

CABINET

6 JULY 2011

NATIONAL CYCLE ROUTE NETWORK ROUTE 23 AND THE HOCKLEY VIADUCT

REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR (OPERATIONS)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

[CAB1509](#) – Hockley Viaduct, 19 September 2007

[CAB2074](#) – Capital Programme 2010/11 to 2013/14 – Budget Options, 10 November 2010

[Minutes of the Local Economy Scrutiny Panel](#) of 3 February 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The National Cycling Network Route 23 is intended to link Basingstoke to Southampton via Winchester. Much of the route is already in place, and there is potential to incorporate into it the Hockley Viaduct which has strong local appeal. The route would also provide a bike-friendly means of reaching the City Centre from the new Park and Ride site.

This report considers the completion of Route 23 through Winchester from Winnall to the South of Winchester Park and Ride. It considers how the Hockley Viaduct might best be incorporated into the route, and explores issues around its repair, future ownership, management and maintenance.

Members are asked to note the progress which has already been made in establishing this missing length of Route 23, and to approve officer proposals to take forward the project to complete the Park and Ride project by providing non-car links into the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Members:

- 1 Affirm the Council's commitment to retaining the Hockley Viaduct as a feature of local heritage interest, rather than demolishing it;
- 2 Support in principle the completion of National Cycle Route Network Route 23, as an integral part of the South of Winchester Park and Ride project and an important link to the South Downs Way;
- 3 Note the progress being made towards the completion of Route 23, and request a further report to Cabinet in January 2012 setting out findings of the Stage 2 surveys, preliminary costings and fundraising options;
- 4 Confirm support in principle for the transfer of the freehold ownership and operational responsibility of the Viaduct to Sustrans, subject to the conditions set out in section 2.10 of this report, and authorise the Heads of Estates and Legal Services to progress discussions with Sustrans towards this end;
- 5 Authorise the Head of Access and Infrastructure to progress discussions with Sustrans and Hampshire County Council regarding a Creation Order for Stage 2 of the Route;
- 6 Approve the deployment of the £500,000 allocation in the Capital Programme in a way which supports not only the repair of the Viaduct but completion of Route 23;
- 7 Endorse efforts to seek external funding, using the current allocation in the capital programme as match funding for external grants where available;
- 8 Authorise the Assistant Director (Economic Prosperity), under Financial Procedure Rule 6.4, to incur capital expenditure of up to £50,000 for undertaking any preliminary work needed that cannot be funded from other sources.

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DETAIL:

1 What is the National Cycle Route Network?

- 1.1 Sustrans was founded in Bristol in 1977 to help people travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. Now a leading charity, the organisation works with families, communities, policy makers and other organisations to encourage and enable people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys they make every day.
- 1.2 The first route which was created by Sustrans was the Bristol and Bath Railway Path, a 17-mile traffic-free trail along a disused railway. The charity went on to set out plans for a national network of routes in 1995 with a grant from the then newly-created National Lottery. Routes are a mixture of on-road and traffic-free. The length and popularity of the network has grown enormously, and it now carries over a million walking and cycling journeys daily and passes within a mile of 57% of the population.
- 1.3 The [National Cycle Route Network Route 23](#) will in time connect Reading to Southampton via Basingstoke, Alresford and Winchester. Large parts are already in place and the section through Winchester offers one of the most exciting sections of the route, running alongside the River Itchen, making use of parts of the old railway embankment (Didcot to Southampton line) and passing over the Hockley viaduct in Winchester. However it also presents a number of challenges which are set out in the following report.

2 What is the Hockley Viaduct?

- 2.1 The Viaduct is located in open countryside, south of Winchester, and lies within the newly formed South Downs National Park. It crosses the valley of the River Itchen and linked the (now defunct) Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway line with the London and South Western Railway (LSWR) main line, on the west side of the valley.
- 2.2 The structure comprises 33 arches and is over 600 metres long. It is largely constructed of concrete, but with brickwork arches and parapets. It was built by the firm of Galbraith and Church under the supervision of the LSWR's consulting engineer, W L Galbraith. He had completed several mass concrete railway viaducts in the West Country during 1889 and 1890.

- 2.3 The railway line opened in 1891. It was closed to passengers in 1960, and to freight in 1966, since when it has been disused. Winchester City Council, then constituted as *The Mayor Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Winchester*, acquired the Viaduct from the British Railways Board as part of a conveyance of old railway land on 15 January 1968.
- 2.4 The Viaduct has been cited by Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group as an early example of concrete construction. It is not, however, a designated listed building or scheduled monument. Applications for statutory designation were rejected in 1984, 1990, 1997 and 2005.
- 2.5 Earlier mass concrete viaducts (some by the same engineer) have been listed Grade II as examples of technological innovation, but English Heritage does not regard Hockley Viaduct as significantly innovative to warrant listed status. The Council's Historic Environment Team nonetheless considers it to be an impressive structure, of architectural and historic interest, and regards it as an undesignated heritage asset.
- 2.6 At present, the Viaduct is accessible and used by walkers. The route over the viaduct is not a dedicated highway but is available for public use (a permissive footpath only). It joins the Hockley Link Road at its southern/eastern end and has a stepped access onto Five Bridges Road bridleway at the northern/western end.
- 2.7 A local [Friends](#) group was set up in 2007 to lobby for the structure to be properly preserved and its future properly planned. They have engaged with Councillors and the local MP, all of whom are committed to supporting discussions between the City Council, the County Council and Sustrans. In the meantime, the Friends have been promoting the interest of the Viaduct locally and they have supported basic environmental activity such as weed-clearing and litter-picking. The Friends are keen to see some form of railway memorabilia included in any scheme for the Viaduct, such as a signal gantry where it used to be at the southern end, along with some form of heritage interpretation. They have indicated that they may be able to contribute to the cost of this.
- 2.8 The Viaduct is already in need of repairs. The minimum works required are to the parapet walls and track bed, and costings for this are in the region of £500,000. However, there are others recommended in previous Cabinet reports ([CAB 1509](#), September 2007 refers) to bring the Viaduct into a state of good repair, and amounting to an additional £500,000. These include:
- monitoring and repair of cracks
 - repairs to brickwork
 - repointing of piers, abutment, arch barrel and spandrel walls
 - cleaning
- 2.9 This level of expenditure is clearly not possible within current budgetary constraints, but the Council is keen to make provision for the Viaduct. Consequently, Members allocated £500,000 in the Capital Budget ([CAB2074](#)

– Capital Programme 2010/11 to 2013/14 – Budget Options, 10 November 2010) to support a possible transfer of ownership of the structure to Sustrans. As a charity, it was felt that Sustrans might have access to other sources of funding to support the repair and maintenance.

- 2.10 However, Sustrans does not have guaranteed long term income and has been hesitant about taking on the liability for repairs. Earlier funds which could have supported the acquisition have now come to an end. As a consequence, Sustrans has stated that a transfer could only be effected:
- a) when significant repairs (as listed in 2.8) had been effected by the Council, putting the structure into a ‘good’ state;
 - b) with a ‘dowry’ of £100,000 to fund routine maintenance work;
 - c) with the proviso that in the event that the Viaduct required major maintenance, Sustrans would reserve the right to close the route whilst it identified funding to pay for the repairs.
- 2.11 Most recent surveys indicate that it would cost over £1 million to put the viaduct back into good repair. Consequently if the Council wished to see the structure retained and it was possible to dispose of the freehold of the property on terms which cost less than this amount, the transaction would represent best consideration. This would be on the clear understanding that the Council had no further liability for repair which might be required in future.
- 2.12 It is unlikely that there are more affordable solutions to the long term care of the Viaduct, although the 2007 report did introduce the option of demolition. This option has not previously enjoyed Member support. Officers have therefore sought to secure a future for the Viaduct not simply as an isolated heritage feature, but as an attractive and useful section of National Cycle Route Network (NCRN) Route 23.
- 2.13 In the meantime, the most urgent maintenance work to the parapet walls and track bed will need to be carried out regardless of the future use or ownership of the Viaduct, and the Friends group is pressing hard for them to be commissioned.

3 Completing NCRN Route 23

- 3.1 The route through Winchester has been divided into two stages as can be seen from the Appendices to this report. These are:
- a) Stage 1 from Winnall to the City Centre, and
 - b) Stage 2 from the City Centre to the South Winchester Park and Ride, incorporating the Hockley Viaduct.
- 3.2 Stage 1 has been the subject of a partnership project with Hampshire County Council, and is fully designed and funded (by developer contributions). This

section is currently out to tender and will be completed during the school summer holidays this year.

- 3.3 Stage 2 presents greater challenges and is the focus of this report. This route would offer an excellent facility for leisure cyclists, who could join it from the South of Winchester Park and Ride site and also from the South Downs Way. The National Park Authority is currently considering diverting the Way so that it comes into Winchester via St Catherine's Hill, providing an easy link with the Route. The Route could also serve cyclists coming into Winchester to work, adding value to the new Park and Ride in terms of enhancing its environmental contribution.
- 3.4 There are various options for securing a route from the City Centre to Hockley. Appendices 2 and 3 attached to this report potential options which utilise some existing roads and public bridleways and sections of the old railway embankment. The ultimate route will depend upon the level of funding secured, and also the agreement of landowners (including Winchester College and Hampshire County Council). The Route will be subject to a Creation Order and the necessary planning approvals. The Creation Order will set out who has the responsibility for maintaining the Route. The City Council could commission Sustrans to oversee aspects of the project, but the making of the Order would be the role of either the County Council or the City Council, and further discussions would be held before the order-making authority was finalised.
- 3.5 The most interesting option takes the Route up and over the Viaduct, both enhancing the interest of the Route and providing a 'useful' future for the structure. This is the more expensive options as it requires:
- putting the Viaduct into a good state of repair;
 - the construction of various access ramps;
 - the repair and improvement of two disused railway bridges;
 - the reconstruction of one bridge where its predecessor no longer exists.
- 3.6 Discussions are already taking place with Winchester College, which owns parts of the embankment, and with Hampshire County Council, which owns some farmland across which access would be required to the Viaduct.
- 3.7 At present, officers are unable to produce accurate project costings because survey work is hampered by the large amount of vegetation on the embankments. This work should be completed by November 2011, at which point outline designs and preliminary costings can be produced for Member consideration.

4 Management Options

- 4.1 Discussions about Route 23 have also considered future management options for the Viaduct. Paragraph 2.10 above indicates the position of Sustrans in relation to the possibility of a transfer of ownership from the City Council. The requirements set out were expressed at a meeting which took place in April this year.
- 4.2 Sustrans made it clear at that meeting that their preferred position would be for a publicly funded body or organisation (ideally with the necessary engineering/structures expertise) to own the Viaduct, as Sustrans has no guaranteed income to maintain it and is averse to exposing itself to financial risk in any transfer arrangement. However, the organisation is very keen to bring the structure into use and will be a key partner in delivering and promoting the final section of the Route.
- 4.3 Hampshire County Council has the relevant expertise but is highly unlikely to want to take ownership of the Viaduct, although completion of the Route would – in effect – also mark the completion of the South of Winchester Park and Ride project. Preliminary discussions have led to involvement of the County Council in using its specialist staff to review completed survey work, and in sourcing possible funding (through developer contributions) for Stage 2. The County is currently considering what, if any, further involvement it might be able to have. It is hoped that this would, as least, include future inspections of the structure.
- 4.4 The City Council could, of course, retain ownership of the Viaduct and with it retain all responsibilities for maintenance and repair. This would potentially be at no greater cost – or even a less cost - than the handover ‘deal’ proposed by Sustrans at paragraph 2.10. However, Sustrans owns and manages a number of large structures, and has the skills in-house to do this. As part of one of the NCRs, the Viaduct would benefit from the regular care and inspection provided by the national Sustrans team. As a charity, Sustrans may also have the possibility of access to grants and funds not available to the Council.
- 4.5 Further discussions are taking place at Sustrans in response to feedback from officers that the Council is unlikely to wish to accept the terms proposed. However, as the Council has already allocated £500,000 in capital funds to provide for the future of the Viaduct, it may be that this money can act as leveraging for some external grant aid (eg from the Landfill Trust or Heritage Lottery Fund) and/or some developer contributions through the County Council. The net result would be to put the Viaduct back into a very good state of repair, and the proposed dowry may then be reduced to reflect this.
- 4.6 Members are therefore asked to confirm that the Council still supports the principle of transfer of ownership and operational responsibility of the Viaduct to Sustrans. They are also asked to support officers in their efforts to seek external funding in order to achieve ‘best value’ from the current allocation in the capital programme.

5 Next Steps

- 5.1 Officers have planned a programme of work over the coming months to support the implementation of Stage 2 of Route 23. This includes:
- a) Urgent repairs to the Viaduct to keep it in a safe and structurally sound condition for its current leisure use;
 - b) Ecological surveys, to be carried out during the summer months;
 - c) Topographical surveys, to be completed in the autumn when vegetation is less dense;
 - d) Commissioning of outline designs and preliminary costings, informed by the surveys, to form the basis of a Cabinet decision in January 2012.
- 5.2 Once the decision is made to proceed with Stage 2, and the issue of future ownership of the Viaduct resolved, officers will progress the Creation Order and planning application. Once these are in place, construction work could be completed in a matter of two to three months.
- 5.3 Discussions will also continue with Sustrans, Hampshire County Council and Winchester College to facilitate the smooth progress of the project.
- 5.4 Members are therefore asked to note the progress made so far in bringing about the complete of NCRN Route 23 through Winchester, and asked to support a number of recommendations, drawn together on the front page of this report, which will support continued progress.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

6 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 This project supports delivery of the High Quality Environment outcome of the Sustainable Community Strategy, by encouraging people to use forms of transport other than the car. In so doing, it also addresses one of the five priority areas of the Strategy, which is to reduce the District's carbon footprint. The completion of Route 23 is included in the High Quality Environment Change Plan.
- 6.2 By the same token, it supports delivery of the Active Communities outcome by encouraging cycling and walking, and the Economic Prosperity outcome by facilitating 'low carbon' tourism.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 An accurate estimate for delivering Stage 2 of Route 23 cannot be made until preliminary design work has been undertaken. An estimate produced in 2005 for Viaduct repairs and works to the various bridges was for £1.2 million, but this was

not informed by full surveys nor actual designs, and did not take into account any other project costs such as fees, surveys or interpretation. Although this figure is not likely to have increased because of the state of the construction market, and Sustrans believes that there is scope to bring it down considerably, it demonstrates the need for additional funding to bring about the project, over and above the £500,000 allocated in the Capital Programme.

7.2 Officers are therefore – as indicated elsewhere in this report – seeking to identify any partnership or external funding which might be available, particularly if ‘matched’ by the capital allocation. In a match funding situation, it would not be wise to progress the works before a funding agreement has been reached as this will mean the contribution becomes ineligible as it ‘predates’ the official project in the eyes of the funder.

7.3 Officers propose that apart from some lower cost activities (such as commissioning a bat survey, clearing damaging vegetation etc) that will prepared the ground for a bigger project, the capital allocation is not spent until funding avenues have been explored. This will ensure that the Council retains the maximum possible for leveraging purposes which will bring about not just the repair of the Viaduct but also completion of Route 23.

7.4 Officers are currently investigating LEADER funding to support the costs of ecological surveys, research, specialist advice and design work.

7.5 Members are asked to approve the use of the £500,000 allocation in a way which best fits the desired outcome of repairing the Viaduct and ensuring its long term maintenance as part of Route 23.

7.6 It is recognised that inclusion of this project in the capital programme does not constitute authority to spend. The Council’s Financial Procedure Rules require that each project is brought forward for approval in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation. However, it is requested that up to £50,000 be approved for undertaking any preliminary work needed that cannot be funded from other sources in order to bring back more detailed proposals for the most effective application of the funds

8 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

8.1 The Hockley Viaduct is regularly inspected and is maintained on an ongoing basis in order to protect public safety. It would, however, benefit from inclusion within Route 23, with increased use of the Viaduct almost certainly contributing to reducing the risk of unexpected financial liabilities by ensuring that problems were identified early and appropriately planned for. However, even with the proposed financial contributions by the Council outlined in this report, there is still a risk that further contributions will be sought from the Council in the event of further maintenance being required in the future..

8.2 Any risks arising from Stage 2 would be identified and managed as part of the Council’s standard project planning process, once full information is available from the surveys.

8.3 The Council is already being lobbied to take action over the Viaduct, with the campaign from the Friends of Hockley Viaduct continuing. There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not agree on a satisfactory plan for the future management, repair and use of this important heritage feature. However, there could also be a reputational risk to the Council, at a time when budgets are very constrained, for choosing to repair a structure such as the Viaduct when other important assets in the District – such as the leisure centre - are also in need of significant works.

8.4 There is a risk that the discussions with other organisations who could play a facilitating role in the project may not be fruitful. This could result in difficulties around land ownership or partnership funding. This would not prevent a project to carry out works to the viaduct on its own, and there are alternatives for Route 23. However, initial responses at meetings indicate interest and – in broad terms – support for the project. Officers can feed back on these discussions as part of the report proposed for January 2012.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Available from the Head of Estates

- Specification for maintenance works
- Condition surveys for viaduct and disused railway bridges

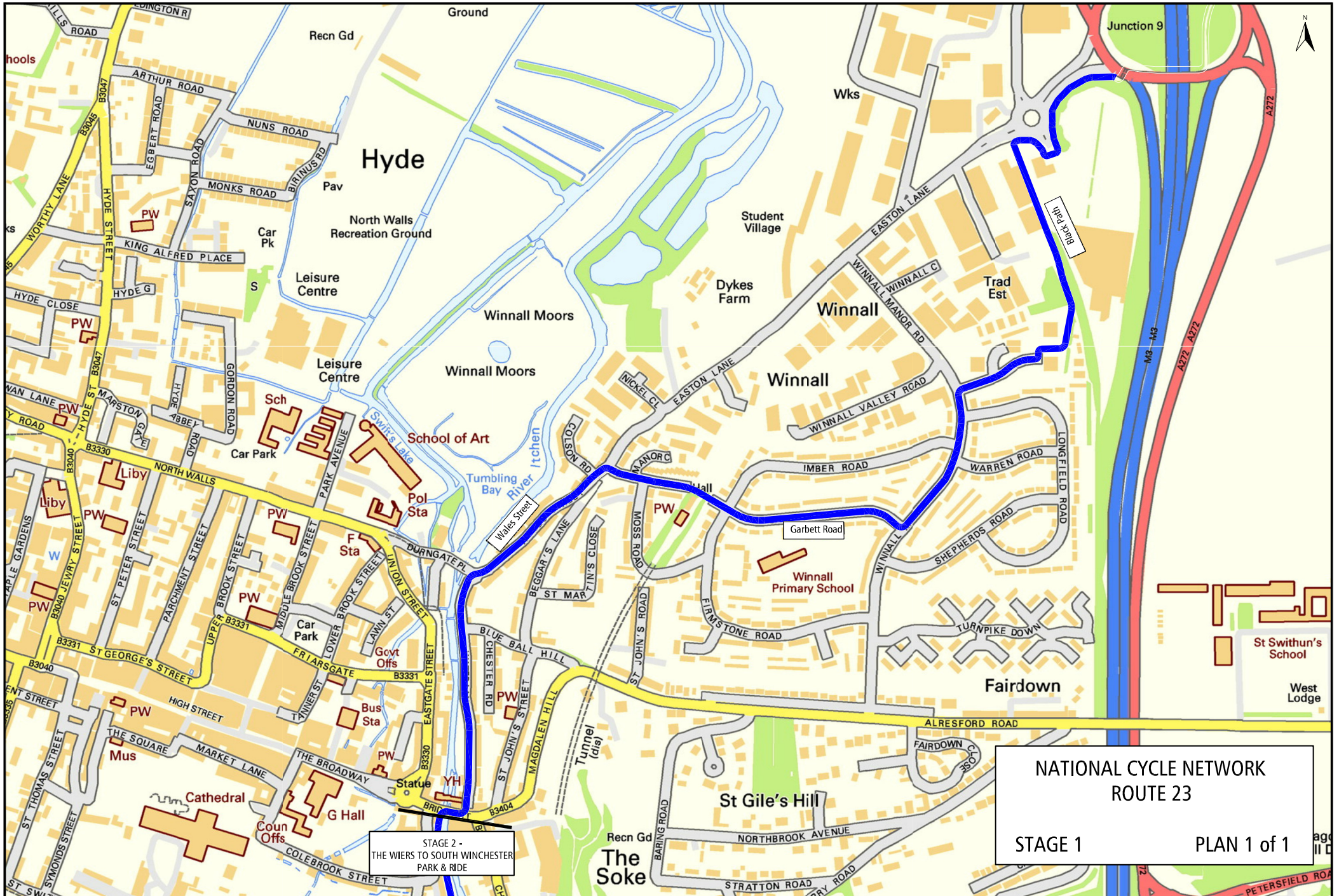
Further information on the National Cycle Network can be found on www.sustrans.org.uk

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: National Cycle Network Route 23: Stage 1

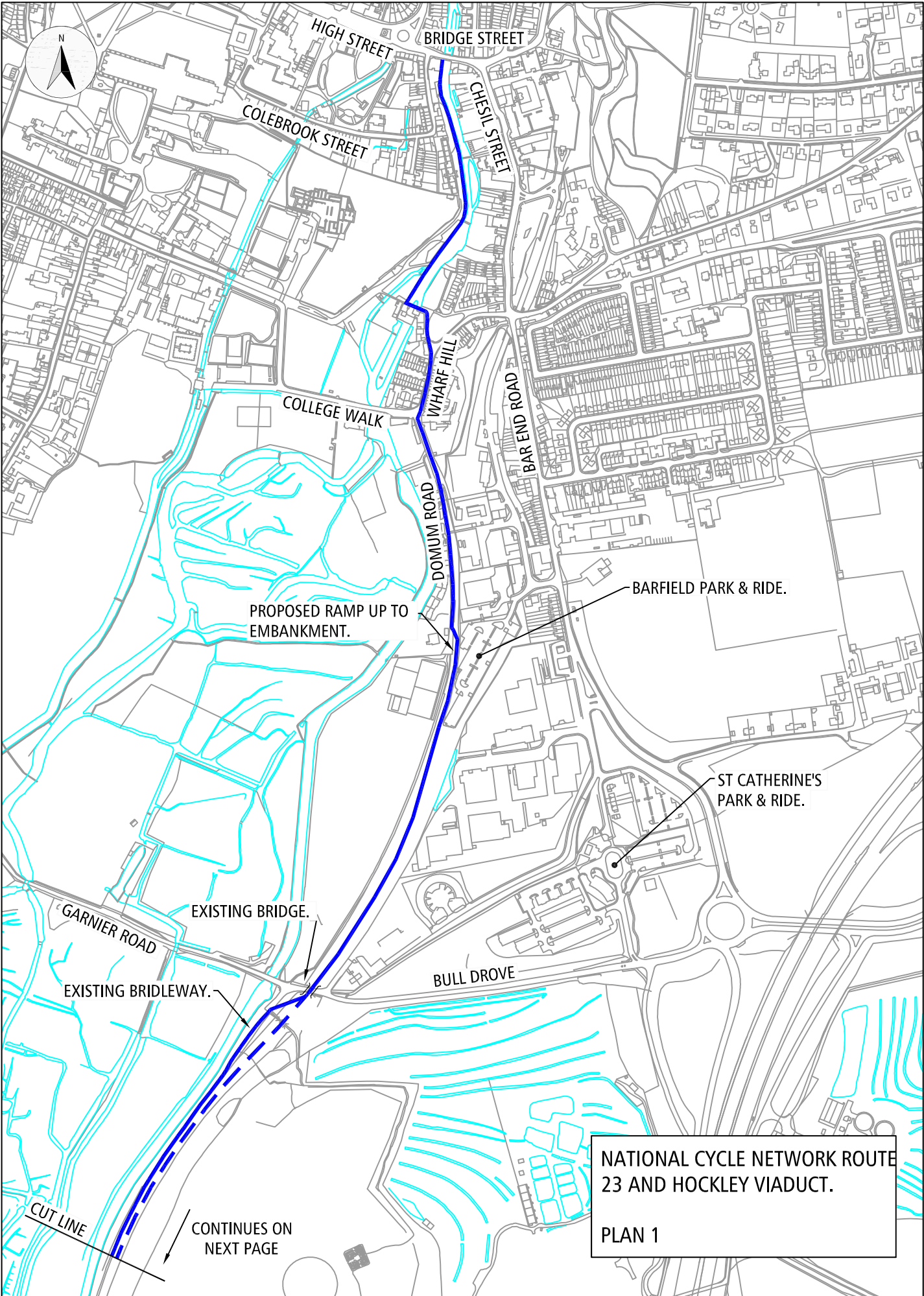
Appendix 2: National Cycle Network Route 23: Stage 2 Plan 1

Appendix 3: National Cycle Network Route 23: Stage 2 Plan 2



STAGE 2 -
THE WIERS TO SOUTH WINCHESTER
PARK & RIDE

NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK
ROUTE 23
STAGE 1
PLAN 1 of 1



NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK ROUTE
23 AND HOCKLEY VIADUCT.
PLAN 1

