

A417 Missing Link Brockworth Bypass to Cowley Roundabout

Response to Highways England Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report May 2019

Ramblers have been campaigning here for over 20 years to move through traffic off local roads (preferably with a tunnel). This scheme is said to be landscape led in this environmentally sensitive Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – the Cotswolds. This road is important for business yet Tourism accounts for a significant part of the Gloucestershire economy. The popular Cotswold & Gloucestershire Ways pass through the proposal.

Ramblers seek that the Scoping Report is widened in a number of areas.

1. Include taking the route below the Air Balloon Inn site (car park).

Not only is the Inn historic, it's said that proposals to demolish the Inn and install a new concrete bridge using large cranes will remove part of Bronze Age Emma's Grove and lose various trees including a veteran. These & traffic issues during construction should be resolved by creating a green bridge under the site (HE has said up to 150 metres), using a relatively low cost tunnelling method as at Hindhead in the South Downs AONB.

2. Include consideration of the benefits of a tunnel between the Air Balloon and Shab Hill.

With the proposed cutting 25-30 metres deep over much of its length and the take required for stable embankments, various methods of creating a tunnel could be environmentally beneficial.

3. Include the benefits of retaining the Air Balloon roundabout as a link for the A436 to the new A417. The road from Cold Slad turn will not be new only the slip roads across to it. A small satellite roundabout could be included for the Leckhampton B4070 turn.

4. Use of 'alternative 2' in place of the Air Balloon roundabout is already covered within the Scoping Report but it should also include retaining the Inn on a Green Bridge as per (1).

5. Consider the environmental and well being factors in retaining the Birdlip Bypass

The Scoping document says that

'Due to the realignment of the A417 between Air Balloon and Cowley, parts of the existing A417 between Air Balloon and Stockwell Lane are no longer required. The opportunity is being taken to remove these sections and reinstate the landscape and ecology connectivity.'

It is not mentioned that suggestions for closing the Birdlip Bypass lead either to reopening of the Roman Road through Birdlip or local traffic forced to use the busy new road, neither of which seem conducive.

None of the other route options (except 12 and 30) moved local traffic onto the new A417.

6. Consider the environmental and well being factors in removing the proposed link to Birdlip new A417 and retaining current connections at the Air Balloon and Cowley Roundabouts, if the link is likely to lead to a new rat run through Birdlip.

7. Confirm the new road will be cut just below surface where possible to minimise spread of traffic noise.

8. Include all of the crossing points as green bridges as a means of biodiversity connection.

Green bridges can be found in the Dorset AONB and in the current A465 dualling scheme west of Abergavenny. Why have they not been included in this scheme for the Cotswolds?

Attached pages show:-

a) Proposed Highways England Option 30

Note that this is the groundworks plan taken from the scheme documents and overlaid onto an OS map.

Other versions of HE plans show alternative flow through junction possibilities at Birdlip and Cowley.

b) Simplified Option 30 keeps local roads for local traffic and retains the Air Balloon Inn on a green bridge.

Keeping the roundabout as a link between the A436 and A417, the proposal shows benefits in just about everything over current and avoids the requirement for a direct link road towards Birdlip.

c) An Intermediate version of Option 30 also keeps the Air Balloon Inn on a green bridge but uses Alternative 2 as a link rather than keeping the Air Balloon Roundabout.

Updating the Scoping Report would allow the Environmental impact assessment to consider (b) and (c).

Highways England Preferred Option 30

The proposal includes a 50 metre wide Green Bridge south of The Scrubs. The Air Balloon Roundabout is removed and connection between the A436 and the new A417 is via 3 alternatives, still in discussion.

Alternative 1 is the present route of the road with a link road to behind Shab Hill. It demolishes the Air Balloon and installs a bridge for the current A417 over the new A417. The works are likely to create congestion and impact on Emma's Grove.

Alternative 2 requires further cutting away of the landscape, demolishes the Air Balloon and also cuts away part of Emma's Grove.

Alternative 3 follows a popular well used track through woodland and also includes the loss of the Air Balloon etc.

Diversions for the Cotswold and Gloucestershire Ways are not discussed.

The Barrow Wake Roundabout may become a junction but the link road directs traffic through Birdlip and beyond.

A proposal to remove the Birdlip Bypass either leads to reopening of the Roman Road or local traffic forced to use the busy new road.

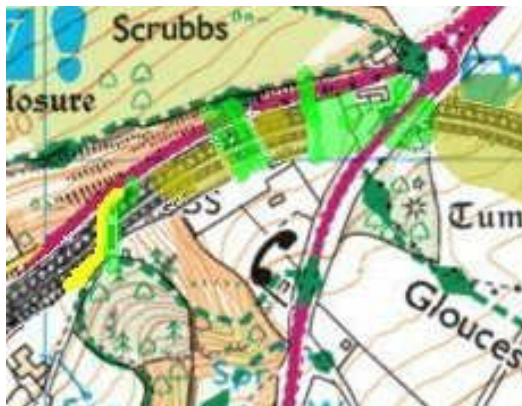
The Cowley Roundabout to Nettleton etc may become a free flow junction.

No plans are yet provided for suitable crossing points for footpaths, bridleways and tracks.



Simplified Option 30 Key Features

1. Retain Air Balloon Inn on 150metre Green Bridge excavated underneath the Car Park.



2. Air Balloon Green Bridge continues north over current A417.

3. Green bridge over new A417, at junction of South Hill track and Gloucestershire Way,

4. Possible tunnel to replace proposed deep cutting between these two Green Bridges.

5. Possible separate 50 metre Wildlife-Only Green Bridge south of The Scrubbs.

6. Slip road from new A417 to current A417 which in turn connects to Air Balloon roundabout as at present.

7. Retain lane alongside the new A417 for Walkers, Horses and Cyclists WHC (& possibly light traffic) Bentham to Cold Slad.

8. Retain Birdlip Bypass for local traffic & now amenable for Walkers, Horses and Cyclists.

9. Consider free flow junction to replace Cowley Roundabout

10. Consider a small satellite roundabout at A436 Leckhampton B4070 turn, past Short Wood for Cheltenham.

11. New A417 kept low in the landscape with a series of Green over Bridges along the route for biodiversity connections.



Intermediate Option 30

A suggestion has been made to consider using Alternative 2 to connect the A436 to the new A417.

Air Balloon Roundabout is removed as per Highways England proposal.

Alternative 2 includes a junction to replace both the roundabout and the slip-roads at Cold Slad turn.

The Air Balloon Inn can be retained on a Green Bridge. However there is the impact of the extra cutting & Shab Hill junction in the landscape.

It may be feasible to relocate the new junction to a point north of the Gloucestershire Way crossing.

A free flow junction may replace the Cowley Roundabout.

Journey Distance Assessment

Simplified Option 30 has same or shorter distances than current. Intermediate & HE Option 30 have some longer and some shorter.

Budgetary Costing Assessment

Simplified Option 30 saves the cost of demolishing the Air Balloon site and construction of a new bridge to Barrow Wake. It also saves the cost of the link road and junctions. All fund going underneath the site.

Intermediate Option 30 saves a slip road bridge but adds in the cost of a link road and junction.

Landscaping funds are used for Green Bridges along the new A417 rather than on closing the Birdlip Bypass to local and through traffic.

