

Engagement summary

Churchill | public transport design proposals

Date of report: December 2024

Context: Churchill and the Bus Service Improvement Plan

The Churchill junction context

- The crossroads where the A38 and A368 meet between Langford and Churchill is a busy, strategic junction on the North Somerset network. The crossroads sits within an area that is expected to see further development over the next five years, including approved and proposed new housing developments, the building of a new Banwell bypass and approved expansion of Bristol Airport.
- With local population growth, the creation of Banwell bypass and approved expansion of Bristol Airport on the horizon, it is essential that we upgrade our road infrastructure, and improve capacity at this junction, to support the associated additional future traffic.
- These improvements will in turn create the conditions for a robust, modern and affordable bus network for our residents, that they can rely on for years to come. The West of England Bus Service Improvement Plan Refresh for 2025 to 2035 includes a specific ambition for a new core high frequency bus service from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol via Churchill, Bristol Airport and the A38.
- The A38 corridor at Churchill is currently served by three public bus services: the Falcon service between Bristol and Plymouth, the 62 between Weston-super-Mare and Bridgwater College, and the 125 between Wrington and Weston-super-Mare.
- Historically, delays in Banwell have hit local bus service reliability, leading to routes being reduced. The current congestion experienced at the existing signalised junction at Churchill crossroads contributes to delays to bus journey times. The typical service delays at peak times are two minutes on the four approaches to the junction.
- Dinghurst Road has also faced long-term congestion issues due to the constrained nature of the road.
- The proposal to convert the current crossroads into a roundabout with smart traffic signals sets out to improve traffic flow and congestion in this location, as part of a chain of improvements to the wider network. This change would enable the junction to function more fluidly, so supporting a higher volume of traffic than is possible currently, and more effective traffic flow and conditions into the future by this increased capacity.



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The Bus Service Improvement Plan context

- The North Somerset Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is a joint initiative between North Somerset Council (NSC), the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), the Department for Transport (DfT), bus operators, and other stakeholders. Its aim is to create a modern and affordable public bus network our residents can rely on for years to come. To do this, we need to create commercially sustainable bus services for our growing population, that are future-proof and affordable, by making bus services more efficient, and by growing bus usage locally.
- The BSIP is funded by the UK Government, through the Department for Transport (DfT). The conditions of this funding mean it cannot be used for any other council activities or services.
- Our communities tell us they want and need more reliable, frequent, affordable and sustainable bus services – and that’s ultimately what BSIP is here to achieve.
- One of the ways the North Somerset BSIP aims to achieve this is by implementing packages of bus infrastructure improvements, called bus priority schemes, such as bus lanes, signals, or other measures that give buses priority over other traffic. These mainly focus on a chain of changes along three of our key routes, or bus corridors – the A38, A369 and A370 – where we are also investing time-limited funding in temporary fares subsidies and more frequent buses.
- Without bus priority improvements to help make bus travel faster, more reliable and more efficient, bus services in North Somerset may have to be cancelled, or significantly scaled back once the Department for Transport’s financial support through BSIP ends. As a local authority, we currently do not have the funds to subsidise bus services in North Somerset that could have sufficient demand to run commercially, and this situation is unlikely to change in the future.
- We have faced this situation before: in 2022, we lost around a quarter of North Somerset’s overall bus network (in terms of miles covered), from entire routes being withdrawn, to a drop in service frequencies, as these could not be financially sustained by operators.
- In the last few months, BSIP teams have engaged with North Somerset communities on several different concepts, proposals, and works for the next phase of bus priority schemes, including at Churchill.



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- The information, knowledge, and views that residents share with us through our engagement activity is invaluable to the design and build process for BSIP. It is an important part of our process for checking and testing whether proposals will be effective, and further developing, remodeling, or refining scheme proposals before any final decisions are made to progress to construction.

About the original proposed BSIP scheme for Churchill

The initial concept designs engaged on for Churchill included:

- Converting the crossroads where the A38 and A368 meet between Langford and Churchill into a new roundabout with new smart traffic signals. This change would enable the junction to function more fluidly, so supporting a higher volume of traffic than is possible currently.
- The smart signals at all four approaches to the roundabout would give priority to buses (with part-time signals on Dinghurst Road), with the A38 having priority.
- Adding four controlled crossings on each arm of the roundabout, to offer safer access for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Installing new pavements to make the junction safer for pedestrians.
- Creating bus lanes on the north and southbound A38 approaches (Bristol Road and New Road).
- Installing a northbound bus link with a bus gate, to allow buses travelling north on the A368 Dinghurst Road to bypass the roundabout to join the A38.

Summary of engagement activity undertaken to date

We invited local people to give their feedback and help shape the proposals. This activity included:



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The logo for WEST, with the word 'WEST' in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a green background.

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- An online survey, open to the public for comment for six weeks (Friday 23 February to Friday 5 April 2024). Paper copies of the survey were also available on request. 195 online surveys were completed during this period.
- A drop-in community event, held on Tuesday 17 September 2024, was attended by 129 people, most of whom were Churchill residents, and 42 people submitted feedback. It was necessary for this session to be held at a later date to the public survey due to the 2024 pre-General Election period.

Survey overview

The public survey was open for six weeks from Friday 23 February to Friday 5 April 2024.

Of the **195** total responses to the survey:

- **46%** (90 respondents) said they lived in 'Wider North Somerset', with 23% (44) living in Langford or Lower Langford, 21% (41) in Churchill, and 10% (19) in Sandford.
- **158** of the 195 respondents (81%) answered that they do not regularly use the bus through Churchill junction.
- **91** respondents said they were aged between 55 and 65 and over (48% total), were White (77%), male (49%), and did not have any health conditions lasting or expected to last 12 months or more (73%).
- The survey was predominantly quantitative (numeric), with one qualitative (free text) question. For this, analysis was conducted to identify key themes across the responses.

! An important note on this survey

- **The purpose of the survey and engagement period was to gather views and insight to help inform the development** of an appropriate bus priority scheme for the Churchill junction that supports the current and future needs of a growing population and decarbonisation.
- **The survey was based on a self-selecting sample of participants.** It was not a survey of a representative sample of the local population. For a survey to be considered representative, the participant sample would have to be weighted to reflect local



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characteristics in terms of age, gender, income bracket, ethnic heritage, disability, and so on. This means any outputs should be considered with this in mind.

- **This survey is one part of shaping proposed designs, alongside technical testing, monitoring and data gathering at proposed scheme locations.** We consider all data sets in the round alongside community representations to make informed, technically sound recommendations about the design of each scheme.
- **Not all survey participants answered all questions.**

Open-text responses give context for quantitative survey results

When commenting freely on the proposals, survey respondents and feedback from the community session tended to express general resistance to and disengagement with any change rather than opposing a specific aspect of the concept design. For example, the four most prevalent themes were:

- General opposition to any changes (appeared in 113 survey responses and 42 feedback forms)
- A view that there are currently too few buses to justify the proposals (appears in 46 survey responses and 14 feedback forms)
- A perception that changes are unnecessary as the current junction works (appeared in 40 survey responses and nine feedback forms)
- Concerns that the scheme would be a waste of money (appeared in 32 responses).
- Attendees at the drop-in community session also expressed safety concerns for residents and school children and raised flooding issues (23 feedback forms).

Against this backdrop, of the 195 people who took the survey, responses saw:

Question: Converting the crossroads into a roundabout

'We are proposing to convert the current crossroads, where the A38 and A368 meet between Langford and Churchill, into a new roundabout with smart traffic signals which give priority to buses. Do you agree with this proposal?'

- 138 respondents answered 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree'.
- 56 respondents answered 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree', or 'Neutral'.



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Question: Installing bus lanes on the north and southbound A38 approaches

'We are proposing to install bus lanes on the north and southbound A38 approaches (Bristol Road and New Road). Do you agree with this proposal?'

- 166 respondents answered 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree', or 'Neutral'.
- 27 respondents answered 'Agree, or Strongly Agree'.

Question: Installing a northbound bus link with a bus gate

'We are proposing to install a northbound bus link with a bus gate, to allow buses travelling north on the A368 Dinghurst Road to bypass the roundabout to join the A38. Do you agree with this proposal?'

- 154 respondents answered 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree', or 'Neutral'.
- 39 respondents answered 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree'.

Question: Installing new pavements and controlled crossings on the roundabout

'We are proposing to install new pavements, and four controlled crossings on each arm of the roundabout, to offer safer access for pedestrians and cyclists. Do you agree with these proposals?'

- 116 respondents answered 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree', or 'Neutral'.
- 77 respondents answered 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree'.

Question: Installing new bus stops after Ladymead Lane

'We are proposing to install new bus stops after Ladymead Lane. Do you agree with this proposal?'

- 65 respondents answered 'Neutral'.
- 69 respondents answered 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree'.
- 58 respondents answered 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree'.

Survey overview

The public survey was open for six weeks from Friday 23 February to Friday 5 April 2024.



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Of the 195 total responses to the survey:

- 138 respondents answered 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' to converting the crossroads into a roundabout.
- 148 respondents answered 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' to installing bus lanes on the north and southbound A38 approaches.
- 154 respondents answered 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree', or 'Neutral' to installing a northbound bus link with a bus gate.
- 116 respondents answered 'Agree', 'Strongly Agree', or 'Neutral' to installing new pavements and controlled crossings on the roundabout.
- 69 respondents answered 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree' to installing new bus stops after Ladymead Lane.

Drop-in session overview

The drop-in session on 17 September was attended by 129 people, most of who were Churchill residents, and 42 people submitted feedback.

When commenting freely on the proposals, feedback from the community session tended to echo that gathered through the earlier survey and expressed general resistance to and disengagement with any change.

For example, the four most prevalent themes in feedback from event attendees were:

- A view that there are currently too few buses to justify the proposals and disruption (theme raised 14 times)
- A perception changes are unnecessary as the current junction works (raised nine times)
- Safety concerns as Dinghurst Road is already too narrow for pedestrians and cyclists (mentioned 8 times)
- A view that the length of the proposed bus lane will not achieve the desired outcome but increase congestion (mentioned eight times).



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Actions and next steps following scheme engagement period

- We are grateful to everyone who took part in having their say on the proposals for bus infrastructure changes at Churchill junction through our survey and drop-in community session.
- We have continued to work through the detailed comments and local insights and have been undertaking further technical testing and surveys to understand the issues raised and consider all information available to us.

No decision on any Churchill junction scheme will be made before January 2025.

Our actions and next steps include:

- Investigating the feasibility of traffic light signal configuration at the junction.

Carrying out additional work, including:

- Reviewing data to help establish the appropriate length of any bus lanes
- Updating the junction modelling
- Reassessing the condition of the existing site
- Updating scheme design drawings to reflect further technical work.

Once all the above work has been completed, we will:

- Share information on any new proposals with ward and parish councillors.

Please note: Council approvals for BSIP schemes are completed in two stages.

The first approval stage is in consultation with the BSIP Formal Board and Executive Member, and the final approval is an Executive Member Decision. This happens before a scheme is approved to proceed to be built.

The anticipated date of the Executive Member decision will be published in the Council's Forward Plan. We do not anticipate a decision to be made on the Churchill A38/A368 crossroads before January 2025.



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