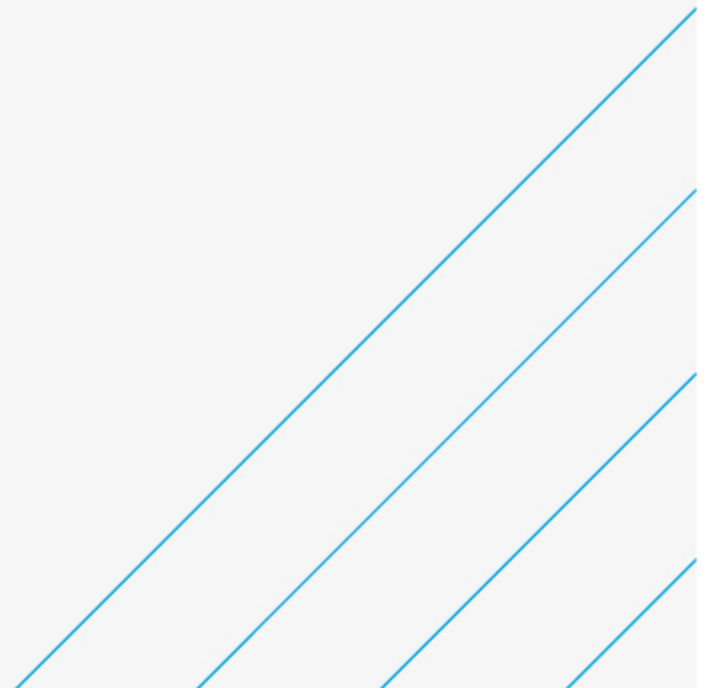


Alveston Hill Greenway Shared Use Path

Planning, Design & Access Statement

South Gloucestershire Council

December 2023



Notice

This document and its contents have been prepared and are intended solely as information for the South Gloucestershire Council Highways Team regarding A38 and Alveston Hill improvements.

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This document has 17 pages including the cover.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of this Report

South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) is seeking to improve highways, cycleways and pedestrian networks across its administrative area with the objective to improve public transport and sustainable transport infrastructure. This document has been produced by Atkins Realis on behalf of SGC.

The application concerns proposals to construct a new greenway comprising a footpath and cycle path on agricultural land on the edge of Thornbury, which will provide a link to Alveston.

The formal description of development is as follows:

“Proposed off-road greenway comprising segregated cycleway and footway.”

This Planning, Design and Access Statement (PDAS) has been prepared to support the application for full planning permission for the Scheme. It comprises a planning statement, which sets out the case for the Scheme, appraises the Scheme against planning policy and considers the merits and harm of the proposals. The Design and Access Statement summarises the design development and the rationale for the proposed design. This is followed by a conclusion to support the reasoning for this proposed development,

1.2. Content of the Planning Submission

This application for full planning permission is submitted to South Gloucestershire Council. The application package comprises the following:

- Application Form and Ownership Certificate
- Community Infrastructure Levy Question Form
- Planning, Design and Access Statement (this document)
- Geo-environmental Desk Study
- Heritage Desk Based Assessment
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Great Crested Newt Survey Report
- Hazel Dormouse Survey Report
- Bat Survey Report
- Hedgerow Report
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Drainage Strategy
- Statement of Community Involvement

Plans and Drawings submitted with the planning application comprise:

- WECA_SGC-ATK-HGN-5220316-DR-CH-000009 Rev C01 Site Location Plan
- WECA_SGC-ATK-HGN-5220316-DR-CH-000007 Rev C03 General Arrangement Layout
- WECA_SGC-ATK-HGN-5220316-DR-CH-000008 Rev C01 Existing Site Plan
- WECA_SGC-ATK-HGN-5220316-DR-CH-000001 Rev C01 Earthworks Layout
- WECA_SGC-ATK-HGN-5220316-DR-CH-000010 Rev C01 Detail Cross Section Sheet 1 of 2
- WECA_SGC-ATK-HGN-5220316-DR-CH-000011 Rev C01 Detail Cross Section Sheet 2 of 2
- WECA_SGC-ATK-ELS-5220316-DR-LL-000007 Rev C03 Landscape General Arrangement Sheet 1 of 2

- WECA_SGC-ATK-ELS-5220316-DR-LL-000008 Rev C02 Landscape General Arrangement Sheet 2 of 2
- Public Right of Way Plan

2. Scheme Context

2.1. Site Description

The application site comprises land within agricultural fields that are located to the south of Thornbury and part of the service access to Thornbury Leisure Centre. The fields are bounded to the north by Thornbury Leisure Centre and its car park. To the east are more agricultural fields whilst the south and west boundaries adjoin the B4061 Alveston Hill, a single carriageway road that links Thornbury to the A38, and some cottages and their private gardens. The perimeters with Alveston Hill and the cottage gardens are lined with trees and shrubs.

The service access to Thornbury Leisure Centre is located to the west of the building. It is currently accessed via the roundabout in front of the leisure centre and provides a link to Public Right of Way (PRoW) OTH/57/10 and OTH57/20, which run through the fields to the south and link to Alveston Hill. The servicing area contains a refuse store and car parking spaces for the leisure centre.

Designations

The Site lies within the parish of Thornbury Council. The following designations have been identified:

- The Site is located within the Bristol Green Belt (Policies CS5 and PSP7)
- The Public Right of Way (PRoW) to the east of the Site is an Active Travel Route (Policy PSP10)
- The Site is partly located in Flood Zone 3.

2.2. Proposed Development

The application proposal for full planning permission comprises the creation of a new greenway comprising an off-road path including a 3m 2-way cycle track and 2m footpath from Alveston Hill to the front of Thornbury Leisure Centre. A new connection point will be created on Alveston Hill to link the path with the existing highway.

The proposed greenway would provide enhanced cycle provision connecting to the A38 and a milder gradient shared route between Thornbury Leisure Centre and Alveston, avoiding the steep Bristol Road via Alveston Hill. The cycleway and footway on the proposed path would be physically segregated by a small edge detail that does not cause obstruction or represent a trip hazard.

In addition to the path, the proposed development includes three rest stop areas (with seating) and two drainage ponds that provide visual amenity as well as ecological enhancement opportunities. A stock proof fence is proposed to run alongside the east side of the path to separate the path from the adjacent agricultural fields.

Details of the proposed path and supporting features are provided on the following drawings:

- WECA_SGC-ATK-HGN-5220316-DR-CH-000007 Rev C01 General Arrangement Layout
- WECA_SGC-ATK-ELS-5220316-DR-LL-000007 Rev P01 Landscape General Arrangement Sheet 1 of 2
- WECA_SGC-ATK-ELS-5220316-DR-LL-000008 Rev P01 Landscape General Arrangement Sheet 2 of 2

The intention is for the new path to replace PRoW's OTH/57/10 and OTH/57/20 that run to the east of the site, providing a dedicated path suitable for multiple modes of sustainable transport in lieu of the current field. A new connection to PRoW OTH/59/10 is also proposed to ensure continuing connectivity following the removal of PRoW's OTH/57/10 and OTH/57/20. The extinguishment of these PRoW's will be carried out under The Highways Act.

The development proposed under this application forms part of a larger set of works to create an improved active travel route from the A38/B4061 Thornbury Road junction to Midland Way in

Thornbury. These works are considered to be improvements to the existing highway and therefore benefit from permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 9, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (the GPDO).

The routing and extent of these wider works has not been finalised. Further consultation is scheduled to commence on 6 November 2023 and the proposals will be progressed following review of the feedback received. This off-road section of the route can be delivered without the wider works and the Council has therefore decided to progress with this planning application.

2.3. Pre-application Engagement

Pre-application Enquiry

A pre-application enquiry for the proposed development was submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on 20 April 2023. A meeting was held with the LPA Landscape Officer and PRoW Officer on 8 August 2023 and the LPA formal response was issued on 20 September 2023. Feedback received from the meeting and written response are summarised below:

- The principle of the proposed development in the Green Belt is acceptable, although the need for the development will need to be demonstrated.
- The proposed path must sit comfortably in the landscape. Presently it does not follow the natural contours of the land and the design and routing should be reconsidered to minimise its impact on the landscape.
- The route should link into existing footpath at bottom of Alveston Hill (on west side), which is very well used, by providing a connection point.
- Lighting along the route should be limited and take the form of bollard lighting.
- Resting points near both ends of the route are recommended. These should include seating and space around to set a bicycle or pushchair, and landscaping incorporated.
- Additional ecological surveys would be required as have been recommended in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). These will be required prior to the determination of any application and the results should detail any additional suitable mitigation/compensation. The enhancements set out in the PEA are welcomed and should be included within the design.
- The site is located in Flood Zone 3 and will need to pass the exception test. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy will be required.

In response the feedback as well as general design development, the following aspects were updated:

- The alignment has been revised to better integrate into the landscape with angular points replaced with more sweeping curves.
- Rest points have been introduced at either end of the off-road section.
- Fencing has been reduced to a minimum and landscape design developed to include substantial green infrastructure planting.

The applicant has investigated the potential to provide a link to the existing footpath at bottom of Alveston Hill (on west side), however, this has been discounted. A link in at the bottom of Alveston Hill would require a semi-formal or formal crossing point on the bend of the road where pedestrians would not be visible to motorists from a suitable distance. The encouragement/facilitation of pedestrians crossing the road in this location is considered dangerous.

The applicant also explored providing a crossing point in a more appropriate location further north on Thornbury Road with a spur from the proposed path. However, this was also discounted as it would require further significant engineering works and vegetation removal to create the spur, as well as the creation of another footpath on the west side of Thornbury Road (currently there is a footpath on the east side only). This would adversely impact scheme viability and is not considered to be a proportionate requirement.

Public Consultation

Public consultation on the Alveston Hill Cycleway Scheme was included as part of a wider engagement exercise for the Outline Business Case for the Thornbury, A38 and Bradley Stoke Way Public Transport and Active Travel Improvements.

The consultation was held between 27 January 2022 and 23 March 2022 and focused on gathering feedback on the proposals, as well as current and future travel habits.

Before the public launch of the scheme early engagement was held with the council's leader and executive member for transport, as well as local members and parish and town councils along the route. Landowners and Circadian Trust (Thornbury Leisure Centre operator) were also engaged with at an early stage.

The feedback received for the proposed greenway has largely positive. Whilst it is almost always impossible to respond positively to all matters raised by individuals and key stakeholder groups, all feedback received has been recorded, reviewed and has informed the proposed development.

The Community Involvement Statement submitted with this application provides greater detail on the public consultation process undertaken.

3. Design & Access Statement

3.1. Need for the Proposed Development

South Gloucestershire Core Strategy (2013) has sustainable development as a core principle throughout. Key Issue 8 states *'Making sure existing and new communities continue to have the opportunity for physical activity, including children's play, walking and cycling, access to formal and informal community meeting spaces and green spaces, has been demonstrated to have a major positive impact on people's health and mental wellbeing.'* Furthermore, the Council's Vision for 2027 and beyond it the Local Plan supports all residents and workers will have better access to local amenities and high-quality public transport, walking and cycling links. The Council's Vision seeks *'the landscape setting of the area and of surrounding villages will be preserved and opportunities will be taken to make the urban area greener. Green spaces, walking and cycling routes will lead through and out of the area into the open countryside.'*

The Local Plan has a network of active travel routes across the Local Authority area, however, many of these are substandard. PRoW OTH/57/10 and OTH/57/20 link Thornbury Leisure Centre to Alveston Hill, however, they run through agricultural land where animals are regularly grazing and are not surfaced. The routes are not suitable for cyclists and difficult for pedestrians to navigate in winter months and poor weather, whilst the animals present a danger to users too. Instead, cyclists must use Thornbury Road and Alveston Hill, which is narrow and has no dedicated cycle lane whilst pedestrians not using the PRoW's must use a substandard narrow footway.

The proposed development is therefore essential to providing a fit for purpose, truly active travel route in line with the Council's sustainable development objectives.

3.2. Development Principles

From the outset the proposed greenway has been developed in conjunction with the following design principles, which have been retained through the proposed scheme's design evolution:

- Be traffic-free from the cycleway and pedestrian route.
- Be accessible to all legitimate users.
- Be wide enough to accommodate all users, considering future and predicted usage levels.
- Minimise maintenance.
- Be an attractive and interesting place.
- Have a smooth surface that is well-drained.
- Feel like a safe place to be and improve cycling and pedestrian safety.
- Increased usage, improved perceptions of safety.

- These principles will ensure routes are inclusive, safe, and attractive.

3.3. Design Development

Proposals for the off-road shared use greenway path presented at pre-application enquiry stage are shown below.

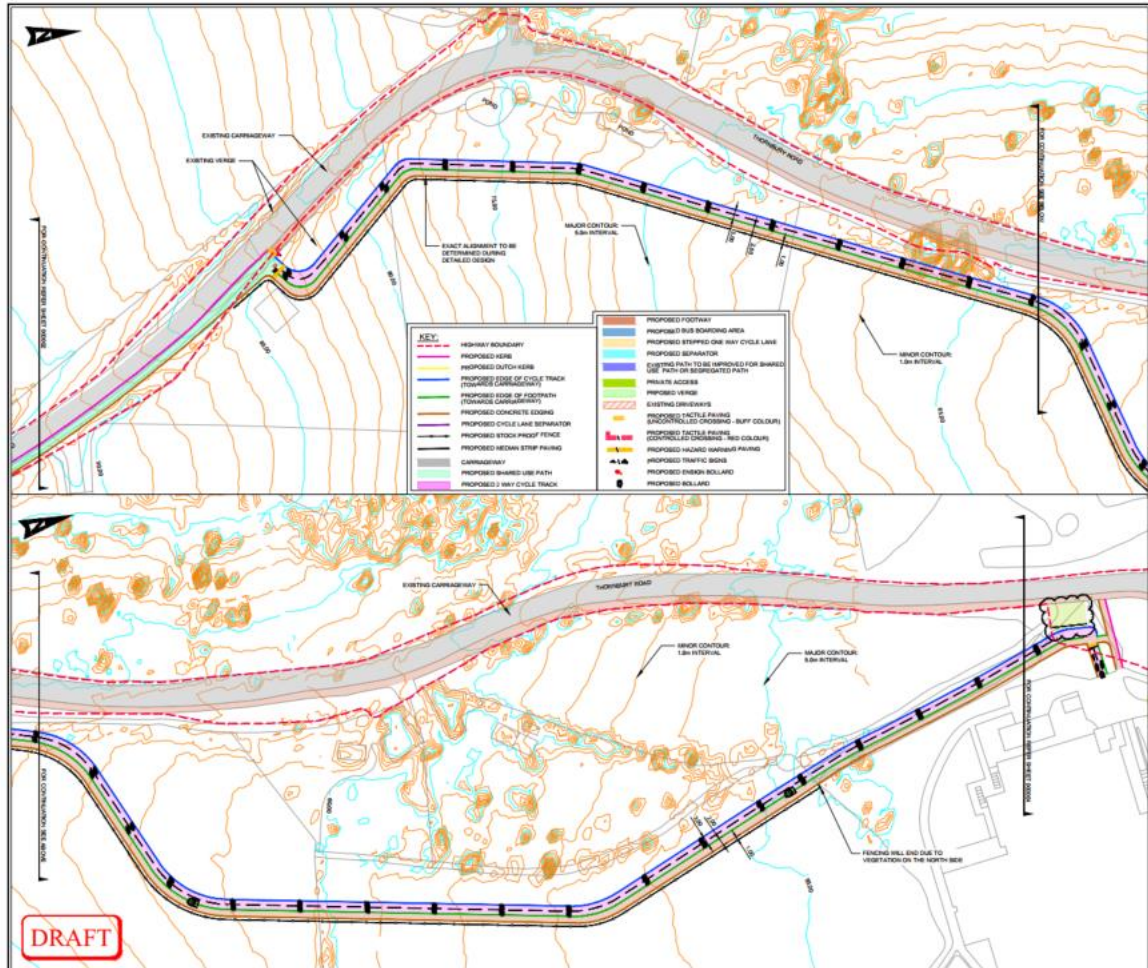


Figure 3-1 Proposed General Arrangement Layout submitted under pre-application enquiry.

Following the submission of the pre-application enquiry and as more information relating to site topography and levels were established, the proposed alignment was revised to provide a route that better integrates into the landscape. The northern section of the route was also revised to utilise an existing footpath around Thornbury Leisure Centre rather than the current private access lane that connects to the town. In line with pre-application feedback, three rest areas have been incorporated into the design. Two are located near each end of route with the third situated within the field near the larger proposed pond. The opportunity for a public art or interaction features alongside two of the rest areas is also identified.

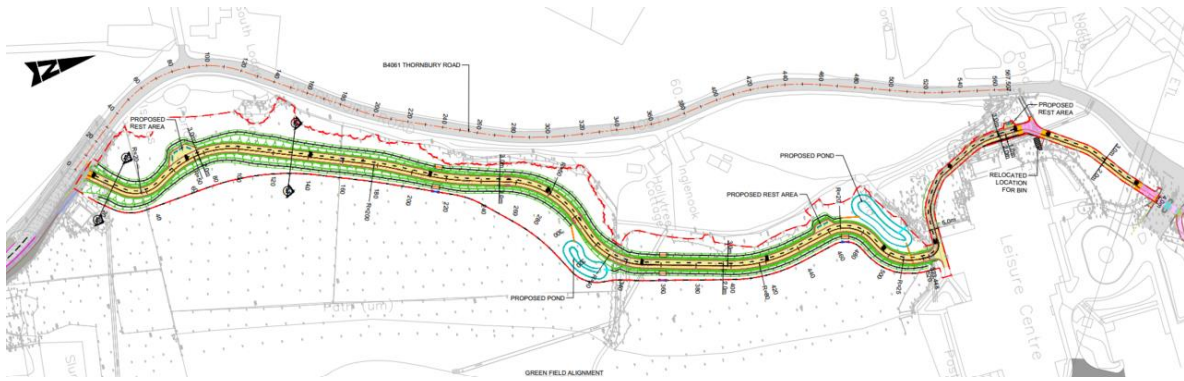


Figure 3-2 Proposed General Arrangement Layout

Following the fixing of the alignment, landscape proposals were developed in conjunction with ecological mitigation and drainage requirements.

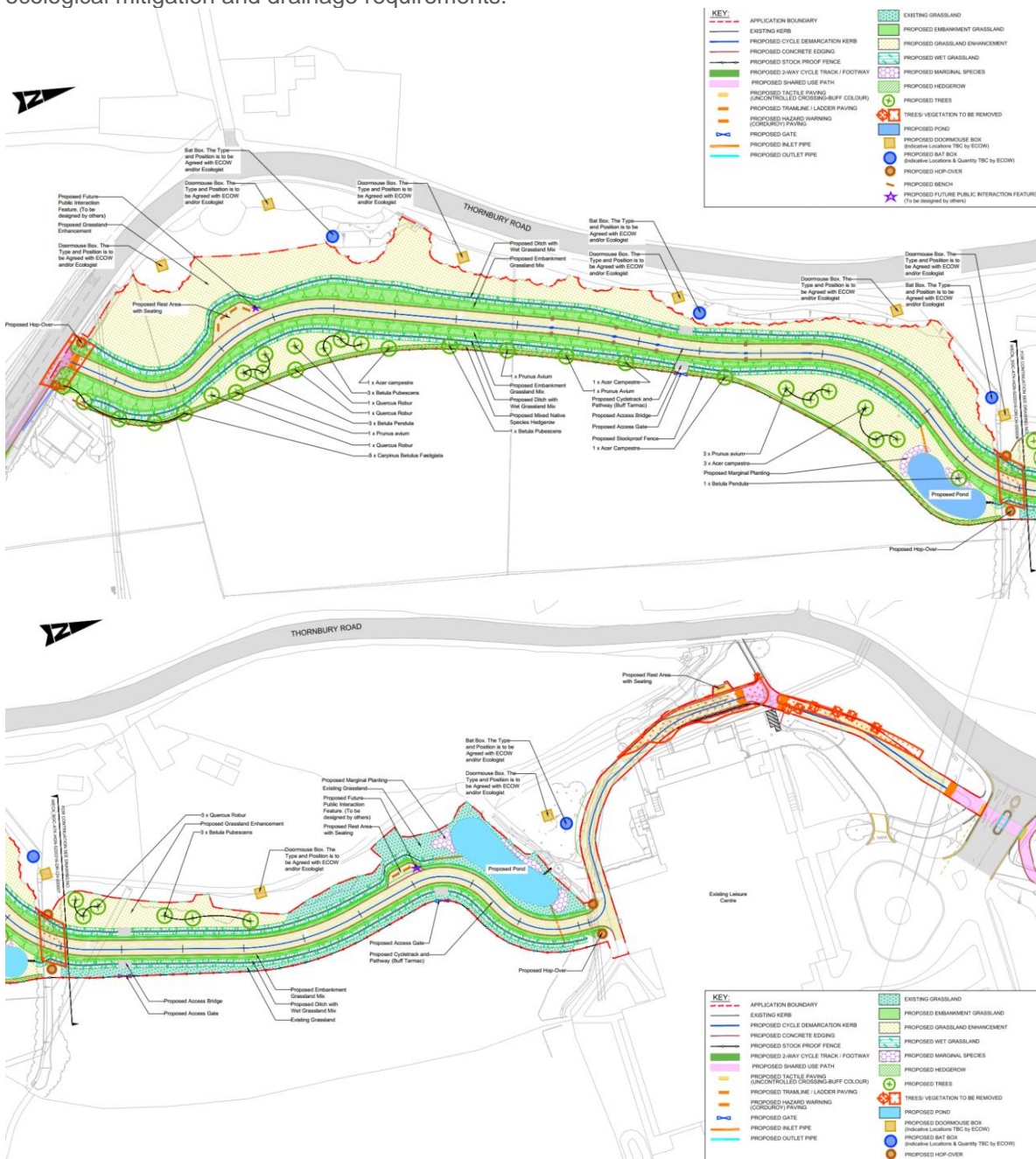


Figure 3-3 Proposed Landscaping Plan

3.4. Character

The approach for the proposed greenway is to provide an off-road route that blends into the landscape with significant green infrastructure included to reflect to countryside setting in which it sits. Proposed green and blue infrastructure also provides ecological mitigation and enhancement to acknowledge the ecological prominence of the site. The proposed scheme will include three resting points and two areas identified for public interaction opportunities. This will provide areas for people to gather sit down, delivering more than simply a commuting route.

With regard to the public art or interaction features, no strategy or art plan has been developed. This could take many forms such as sculpture features, interpretation boards, artwork within the surfacing or play related equipment. Rather than commit to a specific approach, this application is only identifying artwork areas and it is intended that the Council will engage with the local community to develop ideas and the subsequent implementation.

3.5. Movement and Access

As set out previously, the proposed development will 'plug' into a wider set of highway and sustainable transport improvements proposed from the A38/B4061 Thornbury Road junction to Midland Way in Thornbury. It will be accessible to pedestrians and cyclists, providing an attractive route away from heavily trafficked roads.

4. Planning Policy

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires Local Planning Authorities to make decisions on planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. National level policy contained in The National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) is also of significance.

4.1. National Planning Policy

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It provides a framework within which councils can produce their own development plans. In addition to providing guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers in the compilation of plans, the NPPF is also a material consideration in determining applications. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the centre of the NPPF.

4.2. The Development Plan

The site falls under the authority of South Gloucestershire Council. The following are applicable policy documents of the area statutory Development Plan: -

- South Gloucestershire Core Strategy (2013)
- South Gloucestershire Policies, Sites and Places Plan (2017)
- Thornbury Neighbourhood Plan (2022)

South Gloucestershire Core Strategy

The following policies are relevant to the development proposal:

- CS1 High Quality Design
- CS2 Green Infrastructure
- CS4a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CS5 Location of Development (including Green Belt)
- CS6 Infrastructure and developer contributions
- CS8 Improving Accessibility
- CS9 Managing the Environment and Heritage

- CS24 Green Infrastructure, Sport, and Recreation Standards
- CS32 Thornbury

South Gloucestershire Policies, Sites and Places Plan

The following policies are relevant to the development proposal:

- PSP1 Local Distinctiveness
- PSP2 Landscape
- PSP3 Trees and Woodland
- PSP7 Development in the Green Belt
- PSP10 Active Travel Routes
- PSP17 Heritage Assets and the Historic Environment
- PSP19 Wider Biodiversity
- PSP20 Flood Risk Surface Water and Watercourse Management
- PSP21 Environmental Pollution and Impacts

Thornbury Neighbourhood Plan

The following policies are relevant to the development proposal:

- Policy 1 Rural Character and Landscape Setting
- Policy 3 High-quality Design
- Policy 11 Preserving Historic Identity
- Policy 17 Planning for Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Food Production
- Policy 21 Walking and Cycling

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

- Biodiversity and Planning SPD
- Green Infrastructure SPD
- Trees and development sites SPD
- Revised Landscape Character Assessment SPD
- Development in the Green Belt SPD

Other Relevant Guidance

- National Design Guide (September 2019)
- West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy (JGIS) by West of England Combined Authority's (WECA) (June 2020)

4.3. Emerging Planning Policy

The first round of consultation on a new Local Plan closed on 1st March 2021. The second round took place between 7th February 2022 and 4 April 2022. The new Local Plan Preferred Strategy has been published with consultation currently running until 7 February 2024.

Paragraph 48 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies within an emerging plan relative to its stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies, and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies within the emerging plan to the NPPF.

Whilst the new Local Plan has been through two rounds of public consultation, it is still at a relatively early stage in the plan making process and should therefore only be afforded limited weight at this time. However, as it progresses through the plan making process it will accrue more weight.

5. Planning Assessment

5.1. Principle of Development

Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy and policies PSP7 and PSP28 of the Policies, Sites and Places Plan state that proposals for development in the Green Belt will need to comply with the provisions in the NPPF. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF states that *'Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.'* Paragraphs 149 and 150 set out a series of 'exceptions' where the construction of new buildings or certain forms of other development do not constitute inappropriate development.

Under paragraph 150c) of the NPPF, the provision of local transport infrastructure that can demonstrate a requirement within the Green Belt is not inappropriate development provided it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

In terms of the impact on openness of the Green Belt, in both visual and spatial terms the modest intervention within the land would retain a largely verdant and open character whilst the level of activity generated as a result will be negligible with users utilising the new route rather than the B4061 Alveston Hill or the existing PRoW. Accordingly, the openness of the Green Belt would be preserved.

The five purposes for Green Belt land are set out in paragraph 138 of the NPPF and repeated below:

- a. *to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.*
- b. *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.*
- c. *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.*
- d. *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e. *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

The proposed greenway, which would run broadly adjacent to the existing highway, would not result in the sprawl of urban land or the merging of neighbouring towns into each other. Whilst development would take place within existing fields, the type and scale of the development means that there would be no encroachment of buildings into the countryside.

Although the application site is located between the historic settlements of Alveston and Thornbury, the low scale nature of the proposed development is such that there would be no adverse impact on their setting. Furthermore, by virtue of being sustainable transport infrastructure improvements alongside existing highway, it would not discourage urban regeneration and the recycling of derelict urban land. In summary, this part of the Green Belt would still perform the five purposes outlined in paragraph 138 of the NPPF.

In conclusion, the proposed development would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and would not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. It is therefore considered to be an *'exception'* under paragraph 150 of the NPPF and does not constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

5.2. Transport

Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy seeks to improve accessibility supporting sustainable travel links by the integration of walking and cycling into the local network. Policy PSP10 of the Policies, Sites and Places Plan protects all active travel routes from development that will reduce, sever, or adversely affect the utility, amenity safety and delivery of all existing or proposed routes.

Whilst the proposed greenway ultimately involves the replacement of an existing PRoW and active travel route across a field, it would create a multi-modal, fit for purpose path that would be useable by all. In summary, this notable improvement in infrastructure would deliver a truly active travel route that would benefit the local communities of Thornbury and Alveston. To ensure that the surrounding network of PRoW's is not severed or changed, the greenway includes a link to maintain a functioning system of routes and maximise access to the open countryside in the area.

The greenway has been supported and developed by active travel consultants and Council transport planners' advice. Design work has developed ensure that the proposed route provides appropriate gradients to remain widely accessible for all, and also to ensure that the intersection between the

route and Alveston Hill does not give rise further any risk to highway/public safety issues. A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) undertaken, and this can be shared with the LPA if required.

In summary, the proposed development will create a new cycleway and footway that will replace an existing PRoW with the more suitable link. It will be integrated into the existing local highway and footpath network, providing an improved active travel route in this location in compliance with policy PSP10 of the Policies, Sites and Places Plan.

5.3. Design and Landscape

Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy requires the highest possible standard of design and site planning demonstrating that the proposal will connect to the wider network of foot, cycle and public transport links and enhance or develop the public realm including meeting the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and disabled and older people. Policy CS2 concerns green infrastructure and states *‘the Council and its partners will ensure that existing and new Green Infrastructure is planned, delivered and managed as an integral part of creating sustainable communities and enhancing quality of life.’* Policy PSP2 of the Policies, Sites and Places Plan requires a high standard of landscape design for all amenity space, hard and soft landscape works and open space provision, appropriate to the use and character of the development and its location; and designed as an integral part of the proposed development.

The proposed development seeks to provide a coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, attractive and user-friendly route for non-motorised connections between Alveston and Thornbury. The design has been updated to follow the existing landform so that it blends into the landscape and topography plus the route has a more ‘sweeping’ aims to be less angular nature.

Three rest points have been included in suitably placed locations, at both ends of the route and within an appropriate location near the entrance to the field. These provide the opportunity either to enjoy the countryside views, or to gather or rest near the leisure centre entrance. The rest areas include seating and space around them for pushchairs and bicycles.

Surfaces will be finished to a high quality. The proposed footpath element comprises grey asphalt whilst the wider cycleway and rest areas have a buff finish to blend into the landscape.



Figure 5-1 Computer Generated Image of proposed greenway from south end looking north towards Thornbury (Year 15)

Proposed fencing is limited to the east boundary where it is necessary to secure the adjacent private agricultural land. Substantial tree planting and soft landscaping is proposed to improve visual amenity and ‘green’ the route in line with the Council’s Green Infrastructure SPD, which reinforces policy

PSP10 with regard to active travel and access to footpath/cycleway networks contributing to green infrastructure delivery. As a result, the proposed development provides a high-quality cycleway and footpath that connects with the existing network and provides a safe and pleasant experience for its users. Accordingly, it complies with policies CS1 and CS2 of the Core Strategy, and PS2 of the Policies, Sites and Places Plan.

5.4. Ecology

Policy CS9 seeks to ensure that new development conserves and enhances the natural environment and avoids or minimises impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity. Policy PSP19 seeks to ensure the protection of valuable habitats and, where appropriate, a biodiversity gain from new development. The Council's Biodiversity and Planning SPD responds to the Environment Act 2021. It advises engagement with the Council's ecology team and seeks mitigation and ecological compensation for new developments.

A Preliminary Ecology Appraisal (PEA) of the Site identified hedgerows and woodland within and nearby the site as priority habitat as well as habitats suitable for supporting wildlife. Further surveys for great crested newt, hazel dormouse and bats have been undertaken and reports are provided with this application. A Hedgerow Survey Report and Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) are also provided.

The EclA advises that the proposed cycleway and footpath and ancillary infrastructure would result in the loss of habitat, potential habitat fragmentation and potential habitat degradation. In order to combat the impacts and potential impacts, substantial measures and features have been incorporated into the design to provide mitigation and benefit biodiversity.

To compensate for the loss of grassland, tree and hedgerow habitat; the landscaping proposals include the creation of two new ponds designed to benefit wildlife with marginal planting, planting of 34 native trees and planting of 315m of hedgerow planting as mitigation and enhancement for to the sections to be removed. Furthermore, 2,256sqm of wet grassland planting, 2,545sqm of embankment grassland planting and 2,256sqm of grassland enhancement planting is proposed.

Retention of key commuting corridors along hedgerows is proposed via the substantial hedgerow planting outlined above and also with 'hop-over' trees on either side of the hedgerow separation areas necessary to facilitate the path. The installation of four bat boxes and eight dormouse boxes are also included.

In summary, the proposed development includes substantial biodiversity improvement measures that significantly offset the habitat to be lost. These measures meet the requirements of policies CS9 of the Core Strategy and PSP19 of the Policies, Sites and Places Plan to support, conserve and enhance biodiversity where possible.

5.5. Trees

Policy PSP3 seeks to ensure that new development protects existing trees or mitigates their loss if this is unavoidable. It also seeks to promote new tree planting, including along arterial roads, in car parks and in the public realm. Suitable on-site tree planting to compensate for any trees removed should be included in the development in line with the Council tree replacement standard set out within the Trees and Infrastructure SPD.

In order to facilitate the development, it is proposed to remove the following:

- 6 Category B trees and 14 sqm of Category B hedgerow.
- 327sqm of a Category C tree group and 19sqm of Category C lapsed hedgerow.
- 1 Category U tree.

The proposals include significant soft landscaping across the site as a means of providing visual amenity benefits throughout the development and enhancing ecological value and existing landscape boundaries and buffers.

Applying the Council's tree replacement standard, 24 trees are provided to mitigate the loss of the 6 Category B trees and further planting (not defined) for the removal of parts of tree groups and hedgerows. The proposed development includes the planting of 34 new trees and 315m of new hedgerow planting, which is considered to comprise suitable mitigation and enhancement planting to compensate for the loss. Proposed planting runs predominately alongside the new path where it

can offer high amenity value. Additionally, a range of tree species are proposed that will add diversity, increase biodiversity opportunities, plus improve prospects of protection against future disease.

Retained trees will be protected throughout the construction programme, with tree protection measures and a no dig construction approach is recommended for the works in certain locations around the leisure centre. A Tree Protection Plan is provided within the supporting Arboricultural Impact Assessment.

Overall, the proposed development includes suitable protection of existing trees and appropriate levels of new tree planting across the site to provide appropriate mitigation and enhancement. It accordingly meets the requirements of policy PSP3.

5.6. Heritage and Archaeology

Policy CS9 states that heritage assets should be conserved, respected, and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance. Policy PSP17 supports this premise and provides more detailed commentary under various headings, including listed buildings, locally important heritage assets and archaeological heritage assets.

A Heritage Desk Based Assessment has been carried out to identify the potential heritage and archaeological assets that could be impacted as result of the proposed development.

The assessment concludes that the proposed development would have temporary impacts (through construction works) on heritage assets within the built environment, which would be minimal. Furthermore, potential impacts on archaeology are likely to be minimal although some form of monitoring (e.g., a watching brief) may be required. If deemed necessary, this can be secured through a suitable planning condition.

Overall, the proposed development would not give rise to significant impacts on heritage and therefore complies with policies CS9 of the Core Strategy and PSP17 of the Policies, Sites and Places Plan.

5.7. Flood Risk and Drainage

Policy PSP20 seeks to ensure that development is acceptable in terms of flood risk and drainage.

The proposed development is located partly within Flood Zone 3, which is categorised as having a high probability of flooding, i.e., 1% or greater annual probability of river flooding or 0.5% or greater annual probability of sea flooding.

A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy have been provided in support of the application. The FRA confirms that the proposed development categorised as less vulnerable and is therefore compatible with the flood risk. Furthermore, it does not trigger the exception test. In terms of the siting of the proposed development, the FRA demonstrates that there are no sequentially preferable sites for the proposed development that are available and have reasonable prospects of securing planning permission. Due to the siting within Flood Zone 3, the FRA advises that a flood emergency closure process should be put in place and an emergency evacuation plan be prepared to prevent use during times of flood. These measures can be secured by condition.

The proposed approach to drainage shows the incorporation of a Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy (SuDS) measures comprising two attenuation ponds where water will be directed. These are judged to sufficiently manage surface water across the development site on a day-to-day basis, although it is acknowledged that the route will continue to flood in extreme events.

Overall, the proposed development meets the requirements of the NPPF and policy PSP20 with regard to flood risk and drainage.

5.8. Geo-Environment

Policy PSP21 of the Policies, Sites and Places Plan requires developments to appropriately mitigate and remediate any existing contamination of land.

A Geo-environmental Desk Study of the site found the site has been shown to be occupied by agricultural land from the earliest available mapping, dated 1880, and the surrounding area has comprised farmland, residential properties, and industrial uses prior to being developed further for leisure facilities, industrial and residential uses up to the present day.

Several potential sources of contamination have been identified both on and off-site. On-site sources include an infilled pond feature in the north of the site, and sources associated with the leisure centre car park in the north and the site's use as agricultural land. Off-site sources include Made Ground associated with general development and the presence of industrial land uses such as the stores and depots to the north.

Based on the findings of the desk study and the preliminary Conceptual Site Model, the risks to human health are considered to be moderate / low; the risks to controlled waters are moderate / low; and the risk to property is very low. A ground investigation is recommended to provide certainty and better evaluate the risks; however, it is envisaged that the risks can be reduced and mitigated and there will be no unacceptable risk from contamination. The proposed development complies with policy PSP21 accordingly.

6. Conclusion

The proposed development comprises the creation of an off-road cycleway and footway greenway that links Alveston Hill to the south end of Thornbury. It is part of a larger set of works to create an active travel route from the A38/B4061 Thornbury Road junction to Midland Way in Thornbury. The rest of the scheme is still being developed however, this off-road section is progressing and can be delivered within the existing infrastructure.

The larger works are considered to be permitted development under Schedule 2, Part 9, Class A 'Development by highways authorities' of the GPDO with only the off-road section of path requiring formal planning permission.

The proposed greenway has been carefully sited near the existing roads and integrated into the existing landscape in order to minimise impacts and ensure that the openness of the Green Belt is preserved. It would not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and due to being local transport infrastructure, it constitutes an 'exception' to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

This legible access route will enhance recreation access and amenity to the countryside with a safer commuting route connection between Thornbury and Alveston. It will provide a robust, safe and fit for purpose connection that is usable by pedestrians and cyclists, making it a marked improvement when compared to the existing PRow's to the east. Connections to the highway will be safe for all users and overall, there would be no adverse impacts on the local highway network.

The scheme incorporates substantial landscaping across the development area to ensure that new green infrastructure provides appropriate biodiversity mitigation and enhancement. It will deliver a high quality greenway that offers significant visual amenity in addition to being an improved active travel route.

As the site is located partly within Flood Zone 3, the route is susceptible to flooding during extreme events. In this scenario, access across the route will need to be managed through closure measures and an evacuation procedure. Drainage measures proposed are sufficient to manage surface water on a day-to-day basis.

Overall, the proposed development would deliver a sustainable development that satisfies the development plan policies. It will deliver a long-term active travel route for pedestrians and cyclists that is fit for purpose and should therefore be supported by the LPA.

Ashley Grant
Atkins Limited
The Hub
500 Park Avenue
Aztec West
Bristol
BS32 4RZ

ashley.grant@atkinsglobal.com