

24/00125/HED – A435 hedge removal notice

Proposal:

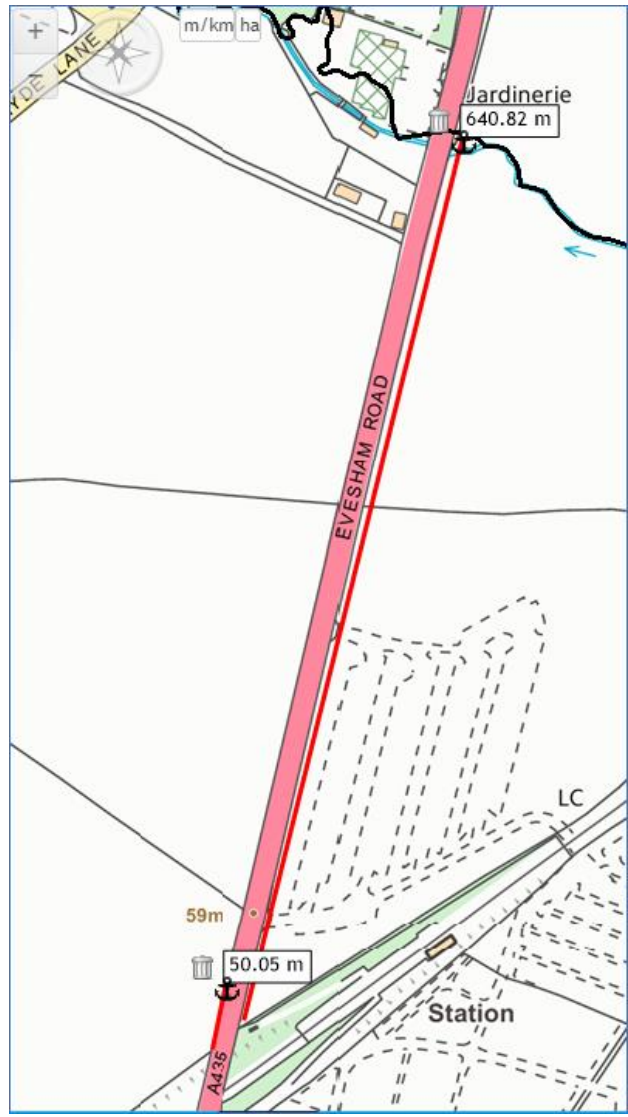
Removal of several sections of hedgerow, primarily to the east of the A435 (but also two small sections to the west)

(Proposal would accommodate a new cycle path and footpath connecting Bishop's Cleeve to the north with Cheltenham (and beyond to Gloucester))

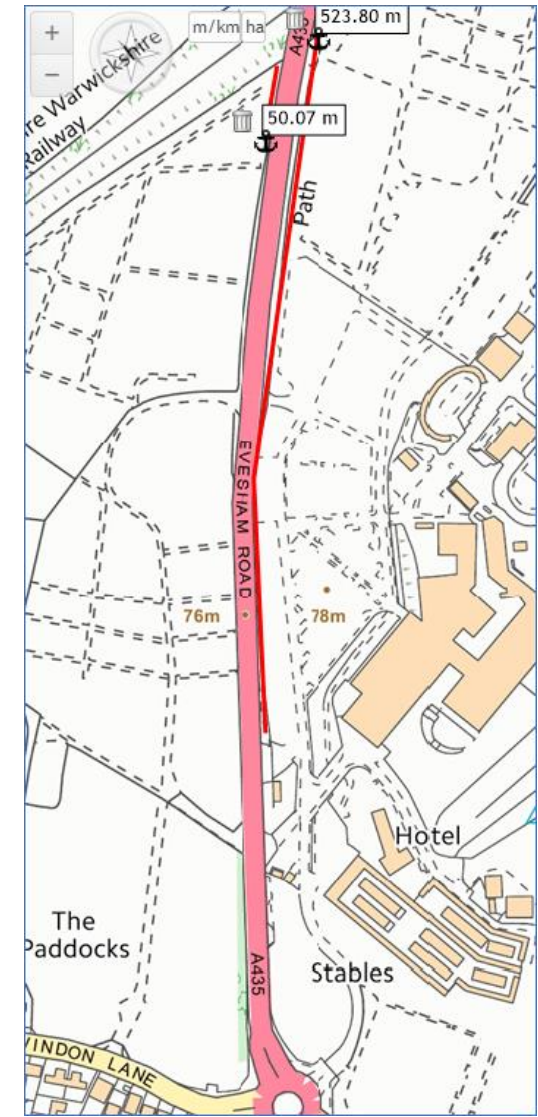
Officer recommendation:

No objections

Removals north of railway line (red lines east and west of road):



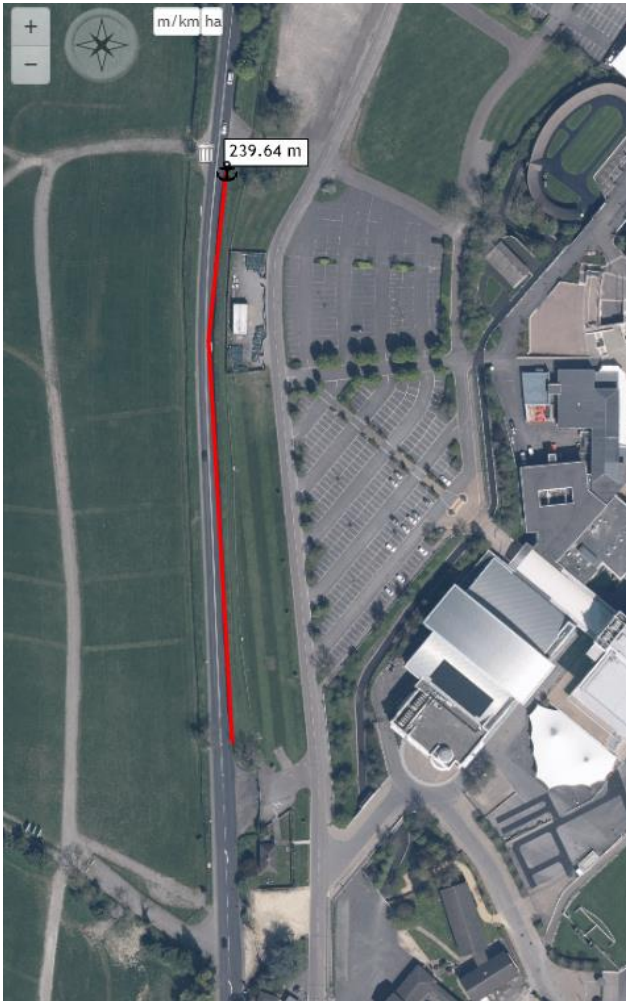
Removals south of railway line (red lines east and west of road):



Site Location Plan

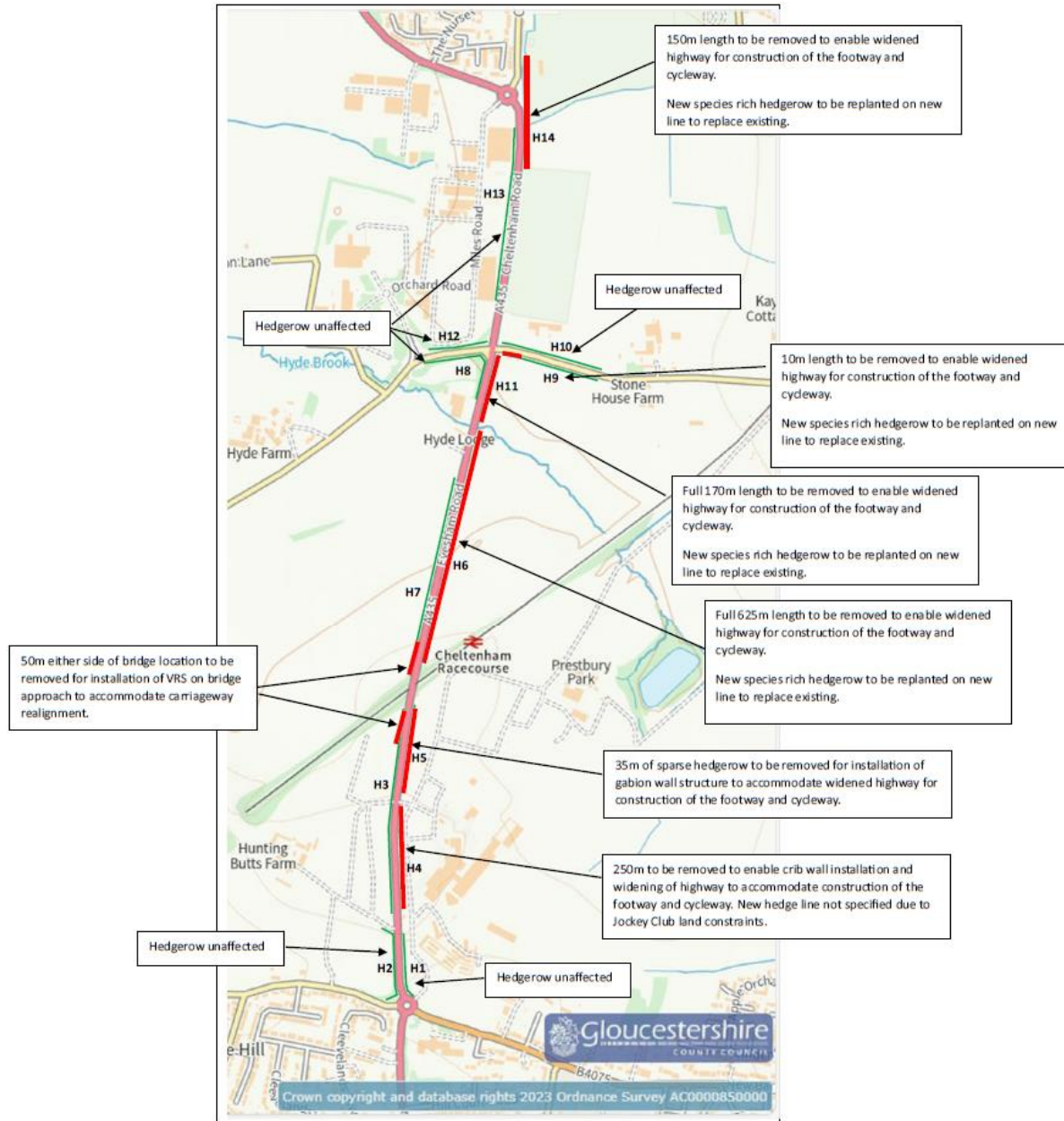
Assessment of hedges

Important hedge proposed for removal:



Assessment made against criteria of Hedgerow Regulations 1997

- One section deemed 'important' as per the following criteria:
 - Adjacent to public footpath
 - Four woody species per 30m
 - A parallel hedge within 15m
 - A bank / wall supporting at least half its length
 - Uninterrupted (no gaps)
- LPA has power (but not obligation) to protect this section (roughly 240m to the east of A435 adjacent to racecourse car parks) with Hedge Retention Notice. LPA must decide if removal is justified.
- No other section to be removed meets the criteria to be 'important' and therefore cannot be protected by the LPA



Context of hedge removal

Cycle/improved footpath scheme connecting Bishops Cleeve and Cheltenham (and beyond).

Replacement hedgerow is planned for most of the sections removed – it cannot be replaced for H4 (important hedgerow) due to site constraints. Specifications of hedgerow and initial maintenance plan agreed with TOs.

New trees (standards) are to be planted on west and east side of highway (specifics to be agreed with GCC TOs.)

Alternative routes / installation of scheme that would retain H4 deemed unfeasible due to narrowness of available land at that point, and the need to reduce the gradient of the route. Specifications for the design of the cycle path are predetermined and funding is reliant on meeting these specifications.

**Cheltenham/Tewkesbury boundary is represented roughly by brook dissecting road. Red lines show hedgerow to be removed.*

Policy

Joint Core Strategy

Strategic Objective 7 – Promoting sustainable transport

Reduce the need to travel and the reliance on the car by:

- Improving opportunities for public transport, walking and cycling by making routes more convenient, safe and attractive;
- Improving existing and providing new frequent public transport links and safe walking and cycling routes in all new developments

NPPF

8. Promoting healthy and safe communities

96. a. ...allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods

9. Promoting sustainable transport

108. c. ... promote walking, cycling and public transport

Consultation

- Adjacent landowners, Swindon and Prestbury PCs, Ward Councillors, GWT, GCER, County Archaeology and English Nature were consulted. Two site notices were put up.
- No public response was received
- GCER reported sightings of badger and hedgehog
- GWT advised that contingency planning should be included in the ecologist's report. This is being addressed

Site Photographs (all photos taken facing north)



Taken from Racecourse at southern end of important hedge



Taken from A435 at southern end of important hedge

Important hedge from A435 showing bank



Important hedge from A435 showing wall



Remainder of photos show not important hedges (and trees) to be removed



East side only



East and west side (50m up to railway bridge)



East and west side (50m away from railway bridge)



East side only (as far as buildings in distance where boundary with Tewkesbury is)

Recommendation: No Objections

- Only one section of hedge can be legally protected by LPA
- Decision to issue Hedge Retention Notice or No Objections for this section of hedge is at discretion of LPA – we must decide if “there are circumstances which justify the hedgerow’s removal” (according to Hedgerow Regulations 1997)
- This is not further explored or defined in NPPF, PPG, Local Plan or JCS
- Justification for hedge removal is in line with JCS Strategic Objective 7 and NPPF para. 96 and 108
- Scheme has investigated alternative routes / designs in order to retain hedges – this has been deemed unfeasible due to technical aspects and funding being conditional on meeting certain criteria
- Mitigating planting has been agreed in principle to include new hedges and trees along the route, coordinating with Tewkesbury TO and County Trees Projects Officers. The final details of the trees planting has not been finalised but broad agreement has been reached with GCC and TBC and involves the planting of a new 1m high hedge (triple row planting at half metre spacings) and the planting 75-100 “Standard” size (2-3m high) trees.