

5. Do you have any comments on our proposal for repurposing the existing A417?

It is assumed that this proposal is for repurposing the whole section of the current A417 from The Air Balloon Roundabout to the Cowley roundabout junction. Document GR-A417-HE-Proposals Review-2019-10.pdf discusses the various options for the route.

It may be best to split the route into three sections and compare to the maps in the above document.

Cowley Roundabout to Cowley Lane that passes Stockwell Farm

This section of the current road will be required for access to local villages. Traffic numbers should be low allowing it to be repurposed as a typical of a B road suitable for Riding and Cycling and walking along if necessary.

Cowley Lane to Birdlip Junction – the Birdlip Bypass

This section of the current road will be required for access to local villages while avoiding the busy new road. There should be a hierarchy in roads so that local traffic doesn't have to use through traffic routes. Traffic numbers should be low allowing this section to be repurposed as a typical of a B road suitable for Riding and Cycling and Walking along if necessary. However in parallel is the ancient Ermin Way Roman Road which is already used by cyclists, riders and walkers as a quiet route. It is stopped up at the eastern end to vehicular traffic.

There was a suggestion to reopen Ermin way to traffic if the Birdlip Bypass was completely closed to traffic but it was felt preferable to keep open the Birdlip Bypass with the projected low traffic volumes.

Birdlip Junction to Air Balloon roundabout

With Simplified Option 30 (and various other options involving alternative 1) this section of the current A417 would be required for access from local villages to the Air Balloon Roundabout and onto Cheltenham.

With options involving Alternative 2 this section of the current A417 could still be used for access from local villages to the relocated Air Balloon Roundabout and onto Cheltenham.

However the parallel A436 link to the A417, although reasonably busy at 6,000 vehicles per day (but nowhere near the 48,000 projected for the new dual carriageway), could also be used for this local traffic. This would allow this section of the road to be closed to through traffic.

The piece from the Birdlip Junction to the emergence of the Cotswold Way from Barrow Wake could be completely returned to nature, and Calcareous grassland has been suggested.

It appears access would be available for cyclists riders and walkers from Barrow Wake car park to the remaining section of road past the Air Balloon Inn to the roundabout.

This short section of currently 4 lane road could be repurposed for all sorts of uses including perhaps as a parking area for visitors using the Cotswold Way and Gloucestershire Way that follow the footway along the verge.

Heritage and places for walking public to meet and eat - 18th century Inns

Two Inns are present within this zone -the Air Balloon Inn and the Golden Heart Inn. The Air Balloon is considered a landmark of the Cotswold and other Ways. Both are used for many walking routes and are places where the walking public and visitors meet, to purchase food and drink refreshments and perhaps fill water bottles. Both should be retained as key places in the Cotswolds and kept accessible to the walking public.

The Air Balloon has existed since at least the late 1700s and was renamed following a famous balloon flight of Edward Jenner, pioneer of the smallpox vaccine, which ended close by on 2nd September 1784. The Golden Heart is a 16th century coaching inn situated on the current A417 at Nettleton Bottom.

As a B road, nature can be left to take its course, and landscape recovery take place with the growth of wildflowers, orchids and grasses typical of the area, flanked by native hedgerows.