

CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT - 24 MARCH 2011

OLD ABINGDON ROAD RAILWAY BRIDGE CYCLE PATH

**Report by Deputy Director of Environment & Economy -
Highways & Transport**

Introduction

1. This report outlines proposals to convert footways to shared use cycle paths on the short stretch of Old Abingdon Road that spans the railway and Hinksey Stream bridges (location plan is shown at Annex 1). This will enable safe and convenient passage for cycles. The scheme will be completed in conjunction with work being carried out by Network Rail to increase the capacity of the railway line. The report recommends that the Cabinet Member for Transport approve implementation of the scheme.
2. Old Abingdon Road Railway Bridge is undergoing comprehensive reconstruction to raise the deck to accommodate taller goods trains, which will result in an increase to the gradient of the bridge (from roughly 3% to 6%), and this has opened up an opportunity to improve conditions for cyclists.
3. The steeper gradient will make cycling harder and more uncomfortable with cyclists more likely to 'wobble', especially given the narrow carriageway. There is a relatively large volume of cyclists at peak times. An option to provide wide cycle lanes on both sides of the carriageway was presented to Network Rail. However, this would have meant widening the deck resulting in more intensive work to the superstructure and ultimately prohibitive costs. It is therefore proposed to convert the pavements to shared use cycle paths.
4. Network Rail will undertake the work at its expense, as part of the bridge deck replacement.

Background

5. Old Abingdon Road is an essential cycle link for those cycling from Kennington, New Hinksey and further afield e.g. Radley, Abingdon and Wootton but cycling can be difficult and uncomfortable due to the narrow carriageway and relatively high volume of traffic.
6. The previous provision for cyclists was a narrow (approximately 0.8m) and sub-standard east bound on-carriageway cycle lane which was often blocked by motor vehicles in the morning peak. This resulted in cyclists either using the pavement to by-pass or wait in queuing traffic thus eroding the benefits of cycling to/from Oxford as a time-saving mode.
7. The relatively low pedestrian footfall but relatively high cycle numbers in this location, coupled with the speed of the road (60mph on western side and

30mph on eastern side) suggests the proposed shared use facility is appropriate in this location.

Description of scheme

8. The scheme will be considered in conjunction with Network Rail's replacement of the bridge deck providing a safer and more convenient and easier cycle route into Oxford from the south.
9. The scheme involves converting pavements to shared use cycle paths over the railway bridge. The pavements will be reconstructed from approximately 1 metre to 2 metres in width with a carriageway reduction from approximately 6.8 metres to 6 metres. A cycle off-slip (Annex 2) will be provided on the Kennington Road to enable safe re-entry on to the carriageway for cyclists. The bus lane on eastern side will be used to provide a safe and convenient re-entry at the entrance to the Camping and Caravan site (Annex 2).
10. The recommendation in this report is worded to reflect the legal requirements for conversion of the footway under the Highways Act 1980.

Consultation on the scheme

11. Stakeholders including local members, Kennington Parish Council, cycle and pedestrian groups, disability groups and frontagers affected by the proposals have been consulted (December 2010 and January 2011).
12. As a result of the consultation some elements of the scheme were added or amended, such as the cycle off-slip and the design and location of dropped kerbs.
13. Councillor John Tanner objected to the scheme on the grounds that he objects to the general principle of sharing of pavements regardless of the circumstances and location. As mentioned previously, the number of cyclists on this route far outweighs the number of pedestrians so due consideration needs to be given to this group. It should also be noted that pedestrians will also benefit from wider pavements. There were no other objections.
14. The county council's road safety officer has some very minor concerns regarding the increased gradient and pavement cycling but indicated this represents a very small risk (similar examples can be found elsewhere in the county). He is happy for the scheme to proceed but has recommended monitoring usage of the scheme if approved. Consultation responses are set out at Annex 3.

Policy and strategy

15. The scheme would make a positive contribution to achieving the following of the five strategic objectives under the current Local Transport Plan (LTP2):
 - (a) Tackling congestion: by encouraging more people to switch from car

- travel to cycling
- (b) Safer roads: by providing safer cycling facilities
- (c) Better air quality: by reducing congestion

Financial and Staff Implications

16. All costs of this scheme would be borne by Network Rail.

RECOMMENDATION

17. **The Cabinet Member for Transport is RECOMMENDED to authorise that the lengths of footway highlighted in red in Annex 2(a) to this report be removed under the powers in Section 66(4) of the Highways Act 1980 and a cycle track constructed under Section 65(1).**

STEVE HOWELL

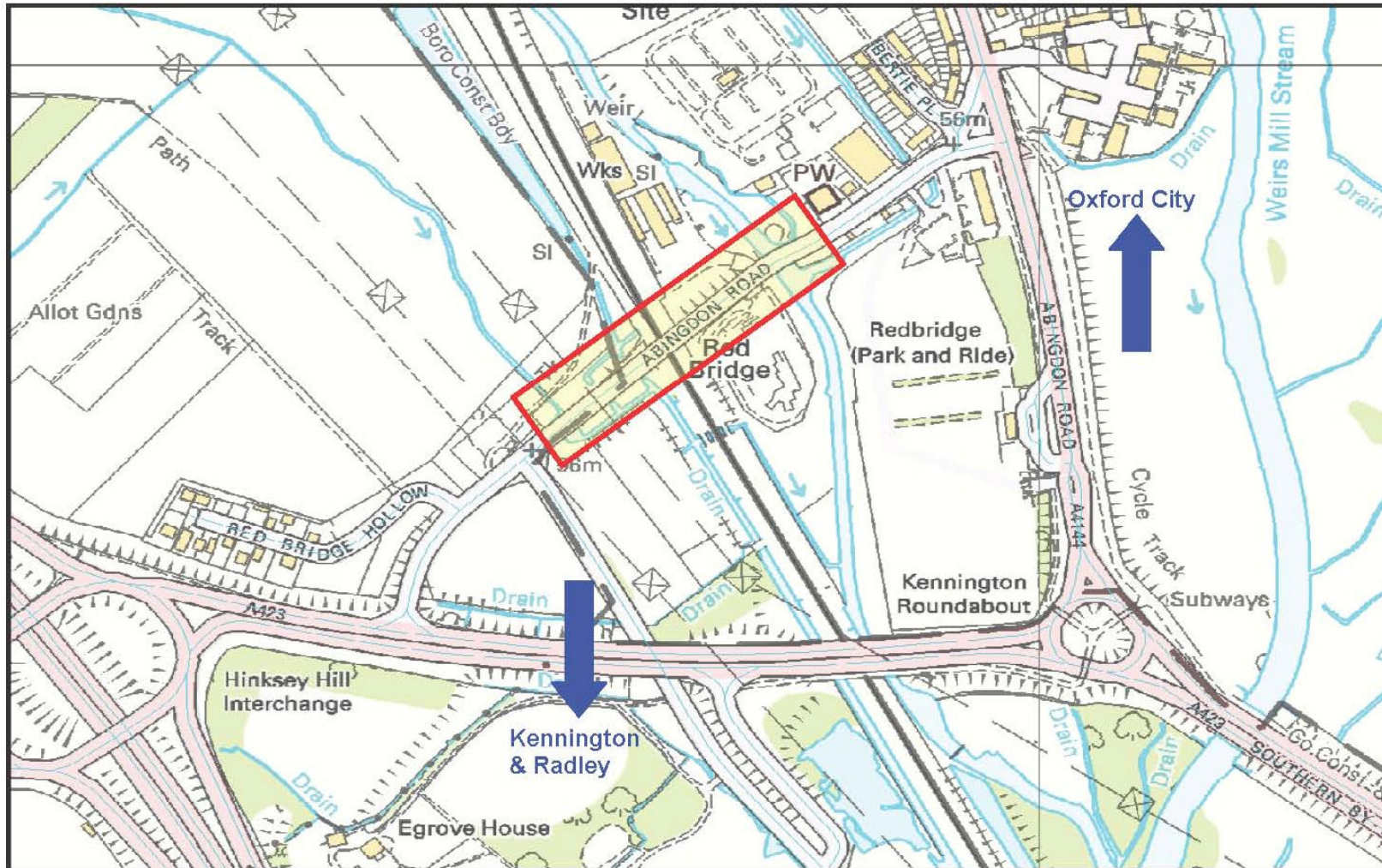
Deputy Director Environment & Economy – Highways & Transport

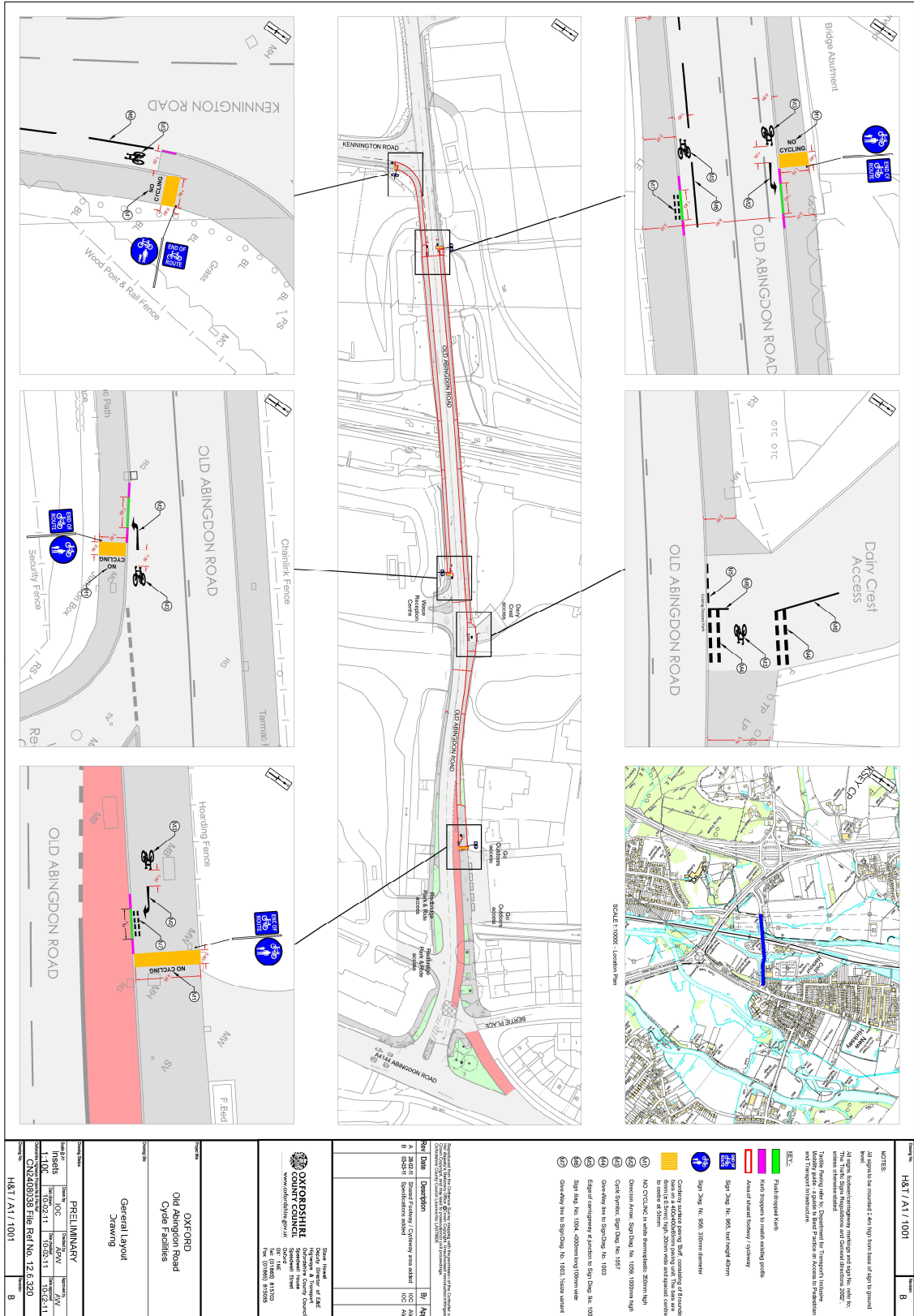
Background papers: Consultation documentation

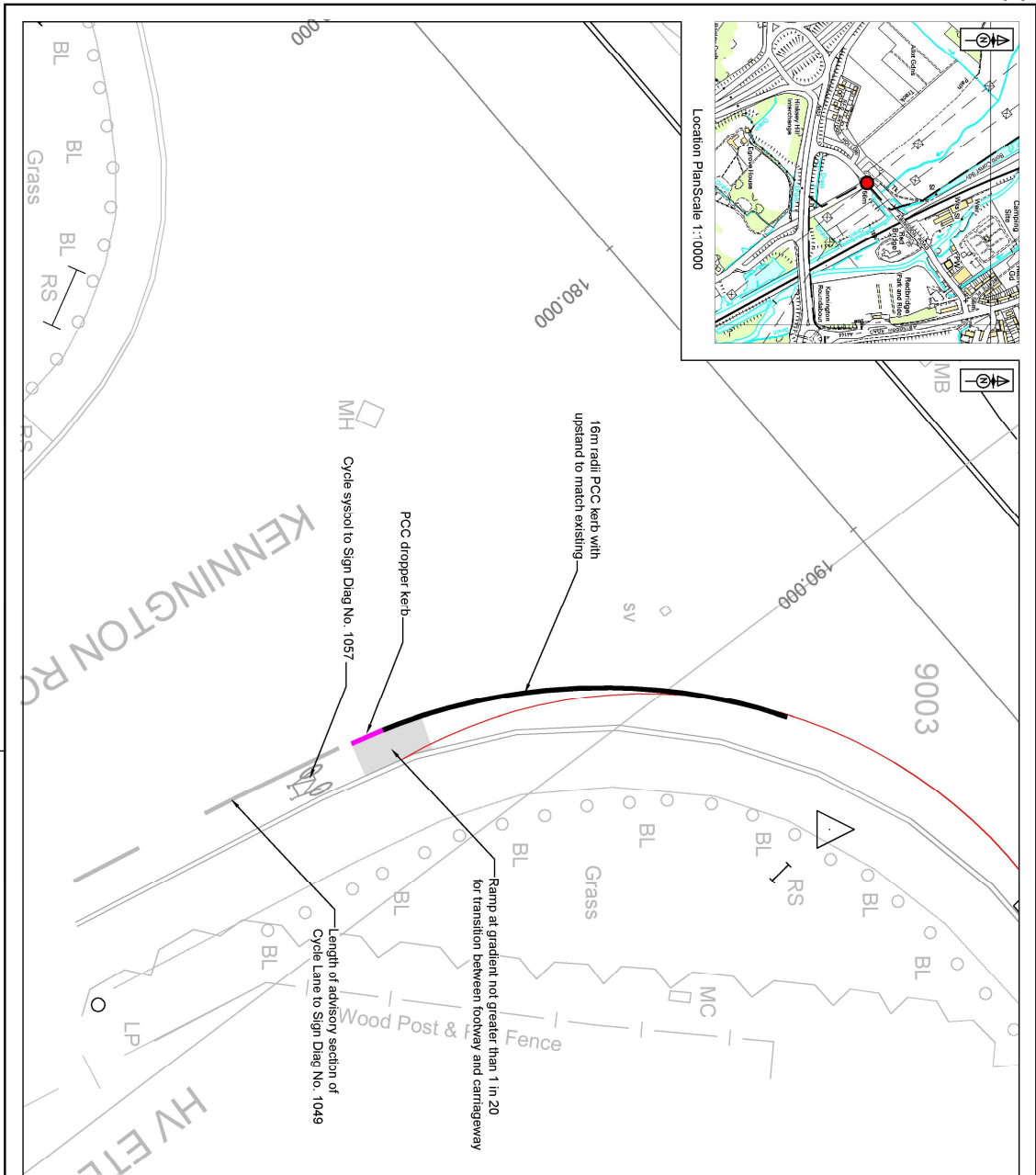
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Annex 1 – Location Map





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