

Title: Abbey Fields Cycle Route Proposals

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Portfolio Holder: Alan Rhead

Wards of the District directly affected: Kenilworth Abbey, Arden & St Johns

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder	09/02/23	Cllr A Rhead
Finance	03/02/23	A Rollins
Legal Services		
Chief Executive	03/02/23	C Elliot
Head of Service(s)	03/02/23	D Barber
Section 151 Officer	03/02/23	A Rollins
Monitoring Officer		
Leadership Co-ordination Group	20/02/23	
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	Yes Recommendation to: Cabinet	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	No/Yes, Forward Plan item – scheduled for (date)	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes/No	

Summary

This report sets out.

- a) The history of consultation that has been undertaken by the various interested parties on attitudes to cycling in and around Kenilworth and the feedback received because of these consultations.
- b) The different options for a cycle route within or around Abbey Fields Park, Kenilworth, alongside the opportunities and obstacles for these routes.
- c) Based on the above information, a preferred route is proposed for further design work and consultation.

Recommendation(s)

- (1) That Cabinet notes the progress made on identifying a preferred route for a cycle route to connect the northern and southern ends of National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 52 within the vicinity of Abbey Fields Park, Kenilworth.
- (2) That Cabinet agrees more detailed design work on the preferred route is progressed in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council and that at the completion of that work a public consultation is undertaken running for a period of 6 weeks.
- (3) That Cabinet agrees that following the completion of the consultation period, a report of public consultation and (if appropriate) a costed proposal for implementation be brought to Cabinet.

1 Reasons for the Recommendations

1.1 Background/Information

- 1.1.1 Abbey Fields is a large public open space in Kenilworth providing opportunities for both formal sports and informal recreation in a historic wildlife setting along the Finham Brook. (See Appendix A – Plan 1) It is owned and maintained by Warwick District Council. There is an active "Friends of" group alongside other active community groups and stakeholders.
- 1.1.2 The remains of St Mary's Abbey and its farmland are protected as a Scheduled Monument and this heritage status covers the entirety of the Abbey Fields site as well as the adjacent Kenilworth Castle Park and Garden (west of Castle Road). Both Kenilworth Castle and St Mary's Abbey Ruins are Grade II listed. Abbey Fields is also designated as a Warwickshire Local Wildlife Site. (Local Wildlife Sites are not statutory designations but are recognised within the planning system and recorded on green infrastructure plans). The park includes a watercourse, a lake, and a range of habitats. The Friends of Abbey Fields work with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and the District Council to support nature conservation.
- 1.1.3 The location of Abbey Fields within Kenilworth means that it provides direct connections for walking and, potentially cycling, between the town centre, Castle, and residential areas. There are pedestrian entrances on all sides including High Street, Bridge Street, Abbey Hill, Forrest Road, Borrowell Lane and Castle Road. There is an existing network of paths, surfaced and unsurfaced, across Abbey Fields alongside the Centenary Way.
- 1.1.4 Currently, cycling is not permitted within Abbey Fields due to the current by-laws although observations show that people already do cycle to and through the park.

- 1.1.5 Over the last two decades, there has been an upsurge in interest in cycling in Kenilworth and development of new facilities. The Cycleways volunteer group started in 1995 and continues to campaign for better cycle provision in the area. In 2000, the National Cycle Network (NCN) was launched, creating a UK-wide network of signed paths and routes for walking and cycling. This now includes NCN Route 52 which runs north from Abbey Fields to Warwick University and Canley in Coventry and runs south from Abbey Fields through Leek Wootton to Warwick. From NCN52, a spur runs along a linear country park or 'Greenway' to the northwest of Kenilworth. The Kenilworth Greenway (NCN 523) follows 4 miles of former railway. Some sections are currently diverted due to HS2 construction work.
- 1.1.6 The proposal to create a cycle route across Abbey Fields has been under discussion since at least 2016, both as a stand-alone proposal and as part of wider improvements to the park environment.
- 1.1.7 The benefits of such a route would include: -
- the completion of a key missing link in the local cycling network as well as the National Cycle Network.
 - the endorsement of existing family cycling activities within the vicinity of Abbey Fields
 - the encouragement of healthy and sustainable leisure activities for local people and the provision of high quality, all-weather paths.
 - The opportunity to encourage pupils to cycle to the new Kenilworth School.
 - Contribute to the Councils published Climate Change Ambitions.
- 1.1.8 Alongside the advantages, the various public consultations have shown that there are concerns over the proposal to formally allow cycling through Abbey Fields and that is largely to do with the potential/perceived conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.

1.2 **History of consultation on attitudes towards cycling and proposed routes across Abbey Fields**

- 1.2.1 A summary of the history of consultation on attitudes towards cycling and Abbey Fields can be found in Appendix B

1.3 **Shared vs. Segregated Cycle Path**

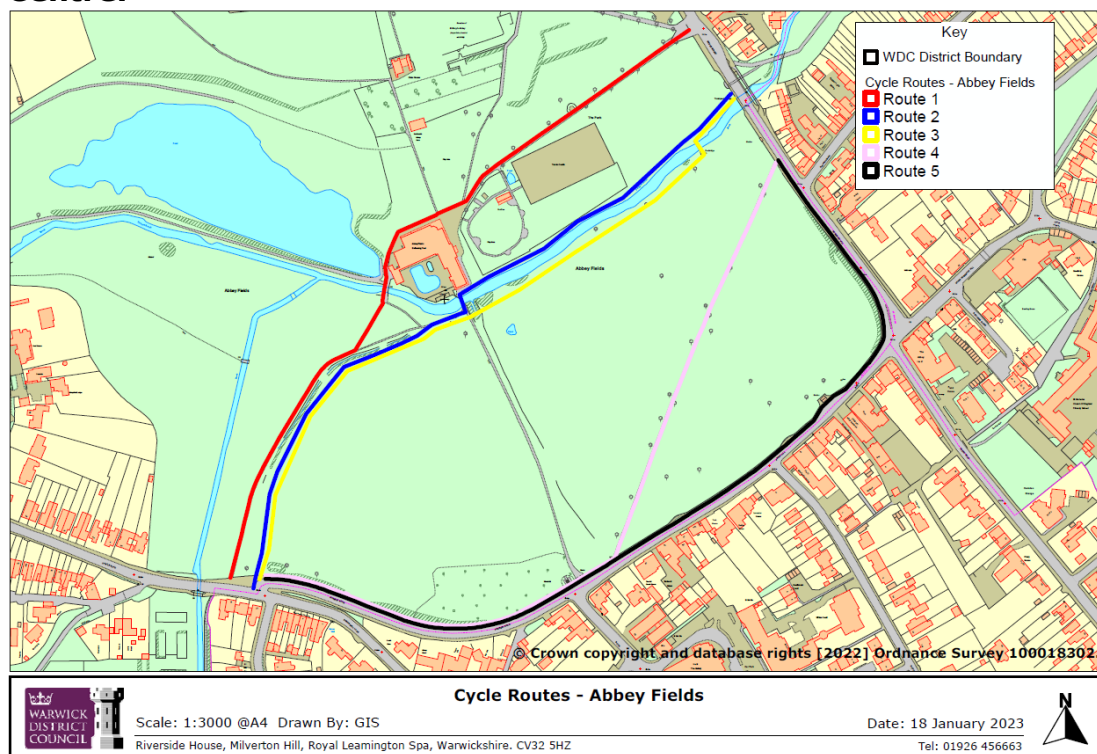
- 1.3.1 Both segregated and shared paths have their advantages and disadvantages. There is no ideal form of segregation, all have their pros and cons. Older users may for example may be less satisfied with shared paths but they may encourage more considerate behaviour amongst all users.
- 1.3.2 As referenced in Appendix B, Sustrans were commissioned in 2016 to produce a Feasibility Study on cycle routes across Abbey Fields. It notes in the conclusion of the report that: -
- "There is a strong preference within the Town Council that the route be segregated to provide a clear cycle only route through Abbey Fields."*
- It then goes onto state: -
- "It should be noted that whilst the new routes can be clearly marked as cycle use only, in reality pedestrians and other users may choose to use them in preference or in addition to existing routes. Sustrans' design advice advocates the use of shared use routes over segregated as they provide a more effective solution with less visual signage and demarcation required. Sustrans' 'Technical Information Note 19 – Segregation of shared use routes.'"*
- 1.3.3 "Where space and budget allow, the most effective way to minimize conflict and increase comfort is to provide separate routes for cycling and walking" – (1.3.2 The National Standard for Cycle Infrastructure Design LTN1/20)

1.3.4 Section 6.5.6 of LTN1/20 states that shared use may be appropriate in situations, which includes "In situations where a length of shared use may be acceptable to achieve continuity of a cycle route. The recommended minimum widths from LTN1/20 are below: -

Cycle Flows	Minimum width
Up to 300 cyclists per hour	3.0m
Over 300 cyclists per hour	4.5m

Rationale behind the preferred route

1.3.5 The Council's preferred route to be put forward for further consultation is **Route 1 – Shared pedestrian/cycle path around the outside of Leisure Centre.**



Warwickshire County Councils Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) supports the above proposal by highlighting a cycle path across Abbey Fields as a potential scheme (Part 2: Network Plans: Warwick District: Ref K17). The following is the rationale for that decision and should be read in conjunction with Appendix C – Consideration of Routes and Section 2 – Alternative Options below.

1.3.6 Demographic

Although a route across Abbey Fields would link up Sustrans Route 52, the primary function of the route would be to provide a safe and attractive facility for local people to cycle to the Leisure facilities at Abbey Fields and Castle Farm. There is a need for a safe traffic free cycle route to cater for novice cyclists, families, and children to enable more cycling. The route would be designed for low-speed cycling with fast club cyclists likely to stick to the road network. The provision of a widened and clearly signed multi-user route across Abbey Fields will help to focus cycling movement on the least sensitive areas. In December 2022 a Motion was formally presented to WDC about enabling young people to cycle to school (See Section 3.2 below). It is acknowledged that a cycle route across Abbey Fields would help with that ambition.

1.3.7 Degree of separation

The shared space needs to be designed to manage users in a way that removes conflict and the perception of conflict between pedestrians and cyclists. There are advantages to a fully shared path; it is recognised that there is generally more considerate behaviour among all users, especially with a code of conduct and coherent design; cycling speeds can be lower and although there are minor interactions there would be less conflict.

"With suitable widths and surface materials, off-highway routes can provide a high level of service for utility cycling" (Section 8.1.2. Cycle Infrastructure Design Standards LTN1/20). "Providing sufficient width for the anticipated levels of use will help minimise the risk of conflict between different user groups" (Section 8.2.2 LTN1/20). The recommended widths are highlighted in Section 1.3.3 above.

A literature-based review by Sustrans 2011 found the following: -

- Perception does not meet reality and walkers who don't meet cyclists had more negative views of sharing the route than walkers who did meet cyclists. Inferring that once a route is being used the fear of conflict drops.
- Good information on who can use a route helps reduced perceived conflict.
- Studies show that most cyclists slow down when they meet pedestrians and average cycle speeds became significantly lower as pedestrian flows increased.

Please note, the section of the preferred route between Bridge Street and the Leisure Centre is already the recommended width and used by certain permitted motor vehicles.

1.3.8 Permissions

The scheduled monument area of Kenilworth Abbey encompasses all of Abbey Fields and as such requires scheduled monument consent. In 2022 Historic England were consulted on the preferred route and they consider it the most viable option as the proposed route would have no impact on the monument for the section east of and around the leisure centre where it crosses the Finham Brook, as it uses existing provision. To the west of the leisure centre the existing pedestrian path will need to be widened to 3m but avoids disturbance in the most sensitive part of the monument. Any design would need to be informed by appropriate archaeological assessment. The creation of a new separate cycle path would increase the amount of development within the park causing a loss to its undeveloped character. In effect Historic England are indicating that they would not give permission to a newly constructed separate cycle path due to heritage impacts.

The preferred route is the preference of the Green Space Team within Warwick District Council as they do not want to see the undeveloped character of Abbey Fields changed.

1.3.9 Topography

It is a relatively flat gradient across the length of the route compared to Route 4 & 5.

1.3.10 Costs

In February 2022, it was estimated that the preferred route could cost approximately £300,000 (but subject to further design work) for the improvements within the park and about £200,000 for the works on the highway. This does not include any potential changes to the footbridge across Finham Brook.

Although the cost of installing a fully separate cycle path has not been estimated, it is envisaged that widening an existing route and not requiring the replacement of bridges across the Finham Brook, would be cheaper.

2 Alternative Options

2.1 Do nothing.

The Cabinet could consider that none of the referenced routes are appropriate and that no further work should be undertaken on a cycle route across Abbey Fields.

The consequence of this decision would be the loss of the opportunity to encourage cycling, reduce car journeys and pressures on car parking at Abbey Fields. Cyclists will continue to cycle in Abbey Fields using existing paths not designed for this purpose will create conflict. This would require regular enforcement of the by-laws. Equality of opportunity will not be opened to people that use cycles as a mobility aid.

2.2 Consideration of other potential routes

Appendix C describes the different routes considered as part of this report whilst Appendix D illustrates their direction. The following outlines why they have not been considered as the preferred route: -

Route 2 – Dedicated cycle path crossing Finham Brook at Leisure Centre Bridge

Disadvantages

- Permission from Historic England unlikely to be granted (see Historic England quote in Route 3 below)
- Additional cost of installing a completely new dedicated cycle path
- Additional cost of replacing existing footbridge across Finham Brook
- Greater potential disruption to wildlife

Advantages

- Potential less conflict between park users

Route 3 – Dedicated cycle path to south of Finham Brook

Disadvantages

- Permission from Historic England unlikely to be granted. Correspondence from Historic England in 2022, stated.
"the area south of the Finham Brook and immediately south of the leisure centre is known to contain archaeological earthworks and very shallowly buried archaeological remains. The works (construction of a new 3m path through the monument) would therefore have a direct impact on the known surviving archaeological remains and affect the legibility of visible earthworks".
- Additional cost of installing a completely new dedicated cycle path
- Additional cost of replacing existing footbridge across Finham Brook
- Greater potential disruption to wildlife

Advantages

- Potential less conflict between park users

Route 4 – Shared pedestrian/cycle path crossing diagonally across Abbey Fields

Disadvantages

- Forest Road section would require an "on-road" signed advisory route or a cycle path with on-street parking removed.
- Approx. cost of shared "on-highway" shared cycle/pedestrian path is approx. £550 per metre. Forest Road section is approx. 300 metres long therefore a high-level cost estimate is in the region of £165,000.
- The average gradient for the Forest Road section is approx. 4.7% and LTN 1/20 design guidance suggests that the maximum length for this gradient should be in the region of 30m to 40m, see below.

Table 5-8: Maximum length for gradients

Gradient %	Desirable maximum length of gradient (m)
2.0	150
2.5	100
3.0	80
3.5	60
4.0	50
4.5	40
5.0	30

LTN 1/20 – Cycle Infrastructure Design

- Current path across Abbey Fields is too steep to meet current design standards and would require rerouting in a “zig-zag” format to meet the required gradients. Average gradient for the full length of path is approx. 3% whilst at its steepest northerly section of approx. 160m it has a gradient of 5%. This does not meet LTN 1/20 design standards, (see Table 5-8 above)
 - Greater potential disruption to wildlife
- Advantages*
- Potential less conflict between park users

Route 5 – Peripheral route around Abbey Fields

Disadvantages

- As Route 4, the Forest Road section would require an “on-road” signed advisory route or a cycle path with on-street parking removed.
- This peripheral route is an additional 200m distance compared to Route 1
- A high-level cost of an “on-highway” option following Forest Road to Abbey Hill and onto Bridge Street is approx. £478,500 (870m of on-road route at approx. £550 per metre)
- The section between Abbey Hill and Bridge Street has an average gradient of 3% across 530m, again not meeting the standards required within LTN 1/20.
- At its steepest (section between Abbey Hill/Priory Road junction to Finham Brook road Bridge) it has an average gradient of 6% over 220m. This does not meet the guidance set out in LTN 1/20.
- Although a full feasibility study has not been undertaken, it is considered that there is insufficient highway space to create a high-quality cycle path on the Abbey Hill to Bridge Street section, photographic evidence of this can be found in Appendix 1

Advantages

- Potential less conflict with park users

Please note that the gradients have been calculated by the author of the report using the route creation option within Strava, the active travel tracker app. The cost estimates for on-highway cycle path were obtained from Warwickshire County Council (WCC)

3 Legal Implications

- 3.1 Currently there are local by-laws across Abbey Fields prohibiting cycling and for any proposed cycle route needs this to be resolved. This will be explored further if the recommendations within this report are agreed. In 2021 there has been initial dialogue with the Council's Legal advisers on the potential of a cycle route through Abbey Fields and this provided several potential options, which included the amendment or revoking of the by-laws, or something referenced as a Dedication Agreement. These options will be assessed further and if necessary, will be included in a further report to Cabinet alongside any recommendations relating to the implementation of the route.
- 3.2 In December 2022 a Motion was formally presented to WDC asking for practical action to enable young people within Kenilworth to cycle to school safely and asked for practical action. It referenced the current by-law preventing cycling in Abbey Fields. It asked that recommendations were taken to Cabinet by September 2023
- 3.3 If the recommended route within this report is approved, investigations into the options surrounding the by-laws will start with legal colleagues. There are examples elsewhere in the district where cycling is allowed on restricted routes despite the presence of a local by-law preventing cycling across the rest of the park.
- 3.4 It must be noted that before any work can be progressed on a variation on the by-law within Abbey Fields, the proposed route must be agreed, detailed costings produced, and the proposed public consultation undertaken. Due to this timescale, it is unlikely that this would be resolved within the timescale recommended in the Motion.

4 Financial

- 4.1 The estimated cost estimates are set out in section 1.3.9 above.
- 4.2 The County Council has indicated it is able to finance the detailed design of the preferred route, and subject to securing sufficient capital funding could lead on implementation of highways work (e.g., the relocation and redesign of the road crossings on Borrowell Lane and Bridge Street).
- 4.3 The cost for the works within Abbey Fields could be shared between Warwick District Council and Kenilworth Town Council. However, details of the costs and proposed funding arrangements will be included in a further report to Cabinet, alongside details of the recommended route for implementation.
- 4.4 Please note that WDC have allocated £160K in potential funding towards this initiative, should it be agreed (Please see Appendix 10 General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24 – Cabinet Report 9 February 2023)

5 Business Strategy

- 5.1 Health, Homes, Communities.
- The proposals will lead to improved health for all by promoting active travel.
- 5.2 Green, Clean, Safe.
- See Section 6 below.
- 5.3 Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment,
- The proposal will improve connectivity between different parts of Kenilworth, alongside access to local leisure facilities (swimming pool, café, tennis courts etc.)
- 5.4 Effective Staff.
- N/A
- 5.5 Maintain or Improve Services
- The proposal will improve access to Abbey Fields and improve the active

travel connectivity between the Castle Farm and Abbey Fields Leisure Centres

5.6 Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term.

- Best value for money will be sought.

6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications

6.1 Warwick District Council has declared a climate emergency and has agreed three ambitions to provide focus to the work to address the climate emergency.

Ambition 2 – Low Carbon South Warwickshire 2030, seeks to reduce net carbon emissions across the area by a minimum of 55% by 2030. Within the action plan to deliver that ambition, there are specific targets relating to this proposal, they are: -

- 1.1. Travelling shorter distances: we will work with our partners and communities to reduce the average number of miles travelled by car per person by 25% by 2030.
- 1.2. Driving less: we will work with our partners and communities to increase the percentage of journeys undertaken by foot, bicycle, or public transport from 20% to 25% by 2030.

6.2 There are studies that illustrate that active travel, i.e., cycling and walking can help tackle the climate crisis. Emission targets for transport are unlikely to be met without a significant move away from motorised travel, with electrification of the vehicle fleet not being sufficient.

A study cited by Sustrans, published in the Global Environmental Change Journal – March 2021, entitled “The climate change mitigation impacts of active travel: Evidence from a longitudinal panel study of seven European cities” states that.

“Shifting to active transport could save as much as a quarter of personal CO2 emissions from transport”.

The study followed nearly 2000 urban residents over time, and it found that those that switch just one trip from car-driving to cycling reduced their carbon footprint by about 0.5 tonnes over a year. It also stated that if just 10% of the population were to change travel behaviour in this way, the emission savings would be around 4% of lifecycle CO2 emissions from all car travel.

So, if residents for example use the proposed cycle path through Abbey Fields to get to the Leisure Centre or the other facilities within the green space and use it as a connection to the wider areas of Kenilworth to replace just one car journey it could drastically lower mobility related lifecycle CO2.

7 Analysis of the effects on Equality

7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been developed alongside more detailed development of these proposals (See Appendix F)

8 Data Protection

8.1 There are no data protection issues within these proposals.

9 Health and Wellbeing

9.1 This proposal will contribute to the Shared Climate Change Ambitions for South Warwickshire – Ambition 3. Which reflects the predicted climate changes and weather patterns across South Warwickshire. In addition, the proposal will contribute to the Health and Well-being agenda of WDC in promoting active travel.

10 Risk Assessment

10.1 See Appendix C

11 Consultation

11.1 The following organisations will be consulted in preparing this proposal, namely:

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Kenilworth Town Council

Warwickshire County Council

Green Space Team - Warwick District Council

Friends of Abbey Fields Group

Historic England

Background papers:

N/A

Supporting documents:

LTN 1/20 Cycle infrastructure design

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>