Funded by UK Government

South Gloucestershire Council

Delivering for you

A38 & Alveston Hill improvements

Further information

Opening up Thornbury and surrounding villages to active travel opportunities

We want to invest in local transport to make it easier and safer for people walking, cycling, wheeling, and travelling by bus from Thornbury and the surrounding villages towards Bristol.

We have already completed two phases of engagement on this scheme. Our initial consultation showed overall support for new investment, with large numbers of people wanting to switch away from their cars for more journeys. We then, earlier this year, captured some initial feedback on the designs for the first stretches of proposed improvements, where concern was expressed about some aspects of the design.

We are now ready to present the designs for the full project. We have incorporated back into the scheme a new stretch of cycle lane between Thornbury and Alveston following the Alveston Hill road, although parts of this route are subject to planning considerations.

The proposals

We have sought funding from the West of England Combined Authority to be invested in improved facilities for cyclists, pedestrians and bus users. This is part of a strategy to make it easier, safer and more pleasant to use active and sustainable travel options and therefore make it more feasible for people to switch away from their cars (especially for short journeys).

Improvements have been prioritised across South Gloucestershire, Bristol and the wider West of England which have the greatest potential impact to deliver benefits for all.

What is proposed as part of this scheme?

The improvements proposed here are part of a wider scheme linking up Thornbury in the north with the Aztec West industrial area in the south and then onto Bradley Stoke following Bradley Stoke Way.

There is already a well-used shared use path for pedestrians and cyclists on Bradley Stoke Way; the proposals there involve creating a separate cycle lane to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists. There isn't currently any such option for cyclists on the stretch up to Thornbury; if anyone wants to travel this way on a bike, they have to do so on the road alongside cars, vans and lorries. The plan is to create new segregated cycling and walking tracks to make this a more viable option. Both schemes would link up with other existing and proposed tracks and paths to create an integrated network, opening up more and more places to active travel options.

Bus stop improvements are planned across both schemes and there is also a proposal for a new bus priority lane to minimise delays for buses.

Improvements on A38/Alveston Hill

- A new, separate two-way cycleway alongside the footway between Almondsbury and Alveston. This will give cyclists a safe route where there currently is no option and free up more space for pedestrians, making it safer for everyone.
- A new bus lane southbound approaching Hortham Lane, to ease the current congestion at busy times.
- Improvements to bus stops along the route to make traveling by bus a more pleasant experience – especially when it is raining! All stops will be upgraded to have shelters and accessibility will be improved by raising kerb heights to reduce the step to the bus.
- Improved crossing facilities for pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists along the A38, to improve safety and provide access to bus stops.
- Reduction in speed limits at Almondsbury and Rudgeway to make getting around safer for everyone.

Your concerns

We recognise there were concerns raised in our previous consultation about the design of the scheme, particularly from people who live directly on the route, worried about potential disruption.

These concerns are understandable, and the council is doing all it can to minimise and mitigate impact so that we can deliver the wider benefits, which so many local people have told us they want.

Previous opposition to the scheme has focused on the following issues:

Concern: Environmental damage due to loss of green verges.
Response: There will be some loss of verges, but the environmental impact will be more than offset through replacement higher biodiversity planting elsewhere. A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) will detail the immediate and long-term commitments to manage the planting, protection and enhancement of biodiversity in and around a new scheme, both during and following construction. The LEMP will consider specific measures to benefit biodiversity, by avoiding and mitigating damage and considering compensation measures such as (but not limited to):

- Landscape management and monitoring requirements,
- A management regime of retained grassland verges to improve their floristic diversity post-construction, thereby increasing the value of each scheme for invertebrates,
- Amphibian friendly drainage assets,
- Hedgerow and tree planting/screening in key areas to reduce road mortality to birds,
- Bird and bat box installation.

By identifying these specific measures, the design can be influenced to include these measures and provide opportunity for the scheme to improve landscape and biodiversity along and around the route.

Concern: High carbon footprint of building the cycle tracks
Response: A key element of the planning and designs of the scheme is a Carbon Management Plan, through which we are calculating the whole life carbon cost of the proposed infrastructure – the materials, transport, construction, replacement and the energy we use. At each stage, we are considering every opportunity to reduce our carbon footprint.

It is true that the initial build phase will be carbon intensive, but the most important metric is the full lifetime carbon cost/benefits of the improvements compared to the 'do nothing' option (which would see carbon emissions steadily increase over time). We are required to report on - and publish - the forecast transport carbon benefits of the scheme as part of the Full Business Case and this will be used to inform mitigation if required such as offsetting.

Results from similar projects and our initial projections show the initial costs will be offset as more people shift to more sustainable ways of getting around.

Concern: Safety when entering/exiting driveways
Response: Vehicles exiting driveways do not currently have priority over pedestrians and the same will be true for anyone cycling or wheeling on the cycle track. Therefore, drivers would need to check for passing cyclists in the same way they currently do for pedestrians and other vehicles. At times this will mean pedestrians and cyclists will need to accept vehicles may block the footway and/or cycle track in order to complete their entry/exit safely. The designs ensure maximum visibility for cyclists and drivers.

Similar schemes have been operating for many years in locations across the country and internationally without this causing issues.

Concern: Increased traffic delays due to narrowing of roads
Response: We continue to model likely impact on traffic movements. Modelling suggests that in the short term there could be some small increases to journey times, mostly at off-peak times but these are expected to be offset at peak times by the reduced delays provided by the junction improvements listed above. In the longer run, in taking more vehicles off the road - especially those making shorter journeys – there will be more space for those who need to drive and congestion will be reduced.

With projected population increases, we anticipate the 'do nothing' approach would lead to a 26% increase in trips on the road network by 2036, increasing average delays per vehicle by almost 40%.

Concern: I want my council tax money to be spent on other things.
Response: No council tax money is being spent on this scheme. Funding comes from Central Government on the pre-condition that money **must be spent on measures to encourage cycling and active travel.**

If we do not proceed with this scheme, money would be returned to Central Government so it could be spent on improvements elsewhere.

Concern: Narrower roads restrict access for emergency services vehicles
Response: Legislation directs minimum widths for roads to allow wide loads to pass and to ensure access for emergency service vehicles. The designs fully comply with these minimum widths. The aim of schemes like this one is to encourage more people to swap

their cars for active travel options, freeing up more space for those who need to drive – like emergency service vehicles.

Concern: There aren't enough cyclists to warrant this investment
Response: Road safety concerns are often one of the main barriers to active travel. This is a particular issue for the A38, where the only option open to cyclists currently is to ride on a busy A-road with no separation from cars, vans and lorries travelling at 40mph – only the most accomplished cyclist would consider this feasible.

Our initial survey identified lots of people who would choose to cycle if there was segregation from vehicles and better facilities, which is backed up by evidence from other similar areas where there has been a large uptake in cycling once facilities are provided.

The scheme design

We have produced updated visuals and maps to show the designs and how the scheme will work in greater detail. Please review these before commenting on the practicalities of the scheme.