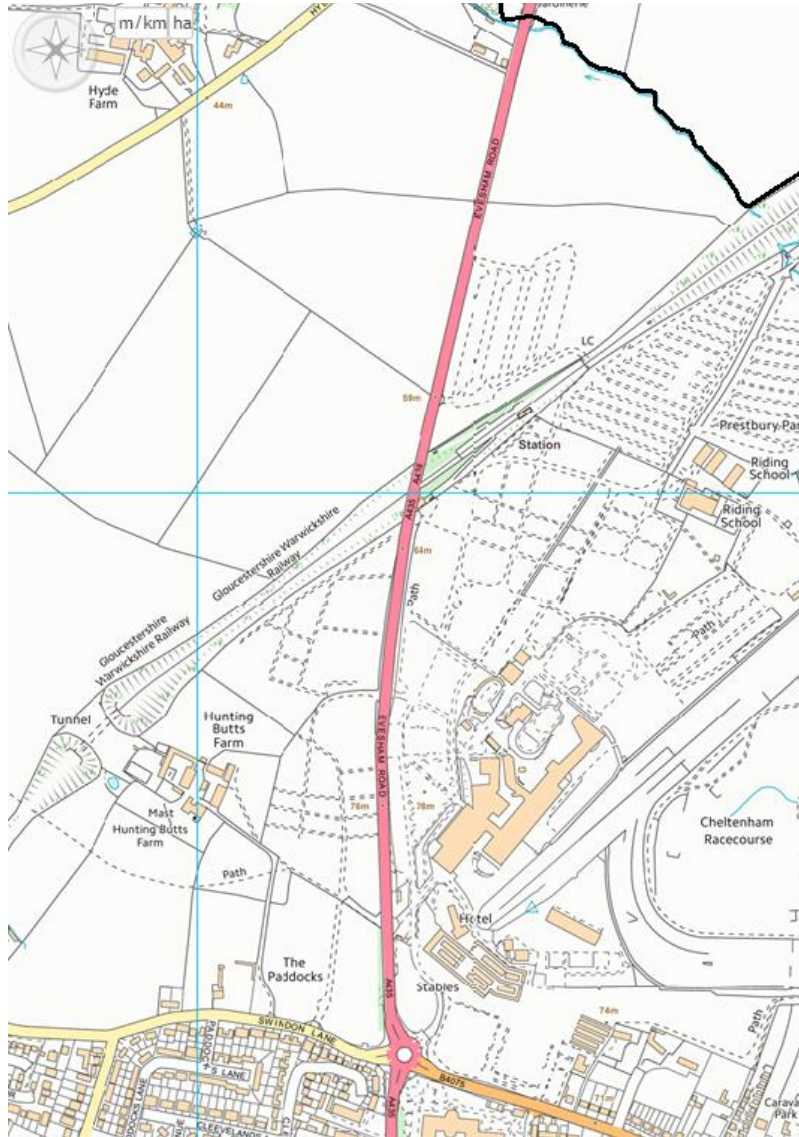


APPLICATION NO: 24/00125/HED		OFFICER: Sam Reader	
DATE REGISTERED: 25.01.2024		DATE OF EXPIRY: 07.03.2024	
WARD: Pittville		PARISH:	
LOCATION:	A435 Cheltenham to Bishops Cleeve		
PROPOSAL:	Hedge removal		

RECOMMENDATION: No objections



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1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Four sections of hedge along A435 between Swindon Lane roundabout and borough boundary to the north.
- 1.2 One section can be classified as an 'Important Hedge' under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997.
- 1.3 The proposal is to remove various sections (see addendum below) of hedgerow to accommodate a road improvement scheme to incorporate a cycle path and improved footpath from Bishops Cleeve to Cheltenham (as part of a wider project to connect Bishops Cleeve to Cheltenham town centre and beyond to Gloucester). The proposal includes replacement planting of hedgerow and new avenue tree planting (see associated documents)

2. CONSTRAINTS AND RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3. POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Gloucestershire, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy

4. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

4.1. GCC has consulted local landowners directly and the wider public in open forums. Feedback from GCC indicates no objections and a positive response from members of the public and landowners.

4.2. CBC has consulted two adjacent landowners, GWT, GCER, County Archaeology, Swindon and Prestbury Parish Councils, Natural England and Ward Councillors. To date only GCER have responded (with recorded sightings of wildlife). Consultation continues until 16.2.24.

5. PUBLICITY AND REPRESENTATIONS

- Four site notices were posted at either end of the proposed site.
- Consultees (listed above) were sent letters inviting comment.

6. OFFICER COMMENTS

- 6.1 Trees Officers assessed the hedgerows proposed for removal. Features of the hedgerows and species contained within demonstrate (in line with the Hedgerows Regulations 1997) that one section of hedgerow to be removed to the east of the road, measuring approximately 240 metres can be classified as 'Important Hedge'. This designation is attributed to a combination of woody species identified and associated features of the hedge as defined within Paragraph 8 of Schedule 1 of the Regulations.
- 6.2 Trees Officers assessed all parts of the hedgerows to be removed and whilst they are ecologically rich, and well kept, could not qualify as 'Important' (as defined in the

Regulations). This was borne out by the Project Ecologist in their report (see associated documents).

- 6.3 Whilst this section of hedge can be classified as important, Trees Officers consider it to be inappropriate to issue a Hedgerow Retention Notice given the nature of the project that will install key cycle infrastructure on a key route into Cheltenham, the advanced stage of the wider project and the proposed mitigation planting and the councils key priority of working with residents, communities and businesses to help make Cheltenham net zero by 2030.
- 6.4 Discussions with GCC's Design Engineer reveal that the scheme's funding is reliant on meeting certain criteria (i.e. width and gradient of the cycle lane) and the design therefore has limitations that would preclude re-routing to include retention of the hedgerow. We acknowledge that the late notification is not ideal and have provided positive feedback to GCC to build in due diligence in respect of future schemes and proposals.
- 6.5 While the Council has the right to issue a Hedgerow Retention Notice, there is no obligation to do so and it is at the discretion of the LPA. A decision therefore has to be made balancing the importance of the hedge against the public benefits of the scheme that would remove it.
- 6.6 CBC Trees Officers have worked closely with TBC Trees Officer to establish a common approach to the scheme and its hedgerow removal proposals, as well as proposed planting mitigation and landscape maintenance proposals, summarised in paragraph 7.1 below.
- 6.7 The proposal meets the criteria set out in JCS Policy INF3: Green Infrastructure by
 - enhancing green infrastructure in the borough (including cycle paths and connectivity creation),
 - justifying its impact on existing local green infrastructure,
 - providing suitable planting mitigation and making provision for future maintenance of the green infrastructure.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 Approximately 240m of 'Important Hedgerow' is to be removed to facilitate a new cycle lane connecting Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve (and beyond in the wider scheme). Planting mitigation has been described and assessed as appropriate by Trees Officers (i.e. triple rows of approx. 1m high mixed native trees managed as hedging and an avenue of 2-2.5m high standard trees planted at roughly 25m intervals between Bishops Cleeve and the Swindon Lane roundabout).
- 7.2 The wider scheme is underway and whilst there will be a loss of visual and ecological amenity in the short term, this should be mitigated by an overall improvement in the new hedges in the longer term.
- 7.3 A Hedgerow Retention Notice would have a profound impact on the scheme, its funding and viability. It may represent a loss of public funds already committed to the scheme.
- 7.4 An improved cycle path and footpath link would improve the A435 through enhanced cycling facilities (with a potential for reduced vehicular traffic) and the scheme should be judged on its benefit to the public.
- 7.5 On this basis the recommendation is to issue No Objects to the Hedgerow Removal Notice.

Addenda:

