

From: Melksham Rail User Group
To: "Melksham Bypass Consultation"
Date: 16th January 2021



Dear Sirs,

**Input to current "A350 Melksham Bypass" consultation
from the Melksham Rail User Group**

Thank you for the early opportunity to provide input into the "A350 Melksham Bypass" consultation process.

This input is written on behalf of the Melksham Rail User Group and was unanimously adopted at the group meeting on Wednesday 13th January 2021.

1. Please consider the Melksham Rail User Group and the TransWilts Community Rail Partnerships as stakeholders and consultees throughout this process
2. We commend options 4 and 5 (rail and bus) public transport and option 6 (cycle and walking) improvements, and note that they score very highly on deliverability, affordability and acceptability. Whilst they are unlikely to meet your objectives on their own, they should provide a valuable and significant element implemented as thoroughly as practical in any solution
3. Please look at alternative of long distance traffic routing via the already Highways England / Trunk A46/A36 route rather than by increasing capacity on the regional A350 (you have confirmed you can add other options at this stage).
4. Please take a look at the alternative of rail use for longer distance freight and medium and longer passenger traffic via the TransWilts railway line which parallels the A350 road.
5. Please ensure that any railway crossings (options 9a, 9b, 9c, 8a and 8b) allow for the line to be restored to a double track such that trains can path both ways under or over the bridge at the same time. Please rule out level crossings at each point that rail and road cross.
6. Please ensure that any development of options 7a, 9b and 9c do not encroach on access to and use of the railway station and public transport hub on Station Approach. The opportunity should be taken within any option to

improve bus / road access to the transport hub at the station for connectionless public transport links in all directions and by rail, road and path.

7. Please use modelling which uses current and projected factors in preference or addition to historic ones.

8. Please take into account and project the consequential housing and business development enabled by the various options in addition to making decisions on purely current and road engineering factors

9. Please ensure that current and planned canal access, use and development is not restricted by any new roads built or changes made to existing roads as an outcome of these proposals or their implementation

10. Please take the opportunity offered by any changes and development to improve national and other cycle routes in terms of infrastructure, access to it, and removing powered road traffic from the route. In particular but not limited to routes 10 a through d and route 403 / Melksham Forest to Lacock

Yours faithfully

Graham Ellis

on **behalf of and the direction of the Melksham Rail User Group**

info@mrug.org.uk / <http://www.mrug.org.uk>

Phone: 01225 708225 or 0797 4 925 928

Appendix information

Supplementary data to item 1 – MRUG Background

The Melksham Rail User Group (MRUG) - formerly the Melksham Railway Development Group - promotes the development and use of public and sustainable transport for journeys to, from and within the Melksham Area. Group members founded the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership in 2011 which has grown into an organisation with a wider (Wiltshire) mandate, and of which MRUG remains a member. MRUG is a member of the Community Rail Network (formerly ACoRP) and has partnered with train and bus operators, councils, other rail organisations and the Department for Transport in helping provide and make use of train, bus and cycle as options to be used in appropriate parallel with private car travel.

MRUG members have technical qualifications and experience over many years and local knowledge to help inform and support the development of travel and transport improvements in and across the area for the future, and we take a

pragmatic view through partnership. We are not a protest group, though we may make constructive criticism at times.

Supplementary data to item 2 – Public transport growth, Melksham

2. Passenger number using Melksham Station have risen from 3,000 journeys per annum to 75,000 in recent years and were predicted (pre-Covid) to be between 260,000 and 600,000 in the planned future. Workings at <http://www.passenger.chat/22954>. Whilst it is more difficult to forecast for the "new normal" at present, we note that local traffic has been more robust than long distance traffic in the last year, and whilst we anticipate a hiatus in growth for a short while, we expect to see the sort of increases predicted last year - all the more so now that there are further significant increases in housing provision in the Melksham area.

Supplementary data to item 3 – alternative for long distance traffic

3 A great deal of the traffic under consideration is long distance traffic, headed from the M4 Motorway to Warminster and south thereof - to Salisbury, Southampton, and Poole. From South Wales and Bristol, much traffic uses the M4 and A350 to the A36 in the Warminster area, rather than the M4 and A46 to join the A36 in Bath, even though the latter is shorter in distance and is a Highway England Trunk Route and not just a primary route within our region. This choice of route is because of (i) a weight limit on a bridge in Bath, (ii) incoming clean air charging in Bath and (iii) congestion on London Road, Bathwick Street and Beckford Road in Bath. An option to link the A46 (Batheaston bypass) and the A36 (Warminster Road) by a link should also be included in your evaluation. I note that:

3.1 This link would be within the area of the Western Gateway SnTB who are the sponsors

3.2 Although the area for the new road has been protected in the past, substantial new build housing is being build there at present to the east of Bathampton and it would appear that there are ways to develop there

3.3 This new link would reduce the need to provide extra capacity around Chippenham or a means for heavy traffic to be kept out of the centre of Westbury

3.4 This link being on National Trunk Roads would be better fitted to national policy

3.5 This link would provide a better outlet from the Frome area to the M4, saving issues around North Bradley

3.6 This link would substantially reduce traffic / growth through Beanacre and North Melksham

3.7 This link would reduce many journey times, and with that bring business benefits and an improved carbon footprint.

Supplementary data to item 5 – need for double track railway crossing

5.1 The railway line in the vicinity of Melksham is currently a single track which runs on a formation that was previously double track. Traffic on the line has

grown significantly in recent years and is forecast to continue to grow with additional trains running necessitating parts or all of the line having the second track relayed. We ask that any bridges are built to accommodate the second track. Refer to SWLEP, Network Rail, Wiltshire Council Sustainable Transport Group and the TransWilts CRP for further data.

5.2 Although level crossings remain at some locations on major roads and railways, the delays and safety issues raised in their operation should rule them out in consideration of the bypass options.

Supplementary data to item 6 – need to protect station environment

6. Your Options 9b and 9c bypass Beanacre, but then arrive into Melksham over the Railway on the A365 very close to the end of the platform at Melksham Station. Passenger numbers at that station have risen from 3,000 to 75,000 per annum in the past 20 years and are forecast to rise to well over 250,000 in the next few years; that's a conservative estimate as it does not allow for town growth, nor in modal shift likely through Climate change. Please take care with these options to ensure that the road and traffic do not encroach on space and access required for public transport, either physically or through noise or air quality.

Supplementary data to item 7 – need to use current modelling

7. Current modelling using, I am given to understand, "WebTAG" factors that are already long in the tooth. In the light of climate change and the move to greener transport, and of the changes brought about by Coronavirus which have slashed journey requirements with the probability that commuter journeys will be permanently reduced, please re-evaluate the options based on current and projected factors, and not on historic ones which are generally acknowledged to be out of date.

Supplementary data to item 8 - need to consider effected development

8. The use of any new road will to some extent depend on the growth in business and residence it brings along its route, and indeed our MP at a public Zoom meeting hosted by the area board and addressed by yourselves suggested that the population of Melksham might double. Use of a new / improved road and additional housing are very much linked to one another, but at this stage you have referred us a separate strand of development planning. Please ensure that your ongoing evaluation takes account of the potential community growth enabled by each option, to be included into future proposals and consultations.

Supplementary data to items 9 and 10 – improvement / protection canal, cycling, walking amenity

9/10.1 Options 10 (a, b, c and d) all cross both National Cycle Route 403 and the bed of the Wilts and Berks Canal. Summary sheets for the various options

appear to differ in how they count crossings. Should these options be adopted:

9/10.2 Protection for a restored canal, with towpath suitable for cycle and other sustainable modes should be provided for in the building of the road and maintained thereafter.

9/10.3 The current National Cycle Route 403 along Lower Woodrow Road is a "rat run" with a poor a poor safety record. Road design and implementation should be such as to take the traffic off this cycle route, both to the south and the north of where it intersects with the new bypass.

9/10.4 Options 8a, 8b and 9c cross the route of the proposed new cut linking the Kennet and Avon Canal to the River Avon and protection for a canal with towpath suitable for cycle and other sustainable modes should be provided for in the building of the road and maintained thereafter.

9/10.5 Options 10c and 8b come close to the Kennet and Avon Canal and run parallel to it between the canal and parts of Melksham for which it provides a significant amenity. Care should be taken to retain that amenity.

9/10.6 Options 10d crosses the Kennet and Avon Canal which provides a significant amenity. Care should be taken to retain that amenity.

- Document ends. 16.1.2021 / GE/MRUG A350 Melksham Bypass input -