



Report to Leader (Transport portfolio)

Decision Date:	30 December 2020
Reference number:	T11.20
Title:	HS2 Cycling and Walking Interfaces
Relevant councillor(s):	CLlr Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Transportation
Author and/or contact officer:	Joan Hancox joan.hancox@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	Great Brickhill; Grendon Underwood; Stone & Waddesdon; Wendover, Halton & Stoke Mandeville;
Recommendations:	To agree that future allocations of the DfT Walking & Cycling Fund (up to £700k) should be used for HS2 Cycling Interfaces.

Reason for decision: DfT need to instruct HS2 Ltd before Christmas 2020 to incorporate amendments to their designs to future-proof a potential Buckinghamshire Greenway cycling and walking route. The suggested option is to use future Buckinghamshire Council allocations from DfT's Walking and Cycling Fund. This would require no capital funding from Buckinghamshire Council and will secure the delivery of several changes to the design of HS2 infrastructure which will enable a Buckinghamshire Greenway to be built at a future date.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council (and formerly Buckinghamshire County Council) officers have been in negotiations with HS2 Ltd since 2017 to try to agree minor design alterations to ensure HS2 designs accommodate an aspirational cycling and walking 'spine route' through northern Buckinghamshire (between Wendover and Steeple Claydon).
- 1.2 Drawing in support from senior officials and ministers at the Department for Transport, officers have negotiated down the cost of these interfaces from over £3m to approximately £700k. Buckinghamshire Council has not made any commitments

to fund this infrastructure, but it was always clear additional funding would be needed as these elements are outside the scope set out in the HS2 Act.

- 1.3 Buckinghamshire Council do not agree we should be funding infrastructure that should be provided by HS2 Ltd and will continue to negotiate with HS2 Ltd to reduce these costs, via the DfT, but we need to agree the funding for the interfaces as a worst case scenario or we will lose this opportunity.
- 1.4 Confirmation of funding arrangements has now become urgent, due to interactions with the HS2 design and construction programme. Failure to instruct now will increase costs substantially due to HS2 programme delay, making the interfaces financially unviable in the future. The DfT have been very supportive of the Council's negotiations to date and have a strong desire to maximise the local community benefit from the High Speed 2 project but are very keen for this to now be agreed and actioned quickly.
- 1.5 The original proposal from DfT was that HS2 Ltd would use part of the Buckinghamshire allocation of the HS2 Road Safety Fund to meet the costs of these interfaces. This would amount to approximately one quarter of the total HS2 Road Safety Funding allocation for Buckinghamshire and officers felt this would not be supported given the level of community demand for this funding.
- 1.6 Instead, Buckinghamshire Council has secured the Department for Transport's agreement to forward-fund the interfaces from a future year walking and cycling allocation, from the Government's £2bn walking and cycling fund. We would hope to partially off-set this future funding loss through in-year savings and a £100K grant allocation from Sustrans towards the Wendover interface.
- 1.7 This means Buckinghamshire Council would not have the opportunity to spend the £700k on other walking and cycling projects, however these potential projects are not yet identified and therefore this can be budgeted accordingly in future years. If the Walking and Cycling Fund funding ceases, there is no liability for Buckinghamshire Council to cover the costs for the HS2 interfaces due to the funding arrangement.
- 1.8 This report also sets out several alternative options, including:
 - Use Buckinghamshire HS2 Road Safety Funding
 - Use full / partial funding from core BC Capital
 - Only agree to contribute to a sub-set of the negotiated interfaces
 - Do not agree a funding package

However, these options are not believed to maximise use of available funding, are financially unpalatable for the Council given its current funding position or would introduce reputational risks for the Council while not securing maximum benefit for local communities and are therefore not recommended.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 The Buckinghamshire section of the route (“The Buckinghamshire Greenway”) forms a key ‘spine’ which could become the start of a future cycle and walking network for Buckinghamshire, connecting local towns and villages otherwise cut off by heavily trafficked roads and HS2 infrastructure.
- 2.2 DfT originally commissioned a panel of consultants to carry out a feasibility study into a ‘HS2 National Cycle Route’ to complement the HS2 rail line. As part of this, consultants carried out detailed feasibility studies in Buckinghamshire. Whilst DfT did not progress the national route, they were supportive of bringing sections of the route forward through local authority plans, and Buckinghamshire has seen this in the DfT investment in Waddesdon Greenway (opened 2018) and the Misbourne Greenway (Wendover Dean to Great Missenden due to open 2021).
- 2.3 The work of Buckinghamshire Council officers in pursuing the HS2 rail interfaces was supported by the Portfolio Holder and Deputy Portfolio Holder for Transportation prior to April 2020, and the matter has been raised in Buckinghamshire County Council senior level meetings with HS2 Ltd to maintain progress.
- 2.4 Officers have been negotiating with HS2 Ltd for several years to make minor tweaks to HS2 designs to ‘future-proof’ various interface points and preserve the potential for a future Buckinghamshire Greenway in the north of Buckinghamshire. These interfaces aim to facilitate future delivery of key walking and cycling links between neighbouring communities to reduce severance from the HS2 line and unlock potential future connections between key growth areas and hubs. Contextual information on the Buckinghamshire Greenway is set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.5 As the Buckinghamshire Greenway had not been developed at the time of HS2 petitioning, these interfaces were not secured in the HS2 Act. Left unmitigated, HS2’s plans would sever the future Buckinghamshire Greenway and make it prohibitively expensive to deliver at a future date. As these elements are additional to the Act, HS2 and DfT have stated that any additional costs for these interfaces must be funded outside the HS2 project.

Negotiations to Date

- 2.6 Negotiations with HS2 Ltd and their contractors have been extremely protracted and have been ongoing since at least 2017. A wide range of technical alternatives have been explored and tested, but progress has often been slow due to a lack of willingness from HS2 Ltd to accommodate changes. As a result, following interventions by the former and current government ministers, the DfT became heavily involved in negotiation of these interfaces in Summer 2019.
- 2.7 With Buckinghamshire Council support, DfT have worked hard to get HS2 Ltd to carry out design work and determine costs for incorporating the interfaces. We have

negotiated down an original cost of over £3m to approximately £700k, including requiring HS2 Ltd to cover their own overheads and accept various local derogations from unsuitable design standards. This negotiation is ongoing.

- 2.8 The interface proposals have a lot of support at the DfT HS2 Directorate up to Director General level. HS2 Ltd, on the other hand, have not demonstrated any level of support and would prefer for them not to go ahead. Given the senior involvement and difficult negotiations to date, there are reputational risks to Buckinghamshire Council if we were not able to agree to a funding package.
- 2.9 Buckinghamshire Council has never committed to funding the interfaces as we have been waiting for costs to settle before any decision could be taken on potential funding sources. However, confirmation of funding arrangements has now become urgent, due to interactions with the HS2 design and construction programme. An agreed funding settlement needs to be established immediately to avoid prolongation costs of extending the HS2 programme, which would make the interfaces financially unviable.
- 2.10 The Department for Transport is strongly supportive of the Buckinghamshire Greenway vision and the need for local walking and cycling connectivity between neighbouring towns and villages. They have stressed the importance of the Station Road Quainton culvert in securing land holder agreements which would allow for a Greenway from Station Road (near Quainton) to Greatmoor and in the future provide for an extensive stretch of off-road Greenway. As this is so important, DfT have offered to proceed with instructing HS2 Ltd on all the interfaces on the proviso that funding can be agreed.
- 2.11 The funding proposal is for the costs of all interfaces to be funded in advance by the Department for Transport. The Department for Transport and Buckinghamshire Council would then enter into an arrangement to reduce the amount from a future walking and cycling allocation (out of the £2bn Walking and Cycling Fund yet to be allocated to local authorities). DfT think our allocation for 21/22 would be similar to this year's (about £2.3m allocated via the Emergency Active Travel Fund).

Summary of HS2 Interfaces

- 2.12 The table below sets out the detail of key interfaces negotiated to this point. Costs presented are a 'worst case' scenario, and negotiations are ongoing to bring costs down further with any reductions coming back to the Council. The Cabinet Member will be informed of the final position before any agreement is entered.

<u>Interface</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Anticipated Cost</u>	<u>Related documents/plans</u>
Station Road, Quainton	Installation of galvanised steel underbridge as part of new HS2 structure on the realigned Station Road. As well as providing a direct route for the cycleway up to Calvert and beyond, it unlocks land acquisition on approximately 2.5km of the Buckinghamshire Greenway (i.e. a link between Calvert and Quainton) at Doddershall.	£500k	1a and 1b/ Appendix 2 & 3
Needles Farm, Quainton	Installation of ramped path between current Station Road (due to be stopped up) and adjacent overbridge, to facilitate direct trips between Quainton, the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre and Waddesdon.	£75k	1a and 2a / Appendix 2 & 4
Small Dean Lane, Wendover	Widening of footway due to be provided by HS2 under parliamentary assurance to facilitate cycling access. Part of A413 Misbourne Greenway route from Aylesbury and Wendover to Great Missenden, Amersham and beyond.	£75k	3a / Appendix 5
Marsh Lane, Stoke Mandeville	Provision of safe crossing of the proposed Stoke Mandeville Bypass to preserve connectivity of a popular quiet lane cycling route between Stoke Mandeville and Princes Risborough	£50k	4a / Appendix 6
Edgecote Road, Quainton	Utilisation of planned HS2 underpasses for future aspirational cycle link between Quainton and Calvert – permissions only.	£0	5a / Appendix 7
FMA/1, Waddesdon Greenway	Realignment of bridge ramps (and potential relocation of structure) to maintain direct connectivity on the Waddesdon Greenway while preserving links to adjacent Public Rights of Way.	£0	6a / Appendix 8
SBH/32, Aylesbury	Investigation of bridge ramp gradients to maximise cyclist and disability access– no change anticipated	£0	7a / Appendix 9
Greatmoor to Calvert	HS2 parliamentary assurance to ensure ongoing permissions for cyclists and utilisation of planned	£0	8a / Appendix 10

	underpasses and minor access roads for future aspirational cycle route – permissions only.		
	Total (without Station Road)	£200k	
	Total (with Station Road)	£700k	

Table 1: Negotiated Interfaces and Anticipated Costs

The “related documents/plans” column relates to additional documents submitted and named as listed, to assist with providing further information for each site.

2.13 There are a number of interfaces which are still being negotiated but cannot be included in the current change order as discussions are ongoing. These are:

- A418 Oxford Road. Ensuring like-for-like provision to latest design standards in the diversion of the Pebble Way walking and cycling route between Aylesbury and Stone.
- Addison Road, Calvert to Steeple Claydon. Widening of planned footpath to facilitate cycling trips. HS2 contractors have verbally committed to making this path as wide as possible, albeit this is likely to be less than 3m due to site constraints.
- A422 Brackley Road. Design of non-symmetrical verge widths and associated utility works to provide wide verge for future cycleway between Buckingham and Brackley.
- Utilisation and Retention of HS2 Haul Roads. Where HS2 haul roads are not severed by permanent works, officers are exploring the potential to retain these (with landowner consent) as a future walking and cycling route.

3. Other options considered

3.1 The following alternative options have been identified and are set out below:

- Use Buckinghamshire HS2 Road Safety Funding.
- Use full / partial funding from core BC Capital.
- Only agree to contribute to a sub-set of the negotiated interfaces.
- Do not agree a funding package.

Full or Partial BC Contribution from HS2 Road Safety Fund

3.2 The Buckinghamshire allocation of the HS2 Road Safety Fund is £3.95m. As such, one option would be to fund the full amount required (or part) from this source. This would be up to approximately £700k. This was the initial preferred option put forward by DfT.

3.3 This option would have a number of positive implications:

- No future liabilities. There would be no need for a future 'deduction' arrangement with DfT and future walking and cycling allocations would be maintained in full for other priorities across Buckinghamshire.
- No budgetary impact. This option would require no contribution from core Buckinghamshire Council budgets or reserves.
- Speed. HS2 Road Safety Funding is held by HS2 Ltd. DfT could simply instruct HS2 to take the agreed costs from this fund and no further side arrangements would be needed. This would enable the change instruction from DfT to HS2 Ltd to be made as quickly as possible.

3.4 However, overall, this option is not recommended due to the following factors:

- Community Impact. HS2 Road Safety Funding is under high demand from local communities. Although it can explicitly be used for cycling measures, such a substantial contribution to a scheme which will only 'futureproof' an aspirational scheme would have significant implications for the Council's ability to mitigate local HS2 construction impacts. Buckinghamshire Council is due to launch the fund for local community applications shortly, and a 25% top-slice of the fund is likely to be controversial with bidders and would reduce the amount the council is able to award to communities badly affected by HS2 construction.

Full or Partial BC Contribution from Capital Reserves

3.5 Buckinghamshire Council could choose to make a direct capital contribution towards the costs of these interfaces, either as a partial sum or the full amount.

3.6 Whilst this would ensure there is no impact on commitment of HS2 Road Safety Fund or future cycling and walking allocations, it would require commitment of funds at a time when the council is facing tight financial situation due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even for a partial contribution, this option is likely to be unpalatable given the current financial position of the Council. It could also slow down the process of DfT instructing HS2 Ltd due to the need for separate financial transfers between the Council and the Department.

Contribute to only some of the negotiated interfaces

3.7 Another option would be for Buckinghamshire Council to agree to fund only some of the interfaces listed above. In reality, this would amount to not progressing with the interface at Station Road Quainton, which carries by far the highest cost. This would reduce the cost of the remaining interfaces to approximately 200k. Not progressing with other interfaces would have minimal benefit given anticipated value.

3.8 However, the Station Road Quainton interface is in many respects key to the whole Buckinghamshire Greenway route. It provides a direct link up towards Calvert, avoiding a significant diversion through the centre of Quainton. Moreover, it unlocks

agreement with a key landowner along the route at Doddershall and effectively secures the majority of land required to construct a route up to Calvert. The interface therefore offers significant value for money and loss of this would threaten the value of other interfaces along the route as there would be little to no onward connectivity.

- 3.9 Station Road Quainton has also been the most complex point of negotiation with DfT and HS2 Ltd and has strong high-level support within the Department. Dropping this interface would therefore risk significant reputational damage with senior figures at the DfT.

No Buckinghamshire Council Contribution

- 3.10 Buckinghamshire Council could choose not to agree any funding towards these interfaces, or continue to argue that costs should be met in full by HS2 Ltd.
- 3.11 This option would have the benefit of having no financial impacts. This option would require no contribution from core Buckinghamshire Council budgets or reserves and no forward funding of future DfT grant. However, HS2 Ltd and the DfT have been clear that as these interfaces are not within the HS2 Act, additional funding must be found outside the HS2 project to support them and this must be identified locally. As such, the result of Buckinghamshire Council adopting this stance would be that the interfaces do not go ahead in emerging HS2 designs.
- 3.12 However, overall, this option is not recommended due to the following factors:
- HS2 Community Impacts. Without inclusion of the interfaces, HS2 will have greater permanent severance impacts for communities along the route which could be overcome through the interfaces identified.
 - Buckinghamshire Greenway. Progression of HS2 designs and works would mean it would be prohibitively expensive to progress these interfaces at a future date, and this would render the Buckinghamshire Greenway route undeliverable. It would also introduce land acquisition difficulties for any future route, as the interface at Station Road, Quainton, is paramount to winning support from a key landowner in the area.
 - Reputational Risks. Negotiation of these interfaces has required involvement of senior officers and politicians at the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd. While Buckinghamshire has not promised any funding to date, pulling out of negotiations at this point could mean the loss of key allies and significant reputational impacts within government.
 - Lost investment. Significant officer time and resource has been dedicated to negotiating these interfaces, including from Buckinghamshire Council, HS2 Ltd

and their contractors and the DfT. Not proceeding with any interfaces would therefore mean abortive costs and effort.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 The sections above set out various options for meeting the funding requirements.
- 4.2 The Department for Transport has indicated that Buckinghamshire Council will receive somewhere around a £2.3m allocation for active travel projects next financial year, subject to Treasury approvals. A deduction of up to £700k of this funding could significantly reduce this future grant allocation but could be partly offset through in-year savings and a £100K grant allocation from Sustrans.
- 4.3 The forward funding arrangement (if agreed) will need to be formalised via a written agreement between DfT and Buckinghamshire Council. There is a potential risk of corporate knowledge loss of the agreement– on both sides – which we will seek to mitigate via the details in the written agreement. We will seek to agree, up-front, the finer, transactional details of the arrangement (e.g. who is responsible for transferring funds to HS2; whether the HS2 cycling interfaces funding can be deducted before grant is allocated to us or cash transferred to us, or whether for Legal or HM Treasury grant rules it needs to be paid to Buckinghamshire Council and subsequently clawed back).
- 4.4 Any contribution from core Buckinghamshire Council funds would have direct financial implications on the Council's Budget, which is likely to be unpalatable given the current financial position of the Council. No core budget contribution is recommended.
- 4.5 From a transactional perspective, the recommended process is as follows:
 - Department for Transport pay up to £700K directly to HS2 Ltd for the provision of these interfaces. Buckinghamshire Council enters into written agreement with the Department for Transport to agree this cost will be deducted from a future DfT walking and cycling grant to Buckinghamshire. We will be asking DfT to administer this, and deduct this forward funding from the grant before they process the payment, however if this is not accepted, we would need to retain

a corporate memory – on a grant register – that monies are owed to DfT against this grant.

- Sustrans pays £100k grant to Buckinghamshire Council to contribute to costs of interface at Wendover. This is held by BC to progress walking and cycling priorities which would otherwise have been supported by the DfT grant.

Future financial and legal implications

- 4.6 The Buckinghamshire Greenway is likely to be built in stages and is unlikely to be built for over five years. At this time, we are only asking for agreement to the funding arrangements to future proof routes but that those interfaces will be owned eventually by Buckinghamshire Council. The length of the Buckinghamshire Greenway facilitated by the interfaces (Great Missenden to Calvert) is 30km. Of this, only roughly 8km (Waddesdon to Greatmoor) would need to be constructed with additional future funding from Buckinghamshire Council, following HS2 works in the area. Based on previous schemes, it is estimated this could cost in the region of £2m (not allowing for inflation) to build, with most of the necessary landowner agreements already in place.
- 4.7 Maintenance of The Buckinghamshire Greenway would be in-line with other HS2 schemes; there would be a 12-month maintenance period following completion during which HS2 Ltd would be responsible. Following this period, maintenance would be taken over by Buckinghamshire Council, subject to the satisfactory completion of any defects and RSAs. Any departures from standards would be assessed and agreed as per existing processes.
- 4.8 A full Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is currently being undertaken to assess the potential impacts of this decision, especially for groups with protected characteristics. This relates to the decision to allocate up to £700k of a future cycling grant to the interfaces rather than other, currently undefined, active travel priorities. Equality impacts will be kept under review throughout the process, and that groups with protected characteristics will be considered at all stages, including during the design process. Although the proposed funding structure means £700k will be diverted from other potential future schemes, at this time it is not possible to say where else the £700k may have been spent, as the broader DfT allocation has not been released and the potential terms, criteria and restrictions are therefore unknown). It is therefore not possible to undertake an EqIA on these other potential, unidentified, schemes.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 The Buckinghamshire Greenway would facilitate sustainable transport for local trips in some of Buckinghamshire's more rural communities, including to key business and tourism destinations. In many cases, the distances between these communities are short and there is high demand for walking and cycling connectivity, but heavily trafficked roads mean there are no safe routes available. By unlocking these future routes, this decision would contribute to the Council's Climate Change and Sustainability objectives in promoting sustainable travel choices.
- 5.2 The interfaces listed above have been subject to several years of protracted technical discussions and analysis, and although these figures represent a 'worst case scenario' we are highly confident that this investment represents value for money for Buckinghamshire for the reasons set out above.
- 5.3 This decision does not have implications requiring an equality impact assessment or data protection impact assessment.

6. Consultation with local Councillors & Community Boards

- 6.1 Very limited consultation has taken place regarding these interfaces to date, including with local members and local Parish/Town Councils or Community Boards due to the protracted and emerging nature of these negotiations.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 Very limited consultation has taken place regarding these interfaces to date, as the content of the interfaces was not crystallised until very recently so there was no detail to share nor reassurance this would be taken forward. However, the DfT recently advised the resolution of these interfaces is needed so that HS2 Ltd can be instructed to incorporate these.

If Cabinet approve the funding of these then we will inform local members and community boards.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 Following the decision being made, we will contact the DfT to provide assurance that they can instruct HS2 Ltd to include the interfaces. The Department for Transport has advised that the instruction to HS2 Ltd needs to be made prior to Christmas 2020.

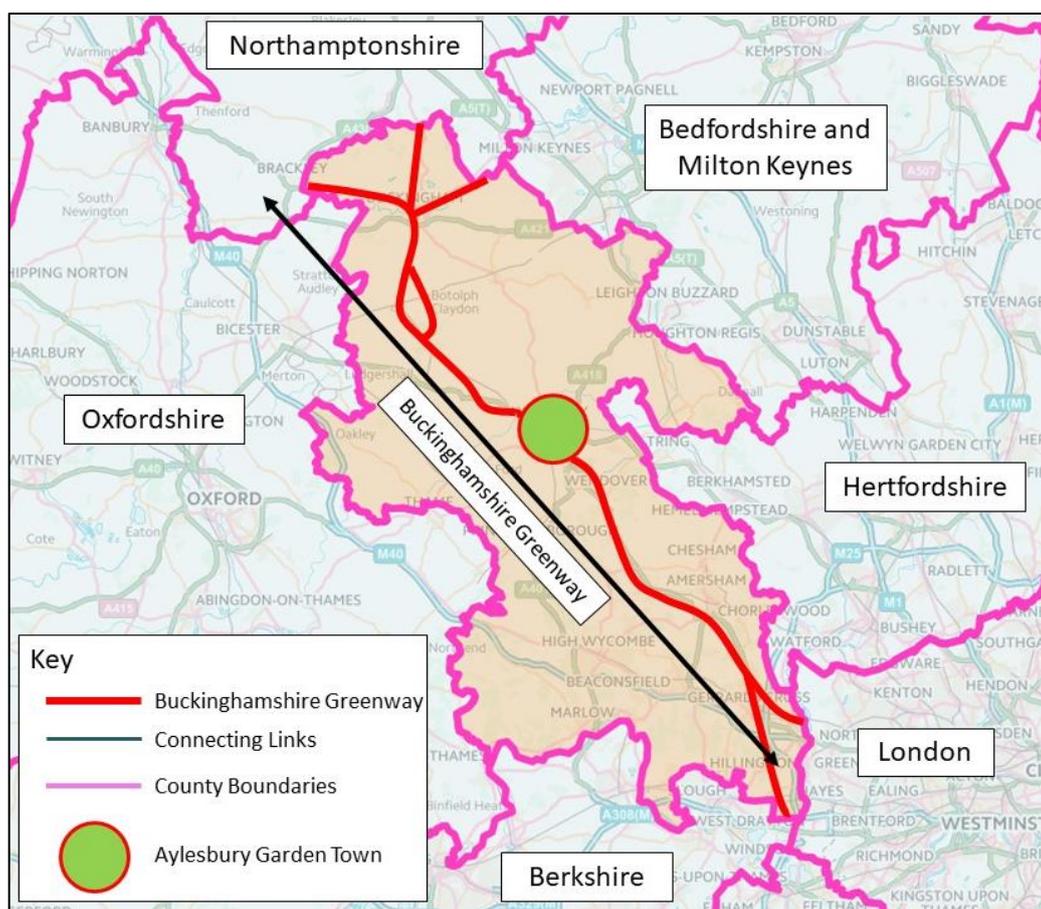
9. Background papers

- 9.1 None.

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

11. Appendix 1: Buckinghamshire Greenway



- 11.1 The Buckinghamshire Greenway is an emerging concept for a countywide walking and cycling spine route connecting towns and villages and key destinations across Buckinghamshire. In October 2019, Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet Members Mark Shaw and Clive Harriss wrote to the Department for Transport Walking and Cycling minister Chris Heaton-Harris MP setting out the vision for the route.
- 11.2 When delivered, the scheme would provide several functions:

- **Community Links.** Providing sustainable connectivity to villages and communities which are otherwise heavily car-dependent, including links to train stations along the route.
- **Growth Hubs.** A 'green spine' connecting Buckinghamshire's key growth areas (housing) and growth hubs (economy), including Silverstone, Buckingham, Westcott, Aylesbury / Woodlands, Wendover, Amersham, Iver, Pinewood Studios and Heathrow Airport.
- **Tourism and Leisure.** As well as cycle tourism, the route connects key attractions including Silverstone, Stowe, Claydon House, Waddesdon Manor, Stoke Mandeville Stadium, Wendover Woods, Roald Dahl Museum, Chiltern Open Air Museum, Pinewood Studios and others.
- **Road Safety.** Provides an alternative to some of Buckinghamshire's busiest routes including the A41 and A413 helping to segregate vulnerable users from heavy traffic.
- **HS2 Mitigation.** Ensuring connectivity between towns and villages severed by the HS2 line. For example, the scheme will establish a direct sustainable connection between communities in Quainton and local schools in Waddesdon village.

11.3 The first section of this route, the 'Waddesdon Greenway' between Aylesbury and Waddesdon was opened in September 2018 and has since become a well-used and well-loved community facility. The route has seen over 180,000 trips since opening.

11.4 In the south of Buckinghamshire, the route (known locally as the "Misbourne Greenway") is relatively straightforward, with the main obstacles being funding and land ownership. Negotiations are ongoing on both points, and the next section of the route is due to be constructed in Spring/ Summer 2021, providing a link between Wendover Dean and Great Missenden.

