

WRITTEN SUBMISSION AND SUMMARY BY GILLIAN ANLEZARK (Ref 20019632) ON BEHALF OF COGS (CYCLING OPPORTUNITIES GROUP FOR SALISBURY) TO APPLICATION BY HIGHWAYS ENGLAND FOR AN ORDER GRANTING DEVELOPMENT CONSENT FOR A303 AMESBURY TO BERWICK DOWN

1st May 2019

This written submission is made on behalf of the Cycling Opportunities Group for Salisbury (COGS), a volunteer organisation seeking to improve facilities for cyclists in and around Salisbury and South Wiltshire since 1994 (<https://sites.google.com/site/cogsbike/>). I am also a member of Cycling UK, the national cycling charity, and a Sustrans volunteer ranger for the National Cycle Network (NCN) routes 24 and 45 that pass through Salisbury. I cycle regularly on route 45 and use the bridleways and byways in the World Heritage Site (WHS) and the wider area for walking and cycling.

General comments

Our interest in the Scheme stems from the severance for cyclists that the A303 causes, preventing safe access to north-south routes across Wiltshire, a deterrent to commuting between Amesbury, Winterbourne Stoke, Shrewton, Durrington and Bulford and longer east-west routes across Salisbury Plain, as well as accessing the WHS from the major population centre and visitor destination of Salisbury. Severance has been exacerbated since the closure of the A344 and building of the Stonehenge Visitor Centre because the surface of the removed part of the A344 across the WHS is not suitable for all weather cycling (or for wheelchair users) and there is no safe crossing of the A303 provided at Stonehenge Bottom for any non-motorised user (NMU).

In the present Scheme, cyclists and other NMUs will be excluded from the proposed tunnel leaving no east-west surfaced route between the tunnel portals unless the proposed new restricted byway along the route of the existing A303 is suitably constructed, surfaced and maintained.

We would like to refer the Panel to Highways England's Cycling Strategy (2016) (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/490545/S150572_Cycling_Strategy.pdf) for how we would expect the Scheme to take account of the requirements of cyclists and indeed other NMUs whose needs largely coincide in that they want routes that are safe, coherent, direct and convenient, minimise gradients as far as possible and avoid lengthy detours. Routes should be surfaced so as to be easily usable by all types of cycle in all weather conditions, and where possible (e.g. sufficient available width), differential provision made for the needs of all NMUs to minimise wear, damage and conflict, particularly where higher levels of use are likely.

We welcome the plan for a restricted byway with bound surface across the WHS and look forward to involvement in discussions regarding its construction and surface at the detailed design stage, which should be of

similar surface quality and durability to the existing A303. We are pleased to see that the intention is for all new Public Rights of Way (PRoW) to be given formal status and they will be added to the definitive map. This is a major failing of the path on the removed part of the A344 provided as part of the Stonehenge Visitor Centre project that remains a permissive path only. The proposed tunnel will help to unite the landscape of the WHS and promote inclusive enjoyment by people on foot, bicycle, horses, horse-drawn carriages or in wheelchairs and prams.

However, severance issues still remain, particularly at the eastern end of the scheme and in the wider area, where we would like to see more opportunities taken for improving facilities for NMUs, linking settlements with workplaces and amenities safely and directly.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Western section

A safe crossing needs to be provided at Yarnbury, where the PRoW SLAN3 crosses the A303. The proposed restricted byway leaves users heading west on the north or south of the carriageway with no safe means of crossing except at Green bridge 1. This is inconsistent with HE policy

“Our Cycling Strategy shows how our planned roads improvements programme will provide integrated schemes which improve cycling facilities. This will contribute towards the development of an integrated, safe, comprehensive and high quality cycling network. For our network this means cycling facilities which are safe, separate from traffic and that enable users of all abilities to cycle, encouraging cycling as a sustainable form of transport”

and Wiltshire Council also note in the Local Impact Report, that motorised vehicles using the PRoWs will need to cross the A303 at this point (Section 8, Public Rights of Way, Negative operational impact).

We welcome the removal of the hazardous crossing of the A303 from the B3083 at Winterbourne Stoke, making this attractive road through the Till Valley part of a potential circular cycle route from Salisbury, Wilton or Amesbury, although this is still blighted by the need to travel along the A36 in Wilton and from Stoford to Stapleford. These wider issues should be tackled as part of the overall legacy of the project in line with HE Cycle Strategy.

It is essential that the proposed provision is made for cyclists to reach Airman's Corner from the restricted byway over the tunnel, giving safe access to the Stonehenge Visitor Centre, avoiding the new double roundabout, and for utility journeys between Shrewton and Amesbury, and longer distance cycle routes across the Plain. We note that discussions are on-going between English Heritage, HE and a third party (HE comments on Relevant Representations) regarding an alternative route, but this should not be longer or less safe and attractive than the proposed route and should consider safety when re-joining the carriageway after Airman's corner.

We look forward to contributing to the detailed design stage for accessing the southern roundabout and link to Winterbourne Stoke.

Central Section

We have no details yet on the surface, fencing and general arrangements for the restricted byway over the tunnel or how it will connect with AMES11 and 12, except that HE has stated that there will be no lighting or obtrusive signage across the WHS. This may affect the type of access controls that are installed, or their appearance, to avoid hazards to users during darkness hours. However, it is essential that its surface should be of similar quality and durability to the existing A303 and maintainable so that it is easily usable by all types of cyclists all day and year round. As stated earlier, we look forward to involvement in the detailed design stage for this.

NCN route 45 joins Stonehenge Road at the northern end of the section of the Avon Valley known as the Woodford Valley. This is the primary on road route for cyclists coming to Stonehenge from Salisbury and the south of England, and long distance cycling to the north and west. Stonehenge Road also forms an important link into Amesbury from NCN 45 and we would suggest that completing the section from the Woodford valley through Amesbury to Telegraph Hill via Ratfyn (see below) would form an excellent legacy project. There must be a high quality link between Stonehenge Road and the new restricted byway across the WHS.

Eastern section

This section illustrates why facilities for cyclists and other NMUs need to be designed into a scheme from the outset rather than being a later addition. NMUs are disadvantaged by some of the proposed changes that increase severance and lengthen journey times. For example, we invite the Panel to compare the facilities proposed on the A360 and the unclassified road between Bulford and Solstice Park with those for the A345, leaving the A345 as the only major north-south route in the Scheme area with no facilities for cyclists, although it joins two growing centres of population.

We await details of a proposed cycling route at Countess roundabout, the route on sheet 9 of TR010025 - 2.9 is shown as a footway only, although section 6.5.6 of 7.2 Design and Access Statement refers to use by cyclists to access NCN45 (access route not specified, but presumably via Amesbury or Durrington, a contribution towards providing this route would be a welcome legacy project as mentioned above).

At present cyclists use an on-carriageway route to cross the A303 with traffic-light controlled junctions so moving with motor traffic, or use the pedestrian underpass on the east side. The new roundabout under the A303 flyover

should not make this less convenient for cyclists by displacing them on to a parallel cycleway that takes longer to cross slip roads than if they stayed on the carriageway. A badly designed cycleway is likely to be avoided by more confident cyclists who will stay on the carriageway rather than wait to re-join it from a cycleway that requires them to give way after traversing the roundabout. However, safety at the slip road junctions with a foot/cycleway is an important consideration and we would be happy with suitably responsive light-controlled crossings.

Consideration also needs to be given to cycling facilities in Countess Road where cyclists may wish to visit Woodhenge and thence use bridleways to get to Salisbury Plain and the WHS. Commuting to and from Durrington is also poorly served with cyclists having to mix with fast moving traffic. Whilst the A345 is the responsibility of Wiltshire Council, little funding is available to local authorities and a contribution from HE funds would be welcome.

The bridge carrying bridleway AMES44 over the A303 at Ratfyn is a key north-south off-road route for cyclists and horse-riders but it is not shown on maps in 2.6 Rights of Way and Access Plans or 2.9 General Arrangement plans. We would like its status clarified as it is over the position of the eastern end of the Countess flyover. Furthermore approach roads are to be used to gain access to power supplies as part of the works. We would like to see the approaches to this route from Amesbury improved to make a high quality link with NCN45 and the Wiltshire Cycleway at Solstice roundabout. HE have suggested that the NMU connections around Amesbury are not as comprehensive as those in Winterbourne Stoke because *“There are limited opportunities to enhance the NMU provision within Amesbury due to limited road space or other available corridors.”* (Response to relevant representations 14-4, RR1429), however, this link already exists and would be relatively simple to improve.

The proposed modifications to Allington Track and closure of AMES1 and 2, will increase severance for NMUs and lengthen journey times as well as increasing the risk to cyclists and other NMUs sharing road space with motorised traffic. Whilst appreciating the safety issues of keeping the crossing open to slower moving traffic, we would ask the Panel to consider if the extra distance for cyclists or walkers travelling to and from Bulford village or Camp to Boscombe Down or other destinations in the Bourne Valley for employment or leisure (estimated at 3-5km each way plus extra gradients to negotiate, depending on where journeys begin and end) is acceptable. All NMUs will be forced to use the Solstice roundabout with motorised traffic. Wiltshire Council state in the LIR Section 7, page 46 that *“Allington Track is forecast to have traffic volumes nearly double from existing levels as a result of the Scheme. It is considered that the proposed new route might attract lorries to and from Solstice from the A338, and this might represent a severe negative impact.....”*. Furthermore, in section 8 PRoW, p53, they note *“Sheet 11 (of 15) PROW AMES 2, where it meets A303 north of A303 – Proposal to be stopped up and connection to A303 closed. There is no alternative provision north and no connection south of A303”*. To mitigate severance, we would support a bridge or underpass at this point and an improved on or off road to

provide a two-way link to the Youth Hostel at Cholderton. If these are provided, we will not object to the stopping up of the PRowS.

Conclusions

The Scheme will provide some welcome new facilities for cycling, horse-riding and walking across the WHS, but needs to take a wider view of connecting in a coherent way with existing networks in order for NMUs to use them in safety.

SUMMARY

The Scheme will create some welcome new facilities for cycling, horse-riding and walking across the World Heritage Site (WHS) that reduce severance caused by the A303. However there are missed opportunities to take a wider view of connecting in a coherent way with existing networks in order for non-motorised users (NMUs) to make long and short journeys safely away from motor traffic in accordance with the Highways England Cycling Strategy (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/490545/S150572_Cycling_Strategy.pdf).

We welcome

- New rights of way across the WHS as long as they are of an appropriate width to avoid conflict between users, appropriately surfaced to allow use in all weathers and by all types of cycles, and adequately maintained
- New right of way allowing safe access for NMUs to the Stonehenge Visitor Centre without using Longbarrow roundabout
- Reduced severance for cyclists using minor roads and PRowS in the western and central sections
- The opportunity to participate in the detailed design stage for these facilities

We have reservations and potential objections to

- Lack of high quality links to National Cycle Network (NCN) route 45 and the Wiltshire Cycleway from Amesbury
- Differential treatment of links between existing settlements (Amesbury, Durrington and Bulford), PRowS and amenities in the eastern section compared with those around Winterbourne Stoke
- Increased unmitigated severance and extended route length for NMUs by diverting Allington Track