

Meole Active Travel Quarter

Report on Student Engagement at The Priory and Meole Brace Schools

March 2024



1 Background and Methods

Shropshire Council has recently announced plans to create an 'Meole Active Travel Quarter' in support of its ambitions to unlock the potential of Shrewsbury within the next ten years. The Meole Active Travel Quarter aims to address long-standing needs from the local community, who have emphasized the desire for real change and improved road safety throughout Meole.

The Meole Active Travel Quarter proposes a redesign of the public highway at identified locations across the Meole ward, to empower individuals to choose walking, wheeling and cycling by improving accessibility and connectivity across the local highway network. It is comprised of the following improvement schemes:

- Bank Farm Road: active travel quarter – upgrade the existing cycling amenities to create an active travel corridor.
- Roman Road Roundabout: enhancement works – revise the roundabout's layout to increase movements and capacity with further measures, including two new toucan crossings (with artificial intelligence) and an enhanced footway.
- Longden Road / Mousecroft Lane: improvement scheme – improve pedestrian and cyclist connectivity with the construction of a new road hump and reallocation of footway to segregated route.

Shropshire Council has undertaken several facets of an engagement programme with local residents to garner public feedback on these plans. As part of this engagement, students at two local secondary schools, The Priory School, and Meole Brace School, were surveyed about their current experiences with active travel in these areas, and their thoughts about planned improvements.

This report summarises the findings of these two surveys. Quantitative results were analysed and are presented below in figures using MS Excel. Qualitative (open-ended) responses were analysed and grouped thematically, and examples of comments representing these themes are also presented in the report.

This report proceeds in the following sections:

- **Section 1: Background and Methods** (this current section), which provides a brief overview of the engagement project as a whole and the student surveys specific to this report.
- **Section 2: Respondents** provides an overview of the age, gender identity and preferred method of travel of those responding to the surveys.
- **Section 3: Bank Farm Road** presents findings from both schools about their thoughts on active travel along this route and what improvements might be made.
- **Section 4: Longden Road/Roman Road** presents findings from both schools about their thoughts on active travel along this route and what improvements might be made.
- **Section 5: Additional Feedback** summarises responses to the final open-ended question to the survey, where students were invited to provide

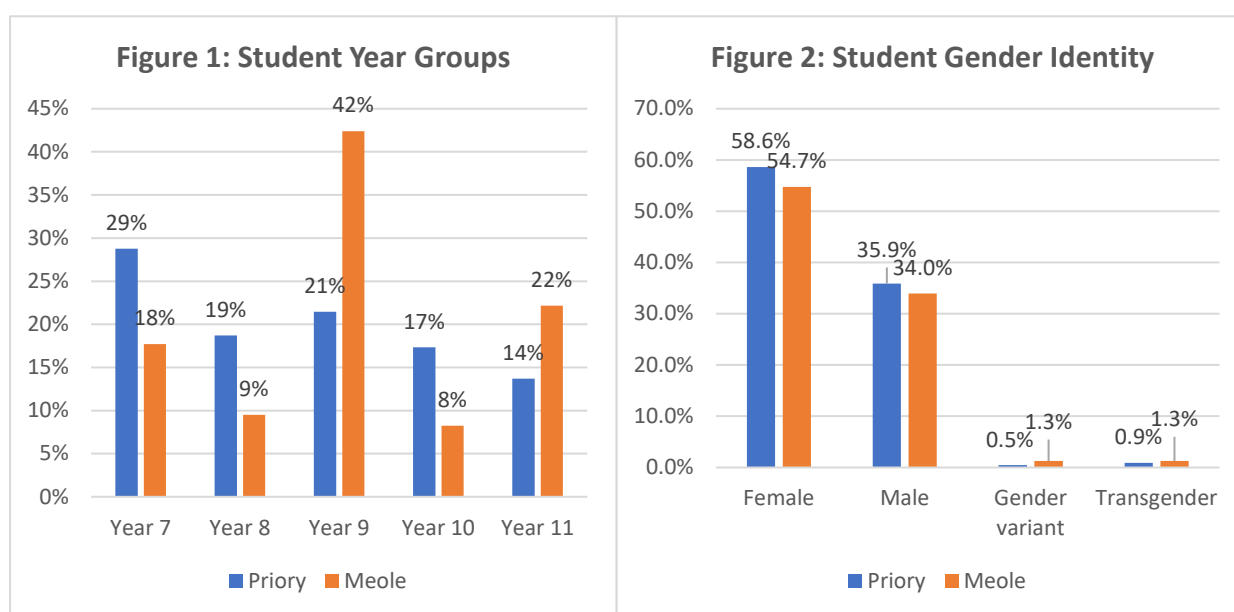
feedback overall on active travel along these routes.

- **Section 6: Summary and Conclusion** provides a brief summary of the survey findings and some basic conclusions that may be useful for the project going forward.

2 Respondents

Overall, 377 students responded to the surveys, which is approximately a 21% response rate.¹ Slightly more students responded from The Priory School (219) than Meole Brace School (158).

The age range of students responding was well distributed overall. However, there was a slightly higher uptake among year 7s at The Priory and a slightly higher uptake among year 9s at Meole Brace (**see Figure 1**).



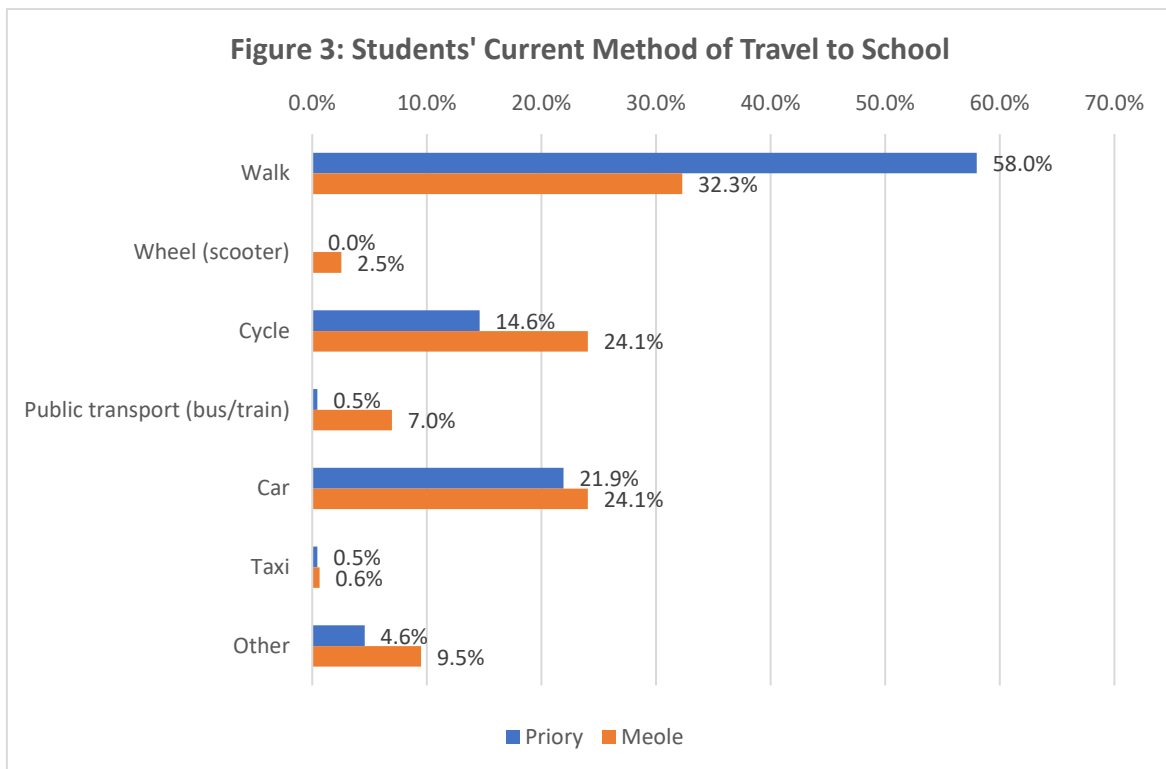
A majority of students responding to the surveys in both schools identified as female, with 59% of respondents from The Priory identifying as female and 55% of respondents from Meole Brace identifying as female (**see Figure 2**).

Students at both schools were asked how they currently travel to school, and these results are summarised in **Figure 3**.

Active travel is currently the most common method of school transport for a majority of students at both schools. Approximately 60% of Meole Brace students and 73% of students at The Priory engage in active travel to school (walking, cycling or wheeling).

Walking was the most commonly cited as students' current method of travel, though walking was much more common among students from The Priory (58%) than those at Meole Brace (32%). Cycling was also popular, though students from Meole Brace were much more likely to say that they cycle to school (24%) than students from The Priory (15%).

¹ Based on an approximate 1,800 combined student population of the schools.



Travel by car was also a common method of transport for one quarter to one fifth of students at both schools, with 24% of Meole Brace students and 22% of students from The Priory saying they currently travel to school by car. Public transport is less common at both schools, but a significant portion of Meole Brace students reported using public transport (7%) while very few students from The Priory reported doing so.

“Wheeling” (or using a scooter as a form of active travel) was not a common form of transport for students at either school, and neither were taxis.

3 Bank Farm Road

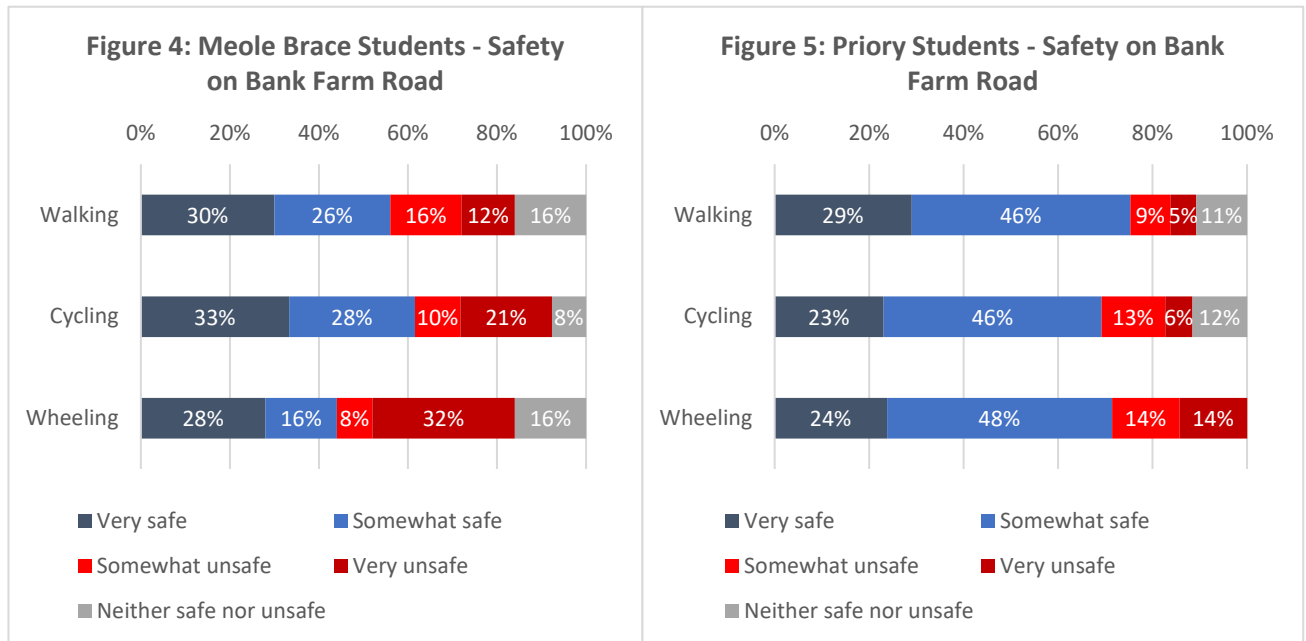
Students at both schools were asked a series of questions about their experiences generally (as opposed to school travel only) when taking part in active travel on Bank Farm Road. Some students said that they do not travel along this route at all. However, as **Table 1** shows, large number of students at both schools said that they walk, cycle or wheel along this route.

Table 1: Number of Students Saying They Use Active Travel Methods on Bank Farm Road

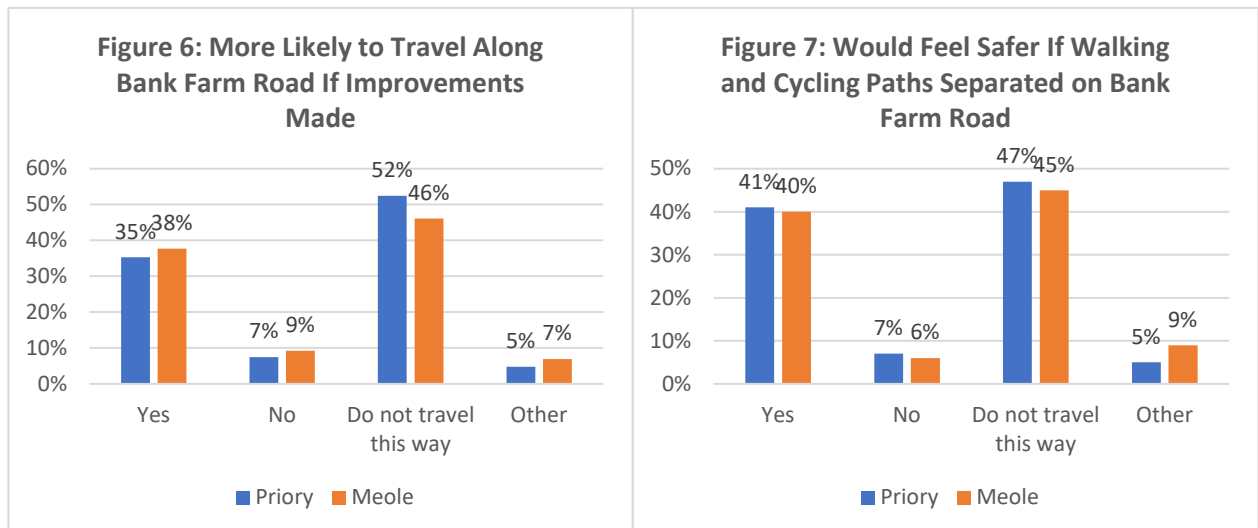
School	Walk	Cycle	Wheel
The Priory	93	52	21
Meole Brace	50	39	25

These students provided their thoughts in **Figures 4 & 5** about how safe they feel traveling along Bank Farm Road when using active travel methods. For a majority of students at both schools, active travel feels mostly “very safe” or “somewhat safe” along Bank Farm Road, though there are sizable minorities at both schools that feel

“somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe” along this route. For instance, as much as 40% of the 25 Meole Brace students who use scooters along this route feel unsafe.



Students were asked further questions about whether changes might make a difference to their feelings of safety along Bank Farm Road. These responses are summarised in **Figures 6 & 7**. Large minorities of students at both schools said that they would more likely to use active travel along Bank Farm Road if improvements were made. Additionally, around 40% of students at both schools said that they would feel safer along this route if the walking and cycling paths were separated.



Respondents at both schools who travel along Bank Farm Road were asked to provide open-ended suggestions about what might be improved on the route. The responses from both schools have been grouped together and various themes identified. These themes are presented in **Table 2** and are discussed in more depth with examples below.

In total, 67 respondents across both schools provided comments on this question. Some respondents covered more than one theme in their responses, and so there are a total of 82 instances of one of the themes below being mentioned.

Table 2: What Could Be Improved - Bank Farm Road

Theme	Count	%
Improved walking/cycle paths (wider pedestrian lanes/separate and clearly marked walking and cycling paths)	22	27%
Safer crossings	11	13%
Too busy (too much traffic/route too busy)	11	13%
Slow traffic down (cars too fast/speed limits/speed cameras)	10	12%
Improve state of the paths (Cut hedges/clean up litter/better drainage/fill holes)	10	12%
More traffic lights	6	7%
Improve aesthetics	3	4%
Very specific or very general safety suggestions	5	6%
Other	4	5%

The largest theme, mentioned by 27% of respondents, was around wanting **improved walking/cycle paths**. These captured sentiments around the need for wider lanes and more distinct differences between the two lanes. For example:

- “Bigger pedestrian lanes.”
- “Bigger paths on both sides, maybe a bike lane.”
- “Separate walking and cycling paths and a wider pavement.”
- “More indication as to which is the cycle lane and which isn't because sometimes it's confusing.”
- “Should have wider cycle lane.”

13% also wanted to see **safer crossings** on the route. For example:

- “More safe places to cross the road.”
- “Also a zebra crossing.”
- “Assistance to cross Grange Road.”
- “There could be more places to cross.”
- “Safer crossing on cycle paths.”
- “More crossing lights.”

7% of respondents (all of these but one from Meole Brace), said that introducing **traffic lights** would improve safety along the route. It was unclear from the context of the comments whether students meant traffic lights for the purposes of crossing, but if so, then these might combine with the “safer crossings” theme to make up the second biggest theme for Bank Farm Road improvements. These comments included, for example:

- “More traffic lights.”
- “Traffic lights.”

13% of respondents were also concerned about the road being **too busy**. For example:

- “The roundabout at the top of Longden Coleham road could be improved, as it gets very busy and congested.”
- “Less traffic.”
- “The traffic and the amount of cars.”
- “There are a lot of kids walking at the same time so can get crammed.”

12% of respondents felt that cars travel too fast, and many had suggestions about how to **slow traffic down** to improve safety along the route. For example:

- “More school signs so cars can drive slower.”
- “Speed humps.”
- “Slower speed for cars.”

One respondent felt that it was cyclists who travel too fast:

- “The speed in which the cyclists travel at, they can knock us over and even bang into us.”

12% of respondents also felt that the **active travel paths need improvements** to increase safety along them. These suggestions included, for example:

- “Possibly by adding a drainage system or something like this as the paths can get water logged which occasionally is deep.”
- “The amount of traffic and debris that is on the road is really dangerous.”
- “New pavements because some have holes in them.”
- “The hedges need to be cut so there is more space on the path.”
- “Not much other than maintaining already made routes as the size is fine however many hedges overlap onto the pedestrian lanes forcing them into bike lanes.”

A few respondents wanted **aesthetic changes** to the route, and five others made **very general suggestions about safety or very specific ones** that are not necessarily within the purview of this proposal. For example:

- “More safety as a saw a young kid get clattered off his scooter.”
- “Less sharp corners more awareness from priory kids.”
- “Helmets should be administered.”

4 Longden Road/Roman Road

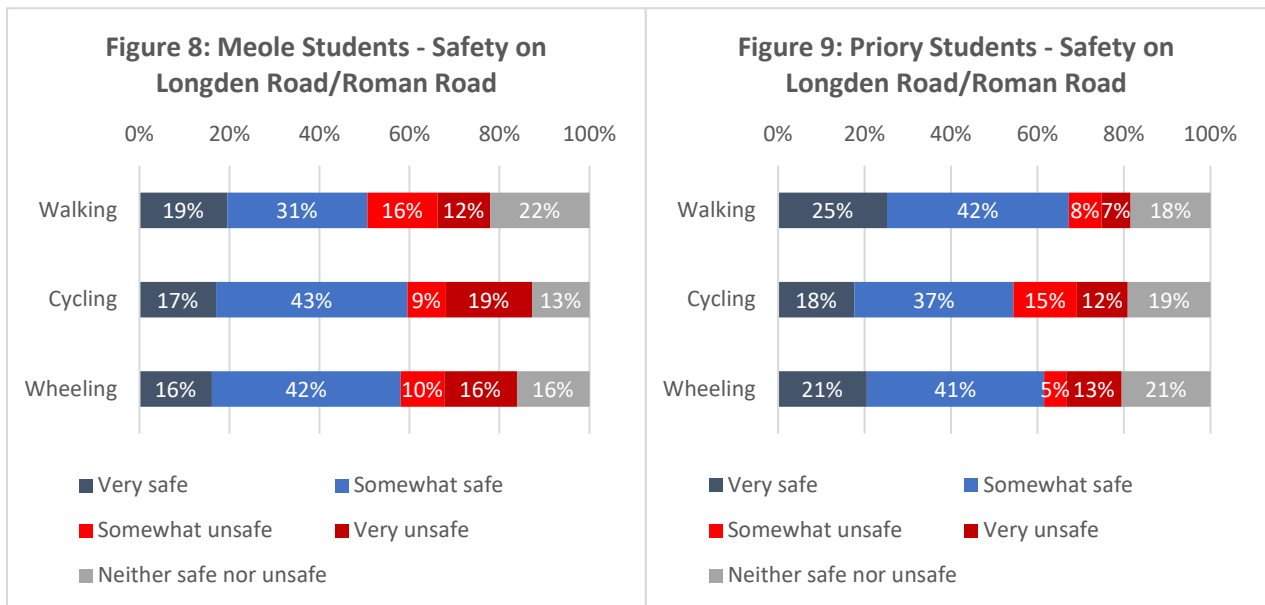
Students at both schools were asked a series of questions about their experiences generally (as opposed to school travel only) when taking part in active travel on Londen Road/Roman Road. Some students said that they do not travel along this route at all. However, as **Table 3** shows, large number of students at both schools said that they walk, cycle or wheel along this route.

Overall, this was a more travelled route by students responding to the survey than Bank Farm Road.

Table 3: Number of Students Saying They Use Active Travel Methods on Longden Road/Roman Road

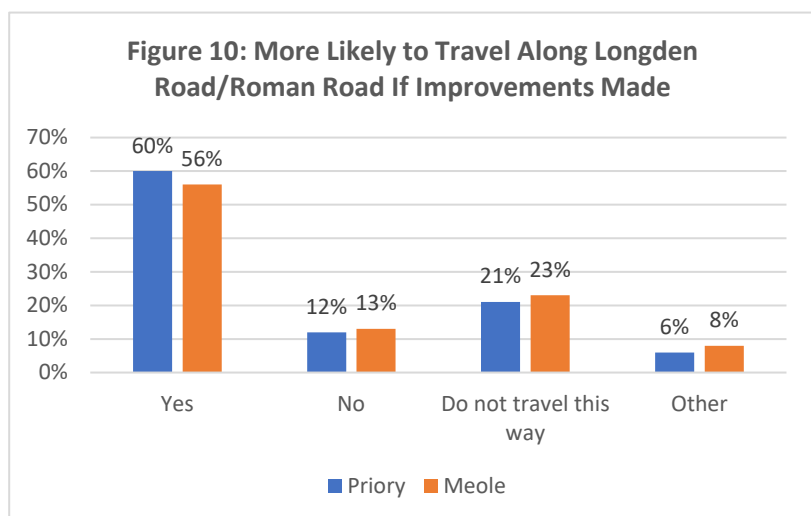
School	Walk	Cycle	Wheel
The Priory	119	68	39
Meole Brace	77	47	31

These students provided their thoughts in **Figures 8 & 9** about how safe they feel traveling along Longden Road/Roman Road when using active travel methods.



For a majority of students at both schools, active travel feels mostly “very safe” or “somewhat safe” along Longden Road/Roman Road, though there are sizable minorities at both schools that feel “somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe” along this route. For instance, 28% of Meole Brace students and 27% of Priory students responding to the survey feel “somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe” cycling along this route.

Importantly, unlike Bank Farm Road, where only a minority of students said that making improvements to this route would make them more likely to travel along it, **a majority of respondents from both schools said that improvements to Longden Road/Roman Road would make them more likely to use the route (see Figure 10).**



Respondents at both schools who travel along Longden Road/Roman Road were asked to provide open-ended suggestions about what might be improved on the route. The responses from both schools have been grouped together and various themes identified. These themes are presented in **Table 4** and are discussed in more depth with examples below.

In total, 107 respondents across both schools provided comments on this question. Some respondents covered more than one theme in their responses, and so there are a total of 132 instances of one of the themes below being mentioned.

Table 4: What Could Be Improved - Longden Road/Roman Road

Theme	No	%
Improved walking/cycle paths (wider pedestrian lanes/separate and clearly marked walking and cycling paths)	48	36%
Improve state of the paths (Cut hedges/clean up litter/better drainage/fill holes)	21	16%
Safer crossings	18	14%
Too busy (too much traffic/route too busy)	14	11%
Slow traffic down (cars too fast/speed limits/speed cameras)	13	10%
More traffic lights	12	9%
Other	6	5%

As was the case with the Bank Farm Road comments, **improved walking/cycling paths** was the largest theme mentioned by students who say they travel along Longden Road/Roman Road, with 36% of respondents mentioning it. Comments here were similar to those about Bank Farm Road as well, with this theme capturing a desire for both wider walking paths and wider cycling paths, and for these to be clearly distinguished. For example:

- “The pavements need to be wider for larger groups because i always get told to move out of the way by the bikers.”
- “The walking part of the path could be bigger due to cyclists and people walking.”
- “Make the pavement larger and make another cycle path this side of the roundabout.”
- “Wider paths/cycle lanes and more restrictions on people walking on cycle lanes.”

16% of respondents in suggested that there needed to be **improvements to the state of the paths** (cycling and walking) such as filling potholes, cutting hedges, and clearing debris. While it may at first appear funny that young people are complaining about potholes, one comment made it clearer why students may be concerned about this:

- “Wider footpath and less potholes in the road so the cars don’t try to avoid them and come onto the pavement.”

Potholes in cycle lanes might also be a safety concern for students travelling by bike. For example:

- “Maybe clear out all the dirt as it’s all over the walking half of the pathway which pushes people onto the cycling lane meaning its easy to be hit by or hit someone with a bike.”

Similar to Bank Farm Road, 14% of respondents to this question about Longden Road/Roman Road also talked about the need for **safer crossings**. For example:

- “Zebra crossings or pelican lights to ensure cars must stop for walkers / cyclists.”

Many of the comments about traffic lights were also clearer in responses to this question that they pertained to crossings specifically. For example:

- “Maybe tragic lights so that we do not have to run across the around about.”

However, 9% of respondents still only mentioned **traffic lights** outside the context of crossings.

11% of respondents felt that the travel area is simply **too busy**. Some mention cars, others congested walkways or cycle paths. For example:

- “Not sure but very crowded.”
- “The Longden road stretch is always a high traffic area for cars and others.”
- “Less cars and big trucks/lorries.”
- “Separate bike side because there’s too many bikes.”

Finally, 10% of respondents said that **slowing traffic down** (both cars and cyclists) would be important for improving safety. For example:

- “Slow the speed of cars travelling round the area.”
- “Yet again the cyclists travel too fast!!!”
- “I don’t know how you could improve it but when it’s busy crossing the roundabout can be quite difficult as cars turn off quite quickly.”
- “You could have cars going at a slower pace.”
- “Wider pedestrian access because you have to go out into the bike lane sometimes to get around people, and the bikes whizz down there and it’s dangerous.”

5 Additional Feedback

As the final question of the survey to both schools, respondents were asked whether they had any additional comments about their journey to school, or about travel on Bank Farm Road or Longden Road/Roman Road. 93 students responded to this question, but 52 of these responses were literally to say that they did not have more to add (e.g. “no”). These were excluded from the analysis, and the remaining 41 responses were therefore grouped thematically and these themes are summarised in **Table 5**. Very few of the comments overlapped this time, meaning that most comments were only tagged with one theme.

Table 5: Additional Feedback on Travel

Theme	No	%
No more feedback	52	54%
Very specific or very general safety suggestions	7	7%
Slow traffic down (cars too fast/speed limits/speed cameras)	6	6%
More traffic lights	5	5%
Improved walking/cycle paths (wider pedestrian lanes/separate and clearly marked walking and cycling paths)	4	4%
Safer crossings	4	4%
Too busy (too much traffic/route too busy)	2	2%
Concerns about road works	2	2%
Improve state of the paths (Cut hedges/clean up litter/better drainage/fill holes)	1	1%
Other ²	13	14%

7% of respondents to this question offered **very general comments about the need for greater safety, or very specific safety concerns** outside the remit of this proposal, for example:

- “All the city needs to be more safe.”
- “It has taken a long time to make improvements. Lots of accidents have happened, safety measures should have been made years ago.”
- “On bank farm road next to co-op there are traffic lights next to the traffic light there are posts in the middle of the path and when I’m biking I have crashed into them so can you please remove them.”

A total of 21% of respondents used this question to reiterate their points made in previous open-ended comments. 6% reiterated the need to **slow traffic down** in the area, 5% the need for **more traffic lights**, 4% said that **cycle/walking paths need improvements** (such as widening), 4% reiterated the need for **safer crossings**, 2% mentioned that the travel route is just **too busy**, and one respondent said that the **state of the paths** could use improvements.

One important new theme that emerged, albeit among a small percentage of respondents, was that road works initiated to make these improvements might in themselves cause safety problems. These comments were:

- “To be honest, getting around the road works would be more of a pain than anything that comes from the roadworks.”
- “I’m concerned about the length of works required and the impact on the community due to already high traffic. Any extensive work will have a large, but temporary, effect.”

6 Summary and Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings:

² The “other” theme had more for this question, as several respondents took the opportunity to be a bit silly with their responses to this question. A few, however, did use this space to do things like thank the council for providing them the opportunity to input.

- Active travel is currently the most common method of school transport for a majority of students at both The Priory and Meole Brace schools.
- A majority of students at both schools generally feel safe when traveling along Bank Farm Road and Longden Road/Roman Road. However, approximately 40% of students at both schools said they would feel safer traveling along Bank Farm Road if walking and cycling paths were separated on that road. Additionally, a majority of students at both schools said they would be more likely to travel along Longden Road/Roman Road if improvements were made along that route.
- Along both the Bank Farm Road and Longden Road/Roman Road routes, respondents wanted to see improvements made to the walking/cycling paths, such as widening them and marking them more clearly.
- Many students also cited making crossings safer, slowing or reducing traffic along these routes, and improving the state of the current active travel paths would make these routes safer for those walking, cycling or using scooters.

Conclusion

Many thanks are extended to those 377 students at The Priory School and Meole Brace School for taking the time to provide truly thoughtful and helpful feedback on their active travel through the Meole area. The feedback will be taken into account by the Sustainable Travel Team at Shropshire Council as it works to implement improvements to active travel in the area through the Meole Active Travel Quarter programme.

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