>	Anonymous	<p><i>The scheme is a proposal to improve the Major Road Network and is predominantly intended to accommodate through traffic. There is likely to be reduced traffic for some residents along the existing road but that is only one of the benefits of the scheme.</i></p> <p><i>We would encourage you to complete the on-line questionnaire so that your views can be captured. All views received will be taken into account and included in the report on the consultation.</i></p> <p><i>It should be noted that the consultation is not a public 'vote' for the most popular route or option. A wide range of factors must be taken into account in determining the preferred solution. The scheme is likely to be the subject of a public inquiry where an independent inspector will consider the evidence before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State.</i></p>

23	<p>From what I have heard the Route option selected is in order to cram more houses into Melksham / Bowerhill. The rate of houses being put up is absurd, when there is little development to bring anything good into Melksham.</p> <p>Where are the shops, the entertainment and local jobs. Does Melksham / Bowerhill need more houses. Send them elsewhere! Melksham has just become one massive housing estate and is swallowing Bowerhill, is Seend Next?</p>	Anonymous	<p><i>The scheme is an improvement to the Major Road Network. It does not include or require the construction of houses or other developments.</i></p>
24	<p>Since the area planned is a flood plain area, that suggests that the road will not be sunken into the surroundings to lessen the impact. Please give full details on how you plan to stop the noise pollution, and conceal the view from residents of Bowerhill and Seend and for anyone else</p>	Anonymous	<p><i>This scheme will require planning consent, and as part of the planning application an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be undertaken to identify and assess the potential environmental impacts that could arise. The assessment will need to propose mitigation measures to minimise these impacts in order to inform the planning, design and construction process, and satisfy legal obligations.</i></p> <p><i>Considerations and full assessment will be completed for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• Air quality</i></li> <li><i>• Ecology and nature conservation</i></li> <li><i>• Landscape and cultural heritage</i></li> <li><i>• Noise and vibration</i></li> <li><i>• Other environmental subjects as required by relevant standard and laws</i></li> </ul>

	that will be negatively impacted for that matter.		<p><i>Key stakeholders such as the Environment Agency will be consulted throughout the development process.</i></p> <p><i>Where required, the proposed scheme will include design measures and landscaping to avoid and reduce any potential adverse effects. These will be designed in more detail as the scheme develops.</i></p>
25	What compensation will be given to those that will be impacted by proposed changes. To that effect, I mean those that live within sight and earshot, with regards to dropping in house prices, desirability of houses, and quality of life.	Anonymous	<p><i>Efforts will be made to minimise the impact of this scheme on the local community and those that live in close proximity. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be undertaken to identify and assess the potential environmental impacts that could arise from the proposed scheme. The assessment will propose mitigation measures to minimise these impacts in order to inform the planning, design and construction process and satisfy legal obligations.</i></p> <p><i>Considerations and full assessment will be completed for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• Air quality</i></li> <li><i>• Ecology and nature conservation</i></li> <li><i>• Landscape and cultural heritage</i></li> <li><i>• Noise and vibration</i></li> <li><i>• Other environmental subject as required by relevant standard and laws</i></li> </ul> <p><i>If property prices are affected, in some circumstances it is possible to make a claim under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973 for the effects of physical factors such as noise, vibration, smell, fumes or artificial lighting caused by the use of a new bypass or road.</i></p>
26	Bring back the Bowerhill Villager newspaper and deliver to every house in Bowerhill, with a full article on the proposed so they know what is going on and can raise their concerns, this is largely only heard about on Facebook groups, and a lot	Anonymous	<p><i>The public are encouraged to give their views on the proposals. The first consultation was launched at the Melksham Area Board on 4 November 2020. An initial online presentation was given to Seend Parish Council on 27 October 2020 and to Melksham Town Council on 23 November 2020. Unfortunately, because of the Covid restrictions it was not possible to hold an exhibition at the library or town hall as would normally be the case.</i></p> <p><i>The consultation received coverage on local television and radio, and social media has been used to increase awareness of the scheme. An extension to the consultation</i></p>

	<p>of people are being kept in the dark.</p>		<p><i>period from the end of November to 17 January 2021 was made in view of the pandemic limitations, and to ensure that the local paper would be operating again so that it could report on the consultation and encourage participation.</i></p> <p><i>We are particularly keen to hear the views of all residents in the wider area to understand what concerns there might be about the proposals and how they could be mitigated. It should be noted that these are non-statutory consultations at this stage and there will be further opportunities to comment as the scheme develops.</i></p>
<p><b>27</b></p>	<p>Why is option 10c the only option shortlisted and option 7a which received more public votes not even on the table now?</p>	<p>Ms G Stevens</p>	<p><i>Please refer to our replies to items 1 and 2 above.</i></p> <p><i>The development of a solution for the A350 improvement scheme is being undertaken in accordance with DfT requirements and methodology, and is based on a number of factors including landscape, archaeology, ecology, air quality, flood risk, environment, cost and benefits and indeed how well options respond to the stated scheme objectives. Recent technical work has progressed sequentially and logically through the option assessment process.</i></p> <p><i>Option 10c is identified as the most viable route, although there are alternative alignments at the northern end, which are being consulted on.</i></p> <p><i>Other potential options have been discounted as the scheme has evolved for a range of reasons including not addressing the scheme objectives, design constraints, costs leading to limited value for money, technical deliverability matters, local impacts, and environmental matters.</i></p> <p><i>It is important that the scheme progressing through to the outline business case represents the best identified solution possible. If any of the other options had scored as well as Option 10c against the criteria, they would have been included in the second round of consultations.</i></p> <p><i>Option 7A was the improvement of the existing road north of Farmers Roundabout and the A365 Bath Road junction.</i></p>

			<p><i>Dualling the existing route south of Farmers Roundabout would be possible, but improvements to the existing road through Beanacre and at the northern end of Melksham to the standards required to meet the needs of the major road network would have extensive adverse impacts on the built up area.</i></p> <p><i>Compared to the likely scale of benefits that might be possible given the constrained nature of this section of the existing route, it was considered that 7A would offer lower overall value for money than other options and was not a viable option.</i></p>
<b>28</b>	How flexible is the northern part of the route 10c between the A350 and the A3102?	Mr T Nicholas	<p><i>The northern section of the emerging route is largely determined by the crossing point of Woodrow Road / Lower Woodrow and seeking a solution which avoids direct and significant impact on residential properties and businesses in that area.</i></p> <p><i>Three potential alternative route alignments are being considered at the northern end of the emerging route to the north of Woodrow Road / Lower Woodrow and how the bypass would tie in with the existing A350. There are various competing and conflicting constraints in this area which need to be carefully considered in determining the optimum solution - including the River Avon and its flood zone, potential impacts on the existing Roman Road, visual impacts, and potential impacts to individual properties in the vicinity of the existing A350.</i></p> <p><i>We are consulting on these potential alternative alignments and would be please to receive comments and views on these and will consider any alternative suggestions that may come forward.</i></p>