

Evidence Paper Sustainable Transport

PRESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2019-2036

REGULATION 16 CONSULTATION DRAFT

Prepared by Andrea Pellegram MRTPI

Introduction and purpose of this report

1. This report considers evidence regarding walking, cycling and equestrian movement around Preston Parish and linking to destinations outside the parish boundaries. The report makes recommendations on where improvements are required.
2. The evidence derives from:
 - Responses by the community to the SWOT and Visioning exercises at the 26 September 2017 village NDP event.
 - Responses to the online community survey.
 - Descriptive interpretation provided by a local resident who is a keen walker.

Planning policy context

3. Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. This evidence paper sets out the context for each policy area in response to this requirement.
4. The Development Plan for the NDP is:
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
 - Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (2018)
5. It will be shown below that both the survey and vision event demonstrated support for the improvement of local footpaths and routes between the village and Cirencester, the retail opportunities at Dobbies and Tesco, and into the countryside. The design statement discussed the importance of local routes and highlighted the perceived conflicts between cars and cyclists and pedestrians. Some footpaths are deemed to be unsuitable or unattractive, and some roads such as Kingshill Lane and the A419 feel unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists because of high traffic speeds, especially at the Toll Bar.
6. The NPPF strongly endorses planning policies and decisions that encourage sustainable transport (paras. 102, 104).
7. NPPF para. 98 states that planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access.
8. Local Plan Policy INF3(a.) seeks to actively support travel choice through provision, enhancement and promotion of safe and recognizable connections to existing walking, cycling and public transport networks, INF3(b) gives priority to pedestrians and cyclists and INF3(d) ensures links with green infrastructure including Public Rights of Way and, where feasible, wider cycle networks.
9. The NDP should encourage the preservation and enhancement of the footpath and cycle path network, linking the village to the retail areas at Cricklade Road (Tesco, Aldi, McDonalds, Beefeater) and the A419 (Dobbies), as well as routes into Cirencester and the countryside. This is fully supported by policies in the Development Plan which seek to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport.

10. The Landscape Character Assessment for Preston Neighbourhood Plan (2019) recommends that a pedestrian link is established which uses the old railway line to create a public footpath which connects the whole of the parish on a north/south axis.

Responses by the community at the 26 September 2017 village NDP event.

11. The event was attended by 49 villagers plus the NDP steering group. The main exercise was a SWOT analysis, followed by a visioning exercise and identification of policy areas for the NDP steering group to consider further. The responses relating to green gaps, village and rural character are reproduced in the evidence paper **Community Survey**.
12. Access to footpaths and cycle paths, particularly where these link to Cirencester and the rural hinterland, were listed as positive aspects of life in Preston.
13. Attendees suggested that the vision for 2028 was that Preston would be a village where:

There was safe, convenient and attractive access to Cirencester, nearby shops and the countryside for walkers, cyclists and people with mobility difficulties on a network of footpaths and cycleways.

Responses to the online community survey.

14. 60 responses were received to the online survey. Where responders did not wish to respond online, the Parish Clerk entered their responses onto the survey so that all responses could be considered together.
15. The full survey can be found in the evidence paper **Community Survey**.
16. Q5 asked how many vehicles and which type responders had at home. 51 people answered this question. Almost all respondents had a car and almost all households had two cars. 21 of the responders had an average of 2 bicycles at home which indicates that there is the capacity to increase cycling. Not many responders used vans or motorcycles.

Q5	Average number	Total number	Total responses
Car	2	91	50
Bicycle	2	34	21
Van	1	5	6
Motorcycle	0	0	2

17. Q9 asked whether respondents would use a defined cycle path if there was one along or adjacent to the A419 to Cirencester. 50 people answered this question and 66% said that they would.
18. Q10 asked how often in one week would the respondent walk or cycle to a range of locations. 40 people answered this question. It is clear that many Preston residents regularly walk to local destinations, particularly the Tesco complex. Most journeys used the rural footpaths. The responses also showed that on average, responders access the rural footpaths 4 times a week and walked to Tesco twice a week. The response regarding travel to school is anomalous which shows that children did not walk to school. However, the survey was not able to determine how many villagers currently attend Kingshill School. It is possible that at the time of the survey, there were no children in the village of that age who attended that school, though this could change in the future.

Q10	Total of responders
Cirencester Town Centre	25
Dobbies	21
Tesco/Aldi at Kingsmeadow	33

Kingshill facilities including schools and leisure	16
Rural footpaths for leisure purposes	38

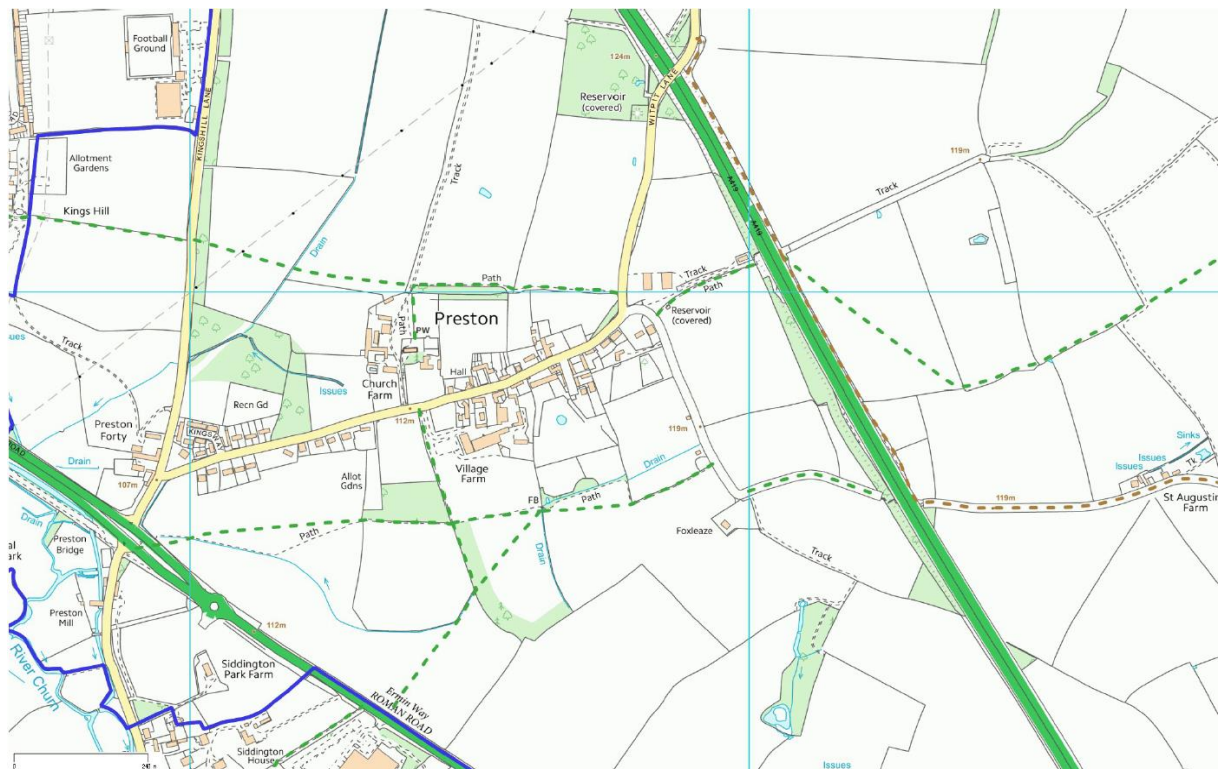
19. Q11 asked responders about the walking/cycling experience. It asked how important are the following issues when walking or cycling in and around Preston on a scale of 1 - 5 with 1 = most important, 5 = not important at all. A total of 49 people responded to this question. There was a clear preference in that maintenance, personal safety and separation from cars all scored highly.

Q11	Responded "1" (most important)
Maintenance of footpaths and cycle ways	39 (80%)
Feeling of personal safety	28 (57%)
Separation from cars and motorized vehicles	37 (76%)
Accessibility for people with mobility issues including young children, pushchairs and mobility scooters	22 (46%)
Street lighting in the evening	6 (13%)

20. Q12 asked which roads were safe for children to use unsupervised. This was an open question and 41 people responded. Only one respondent felt it was safe for children to use the streets unsupervised, and the remainder listed roads that they were most fearful of. Kingshill Lane was considered to be the most unsafe.

Q12	Number of mentions
Everywhere	11
Kingshill Lane	20
Toll-Bar	11
Village and Witpit Lane	11

21. Map showing Public Rights of Way (PROW)



Assessment of existing footpaths, cycle paths and bridle paths.

22. A resident keen walker undertook a full survey of all cycle, foot and bridle paths in Preston and the surrounding area in January and February 2018.
23. The system of footpaths around Preston clearly originates from the farming heritage. The paths link local villages and churches.
24. In places they have been altered by new road building, but the basic system persists.
25. The assessment considers the foot and cycle routes from Preston to neighbouring villages, Cirencester town and schools and those around the village used for leisure, considering their amenity value, condition, signposting and adequacy.
26. There is only one designated cycle path. This runs alongside the A419 from Dobbies Garden Centre, crosses the South Cerney Road and follows the Old Cricklade road as far as Tesco Supermarket. From there a mix of cycle paths and roads leads into Cirencester. This is a shared foot/cycle path with no separation between the 2 modes of transport.
27. The Bridle paths PB/13 provide cycle access to Harnhill and Driffield that was cut off when the A417 dual carriageway was built.

The Bridlepath

28. Leaving the village via Witpit Lane. Just after a road bridge over the A417 a clearly signposted Bridle Path PB/13 is accessed through a metal gate (sometimes locked). There is an unlocked side gate. Unfortunately, this is a narrow footpath gate, although with a fastening suitable for a bridle path, it is not the prescribed width for a Bridle Path gate. Another problem for access through this gate on horseback is that there is a deep hole on the road side of the gate, covered in vegetation, into which a horse could very easily step and panic and damage its leg whilst manoeuvring to open the gate.
29. This path is tarmacked as it serves Waterton Farm, and in good condition.
30. Where the Farm Road turns left, the bridle path continues straight ahead. As previously mentioned the fingerpost at this point i.e. the junction with footpath PB/10 the signpost is illegible and needs repainting.
31. The bridle path continues as PB/13 bordered by the hedge along the A417 on the right and a stock fence with a row of barbed wire on top on the left. This path is currently well maintained by Highways.
32. The path meets the old Harnhill road, at which point the sign posting is also illegible, and continues past St Augustin's farm towards Harnhill.

Footpaths

- Preston to Ampney Crucis
- Preston Toll Bar to Harnhill and Driffield
- Preston to Siddington
- Preston to Cirencester via Kingshill Meadow
- Preston to Cirencester via Preston Toll Bar

- Preston to Kingshill Schools
- Paths around the village
- Footways within the village

PRESTON TO AMPNEY CRUCIS PB10

33. In general, this path is in good condition, a pleasant walk across open fields.
34. Leaving the village road, at the top end of the village, by Pine Corner on PB10, the stile is in good condition, and quite low but fenced tightly so that medium sized dogs have difficulty getting through. However, there is a farm gate which is usually not locked.
35. The path goes through a bed of nettles which are only cut if done by village volunteers, then is unencumbered until reaching the fence onto the A417. This stile is in good condition with sheep netting beneath. There are steps up and over the bund. The vegetation on the road side and top of bund has been cut by highways, but not the side away from the road. The bushes were cut a year or so back so the way is currently clear.
36. Crossing the dual carriageway on foot is possible with patience but requires a strong nerve to stand on the central reservation with high speed traffic passing in both directions whilst waiting for a gap. I would no longer cross with a dog.
37. Finger posts indicating the direction of the footpaths and bridle path at this point have been totally illegible for several years.
38. The path crossing an arable field diagonally in the direction of St Augustin's Farm is waymarked.
39. The gate into the following field is sprung but the lever has become detached from the gate. This field is permanent pasture. It leads on to another cultivated field with a wide border by a hedge to the right. The path leads through the hedge and over a small ditch. There is an elderly railway sleeper bridge covered in moss. The path then turns left to follow the hedge. and should then continue straight across the arable field towards Ampney Crucis but there is no signage to indicate this and it is often blocked by crops necessitating quite a long detour round the field edge. The path then continues with a hedge on the left before exiting over a low stile. At this point it is in Ampney Crucis parish. It continues forwards through Waterton Farm to join the A 419 in Ampney Crucis. Having crossed this road, a paved path leads a short distance to The Crown of Crucis hotel and pub.

PRESTON TOLL BAR TO HARNHILL AND DRIFFIELD

40. This path consists of PF7, PF9 and PF14 as far as the crossing of the A417 then becomes a joint Bridle and footpath following the original Harnhill road, passing St Augustin's Farm.
41. This footpath begins with a signposted stile onto farmland passing to the left of a field drain which it follows for a short distance before veering left to an opening into the next field. It continues forwards over a tumbledown stile where there is a junction of 4 paths. These are not waymarked. The path to Harnhill continues straight ahead across one field, through a gap, (becoming BPR/9/1) then follows the hedge on the left to exit onto the old Preston to Harnhill Road. There is a signpost at this point but it points into a hole in the hedge (confusing). Turning right to follow the old road, a stile leads to a crossing point over the A417 dual carriageway.
42. This crossing is not pleasant or easy due to the volume and speed of traffic.

43. On the St Augustin's side is a finger post supposedly marking the bridle path route and the footpath. These directions have long been illegible and need repainting. From here the old road, now designated as a bridle path, continues towards Harnhill and Driffield.
44. **Cyclists** often use this route too. They cycle up the village street and old Harnhill Road, then lift their bikes over the stiles and cross the A417.
45. A footbridge at this point (which was on the original plans) would give much improved access for residents of Preston and cyclists from area, to the surrounding countryside.

PRESTON TO SIDDINGTON

46. PF8 leaves the village street to the side of The Barn. The signpost here rusted away and fell off some time ago. The path runs with a wall on the right to a junction with the Toll Bar to Harnhill path, which as mentioned is not waymarked.
47. It continues straight on following a farm track until a break in the hedge on the right where the path turns right, (not waymarked) to become PF9 which follows a hedge for a short distance then crosses an arable field towards the A419, emerging by Dobbie's Garden Centre.
48. Crossing the busy A419, you are now in Siddington Parish. A path, to the right of the garden centre leads eventually onto the South Cerney road opposite the Siddington road junction. The Siddington Road is a fairly narrow winding road with no footpaths, and there are points on it when walking towards Siddington, where visibility is obscured. In other words, cars cannot see walkers until they are very close. A footpath on the left just before the village, ending at the allotments, emerges close to the Greyhound pub. – The closest in walking distance to Preston

HARNHILL TO SIDDINGTON

49. If walking from Harnhill to Siddington, one would use path PF9. It crosses an arable field diagonally then passes through a spinney (where it is not well defined), to join the farm track at the point where PF8 turns right. Neither end of PF9 is waymarked.

PRESTON TO CIRENCESTER VIA KINGSHILL MEADOW

50. This path forms a continuation of the path from Ampney Crucis, to Preston, so providing a footpath all the way from Ampney Crucis, to Cirencester.
51. From Pine corner, walk a few yards the Witpit Lane, a few yards to the right and cross the road to a stile. The path PF6 follows a hedge and narrow woodland strip on the left, then carries straight on as PF12, crossing a narrow bridge, and an arable field and passing through a narrow copse to emerge via a stile onto Kingshill Lane. Crossing Kingshill Lane, the next path PF4 is signposted and accessed through a kissing gate provided by the Ramblers Association. It carries straight on towards Kingshill Meadow estate. There is no signposting at the edge of the estate to indicate that PF4 is a public footpath.
52. This is the boundary of Cirencester Town.
53. From here the path carries on through the estate, then follows the line of the A429 to a footbridge over the A429, and eventually emerges onto Beeches Road and an easy walk to the town centre. Along this section there are access paths to City Bank Field, City Bank Glade, and Victoria Road, close to Cirencester Primary School and through these to the Riverside Walk all the way to Gloucester Street.
54. So, there is a footpath all the way from Ampney Crucis to these points.

PRESTON TO CIRENCESTER VIA PRESTON TOLL BAR

55. Following the paved path to the bottom of the village and crossing the village road, a short footpath leads to Preston Toll Bar. This path is very bumpy caused by tree roots and is covered in moss as it is under trees, which make it a bit hazardous. There is a crossing point over the A419 for cyclists and pedestrians. This crossing can be difficult because of the unpredictable speed of traffic on the A419 (Limit 70mph) and the proximity of the exit of traffic from Kingshill Lane. Turning right, the path crosses the South Cerney Road. This is more difficult as this road bend sharply to the left and visibility of cars approaching from South Cerney is greatly inhibited. One has to look out for traffic turning left from the A417 at the same time.
56. One solution may be to make a path onto the triangular traffic island and then another onto the Cirencester side, or provide a mirror so that approaching traffic can be seen.
57. From here the path follows the Old Tetbury Road as far as Tesco Supermarket. This is the boundary of Cirencester Town. From that point there are paved paths on both sides of the road as far as the Premier Inn, and a series of footpaths and underpasses leading to Cirencester.

FOOTPATHS AROUND THE VILLAGE

58. The various footpaths to other points join up to form a circular route around the outside of the village, which is much used and appreciated, and gives excellent views over the surrounding countryside.

FOOTWAYS WITHIN THE VILLAGE

59. The footways within the village are generally in good condition, having been re-laid around 15 years ago. They are of tarmac with dropped curbs where appropriate.
60. Entering the village from Kingshill Lane there is footway on the left side of the road following right round Kingsway, all the way up to the top of the village. Unfortunately, it does not continue around the corner into Witpit Lane, to join up with footpath PF6. Because of this, to be safe, walkers have to cross the road well before the corner and then cross back again opposite the stile to the footpath. With the current volume of traffic, this is not a problem, but it could become so.
61. A footpath on the right side of the road begins by Village Farm Cottage and continues to the top of the village terminating at the corner of the Old Harnhill Road, which is now a No Through Road.

PRESTON VILLAGE TO KINGSHILL SCHOOLS

62. There is currently no footpath or cycle route between Preston Village and Watermoor Primary and Kingshill Secondary Schools. This makes a mockery of the government's stated aim of encouraging physical activity and environmentally sound transport, so needs addressing urgently.
63. There are no other Public Foot or Bridle paths within the Parish of Preston.
64. Preston Village is lucky to be well served with a network of footpaths to the surrounding area.
65. There are no public footpaths or bridleways further north in the Parish.

AREAS WHERE IMPROVEMENTS ARE REQUIRED

66. These are included in the text i.e:
 - A foot and cycle path to Kingshill Schools

- Improvement to the crossing point on the South Cerney Road.
- Slowing of traffic on the A419 making crossing less hazardous.
- A footbridge over the A417 connecting the Harnhill Road
- Continuation of the village footpath around the corner into Witpit lane to connect with PF6.