



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Wokingham Borough Council

Greenways Project

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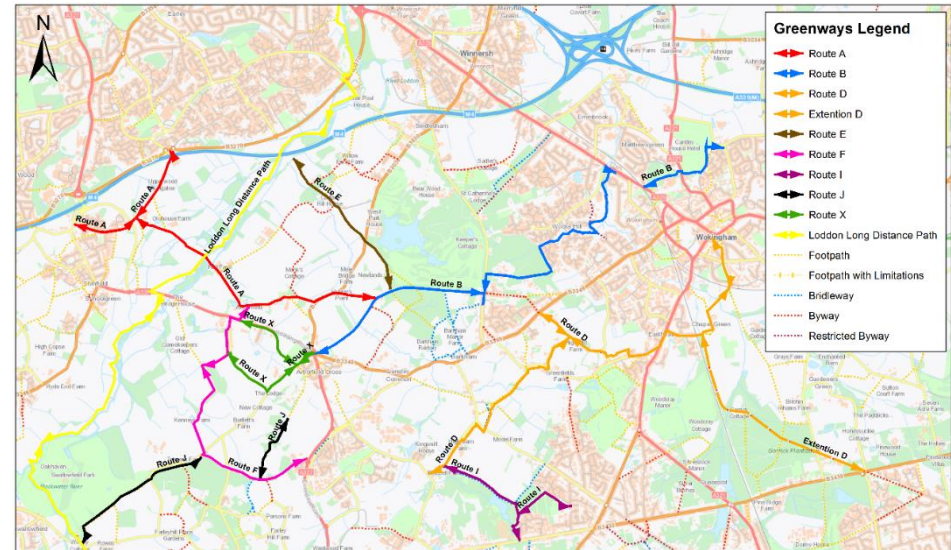
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Introduction and Background

The Wokingham Greenways project is aimed at linking the major developments within the borough with each other and also to the existing communities and places of interest/employment. Greenways will provide non-car accessible commuting journeys to work and school as well as new leisure opportunities to get out into the countryside and greenspaces.

The project will link with and align to additional greenways and paths proposed to improve the non-vehicular connectivity within the Borough and to adjoining boroughs. This internal network of Greenways will utilise and extend beyond the public existing rights of way and highways network to public green space and point of interests.

The Greenways project also includes the River Loddon Long Distance Path (LDP) that links the Thames Valley Path in the north of the borough in Wargrave to the Blackwater Valley Path in the South of the borough in Swallowfield.



Appendix 1 shows the Greenways Route Map across the borough including River Loddon Long distance path.

Strategic Context

The completion of the Greenways project is included in or links to the following corporate plans and policies:

- Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020-2030
 - Statement of Action 2.1(a): Develop and implement the Greenways network
 - Appendix 5: Greenways Strategy and Implementation Plan.
- WBC Core Strategy
 - Policies CP10, CP18-21
 - Appendix 7
- Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
 - Active Travel goals Policy AT1, AT2 & AT3
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2018-2021
 - Aim 1: Promoting more active travel
- Draft Local Plan Update 2020
 - Policies C8, SS6 and SS12

Greenways Route B

Wokingham Borough Council is progressing with phase 2 of its greenways project, which is to implement Greenways Route B. The project will create a network of traffic free multi-user routes which will connect the new major developments at Arborfield Garrison (Arborfield Green) and Shinfield Parish to Wokingham and the new major developments in North Wokingham. The Greenways Project will add to the borough's existing sustainable route network to create an alternative way to get around the borough.

The route has been separated into 3 sub-sections:

1. Cantley Park to Woosehill, through Matthewsgreen
2. Woosehill Meadows to Bearwood Road, through Foxhill
3. Bearwood Road to Arborfield Cross, through Coombes Lane and Coles Lane.

A map detailing the proposed line of Route B is included as Appendix 2 to this report.

This report summarises the responses to the localised public consultation conducted for Section 1 of the route. The full responses to the consultation have been included in Appendix 4 to this report.

Consultation and publicity undertaken

First phase (March – May 2019)

A six week public consultation for the whole of Route B was undertaken from 06 March 2019 to 10 May 2019. Letters were posted to the adjacent properties owners and ward members, Parish/Town councils and Greenways user groups were notified to invite feedback. This was followed by attendance at community forums, Drop-in sessions at various locations in the catchment area of the Greenways Phase 2, inviting comments through Wokingham Council's website, Social media channels and press release.

The consultation received over 300 visitors to the various drop-in sessions and community forums that were held. The consultation responses were 64% in support, 12% objection and 24% neither supporting nor objecting.

Second phase (July – Sept 2020)

Following on from the initial public consultation, an additional localised public consultation was undertaken for Section 1.

A summary of how the consultation and publicity was undertaken is provided below:

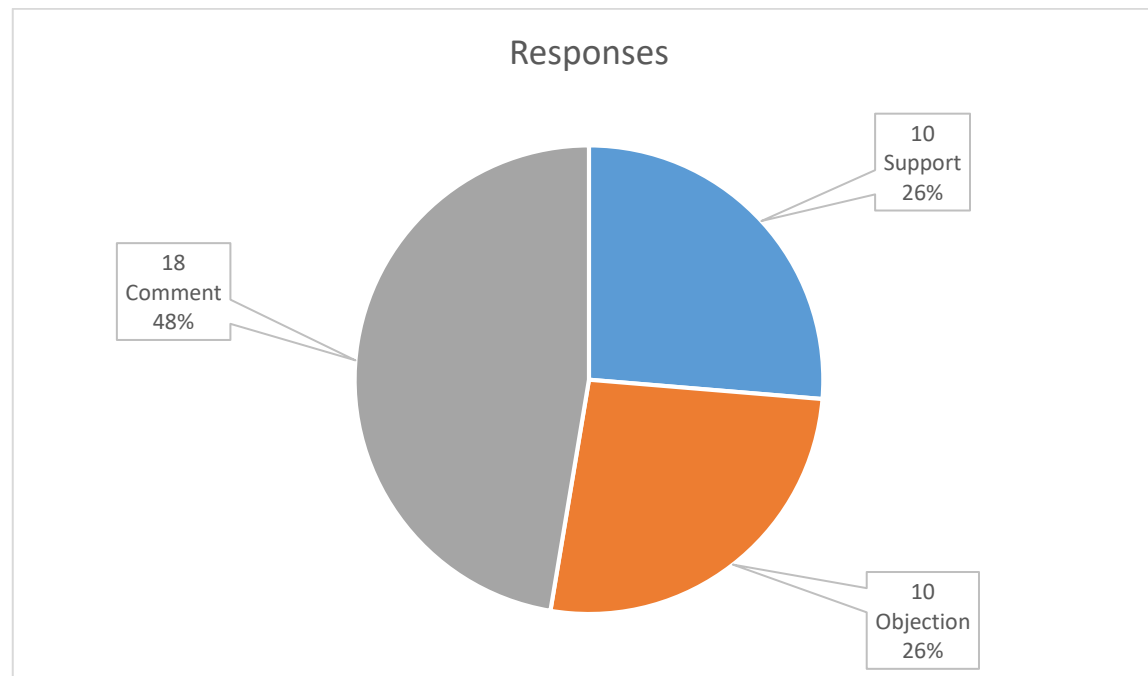
Letter drop/ Emails: Letters were sent to the Landowners and people with properties located next to Section 1 to make them aware of the project and seek their feedback and comments. Emails were sent to notify the ward members, Wokingham Town Council, known user groups and interest groups, the Mid & West Berks Local Access Forum and other key stakeholders.

Online Information on Website and Social Media: The consultation was advertised and the Greenways Route Map and Consultation document were made available to view on the Council's website as well as shared on the social media.

News Release: A news release advertising the consultation was posted on the Council's website and social media pages and was sent to the local media.

Summary of Consultation Responses

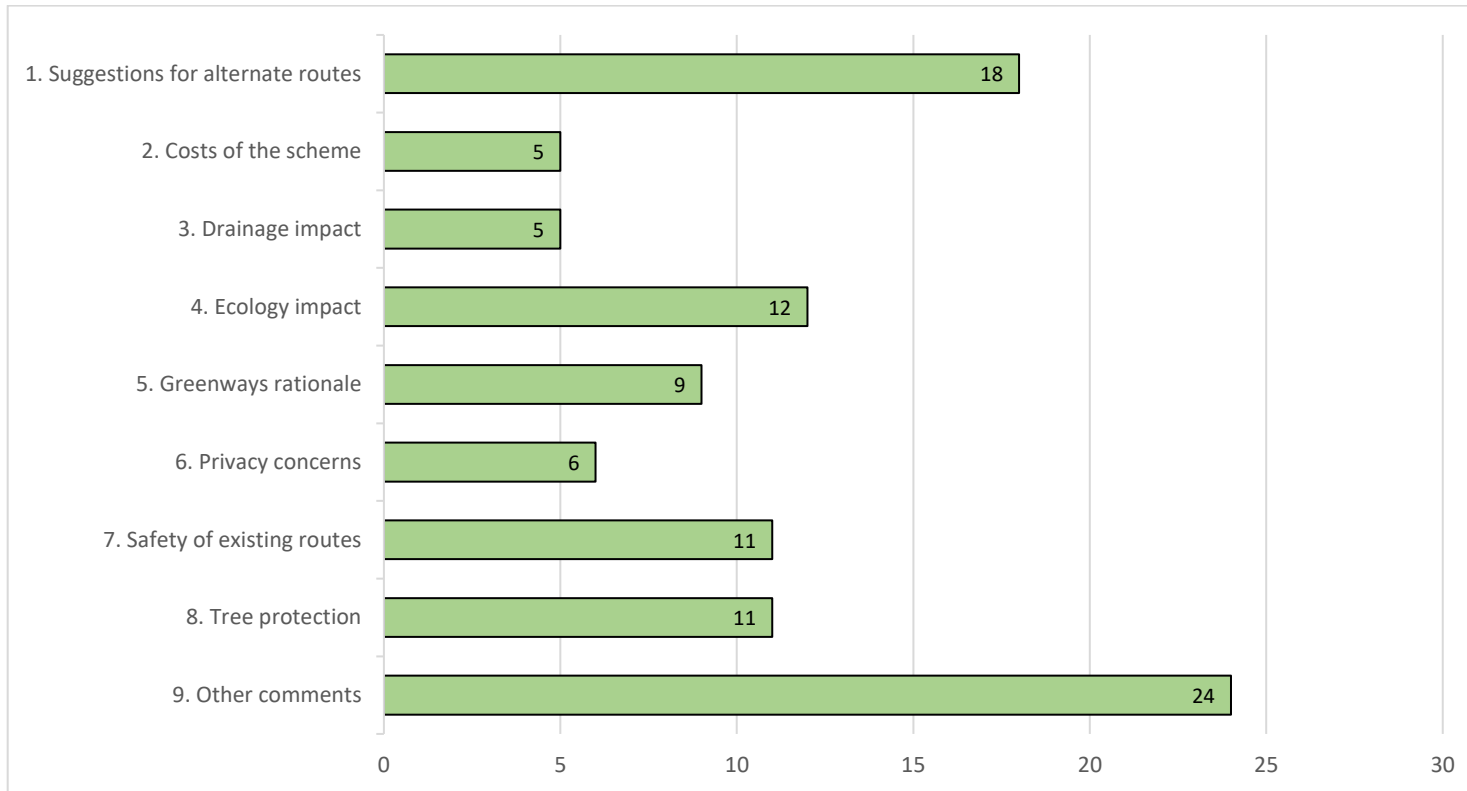
In total, 38 formal responses were received during the consultation, as shown in the graph below. In addition to this a petition was received from the residents of Martins Drive objecting to the proposed route of the Greenway. This petition had approximately 39 signatures but did not contain address details. Some of the signatures included in the petition have also supplied formal responses to the consultation.



The responses are summarised below. The responses have been categorised into various themes as detailed below. An analysis of the feedback received, and any subsequent changes to the final plan are detailed under each heading.

Key Themes from the feedback received:

The comments and representations fell into 9 broad categories



Theme 1: Suggestions for alternate routes

Feedback from the consultation contained a number of suggestions for alternate routes of the Greenway. These suggestions, along with the Councils' responses, are detailed in the table below.

Suggestion	Council response
Use the existing multi-user path that has been constructed along Toutley Road that links to Emmbrook Road	Whilst the path alongside Toutley Road is a good on-road cycling route, the aims of the Greenway is to create an off-road route as much as possible. The suggested option of using the route along Toutley Road goes significantly in the opposite direction that we are seeking to link between the Strategic Development Locations and would require a significant amount of use on busy roads.
Connect into Cantley Park via a new entrance opposite Eldridge Avenue, with a path leading up to the park's amenities.	At the present time there is no plans to connect the Greenways through to the north of Cantley Park to be opposite Eldridge Avenue, the aim is to utilise the existing path network, however the request for additional access to the site from this location will be considered as an improvement project separate to the Greenways scheme.
Suggestion to modify the route of the Greenway at Arborfield to use Biggs Lane in Arborfield Green, down Langley Common Road to the new Barkham Bridge, and then into the Coombs. Alternatively cutting through a small portion of farmland to utilise the Wood Lane Entrance into the Coombs	This suggestion relates to Section 3 of the Greenway. The suggestion is noted, we will take this into account for the design at Section 3.
Suggestion for an East/West route between Twyford and Woodley, or between Charvil/Twyford Station	The Loddon Long Distance Path project is a sister project to link Wargrave to Swallowfield through Twyford, Charvil, Woodley and Winnersh. This project has commenced during 2020 and is being actively pursued in conjunction with the Greenways project.
Suggestion for a direct link using Holt Lane, St Pauls Churchyard, the existing pedestrian rail bridge and Murray Road rather than the longer route via Woosehill.	One of the main strategic objectives for Greenways is to create off-road routes, avoiding the need to mix with vehicular traffic as much as possible. The route as described would be require Greenway users to travel along roads rather than off-road routes.

<p>Suggestion to simply add signage for the area along Jubilee Avenue, Clifton Road and Brook Close rather than creating a new route.</p>	<p>The aim for the section of path adjacent to Jubilee Avenue is to avoid the existing traffic issues that cyclists and pedestrians need to deal with along Jubilee Avenue, which requires the negotiation of two roundabouts amongst significant traffic moving through to Holt Lane; cyclists also need to pass a number of parked vehicles along this section of Jubilee Avenue from Milton Road to the entrance of Martins Drive which means spending a significant amount of time cycling in the centre of the road.</p> <p>Whilst it is a relatively small section of new path, it allows users to avoid the particularly acute issues at Jubilee Avenue. Once this section has been passed the remainder of Clifton Road and Brook Close is a quieter residential section of road.</p>
<p>The end of the signage of the route stops at a major road junction between Bell Foundry Lane, Wiltshire Road and Warren House Road. I would suggest you connect the signage down the new path along the edge of Cantley Park that runs parallel with Bell Foundry Lane and into the Eldridge Park SANG created recently. The North Wokingham SANGs should (hopefully) join up when they are all complete, so it would be an obvious continuation to the greenway for cyclists.</p>	<p>The potential to connect into the new cycleway along Bell Foundry Road has been investigated and the route of the Greenway has been adjusted to meet with this existing cycleway and the section that meets with Wiltshire Road will be removed.</p>
<p>Suggestion to widen the footpath that runs along Milton Road towards the town centre</p>	<p>The widening of the existing footway to join into the Town Centre is outside the scope of the Greenways project.</p>
<p>Suggestion to resurface the pavements on the Joel Park estate instead of creating the Greenway</p>	<p>The proposal is to create a new section of path through land north of Jubilee Avenue, rather than create a route through Joel Park. The existing footpaths are for pedestrian use only, whereas the Greenway is intended to be a multi-user route.</p>
<p>Make Holt Lane a one way road (going North from the Reading Road).</p>	<p>The use of Holt Lane is not considered to be appropriate for a multi-user route, as it would require users to mix with significant vehicular traffic.</p>

<p>Widen the existing pavement on Jubilee Avenue using the adjacent verge.</p>	<p>The widening of the along Jubilee Avenue was considered but it not the preferred option. The creation of new routes within Joel Park was refused by the landowner (detailed below), and a widening of the path adjacent to Joel Park would require using extra land within the park itself, and through environmentally sensitive parts of the park.</p> <p>On the northern side, there is some room, however there is significant level differences between the existing footway and the adjacent land. There is a risk that widening the footway at this point would impact on the root system of the trees.</p> <p>In addition to this, the creation of on-road shared cycle tracks / footways runs against the Greenways rationale, which aims to create, as far as possible, easy to use off-road multi-user routes.</p>
<p>Suggestions for a number of routes through Joel Park:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run the Greenway through Joel Park parallel to the existing pavement • Create the Greenway alongside the lower edge of Joel Park running between the existing avenue of trees that run parallel with Jubilee Avenue 	<p>A number of potential routes through Joel Park were discussed with Wokingham Town Council, who are the landowners of Joel Park. The Town Council considered the proposals but refused permission for any routes through Joel Park.</p>

Theme 2: Costs of the scheme

Feedback from the consultation raised concerns about the cost of the Greenways scheme. As detailed above, the creation of the Greenways network is one of the key strategic focuses of the Council to deliver high quality traffic free commuting and leisure routes connecting the existing and new settlements and points of interest. In light of these aims, the Council has set aside sufficient funds for the creation of the Greenways.

Theme 3: Drainage impact

Feedback from the consultation has raised concerns regarding the existing drainage system within the land to the north of Jubilee Avenue. The detailed design for this section of the Greenway is in the process of being developed, and topographical surveys have been commissioned that will inform the detailed design. The route of the proposed path will be designed with the existing drainage system taken into account. The surfacing of the Greenways is also designed to be fully permeable. The Council's Drainage team will be consulted on any proposals that would affect the drainage system on the land.

Theme 4: Ecology impact

Feedback from the consultation has raised concerns regarding the impact on the local wildlife and ecology of the area. The detailed design for this section of the Greenway is in the process of being developed, and ecological surveys have been commissioned that will inform the detailed design. The route of the proposed path will be designed to minimise the ecological impact of the scheme, including modifying the design as necessary and incorporating any recommended mitigation measures. The Council's Ecology Officer will be consulted on any such proposals.

Theme 5: Greenways rationale

There were a number of comments and questions raised in the consultation questioning the rationale behind the Greenways project, what the Greenways project means and why the Council is seeking to create the Greenways network. As detailed above, the creation of the Greenways network is one of the key strategic focuses of the Council to deliver high quality traffic free commuting and leisure routes connecting the existing and new settlements and points of interest. The implementation of the Greenways project is expected to bring the following benefits:

- People already cycling along these routes may experience reduced accident risk as the paths are safer and more separated from cars.
- People who are enticed to cycling or to cycling more as a result of the project are likely to experience health and wellbeing benefits from greater physical activity.
- Additional transport infrastructure in an area can increase the attractiveness of living in a place and potentially drive up land values.
- It can promote local business and other development in the area. Cycling infrastructure is more likely to drive business development than roads, as cyclists tend to travel more slowly and notice their surroundings in detail.
- Reducing parking pressures on local streets, transport hubs and streets close to shops.

- Reducing the need for parking to be included in new developments.
- Reducing the number of cars used to transport children to and from schools on a daily basis.
- Reducing wear and tear on roads.
- Reductions for vehicle owners in private car costs, such as for petrol and maintenance.
- Environmental benefits including reduction in carbon emissions, a reduction in polluted surface water run-off from vehicles using the highway and a reduction in the urban heat island effect.
- A greenway route as part of place making can have social benefits such as creation of a sense of place or community. There are potentially opportunities for investment in public art forms and advertising along the route.
- The route is also likely to attract casual users, particularly on weekends, with people likely to use the route and then access the various upgrades being made to Cantley Park, including the Destination Play Area, the sports pitches and the new café, producing financial benefits for the Council and local businesses.
- The greenway can also be used as an important educational resource for schools, encouraging cycling and walking as well as biodiversity and ecology.

While there are a number of benefits that are likely to be generated from this scheme, it remains difficult to financially quantify the sum of these. However from an environmental and traffic congestion perspective, it is becoming increasingly important for a scheme of this nature to be delivered in the area and it is clear that the benefits far out way the initial costs to deliver the scheme.

Theme 6: Privacy concerns

Significant objections and comments were received as a result of the consultation raising concerns about the impact that the proposed scheme will have on the residents of Martins Drive. Some of the comments were concerned about the amount of vegetation that would need to be removed, which would enable the residents of Martins Drive to see the public using the Greenway. In addition to this, a separate petition was received from the residents of Martins Drive, reiterating the concerns that have been raised in the public consultation, and requesting that the scheme be cancelled.

Whilst the Council recognises the concerns of the residents regarding the scheme, it does not consider that the proposed route would significantly impact on the privacy of the residents, for the following reasons:

- The majority of the houses along the road are on the opposite side of the road to the wooded area. The closest property boundary is 8.15 metres of the path, and the property itself over 23 metres away. Outside of this the closest property boundary is 27 metres away from the proposed route of the path.

- Martins Drive itself, along with the adjoining footpath bridge link to Jubilee Avenue, is a public highway maintained by the Council. Members of the public have an existing right to pass and re-pass along this road and adjoining footways at a much closer distance to the residents' houses to where the proposed Greenways route will be situated. In addition to this the woodland area is marked on the Council's public open space records as land that the Council maintains.
- The existing use of the footway adjacent to Jubilee Avenue is already visible from Martin's Drive.
- The exact route of the Greenways is being developed as part of the detailed design, however the Council is aiming to keep the path as close to Jubilee Avenue as possible, leaving plenty of land between the path and Martins Drive.

Further planting of this area will be investigated as part of the design to increase the screening between the Greenway and Martins Drive.

In addition to the privacy concerns above, comments were received regarding the privacy of residents at Millmead, seeking reassurance that they do not lose any privacy that they currently have. With respect to this area, there are no plans for any significant changes to the route as existing, the existing fence lines will remain and there are no plans to remove the existing trees in this area.

Theme 7: Safety of existing routes / Road crossings

A number of respondents have raised concerns about the road crossings, in particular at Milton Road and the Reading Road. These crossing points will be reviewed when the scheme advances to the detailed design stage for these sections.

The crossing at Milton Road will be reviewed once the scheme advances into Jubilee Avenue, and the Reading Road crossing will be examined as part of section 2 of the Route. All road crossing designs will comply with Highways design legislation, which specifies a three-stage safety audit of any proposal to ensure that they are safe for the public to use.

In addition to the comments regarding road crossings, comments were received regarding issues at Brook Close, including the issues of cycling access through from Brook Close, potential speed of traffic, overgrowing vegetation and surface issues. The Council will ensure that the vegetation is cut back as part of the works, and this, along with the condition of the surface will be monitored and cleared as part of the maintenance regime for the Greenway.

With regard to the speed of cycling, whilst we recognise that the gradients along the path do allow the potential for some speed to be developed, we are not proposing any particular changes to the use that is already happening along the path. As detailed below,

our experiences of the Greenway at California Country Park have not shown any particular issue for increasing the speed of cycling but we will monitor the situation and make adjustments if necessary.

Theme 8: Tree protection

Feedback from the consultation has raised concerns regarding the removal of trees within the land to the north of Jubilee Avenue. The detailed design for this section of the Greenway is in the process of being developed, however the design has been developed to ensure that no trees over 75mm in trunk diameter will need to be removed. Arboricultural and topographical surveys have been undertaken which have informed the detailed design. The route of the proposed path will be designed with the existing trees taken into account, and the design will seek to ensure that it minimises the impact on any of the existing trees in this area. The Council's Trees and Landscape team will be consulted on any proposals that would affect trees on the land.

Theme 9: Other comments

Other comments regarding the Greenways were received as follows:

Comment	Number of comments	Council response
Horse riding	4	<p>A number of comments questioned whether horse riding will be allowed along the route.</p> <p>Parts of Greenway Route B are being developed to allow horse riding where appropriate, however the section of the Greenway at Cantley Park to Woosehill through Matthewsgreen it is not intended to be for horse riding.</p>
Speed of cyclists	1	<p>We note the concerns about the potential speed of the cyclists along the route. The Council's experience of the Greenway at California Country Park has not highlighted any significant problems with the speed of cyclists, and therefore there are no plans to put in additional speed restrictions. However, we will continue to monitor the use of the Greenway once installed and can put in place intervention measures if necessary.</p>
Maintenance	2	<p>Maintenance questions were asked regarding the maintenance of the routes, highlighting the need for removal of the leaf fall.</p> <p>The Greenways will be maintained by the Council as part of its strategic active travel network. This will include periodic sweeping and clearance of the surface of the way.</p>
Comments on other sections	3	<p>There were a number of comments received about other sections of Route B. In addition to the alternate route suggestions examined under Theme 1. These will be considered during the design of those respective sections.</p>
Barriers	2	<p>A comment was received concerning the existing barrier at the entrance to Cantley Park from Wiltshire Road. The route of the Greenway has now been adjusted in light of the feedback received and will no longer connect directly to Wiltshire Road.</p> <p>Another comment was suggesting a barrier within the route to prevent potential conflict between cyclists using the Greenway at Jubilee Avenue, the need for any barrier at this point will be considered as part of the detailed design stages and the highway safety audits.</p>
Parking	1	<p>A question was raised asking if the Council plans to change the existing usage of Clifton Road, including parking.</p>

		There are no plans to change the existing use of Clifton Road as part of the Greenways project.
Street lighting	3	Concerns were raised about the implementation of increased street lighting in Cantley Park and at Jubilee Avenue. There are no plans to install street lighting along the Greenways.
Numbers of users	3	Questions were raised asking for the number of anticipated users for the Greenway. The council does not have any quantifiable number as to the numbers of users.
Bins	1	Comments were received requesting the number of increased bins that will be provided along the route to accommodate the increase of use, particularly within Cantley Park. The installation and maintenance of bins is a day-to-day land management issue and outside the scope of the Greenways project, however the land managers are closely involved with the plans and any additional bins will be arranged where they are required.
Climate change	1	Questions were raised regarding the removal of trees and the potential negative impact on the climate. As detailed above the detailed design of the scheme will seek to minimise any removal of existing trees, and seek re-planting of new trees in compensation where appropriate. In addition to this, the creation of an off-road non-vehicular commuting and leisure route has been identified in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan as a key element in reducing the existing carbon emissions.
Noise during the works	1	Concerns were raised about the noise of the works during any construction. As with all construction schemes, noise during the works is unavoidable, however any disturbance will be kept to a minimum as much as possible; the Council will be seeking "no dig" construction techniques as much as possible and through root protection areas of trees. The final surfacing of the Greenways is also laid by hand, which minimises the amount of heavy machinery use.
Signage	1	Comments were received recommending that correct signage is put in place that demonstrates where cycling is allowed. The Greenways signage includes clear diagrams and descriptions about what usage is allowed along certain sections.

Road cycling	1	<p>A comment was received highlighting that the route through Clifton Road is not ideal as it still requires cyclists to use the roads, and requested a subsequent phase that would address these issues.</p> <p>The Council does recognise that it is not ideal that road use will be necessary along the route, and has sought to reduce this as much as possible in the proposed design, using quieter roads where it becomes necessary. These issues can be addressed at a future time, however there is no second phase planned.</p>
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