

<u>RING FORT PATH – TO REPORT CONSULTATION AND SET OUT NEXT STEPS</u>			
<i>To:</i>	Economy and Environment Committee		
<i>Meeting Date:</i>	14th July 2015		
<i>From:</i>	Graham Hughes, Executive Director – Economy, Transport and Environment		
<i>Electoral divisions:</i>	Cottenham, Histon and Impington		
<i>Forward Plan ref:</i>	Not applicable	<i>Key decision:</i>	No
<i>Purpose:</i>	To advise Committee of the consultation response, to outline the current project risks, and to seek approval to implement ramp Option Four.		
<i>Recommendation:</i>	Committee is requested to: a) Note the consultation response, and the current project risks; b) Approve the development and delivery of Option Four, along with steps; c) Approve continuing negotiations with landowners.		

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 There is a lack of direct access for pedestrians and cyclists between Histon and Impington, and the new development of Orchard Park, which lies north of Kings Hedges Road in Cambridge. This has led to the creation of an informal path down a steep bank, linking the two communities.
- 1.2 On 8th September 2011 a 475 signature petition asking for the creation of a new link, known as Ring Fort Path, was presented to Cabinet by Cambridge Cycling Campaign. Local member Councillor David Jenkins also spoke at the meeting in support of the petition, and in response, Councillor Ian Bates expressed his support, having visited the site prior to the meeting.
- 1.3 A process is in place for making recommendations for allocating Section 106 in line with the aims of the Cambridge Area Transport Corridor plans. Priority is given to the views of local members and the community. Suggestions for schemes which fit with the objectives of the plan are invited from the Area Committees. These suggestions are assessed and the results are then considered by the Area Committees to seek their views on priorities for consideration. Ring Fort path was successful in progressing through this process in 2012.
- 1.4 Approval to provide £350,000 of Section 106 funding towards Ring Fort Path was given by Cabinet on 18th December 2012.

2. SCHEME DEVELOPMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Following an initial feasibility report which considered a number of possible options, two options were taken forward to public consultation, including reference to constructing steps if the ramp options proved too expensive to deliver or too risky on geotechnical grounds.
- 2.2 Option One is a continuous ramp which would provide a direct route to Ring Fort Road without having to negotiate a bend. A significant number of trees would need to be removed and there is a risk that cyclists travelling down the ramp would build up excessive speed which could be dangerous for pedestrians. This option is estimated to cost £350,000.
- 2.3 Option Two is a ramp with one turn (switch back) in it. This would link into Orchard Park close to the sports facilities and Skate Park. Fewer trees would need to be removed than for Option One. The turn would mean the speed of descending cyclists is kept down. This option is estimated to cost £365,000.
- 2.4 More details of the options consulted on, and the site location are shown in **Plan 1**, and at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/p4s3wax>
- 2.5 The consultation took place throughout November 2014 with a number of manned exhibitions taking place, and information being available on the County Council's website. 101 responses were received. Although the consultation response was not vast compared to other cycling schemes, the initial petition did generate a lot of interest in the issue and showed strong local support to make provision for the link.

- 2.6 The consultation results and main comments can be seen in **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2**. 79% of respondents saw a definite need for improved access between the communities in question. 44% had a preference for Option Two, and 33% preferred Option One. Only 9% felt there was no need for a scheme.
- 2.7 In the event of it not being feasible to provide a ramp, 40% of respondents felt that steps would still be a useful facility, though 40% did not.
- 2.8 The Wildlife Trust has expressed concern regarding loss of trees and the impact on habitats. It is proposed to meet them on site to talk through the issues and to develop a mutually acceptable mitigation package.
- 2.9 Some cyclists have expressed concern about the 'dog leg' in Option Two which could bring cyclists into conflict with pedestrians.

3. REVIEW AND SCHEME DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 In December 2014 Economy and Environment Spokes discussed the project and consultation results. Due to the relatively high costs for both of the options consulted on, officers were asked to consider further options that may provide better value. Subsequently Options Three and Four were developed.
- 3.2 Option Three has a ramp starting 80 metres south of the roundabout, along Cambridge Road, with the ramp continuing behind the skate park through the wildlife area to Ring Fort Road. A large number of trees would need to be felled in this option, and the path would extend through the wildlife area behind the skate park. This option can be seen in **Plan 2**, and is estimated to cost £245,000.
- 3.3 Option Four has the same start location as Option Three. This option has the shortest ramp length and is favoured by Orchard Park Community Council, as it does not impact on the wildlife area behind the skate park. This option is estimated to cost £200,000, and can be seen in **Plan 3**.
- 3.4 Both options Three and Four are more cost effective than options One and Two due to the ramp height reduction from 5.3 metres to 4.3 metres. Both take users a little way off the natural desire line. With careful design, conflict between pedestrians and cyclists can be minimised. The land required by these options is outside the Highways England embankment area, and thus reduces the significant risk in both time and cost in getting their approval to construct.
- 3.5 Further discussions with the Orchard Park Community Council, local members and the Wildlife Trust have taken place. There is good support to proceed with Option Four.
- 3.6 Given the lower cost of Option Four, any remaining budget can be directed at designing a set of steps in addition to the ramp itself as a facility to keep pedestrians on their desire line. If funding permits, then the steps could also be delivered as part of the project. If not, then there may be future

opportunities to use developer funding to deliver this element of the scheme. This approach is strongly supported by local member Councillor Jenkins.

4. KEY RISKS AND ISSUES

- 4.1 There has been a history of maintenance problems associated with the embankment at this location, which was constructed in 1979. It is sited on gault clay, is relatively steep, and has required reconstruction on two separate occasions. Building the new path could be a potential maintenance liability for the County Council.
- 4.2 Initial geotechnical survey work has revealed that the embankment appears to be in good condition, but to progress the project further, a more detailed comprehensive survey will be required. This work will be instructed, once a favoured option has been approved by the Economy and Environment Committee.
- 4.3 To comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and to ensure that the new facility can be used by all users, the ramp will need to be 1:20 or shallower. With an embankment height for the proposed options of around five metres this would require a ramp of around 100 metres in length.

5. SUMMARY

- 5.1 The costs of providing the link are relatively high; this reflects the difficulties of providing any new facility on a steep embankment, which may need to be stabilized. The many benefits of the scheme however are:
- Reduced journey times for non motorized users.
 - Encourages active transport.
 - Road safety benefits - use of traffic free, safer link avoiding busy road, junction and multiple crossing points.
 - Increased independence for young people accessing sports facilities.
 - Ramp offers facility for all users including wheelchair users and pushchairs.
 - Potential increased usage of sports facilities.
 - Improved security as more people using the route past the skate park increases natural surveillance.
 - Strong local support.
 - Increased walking and cycling to schools.
- 5.2 The consultation (and petition) revealed strong support in principle for a link. Option Four is well supported locally, provides good value for money, and has the least impact on tree removal and habitat disturbance.
- 5.3 It is recommended to proceed with further work to deliver Option Four along with steps, by commissioning a detailed geotechnical study. If the detailed study shows that the embankment is suitably strong, then detailed design and negotiations to secure access across the land will be finalised.
- 5.4 Should the study show that extensive strengthening of the embankment is required, or that there is a real risk of future failure of the embankment, then it may be that the provision of just steps is the only feasible option. This approach has some support by local communities, but it is an option that

excludes wheelchair users and pram pushers, as well as making it very difficult to use for cyclists even with wheeling channels added.

- 5.5 If steps emerges as the only option then there will be further discussions with local members, Histon and Impington Parish Council and Orchard Park Community Council before progressing into detailed design and scheme delivery.
- 5.6 On the assumption that the geotechnical survey shows that it is feasible to build the preferred ramp option, the programme would be thus:

Action	Start	Completion
Geotechnical survey into preferred option	September 2015	November 2015
Detailed design and negotiations to secure access across the land will be finalised.	January 2016	April 2016
Construction	July 2016	September 2016
New link opens		October 2016

6. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

6.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

More people cycling and walking contributes towards healthier communities, improved productivity, reduced traffic congestion, reliability of journey times and adds capacity into an already constrained road network, all of which contributes to economic wellbeing. A new foot and cycle route would link large residential areas to large employment sites and provides a safe traffic free potential route to schools in the area.

6.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

Currently many people feel unsafe cycling, although cycling is potentially a form of economic, reliable transport that allows them to access employment or training and hence independence, and the opportunity to incorporate active travel into their lives.

6.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

The new link would make it more convenient to take journeys by foot and cycle between the two communities, and if a ramp can be provided would give a means of access for wheelchair users.

7. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Resource Implications

The scheme will be capital funded from Section 106 contributions. The new link would be designed to ensure minimal maintenance and revenue costs following a thorough geotechnical investigation.

7.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

The key risks are set out in Section 4 above.

7.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

The new link would be available for everyone in the community to use.

7.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

A thorough and extensive period of consultation and engagement has been undertaken. Histon and Impington Parish Council, Orchard Park Community Council and local members will be kept informed as the project progresses, and information disseminated to the public via local channels and via the County Council's website.

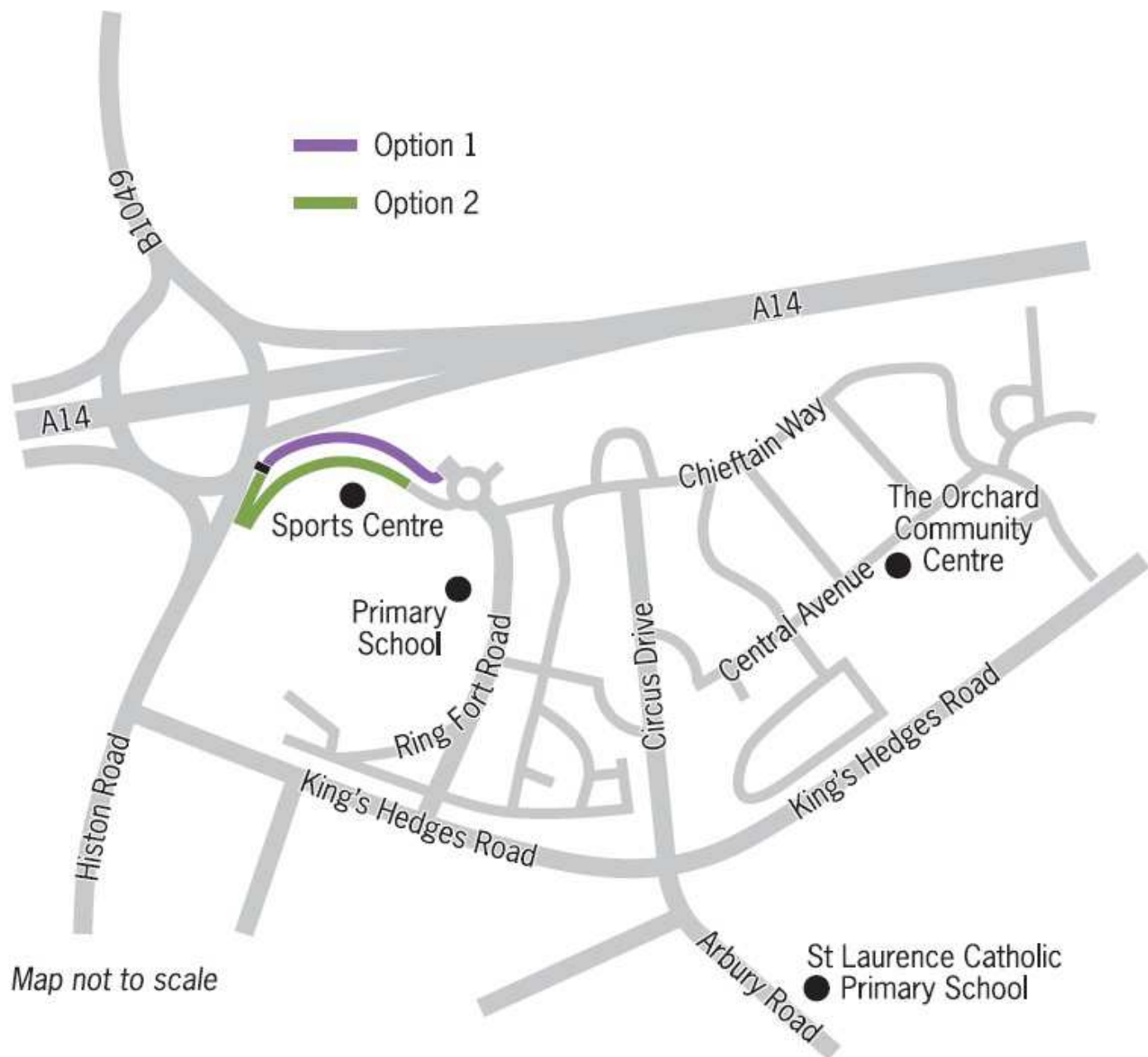
7.5 Public Health Implications

More people cycling and walking undoubtedly contributes to improved public health. The new link would enable more people to incorporate exercise into their daily lives including commuting by foot or cycle, as well as for leisure activities such as running and dog walking. The new link also provides better access to the skate park, football pitch and other sports facilities in Orchard Park for people from Histon and Impington.

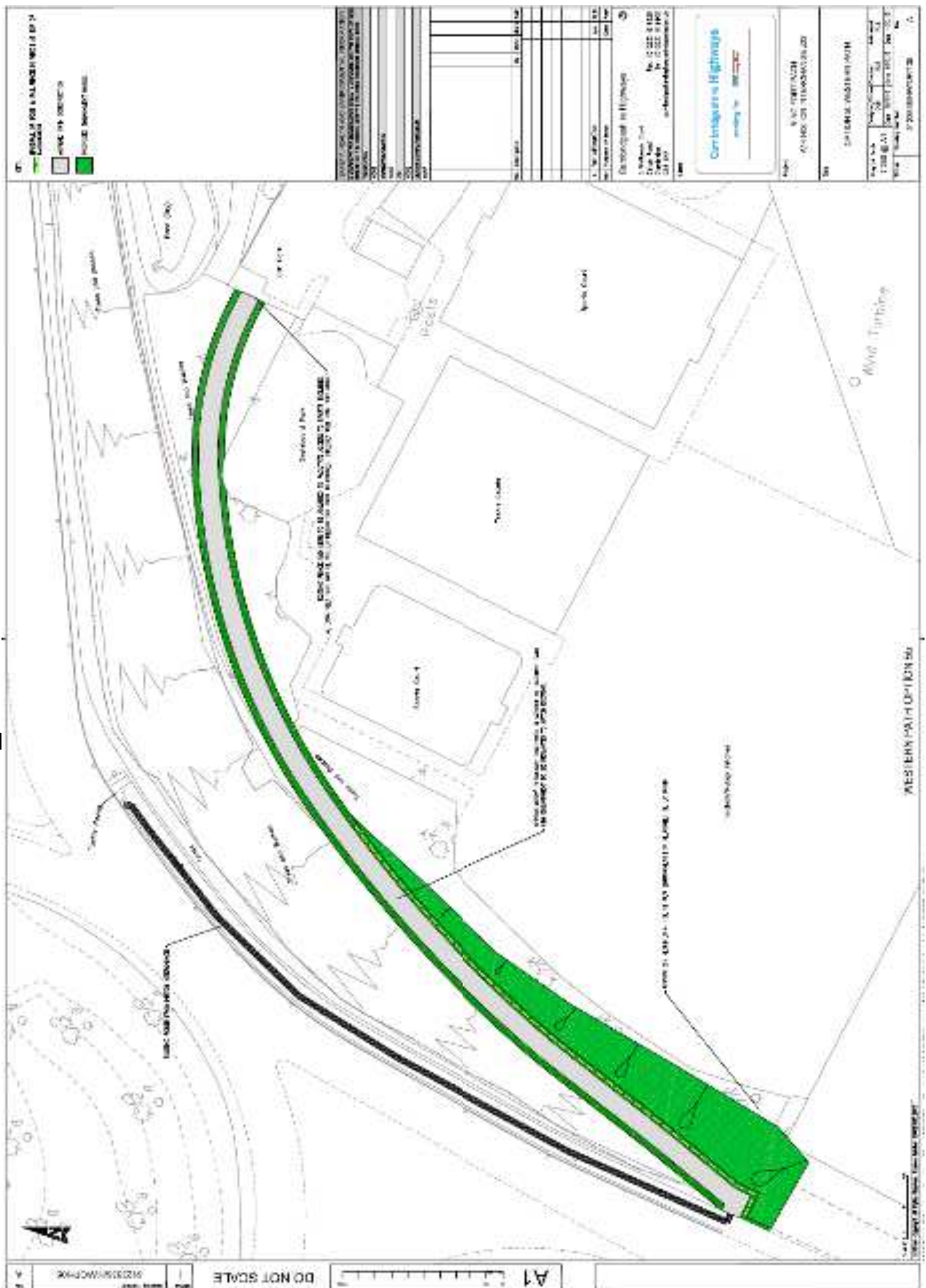
7.6 Localism and local member engagement

There has been extensive public and stakeholder consultation. The Project Team have engaged with, and updated local members and the Orchard Park Community Council throughout.

Source Documents	Location
Petition Feasibility Study	Room 310 Shire Hall,

PLAN 1 – LOCATION PLAN AND OPTIONS

PLAN 2 – OPTION 3

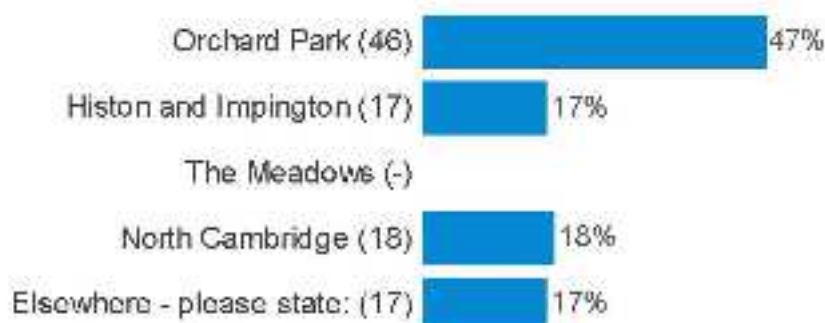


APPENDIX 1 – BREAKDOWN OF COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM THE CONSULTATION RESPONSES

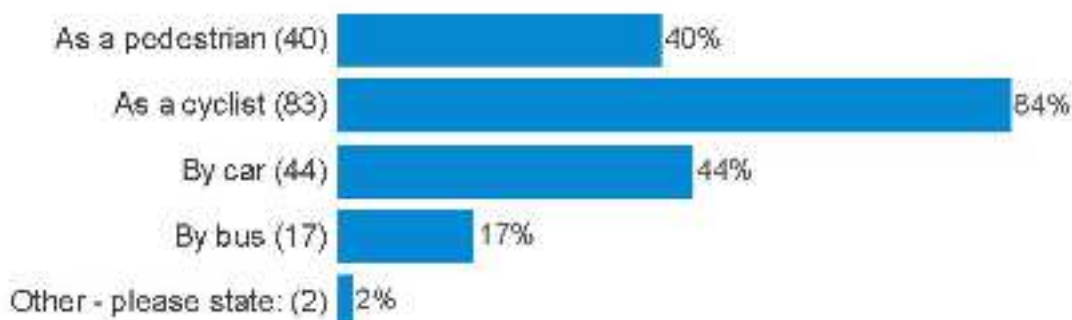
Category:	Number:
No need for a path	14
Concern about negotiating switchback in Option 2	13
Concerned about negotiating steps	10
Scheme should have been provided by developer	4
Concern about speeding cyclists	3
Concern about pedestrians and cyclists negotiating A14/B1049 junction	3
Concern about lack of lighting proposed	2
Against the removal of trees	2

APPENDIX 2: ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

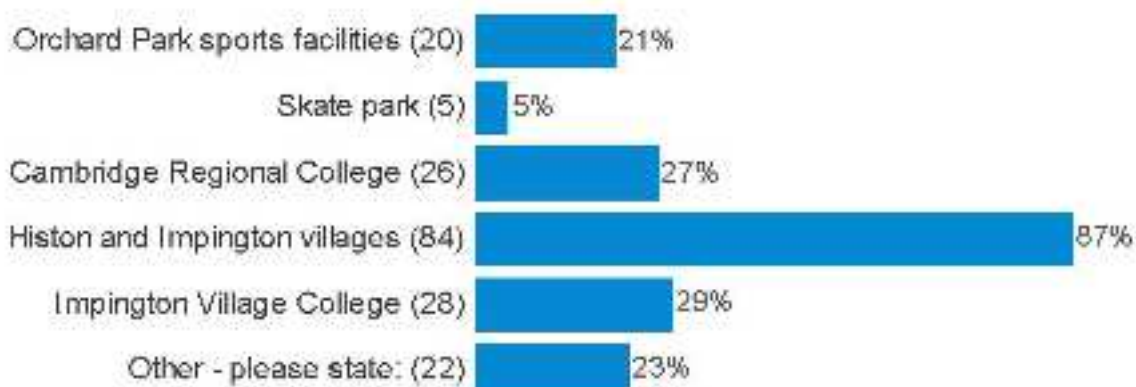
Are you a resident of:



How do you usually travel in the area? (Please tick all that apply)



Do you visit the following locations in the area? (Please tick all that apply)



Do you see a need for improving access from Orchard Park to Histon & Impington?



Which option would you prefer?



Would you approve of steps with cycle ramps, if neither Option 1 nor Option 2 were feasible?

