

Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan (MA&CNP31)
Transport Topic Paper

Prepared by Development in Transition (DinT)

February 2024

Document Purpose

This document complements the Sustainable Transport section of the Melbury Abbas and Cann Neighbourhood Plan (MA&CNP38).

Introduction

Sustainable Transport

While MA&CNP38 recognises that it may not be straightforward to achieve, given the narrow roads and hilly or sometimes waterlogged local topography, consultation for this Plan found demand for a footpath to link Cann Common and Melbury Abbas to Shaftesbury along the B3081, although this would require additional work to resolve land ownership and rights of way. This could be pursued through a well-considered development of both sites of Land South of A30 to explore access off the main highway of the B3081 to connect to existing footpaths and rural lanes. The proposed additional cycle and footpath routes are indicated on the map in the Plan.

Background to the Shaftesbury Bypass

Several routes have been proposed and rejected including the upgrading of both the A350 and the C13 to provide a by-pass for Melbury Abbas and continue a route to the east of Shaftesbury to connect to the A350 just northeast of Shaftesbury. Any solution requires coordination with neighbouring towns and counties which host trunk or satellite routes which pass through the Neighbourhood Area. HGVs are currently encouraged to use the A350 for north-bound routes and the B3081 for south-bound routes.

A 2003 Enquiry by Design consultation process explored the creation of a bypass along the eastern side of Shaftesbury and the 2003 NDDC Local Plan identified and safeguarded land for the Shaftesbury Outer Bypass (see Figure 76); this was carried forward into the 2016 Local Plan.

The Local Plan states that if these routes are to be safeguarded and retained long term, their route will be shown in the North Dorset Local Plan Part 2 Document (however Part 2 has not been adopted and NDDC has been absorbed into Dorset Council).

Local Plan Part 1: Policy 18 indicates that the existing route of the Shaftesbury Outer (Eastern) Bypass will be safeguarded (paragraph 8.122) because “there is no other realistic option for traffic

relief if it is required in the longer term. The route of the road will be reviewed in Part 2 of the Local Plan or through the neighbourhood planning process.” Therefore 2003 Local Plan Policies 5.21 (Safeguarding of Land) and 5.22 (The A350 Corridor) will continue to be saved until the need for both schemes is reviewed. Policy 18 of the 2016 Local Plan indicates that in the period up to 2031, grey infrastructure to support growth will include: the provision of a new road link from the B3081 to the A30 at Enmore Green, north of Shaftesbury. It also mentions improved walking and cycling links between the town centre and residential development to the east of the town and also indicates that a network of green infrastructure will be developed in and around Shaftesbury focusing on linking existing sites, but does not suggest where these routes should link to adjacent rural parishes.

Indeed, any development that may compromise the potential for the creation of an eastern bypass reserved corridor has been laid out in the NDDC Local Plan Policy 2003 saved policy SB18. This position has seemingly shifted more recently. A 2018 NDDC consultation on the Local Plan as part of its Local Plan review found that there were mixed views as to whether the bypass should be retained. In 2017, NDDC stated it might take the Shaftesbury’s Christy’s Lane corridor out of the Local Plan and offer the land for housing if Dorset County Council does not commit to building the bypass by 2033. The Local Plan review in 2018 explored whether or not this land (amidst bypasses for Charton Marshall and Spetisbury) should continue to be reserved. See North Dorset Local Plan Review Planning Policy Briefing 2 August 2018.¹

Shaftesbury’s sustainable footpath routes and links to Cann

Shaftesbury’s Neighbourhood Plan has gathered evidence to suggest that growing levels of traffic on Christy’s Road indicate a need for the proposed Eastern bypass to be built.² However, for Melbury Abbas and Cann, any expansion could be counterproductive to the area’s character and encourage even greater use by all vehicles, further compromising the safety of other road users, especially cyclists and pedestrians. Any development should include careful plans on how best to manage road safety issues, ensuring that well-meaning ‘improvements’ do not lead to unintended, adverse consequences.

¹

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/north-dorset/local-plan-review/pdfs/north-dorset-local-plan-review/issues-and-options-consultation-document.pdf> for details of the issues and options consultation (2017).

²

See Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan policy SFHE4, which is keen to preserve the land for the bypass. See: <https://moderngov.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/s24856/Appendix%20I%20-%20Shaftesbury%20Neighbourhood%20Plan%202019%20-%202031%20Part%201%20202062021%20Cabinet.pdf>

Shaftesbury's Neighbourhood Plan has gathered evidence to suggest that growing levels of traffic on Christy's Road indicate a need for the proposed Eastern bypass to be built. However, for Melbury Abbas and Cann, any expansion could be counterproductive to the area's character and encourage even greater use by all vehicles, further compromising the safety of other road users, especially cyclists and pedestrians. Any development should include careful plans on how best to manage road safety issues, ensuring that well-meaning 'improvements' do not lead to unintended, adverse consequences.

The Eastern Corridor Bypass

A 2003 Enquiry by Design consultation process explored the creation of a bypass along the eastern side of Shaftesbury and the 2003 North Dorset Local Plan identified and safeguarded land for the Shaftesbury Outer Bypass (see Figure 66); this was carried forward into the 2016 Local Plan (Policy 18). The Local Plan states that if these routes are to be safeguarded and retained long-term, their route will be shown in the North Dorset Local Plan Part 2 Document (however Part 2 was not adopted and NDDC has been incorporated into Dorset Council).

While accompanying planning applications often indicate that despite roads appearing to be close to capacity to local residents, in technical terms they are not (e.g. directing HGVs through historic, narrow areas such as Dinah's Hollow). The Cranborne Chase National Landscape (former AONB) Management Group's Reg 14 response recognised Dorset Council and the Highway Authority's desire to link Blandford, Sturminster Newton, Shaftesbury and Gillingham. The Cranborne Chase National Landscape Partnership is seeking to influence an alternative route to the A350 / C13 corridor to the west so that there is a national standard long-term linkage from the south to Shaftesbury and to Gillingham, bypassing that expanding town and linking to the A303 expressway.

All the routes around Melbury Abbas pass through the AONB and include land owned by the National Trust. A new travellers site at a cost of almost £1 million and a solar farm has been built on this proposed route and would be costly to remove and reinstate elsewhere. It is essential that any development is considered alongside employment opportunities in the area, which could cause increased commuting and road traffic.

In the short to medium term, limited funds should be used to maximise the existing routes with due regard to their ability to cope. In the North and North East Transport Study of 2010 commissioned by Dorset County Council, it was made clear that the C13 was nearing its capacity, being the

narrowest road with a mix of HGVs and physical and environmental restrictions. The A357 and the A350, although not ideal, have a greater flow capacity, are wider throughout their lengths, and are currently under capacity. They therefore should be considered as the basis of a one-way system for HGVs to even out the flow of traffic, with the C13 taking the majority of the light traffic. Parish councils should work with Dorset Council to provide cost-effective road safety measures on these roads, where needed, including a much-needed weight restriction on the C13. In the longer term a study could be made for a route to the West of the A350/B3081/C13 corridor and to the West and North of Shaftesbury which could include uninhabited stretches of existing roads.

Excerpt from statement from the previous Shaftesbury-MA&C joint plan on the North-South Corridor

Much money and time has been spent over many decades to find an acceptable solution to North/South traffic problems in North Dorset. The main solutions offered up in the past have been to provide a by-pass for Melbury Abbas and continue a route to the east of Shaftesbury to connect to the A350 just northeast of the Town. Both routes are linked and neither is viable without the other. All the routes around Melbury Abbas pass through the AONB and include land owned by the National Trust. A new traveller site at a cost of almost £1 million and a solar farm have been built on this proposed route and would be costly to remove and reinstate elsewhere. These routes are no longer fit for purpose.

Taking into account the increasing size, weight and congestion caused by Heavy Goods Vehicles using the south coast ports and travelling north via the M25/M1/M4/A34 to the east and the A38/M5 to the west, a route that will take into account the projected increase in commercial traffic needs to be established.

In order for the Port of Poole to expand and continue to provide employment for local people, the road infrastructure needs to be improved in liaison with surrounding Counties. With the current planning for large housing estates to supplement already large estates built in Gillingham and Shaftesbury, there is a severe shortage of employment for residents moving to the area, which will result in many having to commute to obtain work.

To increase the opportunity to develop employment land in North Dorset a route has to be established that:

A) Will cope with the demands of an increasing traffic flow for the long term, including heavier HGV traffic and the longer commercial units starting to appear on the roads today.

B) Be accessible to all of the major towns in North Dorset - Blandford, Shaftesbury, Sturminster Newton and Gillingham.

In the short to medium term, limited funds should be used to maximise the existing routes with due regard to their ability to cope. In the North and North East Transport Study of 2010 commissioned by Dorset County Council, it was made clear that the C13 was the road nearing its capacity, being the narrowest road with a mix of HGVs and physical and environmental restrictions. The A357 and the A350, although not ideal, have a greater flow capacity, are wider throughout their lengths, and are currently under capacity. They therefore should be considered as the basis of a one-way system for HGVs to even out the flow of traffic with the C13 taking the majority of the light traffic. Parish Councils should work with Dorset County Council to provide cost-effective road safety measures on these roads where needed including a much-needed weight restriction on the C13.

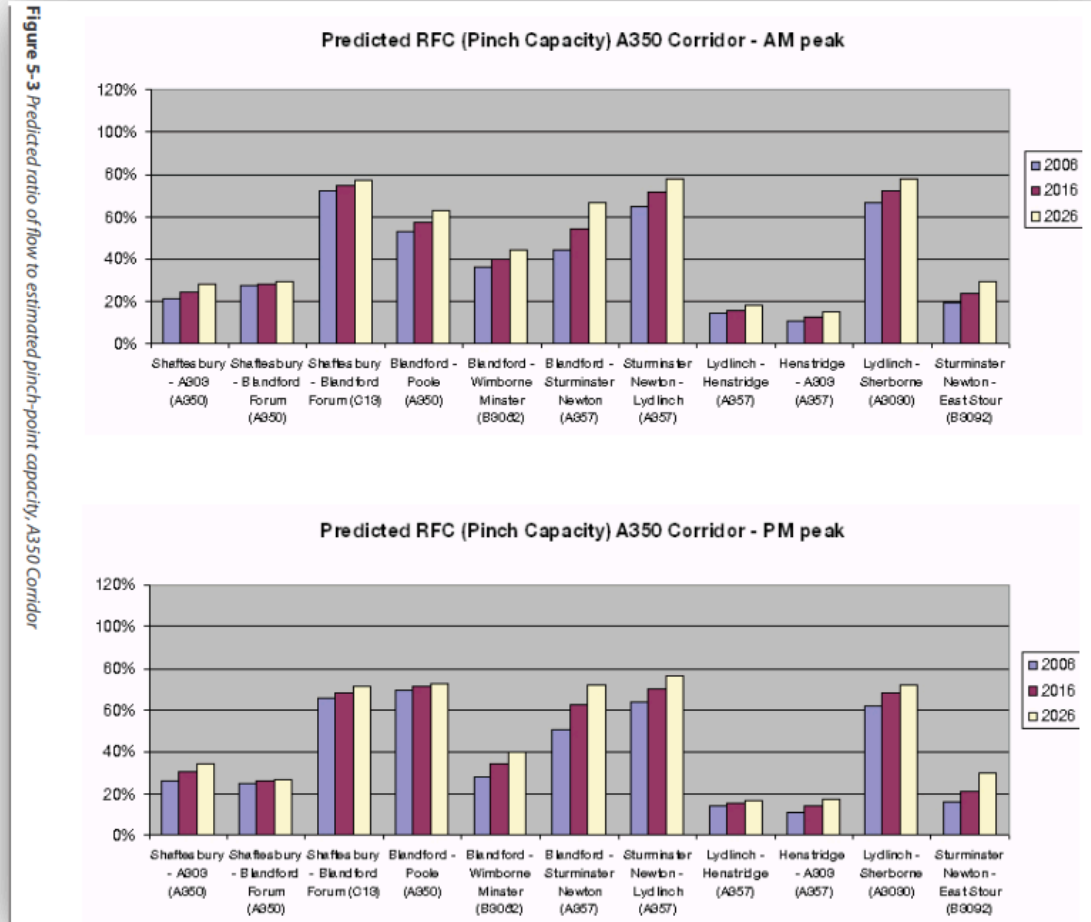
In the longer term a study should be made for a route to the West of the A350/B3081/C13 corridor and to the West and North of Shaftesbury which could include uninhabited stretches of existing roads.

C13 Capacity

There is a potential 'capacity issue' for the C13, which can be demonstrated in a Buro Happold report commissioned by Dorset Council which assessed the Weymouth and Portland Transport Study (2008-2010), the West Dorset Transport Study (2008-2010) and the North and North East Dorset Transport Study 2008 - 2010. The report estimated that the pinch point 60% capacity for the C13 would be reached by 2026. The neighbourhood plan steering group believes that the C13 will soon (if it has not already) reach 60% capacity during the AM and PM peaks as compared to just 20% on the adjacent A350. This is because the Buro Happold estimate was made before Dorset Council promoted HGVs to use the C13, so this 60% has very likely already been reached. See their background explanation and table as follows:

Characteristics such as topography, bendiness and road width will vary along the length of a road; therefore, so too does capacity. In recognition of this, the capacity of each corridor at the highest and lowest quality section of road has been estimated. For example, the road quality of

the C13 is regarded to be lower at Melbury Abbas than other sections of the same road, due to reduced width, increased bendiness and a steep gradient. Therefore, it has been assumed that an estimated lower capacity should be applied to take account of 'pinch points.' The maximum and minimum capacity of each corridor has been agreed following consultation with Dorset County Council and is shown in Table 5—1. It is emphasised that the impact of development has been assessed on the key links of the local road network, these are the roads that have been identified as carrying the highest volume of traffic. The increased travel demand created by development will have an impact on the whole road network, including the extensive network of rural roads



Jams at Melbury Abbas (Dinah’s Hollow)

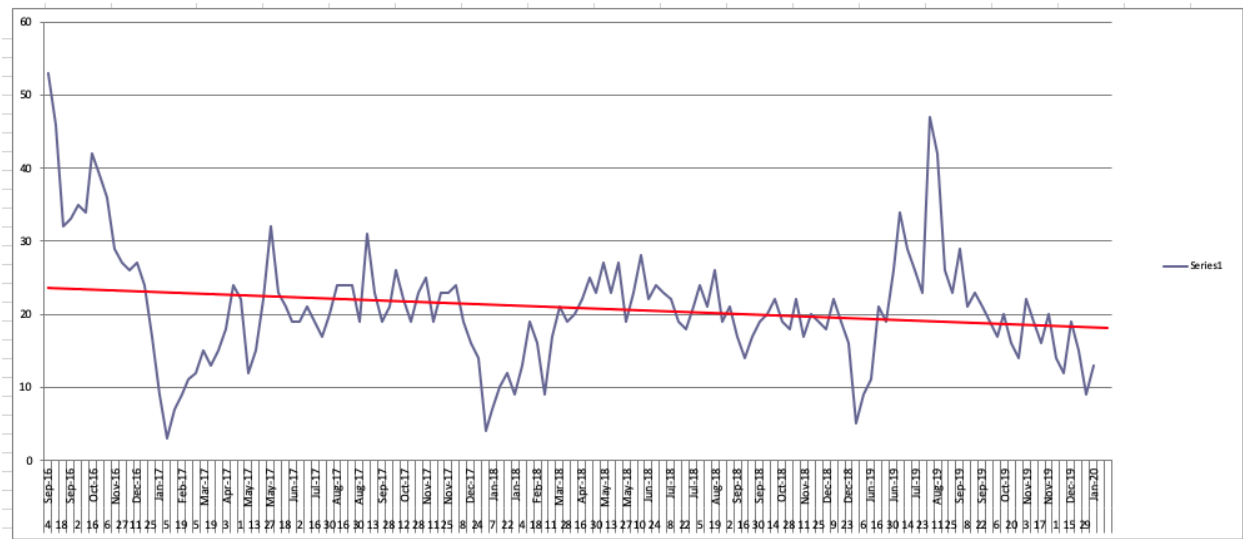
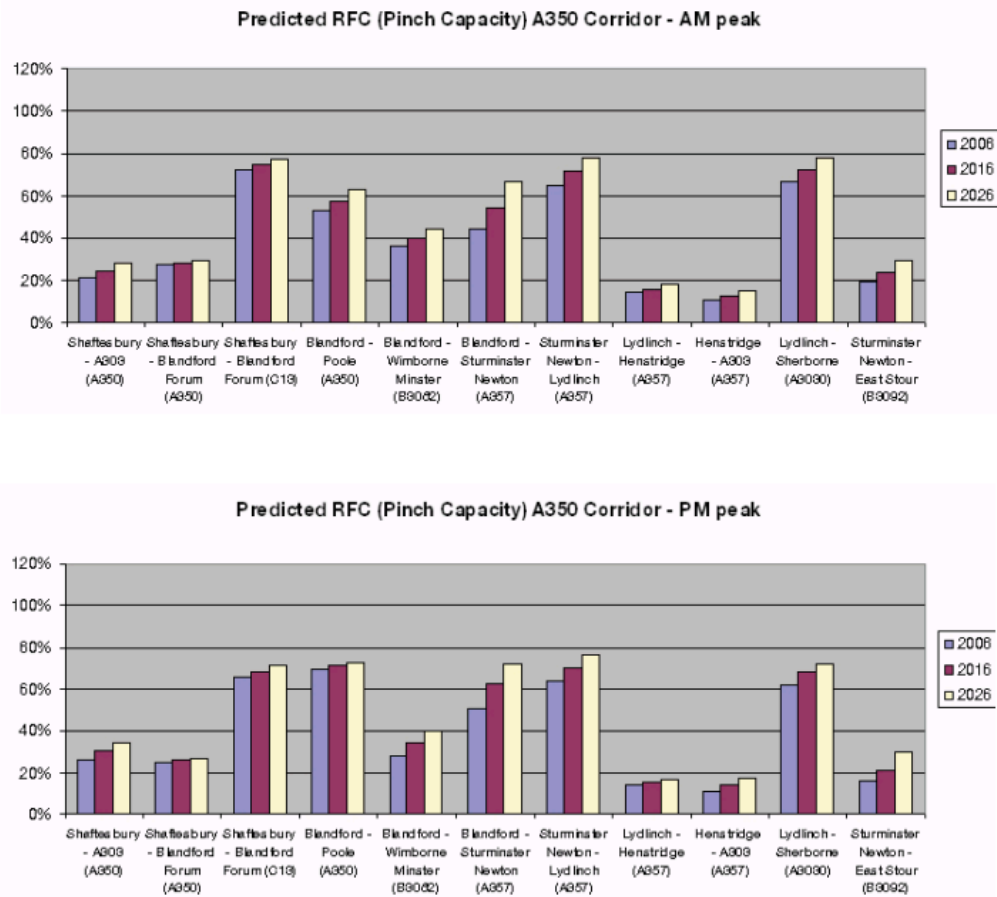


Figure 5-3 Predicted ratio of flow to estimated pinch-point capacity, A350 Corridor



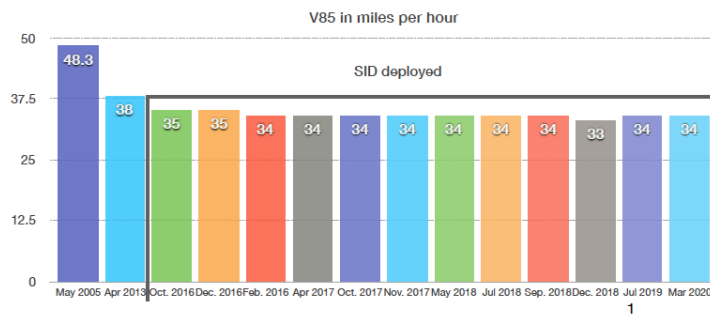
Community Questionnaire 2018 Sustainable Transport results

Traffic Speed Data (2005-2020)

V85* in miles per hour		
DATE	V85 PERCENTAGE	
May 2005		48.3
Apr 2013		38
Oct. 2016		35
Dec. 2016		35
Feb. 2016		34
Apr 2017		34
Oct. 2017		34
Nov. 2017		34
May 2018		34
Jul 2018		34
Sep. 2018		34
Dec. 2018		33
Jul 2019		34
Mar 2020		34

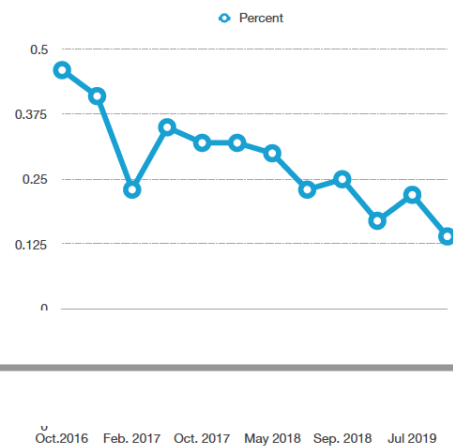
Percentage vehicles travelling 51mph and over		
DATE	PERCENT	
Oct.2016		0.46
Dec. 2016		0.41
Feb. 2017		0.23
Apr 2017		0.35
Oct. 2017		0.32
Nov. 2017		0.32
May 2018		0.30
Jul 2018		0.23
Sep. 2018		0.25
Dec. 2018		0.17
Jul 2019		0.22
Mar 2020		0.14

V85 is defined as "the speed at or below which 85% of all vehicles are observed to travel under free flowing conditions past a nominated point"



B3081 average daily volume: 7,500 vehicles

Percentage travelling 51mph and over




Deployment of the SID at Melbury Motors has also been an effective measure to lower the speed of southbound traffic on the B3081/C13. It has already achieved a 31% decline in V85, as well as a 69% reduction in vehicles travelling at 51mph and over.

Speeding along Guys Marsh

There is some concern about speeding in the Guy's Marsh area. The steering group engaged the HMP Guys Marsh Prison Governor who was supportive of speed restrictions on the main road in Guy's Marsh.

References

See Community Survey 2019-20 Shaftesbury Bypass results - Question 10

 Survey Dec 19 - Jan 20