

Wiltshire Council Cabinet Meeting 30 November 2021

Statement about the A350 Melksham Bypass, on behalf of Wiltshire Climate Alliance (WCA) by Andrew Nicolson, Convenor, WCA Transport Topic Group

Chair, Cllr McClelland, Cabinet members, please think about the implications of the consultation report that more people opposed **any** scheme than supported the Eastern route.

“52% did not support the need for an improvement to the A350 at Melksham and Beanacre, and 43% did... 67% considered that the emerging route being consulted on would not be suitable for the scheme, and 33% that the route would.”

Here is a consultation response where I think the scheme has scored lower with the public and other consultees than any of the popup cycle lanes you removed a few months after you installed them.

That won't be an option with this road.

The National Trust's response included this passage: *“At least two of the three northern route options would require compulsory purchase of parts of our [the National Trust's] inalienable land”*, at Lacock.

Now for the likely cost of this 1 scheme, you could implement a massive program of bus infrastructure improvement and rail strategy investments.

**figures, one and four zeroes*

For a similar sum, you could install some **ten thousand*** separate local and strategic improvements for Active Travel – that's pedestrians, people with disabilities and people leaving their cars and vans at home and cycling to and from their daily activities, on regular bikes, e-bikes and cargo bikes.

And you would stand a good chance of getting these programmes fully funded by central government, which is looking for transport investment that drives the nation towards its carbon reduction targets.

This is starting to look like the same kind of expensive fiasco as the Westbury Eastern Bypass, which had to be aborted after losing its credibility at a Public Inquiry. How will the Council hold up against the National Trust, other landowners, and local objector alliances, in the face of such a low level of support?

And there's a staff and consultancy budget opportunity cost while you push on with this scheme.

The claim that the scheme will “enable” local improvements in alternatives to the car and van hasn't passed the democracy test. They didn't believe you. And you could do that anyway.

Why not do some high-ambition public transport and Active Travel measures first, to reduce traffic congestion? You could start with schemes for Melksham, Trowbridge-Yarnbrook-and-West-Ashton, and Westbury – communities bombarded by both strategic and unnecessary motor vehicle trips.

Then see if there is still a case for a Melksham bypass after 2030 or 2036, **if and only if** Wiltshire is on track to meet the government's climate and carbon targets. It's time for a moratorium and rethink!

[ENDS]