

Briefing note: Chippenham Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan consultation – July 2023

Thank you for your interest in responding to Wiltshire Council's prioritisation consultation on the draft Chippenham Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

This briefing note provides the perspective of the Chippenham Cycle Network Development Group (Cycle Chippenham), to help you respond. Note that the LCWIP is a document developed by Wiltshire Council, not by the Chippenham Cycle Network Development Group, though we have fed into the proposed network, and we broadly agree with the routes proposed in figure 6-6 of the draft LCWIP.

How to respond: The consultation is available at: <https://wiltshirelcwip.commonplace.is> and runs until 23:59 on Monday 31st July 2023.

From a cycling perspective, there are two questions of note in the consultation. To help you respond quickly, we have summarised our suggested response under each question, and then provided more detail explaining the rationale.

1. Chippenham LCWIP – Chippenham Cycle Network: Define priority routes for cycling

Suggested response:

We'd encourage you to prioritise the routes based on your journey needs.

We'd then encourage you to state that additional high-priority routes need to be included (see list below), using the text box marked 'If you have any other comments on walking or cycling, please let us know'. This is under the 'In your view, on which mode should the council focus its funding' question (see below).

More details:

The five routes shown under this question are not the entirety of the proposed Chippenham cycle network. You can see the full network in the LCWIP document in figure 6-6 (linked from the consultation).

Everyone's route preferences will differ, based on the journeys they need to make. However, we do feel that some particularly important routes have been omitted from this high-priority list. In particular, access to the railway station and town centre from the north and west of the town is not well-addressed by the five proposed routes, unless you live close to either CC03 or CC10.

We therefore feel that the following routes should also be considered high priorities:

- CC01 or CC02 (to serve the Malmesbury Road, Greenway Lane and western Birds Marsh areas)
- CC07 (to serve Pewsham)
- CC12 along Sheldon Road/Lowden Hill (to serve the Derriads, Frogwell and Sheldon Road areas)
- CC13 (Bristol Road/Marshfield Road – to serve Bumpers Farm, Cepen Park North and the area around Allington Way, and to provide access to the railway station from the west of the town)

2. In your view, on which mode should the council focus its spending: walking or cycling?

Suggested response:

We would encourage you to make the following points using the ‘If you have any other comments on walking or cycling, please let us know’ box in the consultation:

- **The wording of this question risks creating more division between people cycling and others, and inflaming what can already be a hostile environment for people cycling**
- **The choice should not be between walking and cycling spending, but between active travel and road building spending**
- **The council needs to put more resources into the teams responsible for bidding for active travel funds, so that Wiltshire can secure the levels of active travel funding that nearby authorities are successfully bidding for**

More details:

We are concerned to see this question, since it implies that investment in cycling infrastructure must come at the expense of investment in walking infrastructure, and vice versa.

This kind of head-to-head positioning risks creating division, and inflaming a situation where many people who cycle already experience abuse from others.

The reality is that both walking and cycling infrastructure need significant investment, and that rather than giving people a choice between cycling and walking, the question of spending priority should actually be between active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) and road-building.

The council dedicates significant resources towards securing funding for large-scale road programmes (including the A350 dualling, and M4 J17 works, to name just two multi-million-pound projects). We would like to see those council resources reallocated to focus on bidding for funds for active travel and public transport instead.

Nearby councils are successfully securing significantly more walking and cycling funding from Active Travel England than Wiltshire Council. Since the inception of the Active Travel Fund in 2020, here is what selected nearby local authorities have secured from this fund:

- Gloucestershire: £20.7 million
- Oxfordshire: £13.8 million
- Hampshire: £7.3 million

Wiltshire has secured c.£1.9 million.

(Please Note: this is not in any way a criticism of the Wiltshire Council officer teams that work on the funding bids. Our point is that these teams need to be given more resources to enable them to successfully secure the levels of funding we are seeing from other nearby councils.)

Sources:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-active-travel-fund-local-transport-authority-allocations/emergency-active-travel-fund-total-indicative-allocations>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-people-to-benefit-from-200-million-to-improve-walking-and-cycling-routes>

Some further notes:

Q: Why is there a need for a cycle route along the Bristol Road, parallel to the Donkey Field path?

A: For people to choose to cycle their short journeys, they need routes that are first and foremost considered **safe at all times**, including when it's dark.

While many people will deem the Donkey Field path safe during the day, **many will not consider it safe at night**. This is because it has no natural surveillance from nearby buildings or roads, no lighting along much of its length, and very few escape points.

A route along the Bristol Road will have:

- Good surveillance from the houses
- Good lighting
- Good visibility ahead for people using it, and opportunities for people to turn off or turn round if they see something they're uncomfortable with

ENDS