

Swale Cycling Strategy

A report prepared by Kent County Council with support from Swale Cycling Forum and Swale Borough Council

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. National and Local Policy Overview	4
3. Local Priorities.....	6
4. Improving the Cycle Network	7
5. Maintenance of the Cycle Network	9
6. Safer Cycling.....	10
7. Promoting Cycling in Swale.....	11
8. Monitoring the Cycling Strategy	12
9. Proposed Development of the Cycle Network	13
References:	30
Appendix	31

1. Introduction

The Swale Cycling Strategy is a collection of policies and related action plans that work together to promote cycling and the development of appropriate cycling facilities throughout the Borough of Swale. The strategy was originally drafted by the Swale Cycle Forum to assist Kent County Council Highways and Transportation and Swale Borough Council in developing an effective cycling strategy.

It is recognised that there are many advantages in providing and encouraging cycling as a viable alternative form of transport, exercise and as a source of recreational enjoyment. Everyone should have the opportunity for independent mobility, and in order to achieve this it is vital to consider the street environment and infrastructure. The vision is to create an environment, particularly in the urban areas within the borough, where people of all ages and abilities feel able to cycle safely, easily and enjoy the experience.

Cycling offers a truly door-to-door transport solution. It is often quicker than motorised forms of transport for short journeys and provides an affordable means of travel for most. Over 40% of all journeys made in the UK are less than 2 miles, and almost 70% of all journeys made are less than 5 miles; of which 69% are made by car (Department for Transport, 2005).

Cycling is fun and an ideal activity for all the family. It provides an opportunity to enjoy sights and sounds during journeys that cannot be experienced in a motor vehicle. It offers access to areas that are often too far for many to walk from car parks. It also boosts local spending as cyclists tend to shop locally and spend more as they do not carry large stores of provisions on a journey. Cycling is reported to be worth £2.9bn to the UK economy with the average cyclist spending £230 per annum (London School of Economics, 2011). Therefore an increase in cycling in the borough has potential to improve the local economy.

The aim of this strategy is to release some of the suppressed demand to cycle, particularly in the urban areas. A third of students at secondary schools would like to cycle yet very often the actual figure is 2% (Sustrans, 2006). Continuity of route is the key to getting more people to cycle safely and this strategy looks to join the many disparate cycle routes in the urban areas of the borough. We need to improve conditions for cyclists, enhance the safety of cycling, provide more cycle parking, and integrate cycling within other relevant initiatives.

In a challenging financial climate, funding for new transport infrastructure is limited. However, opportunities will continue to present themselves and it is vital to have a well-planned and prepared cycling strategy to enable us to take full advantage of them. The potential sources of funding include:

- Local Transport Capital Funding
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Developer Contributions (section 106)

2. National and Local Policy Overview

This strategy is influenced by and interacts with a range of national and local policies and strategies. This chapter briefly outlines the current policy context within which the strategy has been prepared.

National Cycling Policy Overview

The Department for Transport and the Department for Health jointly published the **Active Travel Strategy** in 2009, which aims to put walking and cycling at the heart of the local transport and public health agendas. The strategy emphasises the importance and benefits of active travel; in terms of health, the environment and the economy. Its guiding principle is that walking and cycling should be the modes of choice for most journeys. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) produced guidance in November 2012 (PHG41); on **Local Measures to Promote Walking and Cycling as Forms of Travel or Recreation** which has been taken into account within this strategy.

Local Cycling Policy Overview

The third **Local Transport Plan for Kent (2011-16)** sets out Kent County Council (KCC)'s policies and delivery plans for the management and improvement of the local transport network. It has five principal themes, all of which include cycling as an aspect; 'Growth Without Gridlock', 'A Safer and Healthier County', 'Supporting Independence', 'Tackling A Changing Climate' and 'Enjoying Life in Kent'.

Growth Without Gridlock is based on measures in Kent's Growth Areas and Growth Points that support housing and employment as well as the management and maintenance of the countywide road network. This includes cycle routes as an important factor, in particular with regard to reducing traffic congestion.

A Safer and Healthier County brings together a variety of partners working towards a number of common aims, including promoting active travel.

Supporting Independence aims to improve access to services and opportunities, particularly for those who do not have access to a car. Part of this involves improvements to cycling infrastructure, enabling efficient and cost effective access to services without the use of vehicles.

Tackling a Changing Climate looks to reduce transport emissions (in conjunction with the new Kent Environment Strategy) through the promotion of greener travel.

Finally, *Enjoying Life in Kent* recognises the wider role that transport can play in improving our quality of life. This includes improving cycling access within the countryside.

The **Countryside Access Improvement Plan (2007-2017)** (CAIP) is KCC's strategy to increase usage and enjoyment of Public Rights of Way (PROW) and open green spaces in Kent. The county's vast network of paths should be a gateway for residents and visitors to explore Kent's wildlife, history, and landscapes. The CAIP seeks to develop the PROW network to increase sustainable access to

these features. It should be noted that this is currently under review and is at present out for consultation (until July 2013).

Swale Borough Council's Ambitions for Swale 2009-2026 (Swale's Sustainable Community Strategy)

"To deliver an efficient, integrated, sustainable and multi-modal transport network capable of supporting a growing population and increased economic opportunity" Within this six 'Transport Objectives' were identified, outlined below are the priorities relevant to cycling in Swale:

- Delivering sustainable transport in new developments, ensuring that the borough's major regeneration schemes at Sittingbourne and Queenborough and Rushenden have access to high quality alternatives to car transport
- Promoting access to sustainable transport, to enable people to access to school, work, training and leisure facilities, especially in rural areas and the more disadvantaged parts of the borough
- Improving road safety, making Swale's transport systems safe and reliable for all users

3. Local Priorities

The role of walking and cycling in helping to create liveable towns and cities and promoting health improvement and social inclusion has not always been fully acknowledged by government and the health authorities in the past. Recently, however, the link between transport, physical activity and health has been highlighted in the Chief Medical Officer's Report (2009) and by the British Medical Association (BMA) in its report *Healthy Transport = Healthy Lives* (2009). Warnings about the health consequences of an increasingly sedentary society are now widely reported and it has been estimated that the cost of transport-related physical inactivity in England costs the economy £9.8 million per year. This is in addition to the estimated £2.5 billion annual healthcare cost of treating obesity. Adult obesity rates in Swale have reached 30%, which is significantly high.

The BMA outlines the recognised health benefits associated with active travel, which include:

- improved mental health
- a reduced risk of premature death
- prevention of chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, depression, dementia, and cancer

Furthermore, walking and cycling are effective ways of integrating, and increasing, levels of physical activity into everyday life. However, the BMA suggests that there has been underinvestment in walking and cycling infrastructure to date.

Cycling in urban areas can improve air quality through reducing congestion and the local air pollution that comes with it, as well as reducing the carbon emissions that can cause climate change. It has been reported that air pollution reduces life expectancy by 7-8 months, which has the equivalent economic impact of £20 billion per year, (Air Quality Strategy, 2007). Cycling can therefore help increase life expectancy and decrease the economic impact of air pollution; particularly in the more urban areas of the borough, like Sittingbourne.

Cycling also brings benefits to the local economy. The Viking Coastal Trail (VCT) Study has shown that this goes beyond cycle equipment. The VCT is a 28 mile multi-purpose route within Thanet, opened in 2001 and has since been very well used. The study looked into the economic benefits that the route brought and it was found that many cyclists stopped at cafes and pubs along the route. Other businesses that also benefit from the route include local attractions such as museums, historic houses, and accommodation providers. The success of the trail has led to many businesses catering for the needs of cyclists, thus recognising the positive impact that they continue to have on the local economy. Swale is popular for day trips, with 4.4 million day tourism trips to Swale in 2009 (Tourism South East Research Unit, 2009). Swale has a number of beautiful cycle routes and quiet country lanes that make it an ideal destination for visitors. It is therefore suggested that future development of the cycle network includes links to and promotion of leisure cycle routes as well as urban routes in Swale and to neighbouring districts.

4. Improving the Cycle Network

New routes will be designed to provide safe, continuous links between communities and popular destinations such as shops, schools, leisure centres and work places. To ensure the highest possible standards, Local Transport Note (LTN) 02/08 Cycle Infrastructure Design will be the standard guidance underpinning the design and construction of new cycle infrastructure. Additional guidance includes LTN 01/12, Shared Use Routes for Pedestrians and Cyclists, Manual for Streets II and the Kent Design Guide.

There is also a role within land use planning to enable users of new developments to undertake more journeys on foot or by bike. A hierarchy of users has been developed, which can assist in prioritising the needs of different transport modes where there are conflicting demands on carriageway space, or there is incompatibility in the highway layouts suiting different modes. A set of minimum requirements must be met if the infrastructure is to be Convenient, Accessible, Safe, Comfortable and Attractive for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Cycling England produced a report with the Department for Transport, based upon evidence from continental Europe and the English Cycling Demonstration Towns, suggesting that a £10 per head investment is required nationally to significantly increase cycling. Their results indicated that cycling levels rose by 10-50% after this level of investment coupled with a carefully considered strategy. The report also found that for every £1 invested in cycling, the value of decreased mortality is £2.59, thus investing in cycling offers high value for money.

Policy 1: A network of high quality routes will be completed in the urban areas of Swale providing convenient and safe access throughout those areas. The network will include routes to and from the surrounding countryside. Detailed recommendations for new and improved routes in the urban areas can be found in chapter 9 of this report.

Policy 2: Wherever possible measures will be provided in all traffic management/ improvement schemes which give cyclists priority over motorised traffic in terms of accessibility and journey time.

Cycle Parking

Cycle parking needs to be convenient, safe and secure. A cycle locked in a shed at the end of a garden is less likely to be used than one stored close to the front door. Therefore, it is vital that there is secure storage area close to the usual exit of a property. In addition, it is essential that new residential properties have sufficient storage for cycles and this should be managed through the development control process.

Cycling can form part of longer journeys if there is good integration with public transport. High quality, secure cycle parking at railway stations is essential to promote this. There is a good supply of parking at the various train stations, which is ideal in an area where a large number of residents commute to and from London for work.

A key component of any public space cycle parking is that it should complement and enhance the local environment while remaining functional and within cycle parking standards. Therefore,

wherever possible new cycle parking will be chosen to both enhance and compliment public spaces and ideally will be sourced from local suppliers, designed by local artists making use of distinct yet functional designs.

Policy 3: Cycle parking will be provided in all developments (both new build and change of use) that result in the employment of people and secure cycle storage will be provided in all new residential developments in the borough.

5. Maintenance of the Cycle Network

Unless the facilities are maintained to an appropriate standard they will quickly fall into disrepair and will not be used. Structural maintenance on a cycle track is generally not as demanding as for a carriageway but it requires more regular and frequent cleansing and cutting back of vegetation. This includes ensuring that roads frequented by cyclists are maintained with whipping branches and vegetation kept cut back.

Policy 4: KCC will work with partners to ensure the frequent and regular maintenance of all cycle tracks within the borough.

6. Safer Cycling

Cycle Training

National Standard Cycle Training (Bikeability) is provided across Kent by both KCC and via School Games Host Organisations. Bikeability comprises three levels of competency-based cycle training. Level 1 is aimed at the basic bicycle control skills that are required to cycle safely in any environment and is delivered in an off-road environment such as a playground. Level 2 is delivered on quiet roads and teaches participants the skills necessary to take a basic on road journey and includes a variety of junctions. Level 3 tackles busy traffic situations and complex junctions. Importantly, participants must demonstrate competence at each level before they progress to the next.

Policy 5:

- a) All year 6 children will have the opportunity to participate in Level 1 and 2 Bikeability Training.
- b) All children in years 7 to 9 will have access to Level 3 training.
- c) Adult cycle training will be available via work place travel planning initiatives.

Mitigating Collision Hot Spots

The Swale Cycling Strategy has been developed in accordance with the pedal cycle collision statistics for Swale. This has been done to improve safety when cycling within the Borough of Swale. For the statistics on cycle collisions within Swale, please see the appendix.

7. Promoting Cycling in Swale

Without the promotion of cycling in Swale the uptake of cycling and the use of cycle routes are unlikely to increase. Therefore, to make this strategy successful, cycling must be promoted in a variety of ways to a range of different audiences. First and foremost, KCC and SBC's websites need to be kept updated to enable local residents and visitors to access to the latest information on cycle routes and facilities. All cycle routes should be fully signposted for the benefit of new cyclists and those who are unfamiliar with the area. Local clubs and cycle shops could help promote cycling within the borough through active promotion and use of the local network. KCC will continue to develop and maintain a range of publications that will cover both the local and county cycle network. Successful initiatives, such as Sky Ride Local, should be continued within and around Swale.

Policy 6: Ensure all cycle routes are fully advertised and signposted within and around Swale

8. Monitoring the Cycling Strategy

Monitoring should take several forms including continuous automatic counters on cycle tracks and detailed route user surveys. This will enable a detailed database to be established which in turn can inform economic appraisals and health impact assessments in the borough.

Policy 7: Automatic counters should be installed throughout the cycle network to enable a detailed analysis of usage. Each new proposal will be assessed to see if an additional counter should be added to augment the data gathering process.

Policy 8: The condition of the signed cycle network will be reported on an annual basis

9. Proposed Development of the Cycle Network

If we are to achieve the aims set out in this strategy then the schemes chosen must create a network that appeals to both existing and potential cyclists. Numerous consultations around the country have highlighted a number of key areas that have to be tackled to enable more people to cycle safely, more often. Therefore, in order to plan and prioritise the development of the cycle network in Swale, the following criteria have been applied:

- a) Inexperienced cyclists prefer routes away from heavy traffic largely due to perceived and actual safety concerns related to mixing with fast and busy traffic.
- b) Separate, designated cycle lanes are preferred (whether on or off road).
- c) Existing routes need to join up and be continuous; therefore gaps in the network must be addressed.
- d) Barriers need to be addressed to improve cycle accessibility e.g. fast and/or busy traffic, rivers and railway lines as well as gates and railings.
- e) A high proportion of people cycle for leisure and this is a good way to enable people to be active, get fit and learn cycling skills.
- f) Fear of crime needs to be addressed by increasing secure cycle parking provision at key locations.

Route Recommendations:

Detailed recommendations of routes throughout Swale have been explained in detail where possible.

Sittingbourne:

- 1 – Howard Avenue to Laburnum Place
- 2 – Lomas Road to the Swale Way bridge over Milton Creek
- 3 – The Meads to Grove Park and to London Road
- 4 – Routes over Sittingbourne Recreation Ground
- 5 – Laburnum Place to London Road and Sittingbourne Station
- 6 – Stanhope Avenue to Highsted Road
- 7 – Lansdown Road to Great Easthall Estate, over Tonge Road, Murston

There are also plans for a trail change of byelaws, which will allow cycling in open space/park land, along Rectory Road.

Faversham:

8 – Bysing Wood Road

9 – Southern access to the new developments at Davington Park

10 – Routes over Faversham Recreation Ground

11 – Flood Lane to Brent Road

12 – Arthur Salmon Close to Ospringe Road

13 – Junction at Bysing Wood School to Hazebrouck Road

14 – School Road to Athelstan Road

Sheppey:

15 – Queenborough to Sheerness Route

There are currently plans for a route from Minster to Eastchurch; however the exact route still needs to be planned and navigated.

Sittingbourne:

Recommendation 1 : Howard Avenue to Laburnum Place

Brief Description: *There is an existing cycle link between Howard Avenue and Staplehurst Road. This scheme would create a signed route via Staplehurst Road, Eastwood Rd, Springfield Rd, Chalkwell Rd, Watsons Hill, Jubilee St, and the underpass linking with Laburnum Place and also the new Morrisons supermarket.*

Benefits: *This route would form part of link to help residents from Sonora Fields Development and surrounding residential areas access Sittingbourne Railway Station, the Town Centre and other commercial services.*

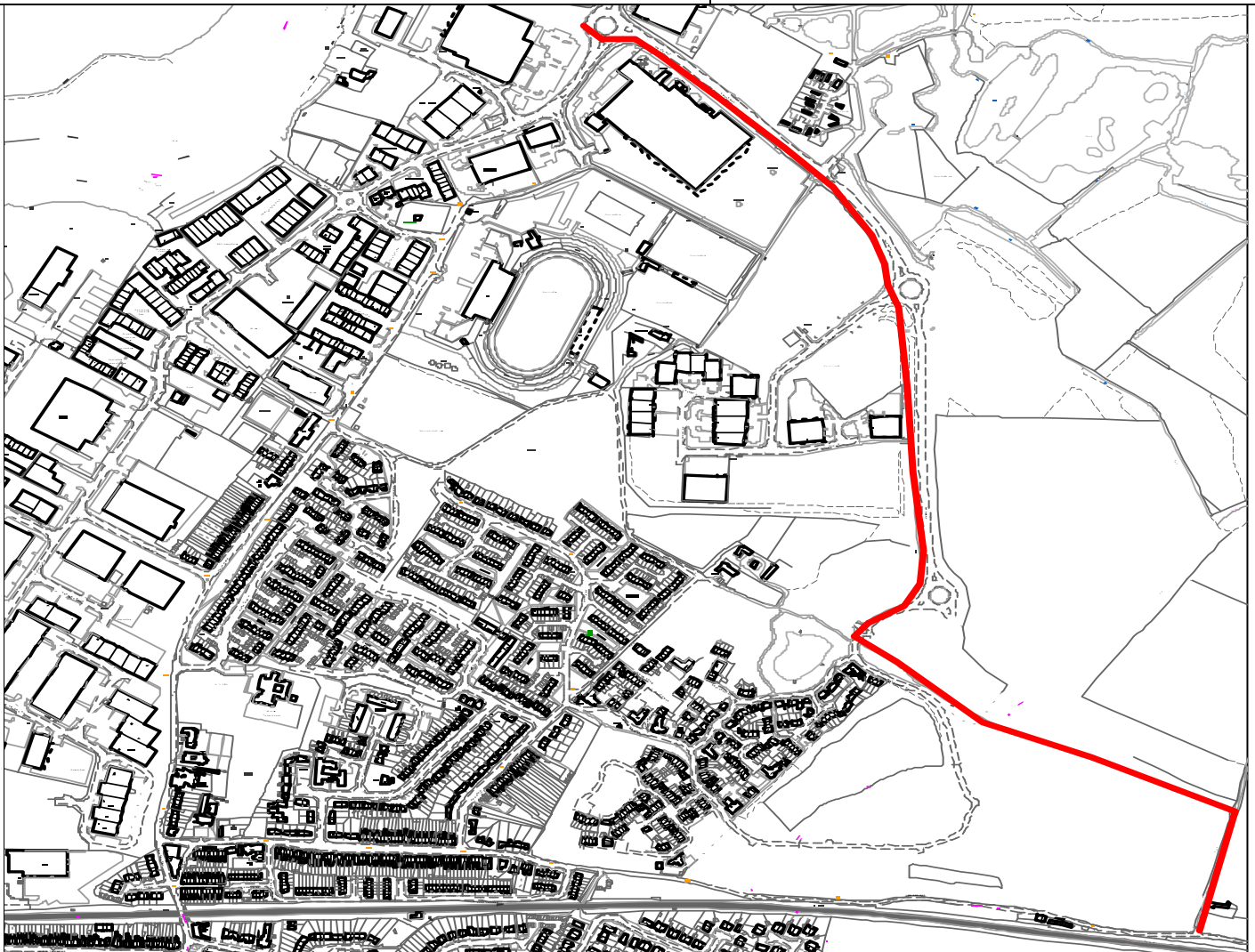


Recommendation 2 : Lomas Road to the Swale Way bridge over Milton Creek

Brief Description: *The newly constructed Swale Way provides a wide shared use path as new northern orbital around Sittingbourne. Unfortunately, the path stops on the eastern side of the bridge over Milton Creek. It re-appears alongside the western edge of the Swale Way around the Great Easthall estate. It needs to be made continuous and to be extended down south easterly to join onto Lomas Road, by following an existing footpath.*

Benefits: *This route would connect the new shared use path along the Swale Way eastwards onto the Lomas road, enabling a through way around Sittingbourne. We envisage this being a re-routed Route 1 national route in the future*

Status: *Half constructed. Existing footpath (ZR189) to Lomas Road to be utilised.*



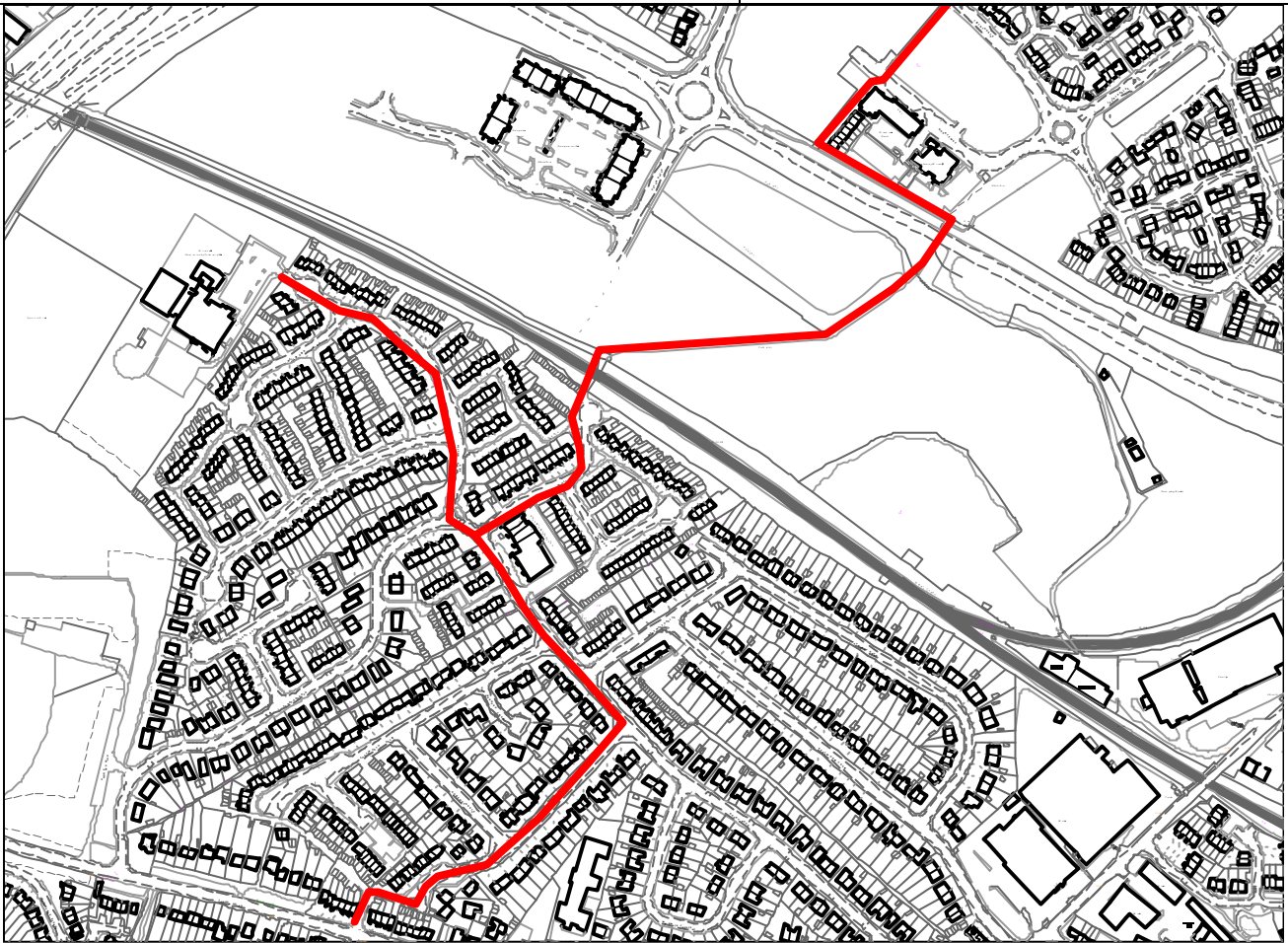
Recommendation 3 : The Meads to Grove Park and to London Road

Recommendation: A north-south route from the Meads estate to the Grove Park area.

Brief Description: The route over the wasteland fields is already used by both cyclists and pedestrians. Potential improvements to encourage wider use include; resurfacing, improving lighting and redevelopment of the railway crossing.

Benefits: The Meads development is still isolated from services. Providing this shared use path south to the rest of the Grove ward would connect up two significant schools, Grove Park and Westlands and other services on the A2.

Status: Existing safe road routes on the Meads and in Grove Park, but requires new cycle path to be laid over Greenfield site and crossing of the railway.

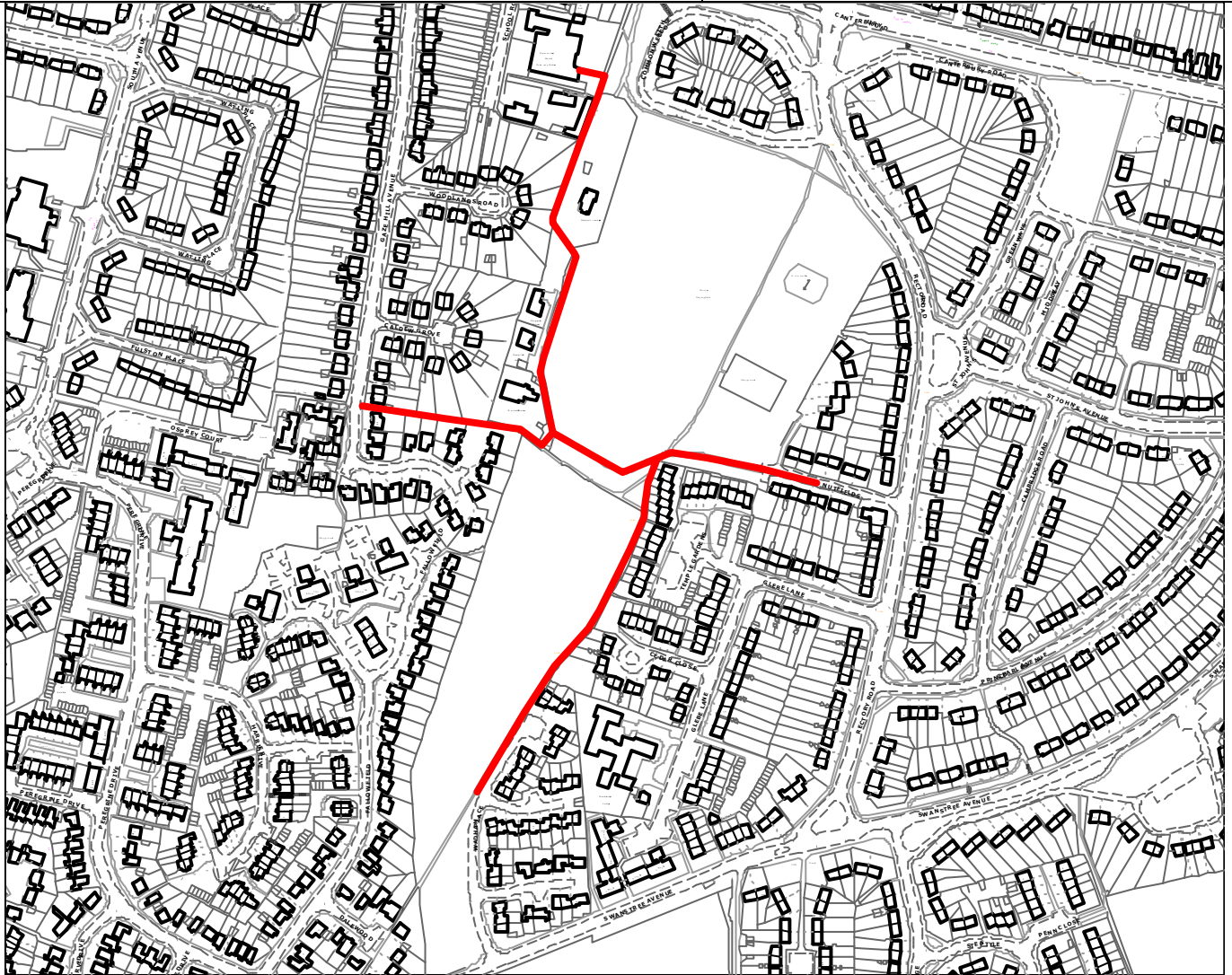


Recommendation 4 : Routes over Sittingbourne Recreation ground

Recommendation: To allow cycling through the recreation ground through improved facilities and access.

Brief Description: The recreation ground already has a network of paths linking the community with schools and other services.

Benefits: Improved permeability, access to schools and local services as well as access to the wider network.



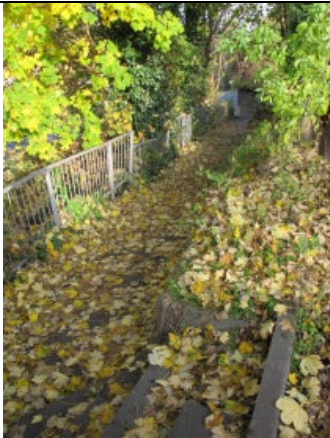
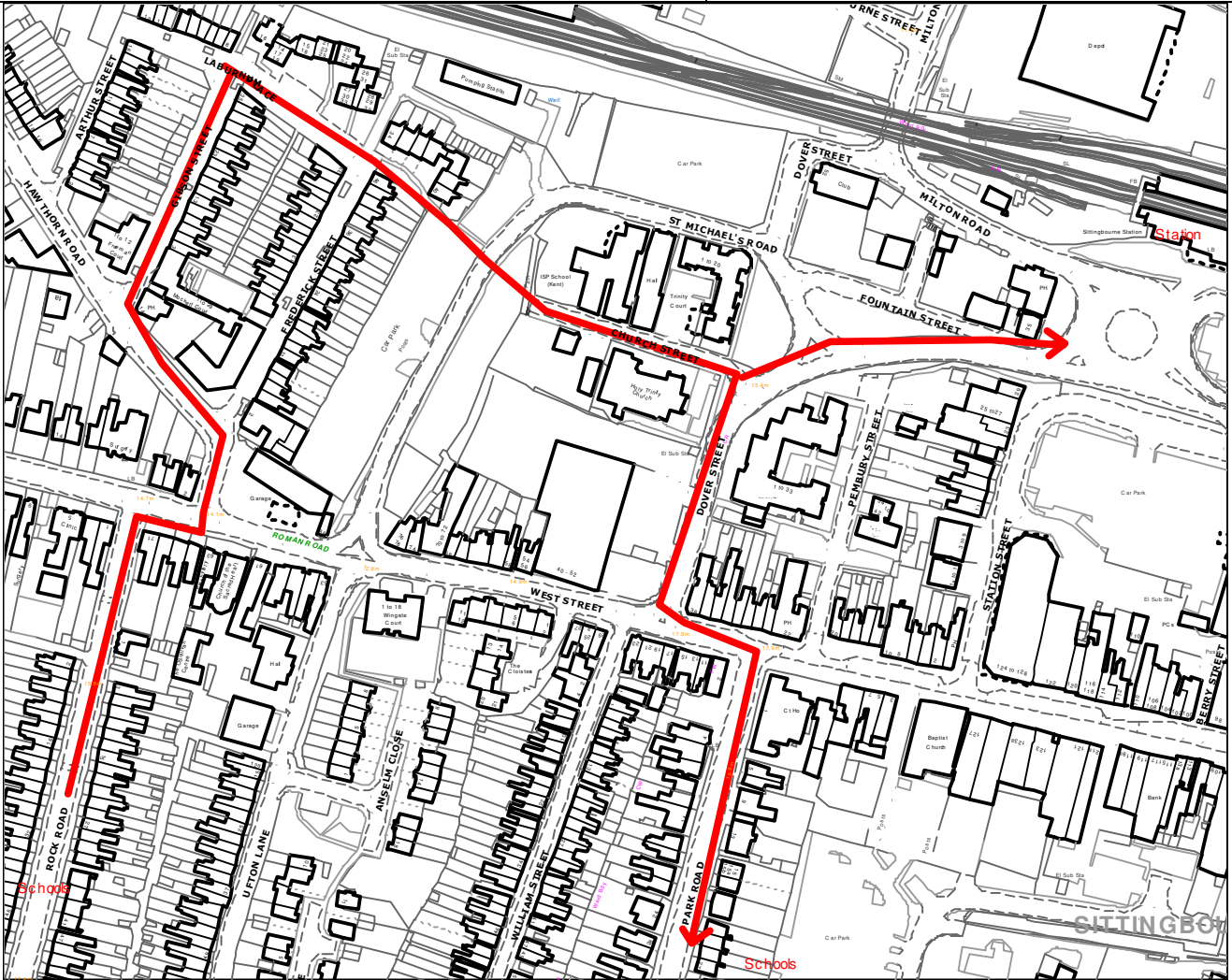
Recommendation 5 : Laburnum Place to London Road and Sittingbourne Station

Recommendation: Cycle and pedestrian path linkage to services

Benefits: Connect routes to services

Brief Description: Potentially 3 new routes across into Sittingbourne town centre to link up existing routes.

Status: To be developed in partnership with Sittingbourne redevelopment



Recommendation 6 : Stanhope Avenue to Highsted Road

Recommendation: Shared use paths to be developed

Brief Description: New surfacing and signage to allow for dual use of existing pathways

Benefits: Facilitate cycling to schools and services.

Status: To be designed and developed



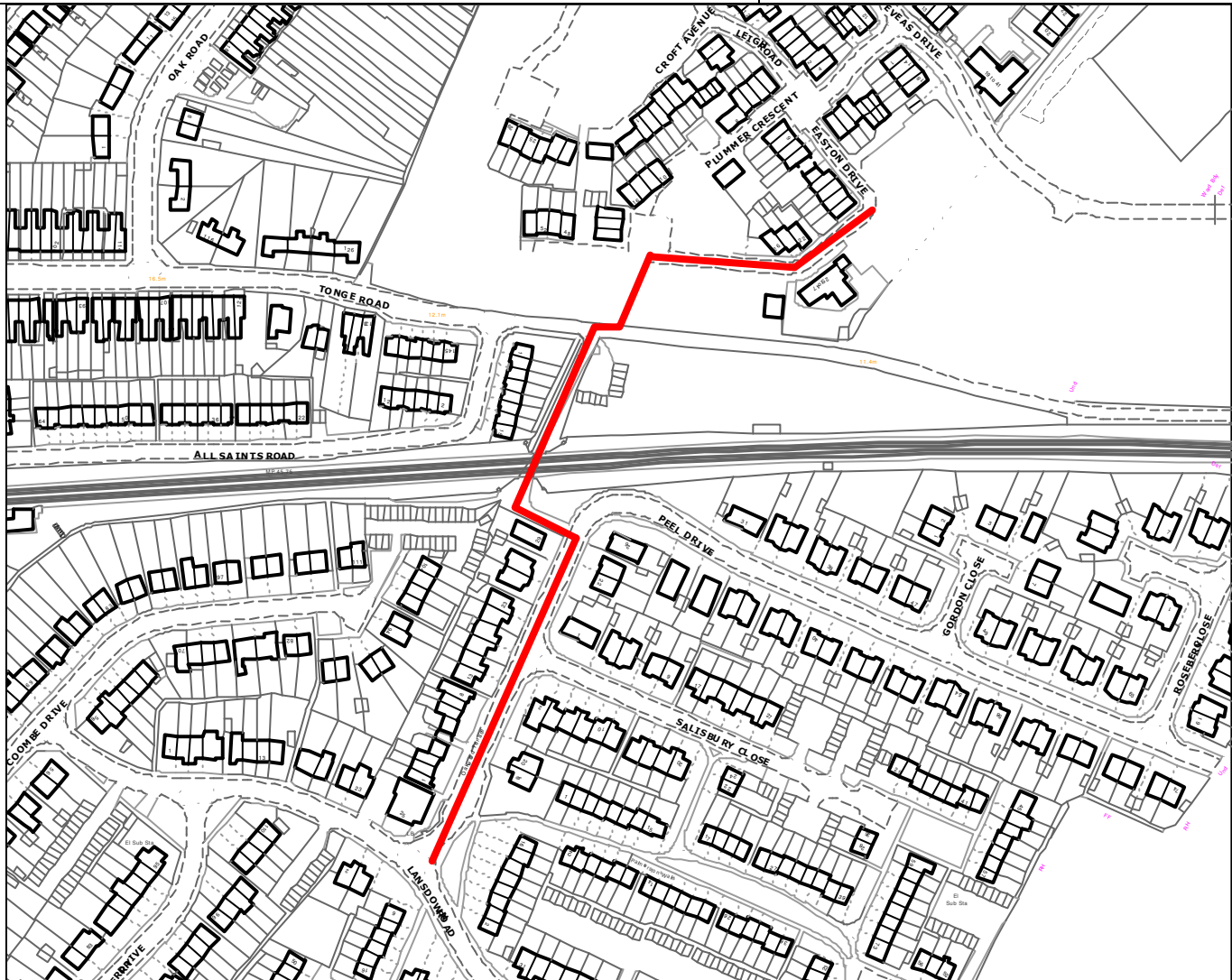
Recommendation 7 : Lansdown Road to Great Easthall estate, over Tonge Road, Murston

Recommendation: *Improve use of underpass and access into Great Easthall estate*

Benefits: *Stimulates the use of walking and cycling between residential places to services*

Brief Description: *Cut-through locations should be improved with shared use signage, drop kerbs and lighting. Warning signage on Tonge Road.*

Status: *To be designed and developed*



Faversham:

Recommendation 8 : Bysing Wood Road

Recommendation: Improvements to route to make it more user friendly by creating a linear cycle track with raised tables at junctions.

Brief Description: This is an existing cycle track that is a key part of NCN1. The present track needs to be improved to make it more user friendly and with more efficient use of the space that is available. At present the cycle track deviates to a crossing at each junction and needs to be redesigned to create a linear route.

Benefits: The present route is difficult for cyclists to use causing many to choose to ride in the road with the risk of conflict with other traffic. The benefits of improving the cycle track will be to create a user friendly linear route that links a residential area with the town centre, a new supermarket and also the countryside



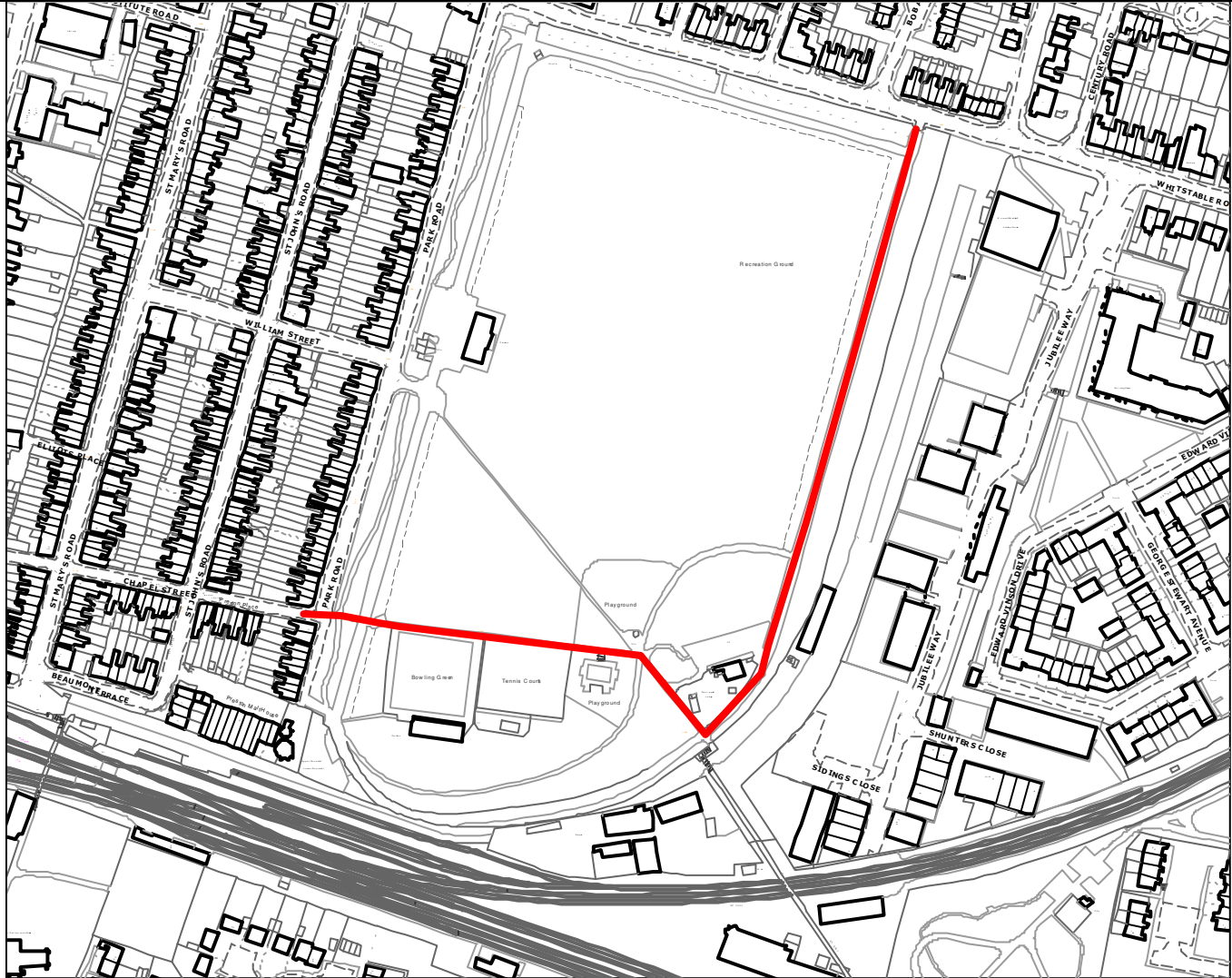
Recommendation 10 : Route over Faversham Recreation Ground

Recommendation: *Creation of dual use pathways*

Brief Description: *New surfacing and signage to enable shared use of paths over public park*

Benefits: *Encourage cycling to and through the park. Avoids cycling on congested East Street.*

Status: *To be designed and developed*



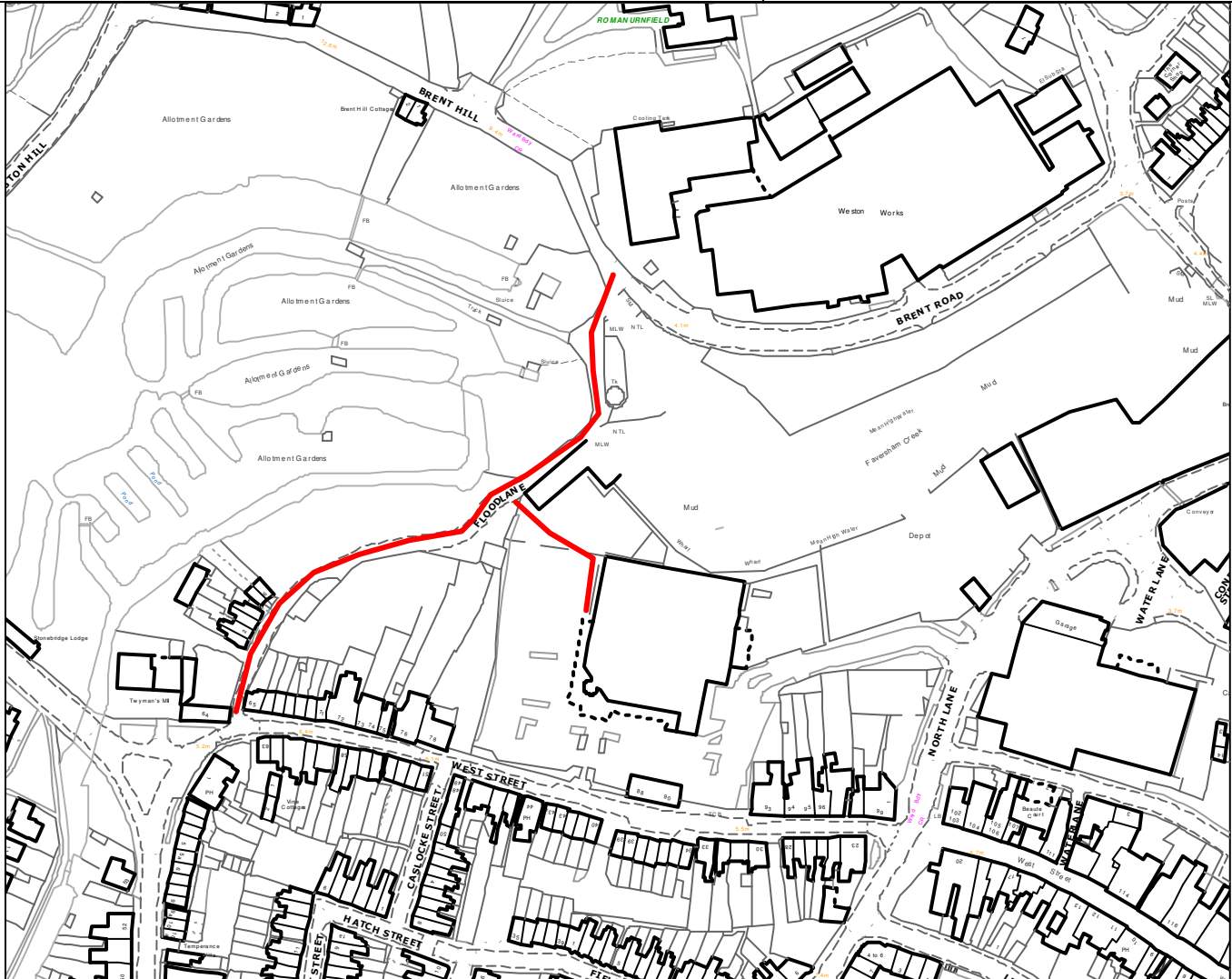
Recommendation 11 : Flood Lane to Brent Road

Recommendation: Shared use pathways

Brief Description: New surfacing and signage to enable shared use of existing paths

Benefits: Encourages both walking and cycling to services.

Status: To be designed and developed. Partnership work with Morrisons and Faversham Creek Trust



Recommendation 12 : Arthur Salmon Close to Ospringe Road

Recommendation: Resurface and add signage for shared use

Brief Description: Cut-through location should be improved with shared use signage, drop kerbs and lighting.

Benefits: Stimulates the use of walking and cycling between residential places to services

Status: To be designed and developed



Recommendation 13 : Junction at Bysing Wood School to Hazebrouck Road

Recommendation : *Improve closed road barrier*

Brief Description: *Closed road barrier needs to be improved to facilitate dual pedestrian and cycling use. Needs drop kerbs, signage and separate barriers.*

Benefits: *Would encourage cycling use to the school, and provide link up route across the area*

Status: *To be designed and developed*



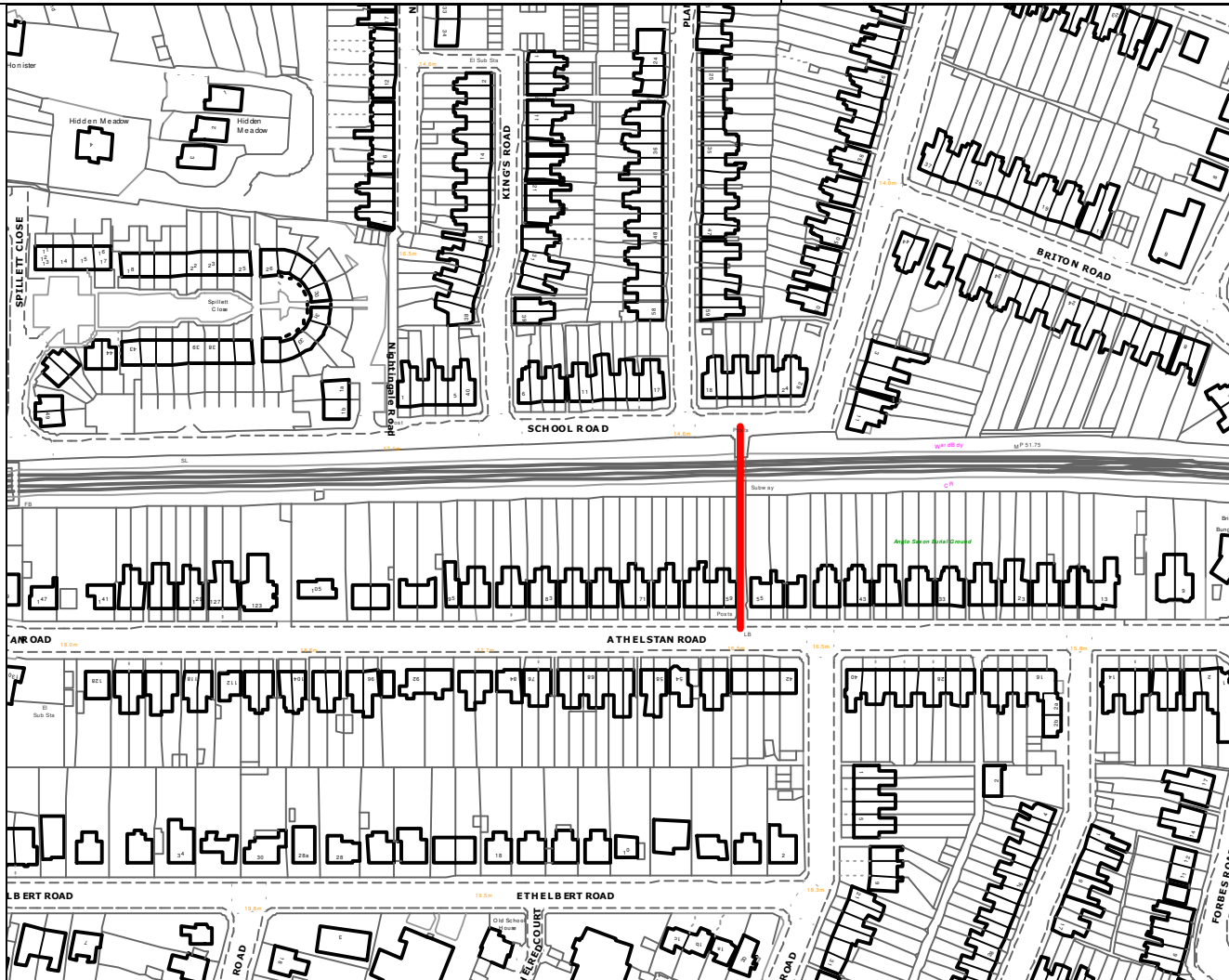
Recommendation 14 : School Road to Athelstan Road

Recommendation: Allow shared use cycling through railway underpass

Brief Description: Cut-through location should be improved with shared use signage and drop kerbs

Benefits: Stimulates the use of walking and cycling between residential places to services

Status: To be designed and developed



Sheppey:

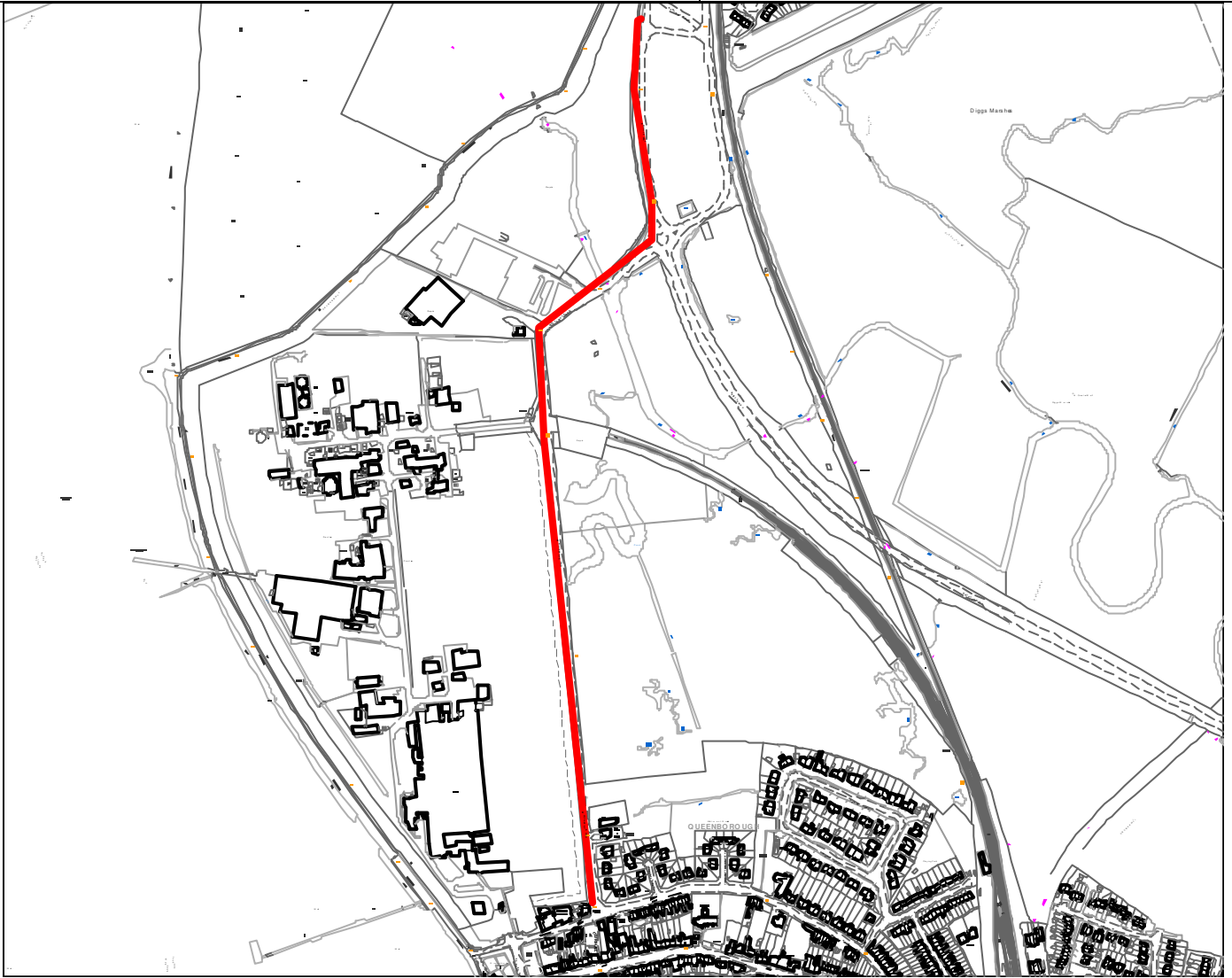
Recommendation 15 : Queenborough to Sheerness Route

Recommendation: *Redevelop existing shared use path*

Brief Description: *Resurface, signage and lighting to facilitate better use of shared use path*

Benefits: *Linkage between the two towns.
Encourage cycling to work and shops*

Status: *To be designed. Seek partnership with Tesco and Aesica*



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Appendix

Local Road Safety Statistics:

In 2011 the number of cyclist killed on roads in Kent fell from the 2010 figure of 4 to 1, but the number of crashes resulting in killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties rose from 41 to 52, and the number of slight crashes involving cyclists went up from 265 to 313. This however does not take into account the number of cyclists, although the figures still need to be reduced if people are to feel safe when cycling and if people are to be encouraged to cycle.

85% of cycle casualties were male and 41% of all recorded cycle casualties were under 25, with 15 and 16 year old being the most vulnerable age group of cyclists. One of the main factors of crashes in the younger age range is when cyclists come off the pavement and onto the road.

The table below gives and the recorded numbers of cycling casualties within Swale which can be compared the average in Kent:

Cycling casualties	2009	2010	2011
Swale	31	31	40
Kent average	30	25.5	30

Useful information on Swale:

Transport Network

The population of Swale has increased steadily year on year, a trend that is expected to continue. In order to encourage cycling and to cope with the increased demands placed on the highway network caused by population growth it is essential to have a safe, well planned and joined up cycle network. Importantly, cycle infrastructure needs to be high quality and provide a viable alternative to car travel.

In Swale, over 36,000 residents work as well as live in the borough. Swale also has more residents commuting to London than other districts in East Kent (4,724) (Swale Borough Council, 2009). Therefore, the cycle network needs to provide safe, convenient access to key services such as public transport interchanges, schools, employment and other key services. There also needs to be safe, secure and convenient facilities at the end of a cycle journey making cycle parking an essential component of any high quality cycle network.

Health and Inequality

Overall, Swale's health outcomes are generally worse than elsewhere in the South East of England. Average life expectancy from birth is 79.3 years in Swale which compares to 80.9 years for Kent and Medway. The proportion of adults in Swale who are obese (30.2%) is the highest of any district in Kent and significantly worse than the UK average. In addition, Swale has a high prevalence of diabetes (6.6%) and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (1.7%) (NHS Kent & Medway, 2012).

Poor health is both a consequence of deprivation and a cause of it. Swale is the third most deprived district within Kent and is ranked 99 out of the 326 districts in England (NHS Kent & Medway, 2012). However, there are significant differences in the profile of inequality across the borough. Sheerness, Bluetown and Murston are within the top 10% of deprived areas in the country (Swale Borough Council, 2009) whereas some of the rural areas on the mainland are relatively affluent.

A growing body of evidence has reported an association between regular cycling and improved health and wellbeing for all ages. It can provide vital additional physical activity for children and adults when used as a form

of transport to work and school. Importantly, it is a low cost form of transport that enables increased independence and access to employment and key services.

Leisure and Tourism

It is estimated that there were 416,000 overnight and 4.4 million day tourism trips to Swale in 2009. It is also estimated that a total of £187,966,000 was spent by overnight and day visitors of which approximately £186,000,000 directly benefitted local businesses. It is reported that in 2009 tourism supported 3200 jobs (7.4% of all employee jobs) in Swale (Tourism South East Research Unit, 2009).

Swale has a number of beautiful cycle routes and quiet country lanes that make it an ideal destination for day and overnight visitors. It is therefore suggested that future development of the cycle network includes links to and promotion of leisure cycle routes in Swale and to neighbouring Districts.