

Title: Abbey Fields Proposed Shared Footway and Cycleway
Lead Officer: Graham Folkes-Skinner Ex: 6337
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lowell Williams
Wards of the District directly affected: All

Approvals required	Date	Name
Portfolio Holder	11/09/25	L Williams
Finance	11/09/25	Andrew Rollins
Legal Services	23/09/25	Kathryn Tebbey
Chief Executive	11/09/25	Chris Elliot
Deputy Chief Executive	11/09/25	Darren Knight
Strategic Director	11/09/25	David Elkington
Head of Service(s)	11/09/25	David Elkington
Section 151 Officer	11/09/25	Andrew Rollins
Monitoring Officer	11/09/25	Graham Leach
Leadership Co-ordination Group	29/09/25	

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)?	All public except for Appendix 6 which is confidential
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	Yes, Forward Plan No. 1584
Accessibility Checked?	Yes

Summary

Cycling is recognized as a key health benefit and Warwick District Council is committed to working alongside key stakeholders to improve the local cycle network. The proposal in this report aligns with local policy objectives, supporting sustainable transport goals in the district. This report outlines the findings from the public consultation on the proposed walking, wheeling and cycling path ("shared path") across Abbey Fields and is the culmination of an ongoing process over several years to look at the potential of providing a shared path and to open up access to the green space to a wider population and provide cycle access to its facilities including the swimming pool

This report sets out.

- a) The details of the 6-week public consultation held between May and June 2025.
- b) In consideration of the results of the above, the report recommends a way forward for a continuous shared path in Abbey Fields but also having in mind the concern highlighted within the results of the consultation for potential conflict between the different users of Abbey Fields.

Recommendation(s)

- (1)** That Cabinet notes the public response to the consultation and subject to recommendations (2) to (4) below, agrees in principle to the construction of a shared footpath across Abbey Fields (set out in Appendix 1)
- (2)** That Cabinet authorises officers to proceed a design on this basis to be brought to the March 2026 WDC Cabinet Committee for approval of either
 - a) A single shared path across Abbey Fields with appropriate safety measures included
 - b) Two destination shared paths that end at the new swimming pool, if sufficient safety measures cannot be designed to allow for a single shared path
- (3)** That Cabinet delegates authority to the Strategic Director to:
 - a) Spend the allocated WDC funding from earmarked reserves and Section 106 Air Quality money towards the design and planning of the proposed shared path; and
 - b) Include with the design phase:
 - i. The potential of adding additional benches along the line of the existing pedestrian footpath referenced above.
 - ii. The options for cycle access around the controlled barrier on the swimming pool access road from Bridge Street, Kenilworth
 - iii. Collaborate on the final design and location of the duck feeding area and any control measures deemed appropriate from the safety control measure work required for the design
 - iv. Prepare the appropriate planning applications, consent from Historic England and other regulatory consents/permissions to implement the proposal once approval from Cabinet of the design is given.
 - v. Proposals to address any revisions to the bye-laws within Abbey Fields.
- (4)** That Cabinet agrees that they are minded to only provide final approval in March 2026 subject to confirmation from Warwickshire County Council (WCC) that the funding for the shared crossings on Bridge Street and Borrowell Lane has been allocated and secured within the WCC budget.
- (5)** That Cabinet notes the confidential Appendix 6 regarding the restrictive

1 Reasons for the Recommendation

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 The proposed new shared route would pass through Abbey Fields, which is owned, managed and maintained by Warwick District Council. Whilst the route has been designed by consultants (Sustrans) appointed by WCC, the cost of installing the new route will be funded by WDC. The costs of improving the road crossings at Bridge Street and Borrowell Lane will be designed, built and paid for by WCC and these will provide greater connectivity to the local area to allow a wider population to have easier access to Abbey Fields
- 1.1.2 This proposal is to implement a walking, wheeling and cycling path, "shared path" across Abbey Fields to link up Castle Farm Leisure Centre with the new swimming pool in Abbey Fields and connect two ends of National Cycle Network No. 52 to allow greater connectivity for cyclists across Kenilworth.
- 1.1.3 The consultation indicated that there is concern about the potential conflict between users if the proposal goes ahead, especially around the swimming pool and children's play area.
- 1.1.4 In anticipation of that concern and the restricted nature of the shared path around the swimming pool, Q11 of the public consultation (See paragraph 1.5.5 below), provided the alternative of the shared path finishing at the swimming pool and the latter acting as a destination. Although this showed support for the shared path continuing around the swimming pool, there were still concerns over potential conflict between the different users.
- 1.1.5 The recommendation within this report to allow the shared path to be continuous through Abbey Fields, has the wider benefit of providing greater connectivity for cycling between North and South Kenilworth. This makes cycling a more viable option for commuting and offers an alternative to cycling on busy roads.
- 1.1.6 However, cyclists will need to slow down to accommodate pedestrians which would make for a less efficient journey.
- 1.1.7 There have been ongoing discussions with colleagues involved in the swimming pool construction, looking at the safety control measures required on the path around the swimming pool. There have been draft designs created for a relocated duck feeding area on Abbey Fields Lake for example. However, further work is required to ensure that all appropriate measures fit into the design requirements from the swimming pool. A thorough assessment of the appropriate measures will be submitted to a future Cabinet for final sign-off
- 1.1.8 However, there needs to be scrutiny on the safety/control measures on the path around the swimming pool if the shared path is to be a through route as other users will feel less safe and any potential conflict between users' needs to be minimised, hence Recommendation 2 above.
- 1.1.9 If Warwick District Council approve the principle of the proposed route, the consultants will be instructed to refine and complete the design considering

feedback from the public consultation and set a timetable for delivery of the project.

- 1.1.10 Following discussions with Planning colleagues, the granting of Planning Permission will take approximately 5 months. Time is needed to allow for the tendering of a company to undertake the detailed designs of the proposed path prior to the submission of a Planning Application. If the recommendations within this report are agreed, then it is hoped that construction of the path could start in Summer 2026 but is dependent on the completion of the proposed swimming pool.
- 1.1.11 If approval for the shared path is given, whether that is for a through route or using the swimming pool as a destination point, WCC will begin the process of installing Toucan Crossings on Bridge Street and Borrowell Lane, Kenilworth. This would involve its own consultation and approval. The consultation will not occur until the outcome of the shared path initiative is known. If the proposal of a shared path is rejected, WCC will not pursue the installation of the new crossings.
- 1.1.12 There are benefits of a shared path across Abbey Fields in isolation to the improved crossings, i.e. better accessibility for a greater number of people. However, it is considered essential that the construction of the crossings is integral to the potential approval of the shared path. The shared crossings will provide a safer alternative for navigating traffic and facilitate more readily the desired connectivity with other parts of Kenilworth

1.2 **Policy Framework** **Sustrans Feasibility Study**

- 1.2.1 It should be noted that the idea of a shared route running through Abbey Fields has been discussed since at least 2016, when WCC commissioned Sustrans (A national walking and cycling charity and custodian of the National Cycle Network) to undertake a feasibility study of a cycle route across Abbey Fields.
- 1.2.2 There was engagement with key stakeholders and although there was support for the proposal, it was not universal, and a decision was made not to move forward with the proposal.

Kenilworth Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2029 – Kenilworth Town Council

- 1.2.3 In relation to the proposal, this document states: -
 - “Proposals to create new priority cycle routes to connect the town to the University of Warwick and to link in with other proposed routes such as K2L particularly within the corridors indicated on the Policies Map, will be supported” (Policy KP9: Cycle Routes)
 - “New cycle routes should preferably be created off the highway on either dedicated routes or routes shared with pedestrians when it is safe to do so...” (Policy KP9: Cycle Routes)
 - “Linking through Abbey Fields is a contentious issue as it is difficult to find a suitable safe route without mixing pedestrians and cyclists though the route ranked 4th out of 10 projects in the Questionnaire. A route will only be supported subject to it being shown to be safe for pedestrians and cyclists and having a minimal impact upon heritage assets” (Paragraph 5.41)

Fields for the Future – Warwick District Council 2019

- 1.2.4 This was a public consultation organised by WDC for residents and community groups in Kenilworth used to inform the Management Plan for Abbey Fields. Question 11 of the survey asked, "Please give your thoughts on cycling in Abbey Fields?" Of 790 people that responded, 633 were in favour of cycling in Abbey Fields.

WCC Pre-Consultation to Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) – 2021

- 1.2.5 This provided the opportunity for residents to comment on where they thought new or improved cycling or walking facilities were needed. The survey showed strong support for an Abbey Fields cycle route.

Consultation on draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan – 2022.

- 1.2.6 This showed support for the Abbey Fields cycle route. Using criteria based on Department of Transport recommendations, the Abbey Fields cycle route was scored as "very high" priority

1.3 The proposed route through Abbey Fields

- 1.3.1 The Council agreed the preferred route for a shared path across Abbey Fields at the WDC Cabinet meeting on 8 March 2023, with authorisation given to create some draft plans of the route and undertake a public consultation on the proposals.

- 1.3.2 The agreed preferred route (solid dark blue font) can be seen in the plan below, and the draft design drawings seen in Appendix 1



- 1.3.3 Although Abbey Fields is owned and maintained by Warwick District Council, the entirety of the Abbey Fields site is designated as Scheduled Monument by Historic England.

- 1.3.4 The proposed route can be separated into three main sections, namely: -
- Borrowell Lane to Finham Brook
 - Path around Swimming Pool
 - Access road to Bridge Street

Photographs from the area of the proposed route of the path can be found in Appendix 2.

1.3.5 It is worth noting that out of the 3 sections referenced in Paragraph 1.3.4 above, the only proposed new stretch of path would be between Borrowell Lane and Finham Brook. The section around the swimming pool and the access road to Bridge Street are being constructed by the swimming pool contractors and will be built irrespective of whether the shared path initiative is approved.

1.3.6 If the initiative is approved conversations will continue with colleagues involved in the swimming pool construction to understand the exact details and the proposals for any safety measures on the path to minimise any potential conflict.

1.4 Consultation

1.4.1 As agreed in the WDC Cabinet Report presented on 8 March 2023, a 6-week public consultation on the proposed route was undertaken between May and June 2025.

1.4.2 A company called PO'Sh Creative was procured to assist in the publicity of the consultation.

1.4.3 The Council invited electronic completion of the consultation questionnaire through its website or in person at six events held across the area. Paper copies could also be sent to individual addresses. Completed paper copies could either be posted back to WDC or handed in at Kenilworth Library or at one of the six face-to-face events.

1.5 Consultation Summary

1.5.1 Submissions could be made online or via paper surveys.

1.5.2 There were 1,028 responses to the consultation, 98% of which were from individuals.

1.5.3 A summary of the results can be found in Appendix 3, and the questions were largely split into the 3 main sections of the proposed path. The information below provides an understanding of the results and needs to be read in conjunction with the above Appendix 3.

1.5.4 Borrowell Lane to swimming pool

Q7. Do you agree or disagree with the following design elements		
	Strongly disagree/disagree	Strongly agree/agree
Creating a new 3 metre path across the grassed area	39%	58%
Permitting cycling on the new path	40%	57%
The position of the proposed path	30%	53%

1.5.5 **Section around swimming pool/duck pond**

Q10. To enable users of the reduced width section to be aware of different users, i.e. cyclists, pedestrians, duck feeders etc. what sort of signs would you consider appropriate?		
	Strongly disagree/disagree	Strongly agree/agree
Informative signs with a "share with care" message and asking for consideration to those using the path with you	21%	65%
Bollards to help slow users down	26%	60%
Instructional signs asking cyclists to dismount when leaving the cycle route. Please note: It should be kept in mind that some people with mobility impairments will be unable to dismount	37%	48%

Q11. An alternative to a continuous shared path across Abbey Fields is to use the swimming pool as a destination for two separate cycle paths arriving at the venue, one from the Borrowell direction and the other from Bridge Street. The routes would stop either side of the swimming pool and cyclists travelling across Abbey Fields would be expected to dismount and walk. We would like to understand which of these options would be your preference?	
Option 1 – Cycle route continues past the swimming pool	48.3%
Option 2 – Cycle route terminates either side of the swimming pool, with cyclists being asked to dismount in between	37%
No preference	7.1%
Unsure/Don't know	7.6%

Q12. The current duck feeding area will potentially be relocated onto the long side of the lake with its current position re-landscaped with signage and a bench/wall delineating where the path is separated from the duck feeding area. We want to ensure all users of the park feel catered for in this area whether the path much be a reduced width. Do you think that the separation of the new path from the edge of the lake though the use of a bench will sufficiently keep different users separate?	
Strongly disagree/disagree	37.3%
Strongly agree/agree	35.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	27.4%

1.5.6 Section between Bridge Street and swimming pool

Q13. Do you feel that the new section of path at the Bridge Street entrance to the car park will adequately separate out the cyclists from car users?	
Strongly disagree/disagree	29.9%
Strongly agree/agree	45.3%
Neither agree or disagree	24.8%

1.5.7 General

Q19. Now that you have seen the proposals, to what extent do you support the implementation of a shared path across Abbey Fields?	
Strongly oppose/oppose	40%
Strongly support/support	56.1%
Neither support of oppose	2.8%
Unsure/don't know	1.2%

1.5.8 Questions 20, 21 & 22 asked open questions on, any comments on the proposal; would proposals negatively or positively affect or impact people of groups with protected characteristics and any suggestions for inclusion. Although there were separate questions presented, the written responses for the latter two questions were almost entirely repeats of the comment for question 20.

1.5.9 A lot of the feedback provided a mix of personal views and constructive comments. A representative selection of the comments can be found in Appendix 4.

1.5.10 The full results of the consultation questionnaire can be found in Appendix 5.

1.6 Discussion

- 1.6.1 The consultation prompted strong feelings for and against the details of the proposed route. The main concerns from opponents of the route focused on the potential conflict between the different users of the park, signage and enforcement, as well as the potential loss of the current ambience of the park and the opposition of cycling in the park in principle.
- 1.6.2 Equally the advocates of the route said it was difficult to cycle across Kenilworth presently and the benefit of being able to cycle to the swimming pool.
- 1.6.3 The area of particular concern is where the path goes around the swimming pool and the conflict with the different user groups, children's play areas, reception to the swimming pool and the duck feeding area.
- 1.6.4 There has been ongoing liaison with the Chair(s) of the Friends of Abbey Fields Group in this process.
- 1.6.5 Certainly, the responses to the questions involving the shared path section around the swimming pool are more nuanced and as not as statistically clear as the sections of the proposed path either side of the pool.
- 1.6.6 In addressing the key concerns from the consultation, Recommendation 2 requires that WDC focuses on the safety and signage needed for the section of the path immediately around the swimming pool. This could include signs, bollards, finger posts and surface markings to ensure appropriate measures are

implemented in the final design. This will involve working with WCC and Sustrans.

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 shared 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. Equality of opportunity will not be opened to people that use cycles as a mobility aid.

2.2 Shared cycle path terminating at swimming pool

The swimming pool could act as the designation point for the two sections of shared path, so cyclists would have to dismount when they reach the swimming pool. This would reduce the potential for conflict between users and provide a safer space for vulnerable users, including children, the elderly etc. but it would limit connectivity with the wider Kenilworth area and less useful for commuting. However, even if this scenario is agreed the "destination paths" could be congested in peak times, increasing the potential for conflict.

3 Legal Implications

ByeLaws

3.1 Currently there are local byelaws across Abbey Fields relating to cycling. The relevant part of the bye-law states: -

- a) A person shall not, except in the exercise of any lawful right or privilege bring or cause to be brought into the pleasure ground any barrow, truck, machine or vehicle other than:
 - i. A wheeled bicycle, tricycle or other similar machine
 - ii. A wheelchair or perambulator drawn or propelled by hand and used solely for the conveyance of a child or children or an invalid
 - iii. A person shall not except in the exercise of any lawful right or privilege ride any bicycle, tricycle or other similar machine in any part of the pleasure ground

PROVIDED that where the Council set apart a space in the pleasure ground for the use of any class of vehicle, this byelaw shall not be deemed to prohibit driving in or to that space by a direct route from the entrance to the pleasure ground or any vehicle of the class for which it is set apart

3.2 It is therefore permissible to bring a bicycle onto Abbey Fields but not ride it unless the proviso applies. Advice has been sought from Legal, and their advice having analysed the current byelaws is centred on the definition of a vehicle. They have concluded that through statutes, case law and government notes that a bicycle is capable of being classified as a vehicle. Therefore, the Council will need to clearly and unequivocally "set apart a space in the pleasure ground" for use by bicycles as a class of vehicle. It will be necessary for the "setting apart" to be clear and design/engineering solutions will need to be considered to fulfil this requirement.

Consultation

3.3 There are four main principles of fair consultation:

- a) Consultation must take place when the proposal is still at a formative stage.

- b) Sufficient reasons must be put forward for the proposal to allow for intelligent consideration and response.
- c) Adequate time must be given for consideration and response; and
- d) The results of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account

3.4 The Council should only proceed to making a decision after it has first taken account of the consultation results

Restrictive covenants

3.5 Restrictive covenants relating to the use of Abbey Fields burden part of the land proposed for the route of the new path. Confidential Appendix 6 provides a summary and legal advice.

Scheduled Monument Consent

3.6 The whole of Abbey Fields, Kenilworth is classed as a Scheduled Monument. Ongoing liaison has occurred with the local Historic England office to make them aware of the proposals.

3.7 The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (as amended) provides the legal framework for the protection of Scheduled monument.

3.8 As the proposals for the shared path will affect a scheduled monument, if the initiative is agreed WDC must apply to the Secretary of State for prior written permission. It must be given in writing before any works are started.

Planning Permission

3.9 Preliminary discussions have occurred with WDC colleagues within Planning and discussions around what is needed to obtain the relevant planning permissions, this includes: -

- Arboriculture Report
- Archaeology Report
- Ecology Report
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Drainage Details

3.10 A several of these reports have been completed, i.e. Archaeology and Ecology as part of the ongoing discussions with Historic England, others will be required if the initiative gets the go ahead.

Crime and Disorder Act

3.11 There are no plans to light the proposed shared path, although the immediate area around the swimming pool will be lit due to the nature of the facility. Most of the path will have clear sightlines and routinely be maintained. There will be signage providing guidance on the use of the path

4 Financial Implications

4.1 In May 2025, Sustrans estimated that the route would cost approximately £257,000 (but subject to further design work) and that was inclusive of Design and Planning Fees. This does not include the cost of signage, additional benches etc.

4.2 Money has been allocated from within WDC to cover the cost of the installation, partly from General Funds, £160,000 (General Fund Revenue and Capital

Budget 2023/24 – Cabinet Report 9 February 2023) and partly from the Section 106 Air Quality budget, £600,000 (Air Quality Action Plan – Cabinet Report 3 September 2025).

- 4.3 The construction of the path will be funded by WDC, alongside its long-term maintenance, however as the proposed shared path is partly on what was previously existing hard surfaces, which through the swimming pool project are to be renewed, i.e. access road from Bridge Street and the path around the swimming pool, there should not be any significant implications for the maintenance budget.
- 4.4 Warwickshire County Council have the finances for the design of the two shared Crossings but have not yet secured the capital funding to pay for their installation. If the recommendations within this report get approved, WCC will start seeking the required budget for this highway work. The approximate costs for both crossings are £528,000. Please see Paragraph 1.1.11. above.

5 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which sets three strategic aims for the organisation.

5.2 Delivering valued, sustainable services

This proposal has been worked on in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council and Sustrans. If the recommendations within this report are agreed, then the proposal would be to use finances from the Council's Section 106 and General Fund budget. (See Paragraph 4.4 above).

5.3 Low cost, low carbon energy across the district

This strategic aim is not relevant to the proposal outlined in this report.

5.4 Creating vibrant, safe and healthy communities of the future

If this proposal gets agreed, it will support this strategic aim by: -
"Encourage everyone to have a more active lifestyle by using our leisure centres, parks and open spaces, other sports facilities and the provision of outreach activities" – Para 3.2.3

In addition:

"In partnership with Warwickshire County Council, promote and implement active travel choices as a priority – public transport, walking and cycling" – Para 3.2.6.

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 completed. Please see Appendix 7.

8 Data Protection

- 8.1 There are no data protection issues within these proposals

9 Health and Wellbeing

One of the essential conditions to have good health is an active lifestyle and active transport helps with that by promoting walking and cycling. Therefore, in enabling more active travel this scheme also enables a more active lifestyle contributing positively to good physical and mental health. This scheme though by promoting active travel can contribute to reducing air pollution which is a significant factor in respiratory illness the prevention of which is a priority for the South Warwickshire Place Partnership.

Risk Assessment

- 9.1 Please see Appendix 8.

10 Consultation

- 10.1 The following groups have been consulted with reference to this proposal, namely: -
- Kenilworth Town Council
 - Warwickshire County Council
 - Committee of Friends of Abbey Fields Group
 - Green Spaces Team – Warwick District Council
 - 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>