

Connecting the Ivers



Taking the next steps: A project proposal



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Introduction

Government, at national and county level, has recognised the value and importance of promoting Active Travel (*i.e making journeys by physically active means, such as walking, cycling or use of a wheelchair*). Its benefits include promotion of regular exercise, improved health and well-being, reduced vehicle traffic and associated congestion, and reduced atmospheric pollution.

A positive outcome of the travel constraints during the Covid-19 pandemic has been an enormous increase in walking and cycling. This has been particularly apparent in the Ivers as quieter roads have encouraged residents to explore the local environment on foot, on cycles and on horseback.

The parish has a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW). The Buckinghamshire County Council (now Buckinghamshire Council) has recently published a Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan which, if fully implemented, should transform their accessibility and value to the community. However, with few exceptions, the PRoWs are fragmented and do not provide integrated routes between key locations. Some have surfaces that render them inaccessible to some users.

Planning conditions for the Ivers require that developments involving infilling or demolition of existing buildings with replacements having increased household capacities must provide cycle storage as part of the scheme. There are numerous recent examples of this across the parish. All are obliged to provide cycle storage but are accessed from the Ivers' busy roads, unsuited to cycling.

The impact of speeding traffic in villages and on rural roads across is recognised in a recent publication "*Traffic Calming in Buckinghamshire A Guide for the Implementation of Traffic Calming Measures July 2020*". In particular, it can result in:

- Intimidation to walkers, cyclists and horse riders
- Higher CO2 emissions
- Noise pollution
- Increased risk of a collision
- Severance of communities (reducing social interaction and the use of local services).

It follows that implementation of traffic calming schemes can make an important contribution towards encouraging Active Travel and improving safety. A number of schemes are planned or in place around Buckinghamshire.

The Working Group on Footpaths & Cycleways, reporting to the Ivers Parish Council's Highways and Infrastructure Committee, has set out a vision for The Ivers that seeks to capitalise on the new enthusiasm for Active Travel by developing policies and networks that link the different parts of the community. We propose here a series of first steps towards generating an integrated, fully connected, safe Active Travel network to benefit members of the community of all ages and physical abilities.

How do we sustain and capitalise on the new-found enthusiasm for Active Travel in the Ivers?

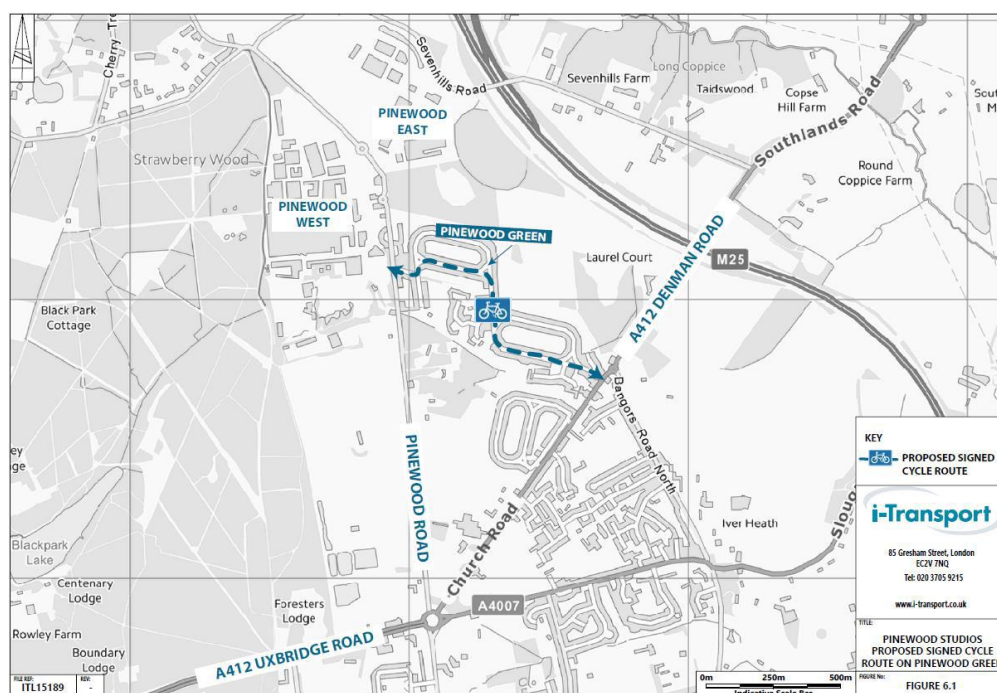
In a recent report to the Ivers Parish Council Highways & Infrastructure Committee (*Active Travel in The Ivers Parish; September 2020*), the Working Group on Footpaths & Cycleways made a series of proposals to improve connectivity both within and beyond the parish boundaries. Realising this ambition will require significant investment of capital, imagination and a willingness to adapt what is essentially a rural road network and series of PRowWs. However, the benefits would be real and enduring. We see development of Active Travel as a central tenet in shaping the future of our community.

A condition of planning permission for expansion of Pinewood Studios was the provision of funding (S106 monies) to provide Active Travel facilities that connect the studio site in Iver Heath with the rest of the parish. The first element of this, a shared use footway/cycle path along the length of Pinewood Road was completed in 2019. As awareness of its existence has developed, this has seen an encouraging increase in use by walkers, joggers and cyclists.

We understand that approximately £500,000 of the S106 commitment remains unspent.

In a further development, Pinewood Studios has been granted planning permission for a major upgrade to Sevenhills Road (Application No. JCB/DF/ITL15189-019 TN). Included in the proposal is a cycle route via Pinewood Green and Thornbridge Road that would link Pinewood Studios with the retail centre of Iver Heath and beyond (see figure below).

Implementation of this route will be a positive step towards linking communities in the Parish.



Proposed cycle route linking Pinewood Road and A412 Church Road.

Reproduced from Pinewood Studios (Sevenhills Road) Technical Note on Sustainable Travel (Application JCB/DF/ITL15189-019 TN; February 2020).

Developing the network

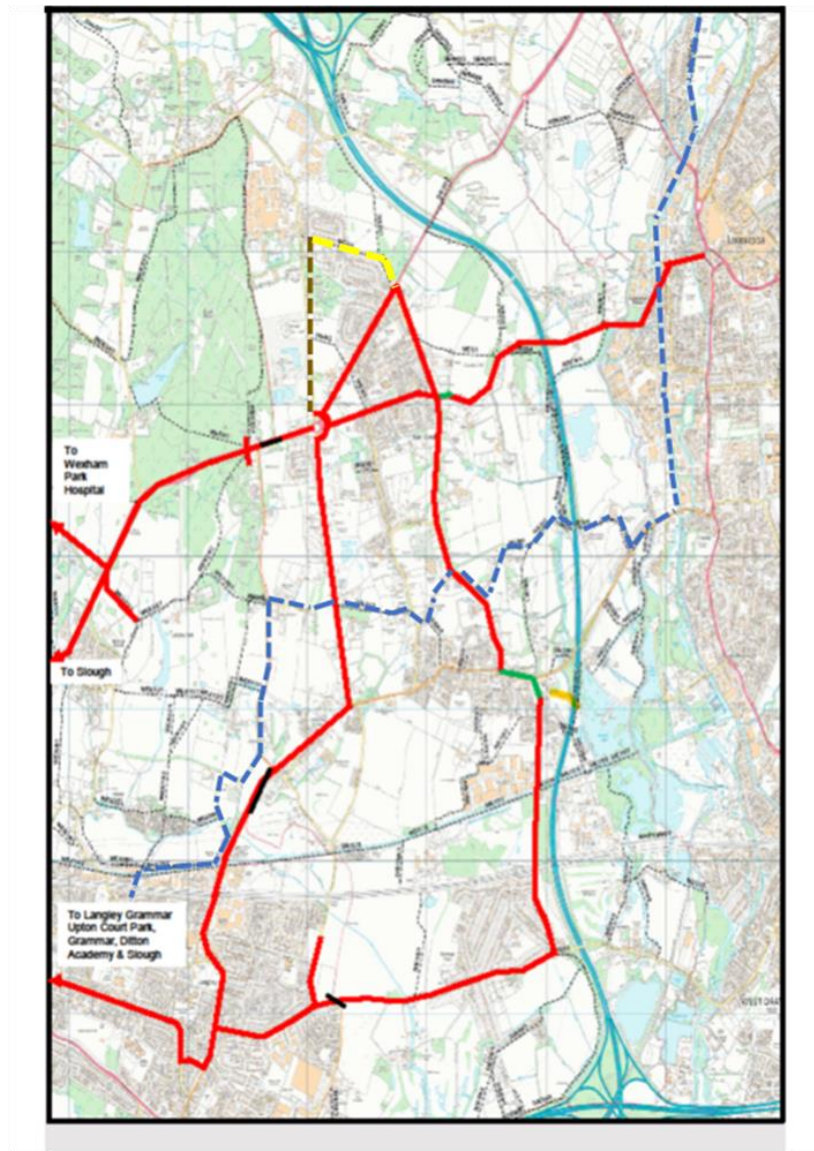
The report by the Working Group on Footpaths & Cycleways (*Active Travel in The Ivers Parish; September 2020*), contains a number of proposals on the promotion of Active Travel and its integration into future developments in the parish. The proposals included a number of 'Key Routes' that would link the principal settlements, places of work, transport hubs and places of leisure and recreation. These are summarised in the Table below with the respective rankings assigned by the Working Group.

Rank	Route
1	North-south connection from Iver Heath to Richings Park via Iver Village
2	Five-Points Roundabout – safe crossing points (Pinewood Road, Church Road, Slough Road, Wood Lane)
3	Five-Points Roundabout to Langley Park Road & Langley station
4	Five-Points Roundabout to Slough (A412)
5	Five-Points / Slough Road to Uxbridge
6	Black Park Road/ Avenue Drive Crossing point on A412
7	Richings Park to Slough High Schools/Leisure/Retail
8	Langley Park Road to Trenches Lane access to Langley Park
9	A412/Seven Hills Road junction to Denham
10	IVE/16/4 (Replacement for Reeds Bridge over Grand Union Canal)
11	A412 link to Colne Valley (extension of 4 above)
12	Iver to Uxbridge
13	Thorney Lane North to Iver Recreation Ground - Leisure Route to avoid narrow road and pinch-point at Swan pub/St. Peter's Church

The plan below illustrates our vision as to how, together, these Key Routes would provide the backbone of an integrated network of designated 'safe routes' for pedestrians and cyclists. Also shown is the how these Key Routes feed from the confirmed Pinewood Studios' schemes (cycleway on Pinewood Road and cycle route from Pinewood Road to Church Road).

We propose that the next step should be to build on these contributions towards a north-south, Active Travel link from Pinewood Studios to Iver Station by extending the route along Bangors Road North and Bangors Road South. Given the nature of these roads, they are not without their challenges in terms of providing safe routes for cycles and pedestrians. However, they provide the most direct route to Iver village and the station (an important consideration for commuter cyclists) as well as connections to National Cycle Route 61 and the Colne Valley Trail.

Upgrading of the footway on Bangors Road North was anticipated in Pinewood Studios' proposals as part of its planning applications (see *PSL3-2 D Bird appendices to proof: October 2013*) and so our proposal is in accordance with the scheme as envisaged in the developments that generated the S106 funding.



Integration of the proposed Key Routes (solid red line) with the existing Pinewood Road cycleway (dotted brown line) and National Cycle Route 61 (dotted blue line). Solid green lines indicate obligatory dismounting of cycles to negotiate narrow footways. Yellow dotted line indicates planned cycle route envisaged as part of the Sevenhills Road upgrade programme.

What is required?

Bangors Road North

The footway on the west side of Bangors Road North is relatively wide and could be developed for shared use by cyclists and pedestrians. One section, north of the junction with Anslow Gardens, has encroaching vegetation that would need to be removed.

Bangors Road North has a number of intersections on the west side, which is not ideal. However, the alternative approach of road markings designating cycle lanes on the carriageway is considered impractical, given the narrow width of the carriageway and the long queues of stationary traffic on the northbound side during evening peak periods.

Cyclists could be directed away from the footway and along the parallel service road just north of the Black Horse pub. This would require resurfacing of the road surface in order to render it safe. Cyclists would rejoin the footway by the entrance to the Black Horse car park and then cross Slough Road at the existing designated crossing point.

Bangors Road South

Bangors Road South presents different challenges. Around 1,300 metres has a 40 mph speed limit and the road includes some hazardous bends, most notably at the 'pinch point' immediately north of its junction with High Street, Iver village. Added to this, the existing footway alternates between the east and west sides of the road.

The section of footway between Love Green Lane and Coppins Lane is a designated shared use path which forms part of National Cycle Route 61. This runs on the west side from the junction with Love Green Lane South, then crosses to the east side by the entrance to Coppins before joining Route 61 along Coppins Lane.

Much of the existing footway on Bangors Road South is wide but has been reduced in useable width by years of lack of maintenance of adjoining vegetation. Some sections have been recovered to their original width through the efforts of local volunteers, but much needs to be done in order to render it suitable for cyclists.

An alternative approach would be to provide designated cycle lanes by marking the carriageway. However, this approach would be acceptable only if significant traffic calming



measures were introduced. In any event, the true width of the footway needs to be regained in order to make it safe for pedestrians, especially those with pushchairs or for users of mobility scooters.

The section of footway between the junction with Evreham Road and High Street is extremely narrow, as is the carriageway. This is inherently dangerous for pedestrians and, indeed, for all road users. The question arises, therefore as to whether it is suitable for cyclists. One approach is to instruct cyclists to dismount before negotiating this section. This may be acceptable but there is insufficient width of the footway to allow passage of pedestrians coming in the opposite direction.

An alternative approach would be to direct cyclists along Evreham Road, Bangors Close and the footpath leading to High Street. Ideally, this would require cyclists to cross the road by the bus stop on the west side.

One further point is that if Bangors Road South is to become a cycling route, the poor level of lighting needs to be improved along its length.

Alternatives considered

The Working Group considered two other options for developing Active Travel Routes consistent with the terms of the S106 funding.

1. Improvements to crossing points at 5-Points Roundabout

5-Points Roundabout has a central role in the Working Group's proposed integrated scheme for Active Travel routes and the newly-constructed cycleway on Pinewood Road terminates at the roundabout. Crossing the road on foot or bicycle at any of the junctions is extremely hazardous, most notably on the A412 Uxbridge Road arm. Provision of safer crossing points would be a major step forward. However, the pursuit of this as an option was dismissed on the basis of likely costs and the possible need for revisions to the junctions in the event that plans for a Pinewood Visitor Attraction on the west side of Pinewood Road were to proceed.

2. Upgrade of the footway on Wood Lane to shared use footway/cycleway

Wood Lane has scope for a shared use footway/cycleway for much of its length and would provide a convenient link to Langley Park Road which, itself, has the potential for a similar upgrade, heading westwards to provide a link to Langley Station.

Whilst this option is seen as one of the Key Routes it was felt that it does not satisfy the central aim of providing a direct link between Pinewood Studios and Iver Station, favouring Langley Station instead, or the aim of linking the village centres of Iver Heath and Iver.

We recommend that these two elements of the Active Travel proposals are given serious consideration for alternative funding streams.

Next steps

We urge Buckinghamshire Council, in collaboration with Pinewood Studios, to commit to developing the Active Travel network by implementing the next stage of the north-south link along Bangors Road North and South. This entails:

1. Upgrading the footway on the west side of Bangors Road North to a shared use footway/cycleway.
2. Improving the quality of the crossing point at the junction with Slough Road (Black Horse).
3. Where feasible, upgrading the footway on Bangors Road South to a shared use footway/cycleway.
4. Where the footway in Bangors Road South does not permit shared use, providing designated cycle lanes on carriageway.
5. Cutting back vegetation and reclaiming the full path width on Bangors Road South.
6. Introducing traffic calming measures on Bangors Road South (e.g. reduction in speed limit from 40 to 30 mph; single lane working chicanes at intervals) and enforcement of the 7.5 tonne weight limit. [This would also benefit the regular use of the road by equestrian groups].
7. Providing a safe route for cyclists through (or around) the pinch-point on Bangors Road South between Evreham Road and High Street.

We ask that full project evaluation and costing are initiated with a view to capitalising on the available S106 funds to create a new Active Travel route for the benefit of residents, commuters and leisure visitors across the Ivers Parish.