

Officer Response

Public Consultation

The initial public consultation, the outcome of which is considered within the report, asked respondents to indicate their support for a cycle facility between Hilperton and Melksham and asking their preferred route. The information provided at this time was a plan outlining the routes with some information regarding upgrading the crossing at Semington and the proposed closure at Devizes Road. Specific detail regarding either the route along the byway or along the A361 was not included at that time. The results of those questions are below for information. This data gives some indication as to the potential latent demand for the facility.

Do you support the proposed scheme from Hilperton to Melksham via Semington?

- Yes: 372 (70%)
- No: 33 (6%)
- Don't know: 101 (19%)

Which of the route option in the Hilperton to Melksham via Semington scheme do you prefer?

- Route 1 – along the A361: 106 (20%)
- Route 2 – via byways: 309 (58%)

The option of 'no route' was included as a decision option for the consideration of the Cabinet Member when reviewing the public consultation outcome and other information provided within the report. The report does not focus on a 'no route' option as this predominantly self-explanatory in that there would be no improvement for active travel between Hilperton and Melksham should the scheme not proceed in any form. There would be potential financial implications therefore this was noted.

Route comparison and compliance

Whilst consultation was ongoing, it was possible to undertake exploratory work allowing additional technical information to be included with the Cabinet Member report to aid the decision making process.

At the outset of public consultation, initial estimates demonstrated that the route along the A361 (route 1) was deliverable within the budget available. Further preliminary design investigations by Atkins identified additional carriageway alignment changes required to form a route compliant with the guidance set out in LTN1/20. The costs associated with this additional construction exceed the available budget as set out in the technical report.

it is important to note that these two route – A361 and the byways - are very different in nature and subject to different demands in terms of usage and as such the guidance in LTN1/20 differs in relation to each routes characteristics. For example, survey data shows that the annual average daily flow of vehicles on the A361 is in the region of 16,000 vehicles

while a recent 12 hour count on HILP21 recorded 12 vehicles during that period. The number of cycles and pedestrians (73 combined) on HILP21 was greater than the number of vehicles recorded during the same period.

Due to the low vehicle numbers and driven speeds on the byways route, the guidance put forward within LTN1/20 determines that a mixed traffic route is suitable. Whilst the proposed improved surfacing and wayfinding signing would see an increase in the use of the route by cyclists and pedestrians, these users already have legitimate use of the byways and all users of the route are required to be considerate to one another. Increased usage of the route by pedestrians and cyclists is overall beneficial to public safety in that the route becomes less secluded.

Lighting

With regard to lighting, the guidance set out in LTN 1/20 recommends lighting of routes adjacent to the carriageway – such as along the A361 – to reduce the likelihood of cyclists being dazzled by the headlights of passing vehicles and any confusion that may arise from drivers seeing cycle headlights on the nearside. However, the guidance states that routes similar to the byway will potentially see limited use outside of peak commuting hours even if lighting is provided and recognises that there is an environmental aspect to be considered in these locations. It is not intended to light this route and taking into account the additional comments received, low level lighting is also not being pursued.

Wildlife/Ecology

A Preliminary Ecological Assessment has been undertaken along with an initial habitat survey including bats. Wiltshire Council are awaiting the report on these assessments from the consultants Atkins. As it is not proposed to light the route, the impact upon bat wildlife is likely to be limited to noise generated during construction. Mitigations will be put in place according to the recommendations of the ecology specialists in relation to bats and other wildlife.

Devizes Road Hilperton – Point Closure

It is proposed that whilst the point closure be omitted from the overall cycle scheme at this time, Wiltshire Council will proceed with the legal advertisement process to allow formal consultation specifically relating to the proposed point closure to take place. The outcome of this consultation will inform the next steps to be taken.

Surfacing of the byways

As set out in the main report, due consideration is being given to the choice of surfacing for the byways to ensure that all users are appropriately accommodated. Wiltshire Council's term consultants, Atkins, are preparing a technical note outlining the result of research into best practice for multi-user surfaces as set out by organisations such as the British Horse Society, Sustrans and the Countryside Agency. There are a number of approaches to surfacing that are appropriate for cycles, pedestrians, equestrians and the vehicle traffic using the byways. This technical note will review the best practice and make a recommendation as to the most suitable solution for this location.