Report carried out by:	Sian Williams, Principal Engineer, Cheshire West & Chester Council (CW&C) & Lee Holt Highway Engineer, Cheshire West & Chester Council (CW&C)
Report for:	Janet Mills, Safer Routes to School, (CWAC)
Reason for report:	Feasibility study into the introduction of a cycle route from Frodsham to Helsby High School, due to the closure of Frodsham High School.
Drawing(s) / documents Attached:	- 'PD/3000564/50/01' - 'Preliminary Cost Estimate'.
NOTE:	This report is to be read in conjunction with Drawing 'PD/3000564/50/01'

Section 1(i)

Existing

There is an existing gated access from 'Fountain Lane' to the 'Arts Centre' within the Castle Park grounds (Point A on the drawing). The photo's below show the existing path through the wooded area.

Proposed

From the 'Art's Centre' gates on 'Fountain Lane' (Point A on the drawing), the existing path running up to the 'Castle Park' car park area is currently being upgraded by "others". The full extent of their works is, at present, unknown however, lighting will be required in this area.

Section 1(ii)

Existing

From Castle Park car park area there is a section of wooded area before opening out onto the existing playing fields at 'Netherton Drive. The wooded area is dark even during daylight hours. The Photo below shows (Point B on the drawing) the view of where the footway runs along the playing field area connecting onto Netherton Drive.

Proposed

The 'Castle Park' car park area would require the construction of a shared footway/cycleway (approx 175 linm). This would follow the route along the western side of the car park, through a section of the wooded area, upto the northwest corner of the Playing Field and connecting at

'Netherton Drive' shown at Point B. It will also require lighting to specification along the full length of this section.

Section 2(i)

Existing

From Park Lane (Point C on the drawing) there is an existing pathway through to 'Synagogue Well'. The photos below show the steps near to 'Synagogue Well' and the wooded area along Section 2(i). It is to be noted that the wooded area is: dark even during daylight hours; is undulating in level; and has open land drainage channels running through it.

Proposed

The path through to by Synagogue Well would require the removal of the existing random stone steps (not sure if these are historic!) to be replaced with the construction of a shared footway/cycleway at a gradient. This construction would be required to continue through the wooded area following the existing path shown at Point D (approx 185 linm). Lighting would be required and this would be a significant element. Also there are significant changes in level throughout the site and further analysis on details such as gradients, levels etc. will be required.

Section 2(ii)

Existing

From the Wooded area at Point D following the route of the southeast side of the playing Field, it is generally a fairly level grassed area except for the connection to 'Netherton Drive'. The photo below highlights the existing difference in level at this location shown at Point E.

Proposed
From Point D on the drawing, this section would require the construction of a shared footway/cycleway running along the perimeter of the existing playing field (approx 260 linm). The connection to 'Netherton Drive' at Point E would require a 'ramp' to be constructed to a suitable gradient. Lighting will also be required along this section.

Section 3
Existing
From the playing field, following the route of Netherton Drive which is at a fairly steep gradient upto the junction with Howey Lane. The photo below shows a typical view along the route.

Proposed
'Netherton Drive' to 'Howey Lane' junction. Cycleway signage, for direction, will be required in this area.

Section 4(i)
Existing
From the junction of Netherton Drive with Howey Lane, there is a wide verge area with an existing footway as shown below.

Proposed
This section would require the widening of the existing footway to create a shared use footway/cycleway (approx 52 linm of construction).

Section 4(ii)
Existing
Progressing along Howey Lane, this is a narrow road with no footway and is bounded by stone walls. The existing full length of Howey Lane has existing street lighting and is traffic calmed with speed cushions, as shown in the photo below.

Proposed
The short length at the end of 'Howey Lane' upto the junction with the A56 is to be used with only signing to be included to direct users. Unfortunately, due to the existing constraints no segregated footway or cycleway can be achieved in this location.

Section 5
Existing
The junction of Howey Lane with the A56 Chester Road is a large open junction also incorporating a side road. Below is a photo of the existing junction showing the view up 'Howey Lane'.

Proposed
Redesign of the existing junction layout would be required to aid safe crossing. A detailed design would be required,(options could range from a basic do minimum design or a full signalised crossing area).

Section 6
Existing
From Howey Lane junction progressing along the A56 Chester Road upto the junction with the side road to the Cemetry, there is an existing footway on both sides of the road and an existing cycle lane on the carriageway for the Frodsham bound traffic only. The photo below is a view of the A56 looking Northbound (heading towards Frodsham) along Section 6.

Proposed
Option 1: Length of 'on-carriageway' cycle lane could be implemented to the Helsby bound lane (on the right side lane on the photo - would require lining, approx 180 linm).
Option 2: The construction of an 'off-carriageway', shared use footway/cycleway (approx 265 linm). This could be introduced on either side of the carriageway; however, crossing facilities would be required.

Section 7

FRODSHAM HIGH SCHOOL TO HELSBY HIGH SCHOOL

Existing

Continuing along the A56 Chester Road, there is an existing cycle lane on both sides of the carriageway together with footways segregated from the carriageway by a verge area. The length of road has existing street lighting. The photo below shows a typical view Southbound (towards Helsby). The difference in level between the carriageway and footway varies along this section.

Proposed

Option 1: Refresh the lining to the existing on carriageway, Northern and Southern direction, cycle lanes.

Option 2: Provision of an 'off-carriageway, shared use, footway/cycleway' along the west side (school side) footway. This option would require a crossing point, preferably a signalised crossing, near to 'Howey Lane'. Section 6 proposals may then not be required under this option.

Option 3: Provision of an 'off carriageway, shared use, footway/cycleway' along the east side footway (Howey Lane side - approx 800 linm). It is to be noted that there are side roads and various accesses to negotiate.

Section 8

Existing

At Helsby High School there are existing cycle lanes to both sides of the carriageway. It has footways to both sides, segregated by a verge on the side of the school, and has street lighting. It is to be noted that during school drop-off & collection times of the day, vehicles park along both sides of the carriageway adjacent to the school frontage and within the existing cycle lane areas.

The photos below show:

(i) a typical view looking Southbound from 'Godscroft Lane' with 'Helsby High School' to the right of the photo.

(ii) a possible location for the provision of a signal controlled crossing (Point J on the drawing) to aid crossing the busy road to the school.

Proposed
The provision of an off carriageway shared cycleway/footway (approx 135 linm) and the addition of 2 no. drop crossings at points H and I on the plan. Possible location for a signalised crossing is indicated at point J on the plan.

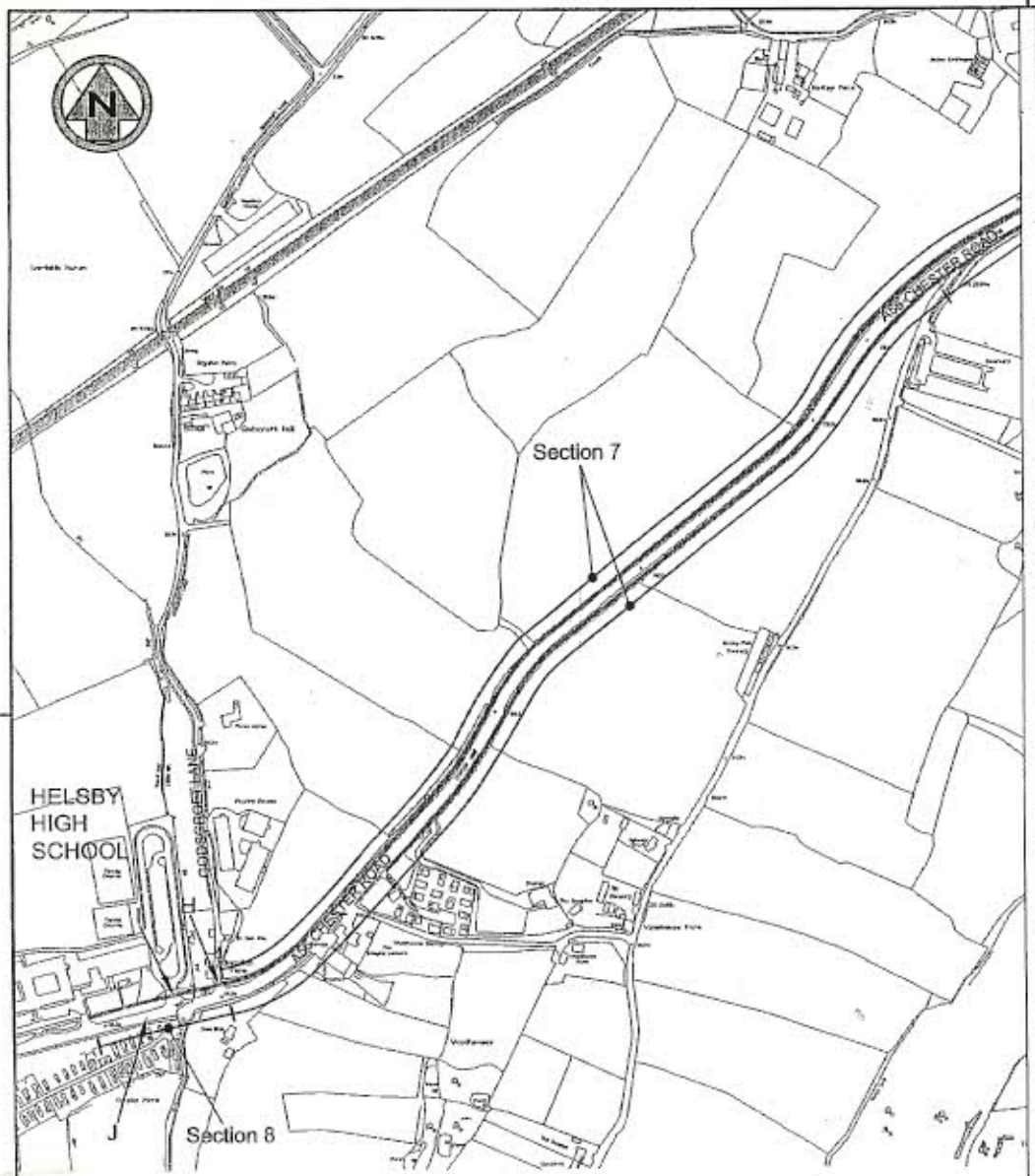
Other routes/locations considered.

The proposal of a signalised crossing, near to the Frodsham rail bridge, in order to utilise a a route along the railway line as an option.
This option would connect the Castle Park route to the railway siding (Point L on the drawing). The photos below highlight the existing poor visibility in either direction due to the railway bridge being located on a bend.
A signalised crossing placed too close to the bridge would give restricted visibility to the driver. Therefore if a signalised crossing were to be installed it would have to be placed at a safe distance away from the bridge so as to provide adequate visibility. This would result in an indirect route for the pedestrian/cyclist in order to cross at a safe location, also, access to and from the signal crossing in order to link the proposed route would be required. This, however in itself, would pose a problem, as an off carriageway shared footway/cycleway is not an option that could be implemented along this length as there is insufficient Highway Land to incorporate. Unless additional land take was gained then, due to existing constraints, this connection via a signal crossing would not be easy to achieve.

The possibility of utilising the pathway (Point/section G on the drawing) as an off-road link from Howey Lane to the 'A56 Chester Road' was investigated. On inspection it was deemed that this route is unsuitable due to its secluded, built up nature and the steep gradient. Also, the link along the A56 Chester Road from the footpath to Howey Lane Junction would be difficult to achieve due to the existing constraints on the A56.

Summary.

Many options and routes are available to use, however, those thought most practical have been reported. It is to be noted that the wooded areas through Castle Park, all be it a safe off-road route, it can also be a potentially "nervy" area to the user. The lack of lighting, the quite nature of the route and the tree environment being a possible hiding place for "others" to be lurking (behind the trees etc), could cause the route to be provided and not actually used and so end up being a wasted cause. Therefore any potential route would need to be thought through and executed ensuring all aspects and issues of safety are fully reviewed.



Cheshire West and Chester

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Project:

Frodsham to Helsby Cycle Route

Preliminary Route Analysis

Contact Name: Sian Williams
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Drawn by: L. Holt

Checked by: Sian Williams

Date: Aug 09

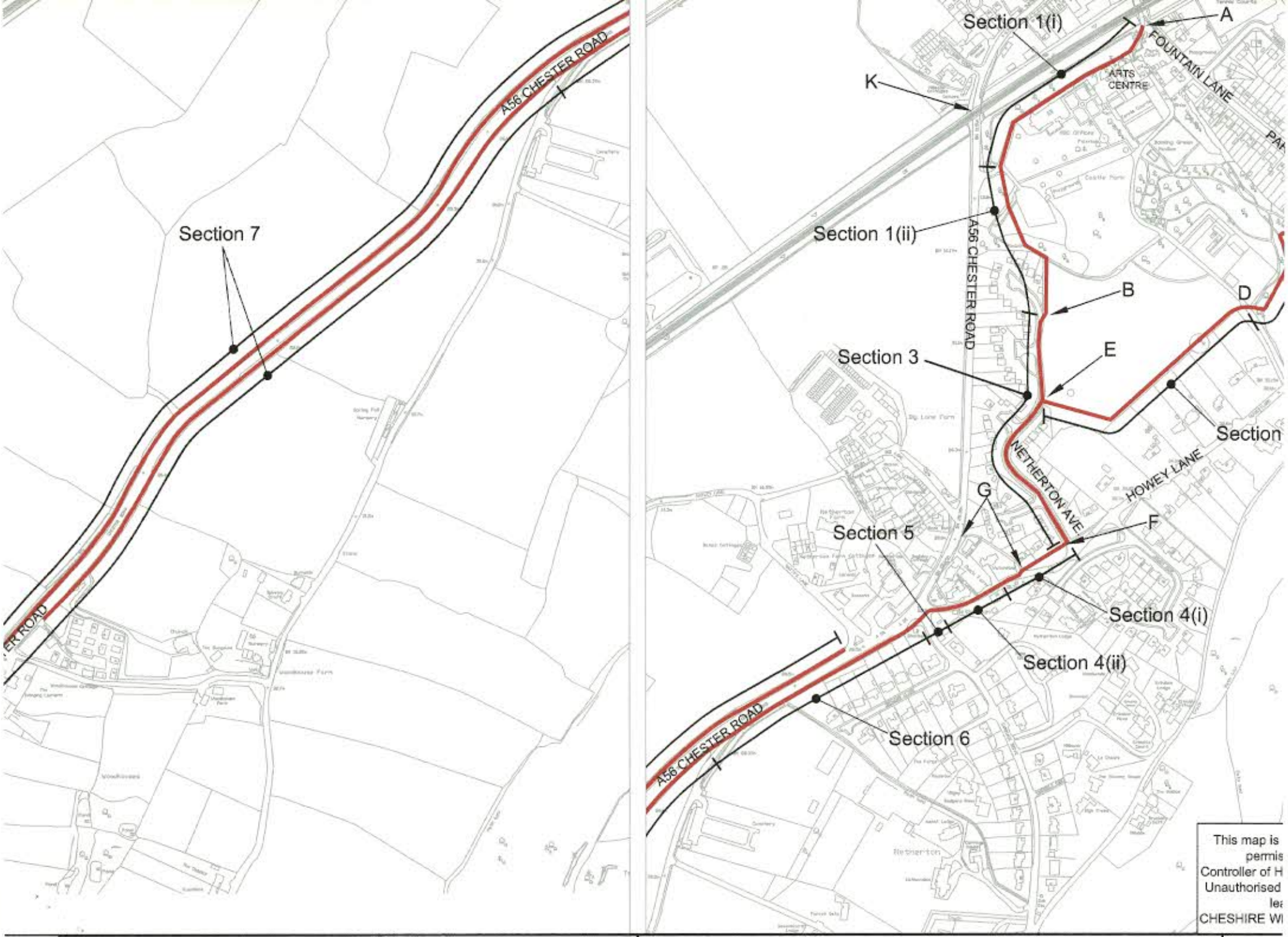
Scales at A3: 1:5000

Sheet 1 of 1

Drawing No: PD/3000564/50/01

Phase/Rev: D/A

AutoCAD File Ref: X:\12 KJD Current Projects Folders\3000564 Frodsham to Helsby High Cyclewayt Drawings\Issued Dwgs\ PD-3000564-50-01 DA Prelim Route Analysis.dwg Sep 22, 2009 - 3:55pm



Project:

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