

4. Do you have any comments on our proposal for Alternative 2 as the preferred A436 link road?

To preserve and protect the woodland and hedgerows in this area, any replanting of new trees and hedgerows must be with indigenous species typical to the Cotswold scarp and not with fast growing trees that are not typical of this region. The region is renowned for its oak, ash and beech woods and for the calcareous grassland habitat. The link road should be low enough to ensure that countryside and woodland views from footpaths along this section are not blocked, especially views across to the wooded Ullenwood area.

However, as described in the fly through commentary, the Shab Hill junction is the wrong way up. The A417 dual carriageway should remain in its cutting and pass underneath the junction. The efforts are appreciated to keep the Barrow Wake link road in a dry cutting but it doesn't quite fit resulting in elevated roundabouts. It gives more reason to take the A417 underneath.

GR-A417-HE-Proposals Review-2019-10.pdf discusses the various options for the route including Alternative 2. Here is a recap of the other options before considering Alternative 2.

Tunnel Option 3

This is the lowest cost tunnel option that was not put forward for consultation. However it's a useful benchmark for traffic flows. It keeps open the current A417 as a local link from Cowley roundabout to Nettleton, Birdlip, Barrow Wake, the Air Balloon Inn, Crickley Hill and on to Cheltenham. Journey distances are the same as current for all local traffic including A436- A417. The tunnel is a more direct link so through traffic distances are less. The option retains the landscape such as the Air Balloon and uses the roundabout for the A417-A436 link, so has no Shab Hill to Barrow Wake link road. The Cotswold and Gloucestershire Ways stay on line.

Simplified Option 30

This uses the same principles as Option 3 but follows the line of Option 30 and keeps the deep cutting from the Air Balloon to Shab Hill. It retains the Air Balloon Inn on a green bridge and uses the roundabout for connection of the A436 to A417. Like Option 3 journey distances are the same as present except for through traffic which is shorter. It also has no Shab Hill to Barrow Wake link road.

Highways England Option 30 with alternative 2

This relocates the Air Balloon roundabout and uses a new junction at Shab Hill to link the A436-A417. These journey distances are some 2 miles longer than previous options. It also requires a Barrow Wake – Shab Hill link road. The Air Balloon Inn is demolished and the Cotswold and Gloucestershire Ways are rerouted.

Highways England Option 30 with Alternative 2 retaining the Air Balloon Inn

Retaining the Air Balloon on a green bridge keeps the Cotswold and Gloucestershire Ways on line & avoids diverting horseriders and cyclists too.

With both of the Alternative 2 Options there is the opportunity to repurpose the current road at Barrow Wake and use it for calcareous grassland.

All options have a 50 metre wildlife Green bridge. However where the crossing at the Air Balloon is removed a long diversion of both Cotswold and Gloucestershire Ways is proposed to take humans over the wildlife bridge.

In all cases it would seem preferable to retain the Birdlip bypass so that local traffic doesn't have to use the busy new Road and that all footpath, bridleway etc crossing points of the new road are retained on green flanked bridges for biodiversity gain.

In January 2015 the Air Balloon Inn sold for £31,345,000 leasehold.

<https://nethouseprices.com/house-prices/gl48jy>

This cost is likely to be comparable to the cost of tunnelling underneath to create a green bridge.

In summary if the Air Balloon Inn is to be saved and hence the Cotswold and Gloucestershire Ways kept on line (and discounting tunnel option 3) only two options seem viable:-

Simplified Option 30 retains the road past Barrow Wake but has no Shab Hill junction or link road to Barrow Wake.

HE option 30 with Alternative 2 would allow removal of the road past Barrow Wake and the route returned to nature. However it has the Shab Hill junction in the landscape and adds 2 miles to A436-A427 journey times.

Input from other organisations should help decide which of the two is preferable.