



AYOT GREENWAY

GREENSPACE ACTION PLAN

2020 – 2025

Produced by:



On behalf of:



OVERVIEW

Greenspace Action Plans

Greenspace Actions Plans (GAPs) are map-based management plans which specify activities that should take place on a site over a stated period of time; these activities will help to deliver the agreed aspirations which the site managers and stakeholders have identified for that site.

Public Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is at the centre of effective management planning on any site. An initial engagement period was held in September and October 2019, to establish core aims and objectives for the site; these are reflected in Section 3. A second stage of engagement was held in February and March 2020 to enable stakeholders to comment on the proposed management actions for the site. An associated engagement response document will be published online as an appendix to the final version of this plan, to summarise comments received and any amendments made to the plan as a result.

Version Control

Version	Issue Date	Details	Author	Reviewed	Approved
0	Feb 2020	Draft	RB	AT	LT
1	July 2020	Final	RB	AT	LT

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1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 Site Summary

Site name	Ayot Greenway
Grid Reference	TL186144 to TL317119
Owners	Tarmac Ltd (TL186144 to TL190143 – 0.4km) Hertfordshire County Council (TL190144 to TL237134 – 4.9km) Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (TL221144 to TL222143 – Ayot Green car park).
Managers	Hertfordshire County Council Tarmac Ltd
Size	Full route length 6.4km including on road section
Designations	Conservation Area Metropolitan Green Belt Local Wildlife Site Site of Special Scientific Interest Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland

1.2 Vision Statement

To maximise the value of the Ayot Greenway as an attractive, functional, multi-user route which is well-used for active travel and recreation alike and rich in biodiversity and heritage.

This will be achieved through the following objectives:

- To improve and maintain the Ayot Greenway, as a core component of Hertfordshire's strategic non-motorised transport network.
- To increase use of the Ayot Greenway for both active travel and recreation.
- To ensure financial sustainability of all management operations on site.
- To protect and enhance the natural environment and heritage of the Ayot Greenway.
- To ensure that users of the Ayot Greenway feel safe and welcome at all times.
- To develop and maintain an informed, involved and enthusiastic local community.

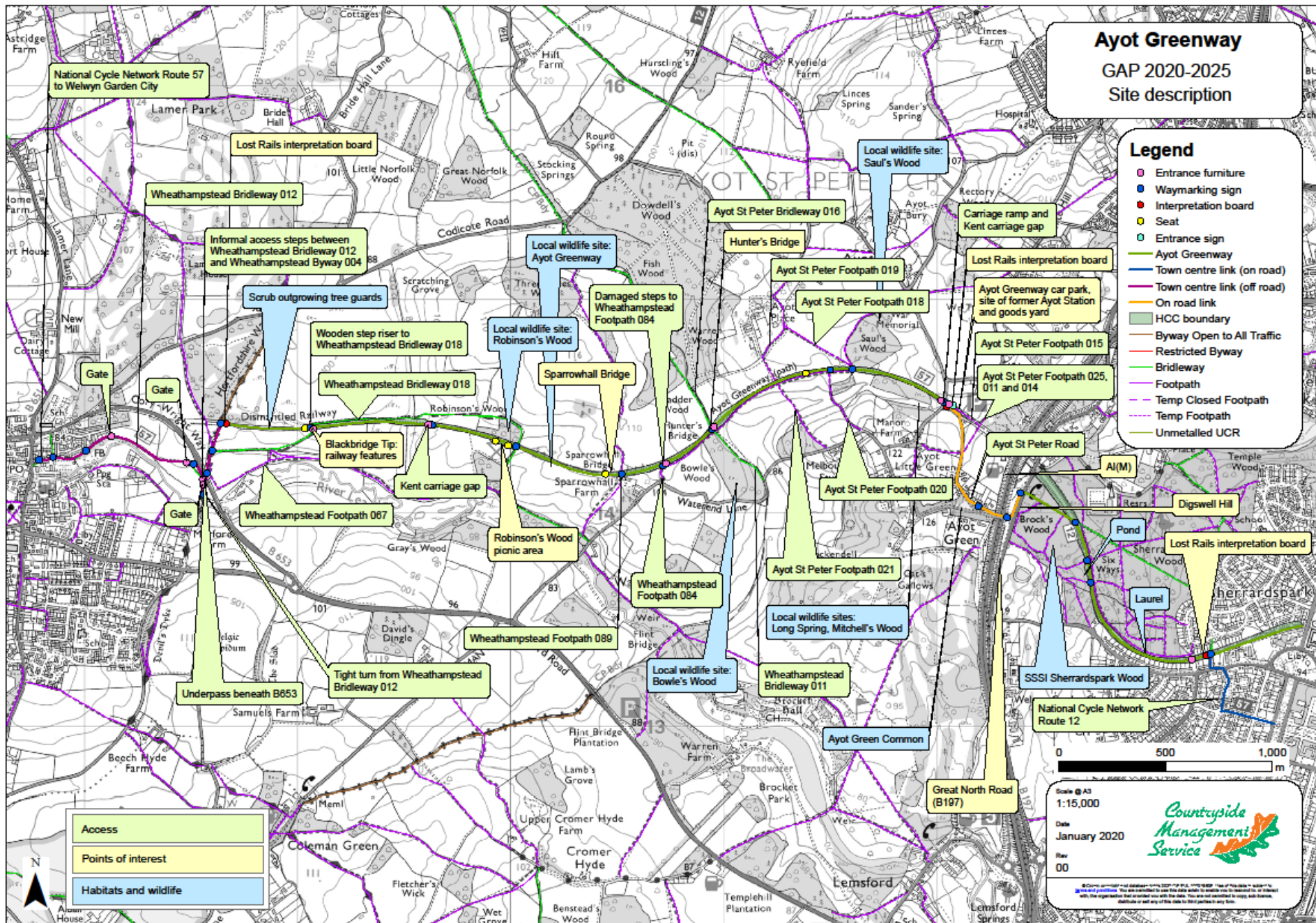
The Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for the Ayot Greenway sets out the management, maintenance and development framework for the site over five years. It will focus on the section of the Ayot Greenway between Wheathampstead and Welwyn Garden City which is owned by Hertfordshire County Council, and will also provide recommendations for the management of the remainder of the route.

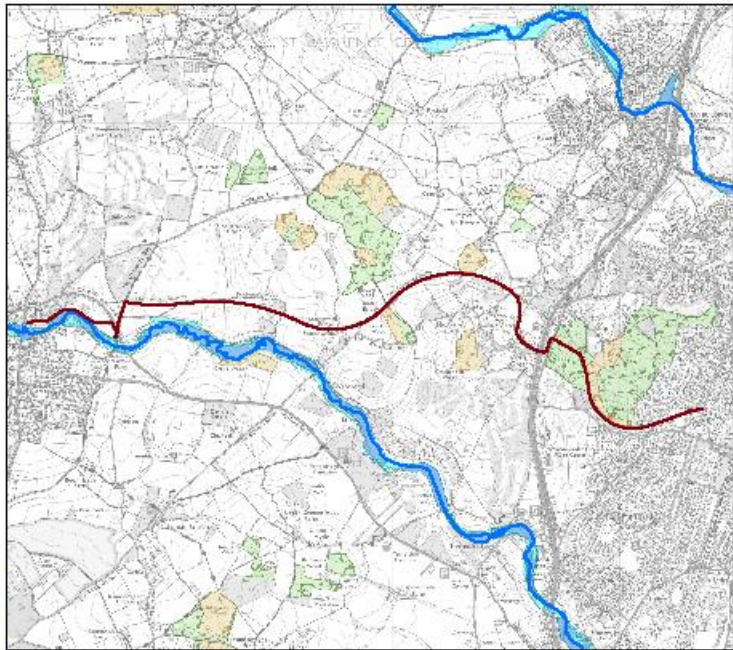
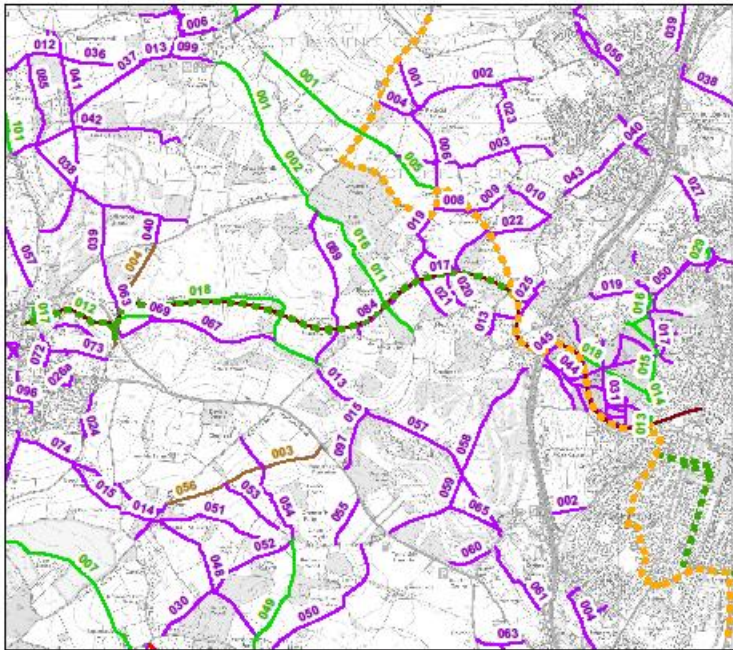
The GAP is reviewed annually in conjunction with any relevant bodies, so that any outstanding tasks can be rescheduled as necessary.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Introduction

The Ayot Greenway is a 6.4km non-motorised transport route following the former Welwyn Garden City to Luton and Dunstable branch line. It forms part of Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 57 running through a largely rural area and passing close to a number of small hamlets, notably Ayot St Peter, Ayot Green, Ayot St. Lawrence and Lemsford. It provides a valuable predominantly traffic-free connection between Wheathampstead and Welwyn Garden City for cyclists, horse riders, pedestrians and carriage drivers, both for active travel and for recreational use. It connects at both ends to links to the respective town centres, and to a further traffic-free route heading East between Welwyn Garden City and Hertford.





Ayot Greenway GAP 2020-25 Constraints Plan

Legend

- National Cycle Route 12
- National Cycle Route 57
- Ayot Greenway
- Greenbelt - March 2007
- Conservation Areas
- Common Land

Public Rights of Way:

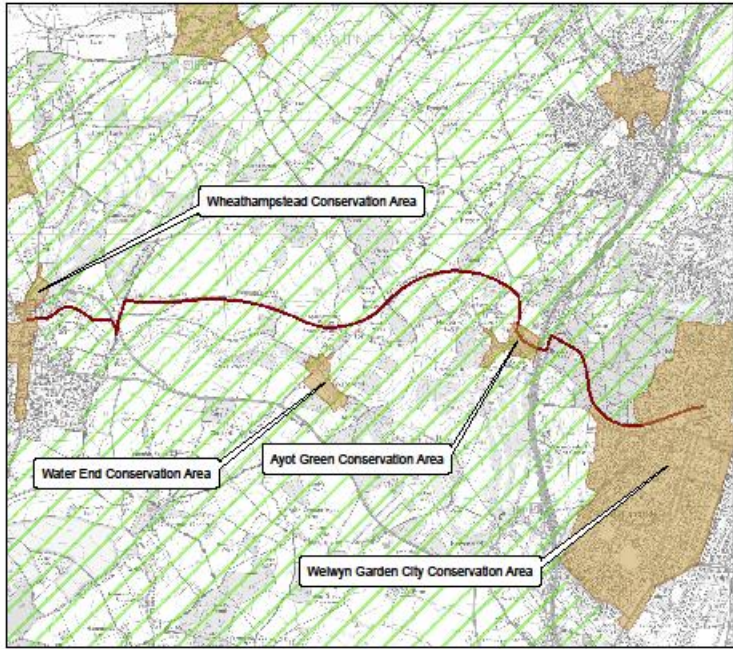
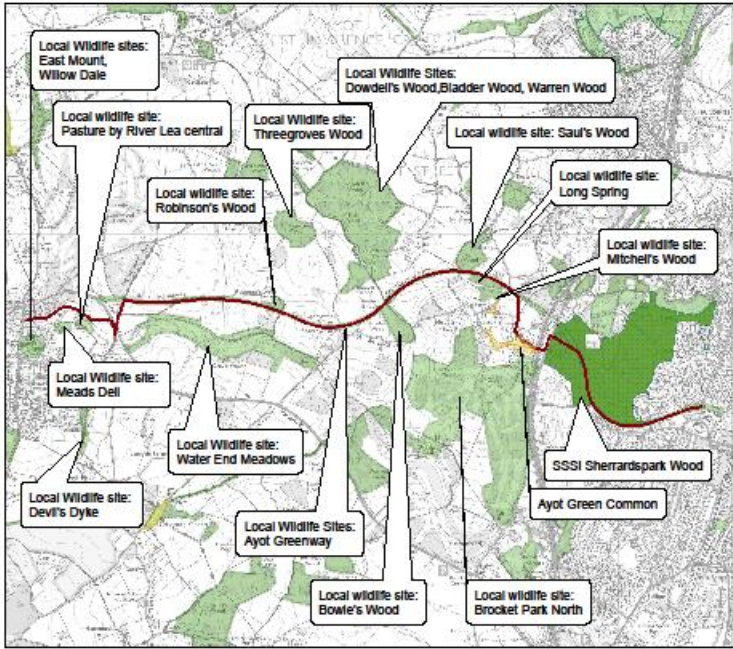
- Byway Open to All Traffic
- Restricted Byway
- Bridleway
- Footpath

Flood Zone Categories:

- Main River
- Flood Zone 3
- Flood Zone 2

Environmental Designations:

- Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)
- Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)
- Local Nature Reserve
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Wildlife Site



Scale @ A3
1:40,000

Date
April 2020

Rev
01

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2.2 Strategic Context

2.2.1 Active travel

The Ayot Greenway should be viewed not as an isolated route but as part of a developing and increasingly important strategic network of non-motorised transport options, providing a predominantly traffic-free link between Welwyn Garden City and Wheathampstead.

One of the four guiding principles of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2018-2031 (LTP4) is **modal shift and encouraging active travel**: 'Achieving a modal shift in future years away from car use to more sustainable modes such as public transport, walking and cycling will greatly support delivery of the LTP objectives. The potential public health benefits of increased levels of active travel indicate this should be a high priority, and a key feature of the future transport system we are planning for.'

The development and promotion of active travel routes is supported by three policies in [LTP4](#):

- **Policy 1: Transport User Hierarchy** which considers the needs of pedestrians and cyclists before those of any other transport user group.
- **Policy 7: Active Travel – Walking** which seeks to encourage and promote walking by increasing the priority of pedestrians relative to motor vehicles, delivering improved facilities for pedestrians and promotion of walking for both travel and recreation.
- **Policy 8: Active Travel - Cycling** which aims to deliver a step change in cycling in Hertfordshire through infrastructure improvements, higher prioritisation of cyclists and promotion.

2.2.2 Transport and health

The [Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020](#) includes an objective to: 'seek to increase the proportion of working age adults who are getting the recommended level of physical activity and reduce levels of overweight and obesity.' The recommendation for adults is 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week, but currently one in four adults across Hertfordshire do less than 30 minutes moderate activity a week. Growth in active travel and recreation will increase levels of physical activity, thereby improving health, promoting mental wellbeing, improving quality of life and helping promote independence.

Public health provides a strong business case for investing in cycling and walking, which offer excellent value for money, including by preventing the cost of ill health to society and the public purse. It is estimated that overweight and obesity cost the county £404m per year (Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-16).

2.2.3 Air quality and climate change

Emissions from transport are a major source of air pollution, and poor air quality is also a serious threat to health. In Hertfordshire, 514 deaths per year are thought to be attributable to fine particulate air pollution (Public Health England). Any modal shift from car to active travel will provide additional health and environmental benefits by reducing air pollution.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport is also essential if national targets are to be met. Road use by each Hertfordshire resident produces 2.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, 6% higher than the East of England average (National Statistics, 2017).

2.3 Geography and Landscape

The entirety of the Ayot Greenway lies within the Green Belt. It passes through the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area and passes near the Ayot Green, Water End and Wheathampstead Conservation Areas. The HCC-owned section of the route west of the A1(M) is a Local Wildlife Site (57/012), and the HCC-owned section east of the A1(M) passes through Sherrardspark Wood SSSI. The route passes a number of additional Local Wildlife Sites, shown on the constraints map in 2.1:

- Robinsons Wood (57/024 – ancient semi-natural woodland)
- Bowle's Wood (57/019 – ancient semi-natural woodland)
- Saul's Wood (57/009 – ancient semi-natural woodland)
- Long Spring Wood (57/051 – ancient semi-natural woodland)
- Blackbridge Tip (56/013 – protected species)

The eastern part of the route lies within the [Ayot St Peter Wooded Upland](#) Landscape Character Area (LCA), entering the [Upper Lea Valley](#) LCA in its western section.

This area is predominantly arable land in between extensive woodland and plantations. The traditional hamlets of Ayot St. Peter and Ayot Green are located to the eastern end of the route. The urban influence of Welwyn Garden City to the east is only apparent at the eastern fringes of the area. Despite the presence of the A1(M) to the east, most of the area feels remote and tranquil. To the west, the valley of the River Lea has more of an impact on the landscape, with slopes running down to the narrow and meandering river corridor. Users of the Ayot Greenway will see the river as they leave the route of the old railway line and follow public rights of way into Wheathampstead.

As a wooded green corridor, the Ayot Greenway is a significant feature traversing the landscape. Throughout the HCC-owned section it passes through cuttings and embankments, providing sections with open views across surrounding fields. These cuttings and embankments are almost the only reminder that this route was once a railway line. Much of the route has become naturally enclosed by secondary woodland, currently making some areas dark and over shaded. The section owned and managed by Tarmac Ltd is much more open.

2.4 History and Archaeology

The Ayot Greenway follows the route of the former Welwyn Garden City to Luton and Dunstable branch line. This opened in 1877 as a later addition to the Hatfield to Luton and Dunstable branch line. In July 1948, Ayot station (towards the eastern end of the route) was destroyed by a fire. The station was never rebuilt and was officially closed to passenger traffic in September 1949. Goods traffic continued to pass through until the station was closed to all railway traffic in 1963. Ayot station has since been demolished with very little evidence remaining. At the south end of the station, two sets of crossing gate posts survive. To the north of the crossing, the foundations of a number of buildings, including the signal box, can be found in the former goods yard. The stationmaster's house alongside the approach is now in private occupation. The south end of the former goods yard is now a car park for the Ayot

Greenway and is owned by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and managed by Hertfordshire County Council.



Figure 1. Ayot station c.1905 and station after fire in 1948



Figure 2. 1976 photo looking south east with former goods yard on far side of posts and 2006 photo of crossing gate posts, looking north west towards site of Ayot station. *Source: www.disused-stations.org.uk*

Wheathampstead station (at the western end of the route) is now owned by Wheathampstead Parish Council and was opened with the second section of the Hatfield to Dunstable line in 1860. The station closed to passengers in April 1965, and goods traffic continued to pass through until November 1965 when a connection with the Midland line at Luton opened, making the track east of Luton redundant. The west end of the station platform and a short section of the east end have since been demolished. Part of the single platform has now been restored by a team of volunteers, including the addition of a traditional shelter, a short section of railway and a restored 12 tonne goods wagon. Since restoration, the station has become an open air museum and is a feature of the Wheathampstead Heritage Trail.

Detailed histories and historic photos of Ayot and Wheathampstead stations, along with a history of the Welwyn Garden City to Luton and Dunstable line as a whole, can be found at the Disused Stations website: www.disused-stations.org.uk

2.5 Habitats and Wildlife

2.5.1 Habitats

The banks adjoining the old railway line have been naturally colonised by secondary woodland and scrub since the closure of the railway and the cessation of regular, large scale vegetation clearance. This now provides an important continuous linear wildlife corridor, offering a variety of habitats for insects, birds and mammals and providing a link between other wildlife sites. Tree and scrub species along the banks include oak, ash, hornbeam, hazel and hawthorn. Ash is present throughout the route, but particularly prominent towards the western end and it is likely that this area will be affected by Chalara dieback of ash within the next decade.

In many places, the dense semi-mature woodland on the embankments and cuttings prevents light from reaching the floor, and results in a poor, shade tolerant ground flora. Several ancient woodland indicators have been recorded in the ground layer, including Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Yellow Archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*), Wood Meadow-grass (*Poa nemoralis*), Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) and Early Dog-violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*).

Narrow strips of grasses and wildflowers border the central track where sufficient light reaches the ground. In the past, the grassy banks have supported a good diversity of flora including indicator species such as Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Bird's Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*) and Salad Burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*). Other species of interest recorded include Common Corn-salad (*Valerianella locusta*), Common Stork's-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*), Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*) and Small-flowered Crane's-bill (*Geranium pusillum*). The Ayot Greenway from Wheathampstead to the A1(M) is a Local Wildlife Site as a result of these grassland indicator species, which are still present in places although lost to over-shading in many areas. This loss has also impacted other aspects of the wildlife of the site including grassland butterflies and moths.

2.5.2 Species

A HERC data search obtained shows that several protected species have been recorded close to the Ayot Greenway. However, few records are directly associated with the site.

Badgers have been recorded on the route, and there are numerous records from within 2km of the route. There may be setts in the embankments or cuttings. Bats will use the Ayot Greenway as a corridor to feed along, and mature trees have the potential to hold roosting bats. Eleven species of bat have been recorded within 2km of the route.

A variety of common birds can be expected to nest in trees and scrub along the route. The invertebrate fauna is also likely to be diverse although under-recorded.

2.6 Access, Facilities and Infrastructure

2.6.1 Access, Circulation and Entrances

The Ayot Greenway is not a designated Public Right of Way, but access is permitted for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers. It forms part of Sustrans National Cycle Network Route 12, between Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage, and Route 57 between

Welwyn Garden City and Wheathampstead, providing an off-road link between Welwyn Garden City and Wheathampstead. At the Wheathampstead end, the disused railway section connects to the village along short off-road sections on Wheathampstead Byway 004 then Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 and Mount Road. At the Welwyn Garden City end it connects directly to the road network at multiple points, with the National Cycle Network leading onto Bridge Road.

It is accessible from all the roads and rights of way which cross or meet the route:

- B653 Cory Wright Way
- Wheathampstead Footpath 063 towards Sheepcote Lane and Codicote Road
- Wheathampstead Byway 004 towards Sheepcote Lane and Codicote Road
- Wheathampstead Bridleway 018 towards Sheepcote Lane and Waterend Lane
- Wheathampstead Footpath 089 towards Codicote Road and Waterend Lane
- Wheathampstead Footpath 084 towards Waterend Lane
- Ayot St. Peter Footpath 017 towards Ayot St. Peter Road
- Wheathampstead Bridleway 011/ Ayot St. Peter Bridleway 016 towards Codicote Road and Waterend Lane
- Ayot St. Peter Footpath 019 towards Ayot St. Peter Road
- Ayot St. Peter Footpath 021 towards Waterend Lane
- Ayot St. Peter Footpath 020 towards Waterend Lane
- Ayot St. Peter Road
- Ayot Little Green Lane
- Ayot Green
- Great North Road
- Welwyn Garden City Bridleway 018 towards Great North Road
- Welwyn Garden City Footpath 035 within Sherrardspark Wood
- Welwyn Garden City Footpath 034 within Sherrardspark Wood
- Welwyn Garden City Bridleway 013 towards Reddings and Bridge Road
- Campus West Car Park
- Digswell Road

The Ayot Greenway is a predominantly traffic-free route, although it does follow a short on-road section from Ayot St. Peter Road to cross the A1(M). The route then passes over the A1(M) by bridge from Ayot Green and proceeds to cross Great North Road before entering Sherrardspark Wood.

2.6.2 Car park and vehicular access

There is one car park associated with the Ayot Greenway. This is located in the former goods yard of the old Ayot station and is owned by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and managed by Hertfordshire County Council. The car park has space for around eight vehicles. No motor vehicles are allowed on the Ayot Greenway apart from contractors authorised by the landowners. The main access for authorised vehicles, including emergency services, to the HCC-owned section of the Ayot Greenway is via Sparrowhall Farm.



Figure 3 Ayot Greenway car park looking east and car park looking west

2.6.3 Path surface

The HCC-owned section of the route has an unsealed aggregate surface, which in many places is covered by organic material and can be very wet during the winter. The wetter and muddier sections are generally associated with the cuttings, which are darker, shadier and have more overhanging vegetation. In contrast, the embankments are usually lighter and drier. The section owned by Tarmac Ltd has a similar surface type, although it is generally more open and less muddy.

At the Wheathampstead end, the route passes through the B653 underpass on Wheathampstead Byway 004, which regularly floods after prolonged wet weather. Although drainage ditches are present these are overgrown with vegetation.



Figure 4 Flooded surface by B653 underpass

2.6.4 Destinations accessible from the Ayot Greenway

The primary destinations of the Ayot Greenway are Wheathampstead and Welwyn Garden City, towns with populations of 6,410 and 48,380 respectively (2011 census) and major employers such as Tesco and Hertfordshire County Council. The larger neighbouring settlements of Hatfield (69,429) and St Albans (57,795) can also be accessed by a

combination of on- and off-road routes. The nearest railway station is Welwyn Garden City (1km from the eastern end of the Ayot Greenway). The route also provides access to the villages and hamlets around Ayot Green.

For recreation, the Ayot Greenway provides a route through Sherrardspark Wood. It also connects with the Hertfordshire Way at Sheepcote Lane near Wheathampstead, and intersects the Lea Valley Walk, a 50 mile route following the River Lea between Luton and the Thames, at Wheathampstead.

2.6.5 Furniture

There are three benches or seats along the route with two more picnic tables at Robinsons Wood picnic area, the majority of these are now in poor condition and in need of replacing.

There are steps by the B653 underpass where Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 meets Wheathampstead Byway 004, however a steel bar crosses the gap in the fence restricting passage. Users currently have to continue along to the end of the Bridleway to reach the Byway. There are also steps built into the bank where the route descends onto Ayot St Peter Road to join National Cycle Network Route 12. An alternative access option here includes the series of ramps with a Kent carriage gap, providing sloped access to multiple users including carriage drivers. There is also a Kent carriage gap located just before Robinsons Wood towards the Wheathampstead end.

No access furniture exists for most of the Rights of Way access points that cross the Ayot Greenway, with exception of stepped banks used to access Wheathampstead Bridleway 018 and Wheathampstead Bridleway 011, and some steps used to access Wheathampstead Footpath 084.

2.6.6 Signage, interpretation and leaflet

There are various fingerposts along the route; blue cycle route signs for the National Cycle Network and connecting routes, Rights of Way signs and some additional routed wooden signage. National Cycle Network routes 57 and 12 are also signed in places with small blue markers or stickers on waymarkers and signposts.

There is a lack of entrance signage at either end of the Ayot Greenway, however large wooden finger posts are located in Wheathampstead at the start of Wheathampstead Bridleway 012, the junction where Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 meets Wheathampstead Byway 004, along Sheepcote Lane where the Ayot Greenway begins, by Ayot St Peter Road where the route joins National Cycle Network Route 12 and just outside of Sherrardspark Wood near Reddings where the route meets Welwyn Garden City Bridleway 013.

Historical interpretation panels are located at the western end of the route in Wheathampstead where a wind-up audio feature no longer works, by the Ayot St Peter entrance and near Reddings where Welwyn Garden City Bridleway 013 meets the route.

An [Ayot Greenway leaflet](#) exists which details the whole route, including a brief history and what to see and do along the route. The Ayot Greenway is also included on the [Hertfordshire Cycling Map for Recreation and Commuting](#).

2.7 Community, Management and Events

The Ayot Greenway has three landowners (shown on following map). At the western end, Tarmac Ltd own and manage 0.4km between Sheepcote Lane and Blackbridge. The 3.3km section between Blackbridge and Ayot St Peter Road and the 1.5km section which runs through Sherrardspark Wood to Digswell Road in Welwyn Garden City is owned and managed by HCC as part of its Rural Estates. This has been used for active travel and recreation since the closure of the Welwyn Garden City to Luton and Dunstable line in 1965. A 0.9km on-road section follows National Cycle Network Route 12 from Ayot St Peter Road and heads south to cross the A1(M) and Digswell Hill (B197) before linking to Sherrardspark Wood. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council own the 0.3km section starting at the Sherrardspark Wood entrance off Digswell Hill before joining back up with land owned by HCC. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council also owns a short stretch of track heading east along Ayot St Peter Road where the car park is located. At the Wheathampstead end, a 1.3km off road route links to Mount Road following National Cycle Network Route 57. At the Welwyn Garden City end, a 0.6km on road route links to the Parkway following National Cycle Network Route 12 via Bridge Road, Handside Lane and Russelcroft Road.

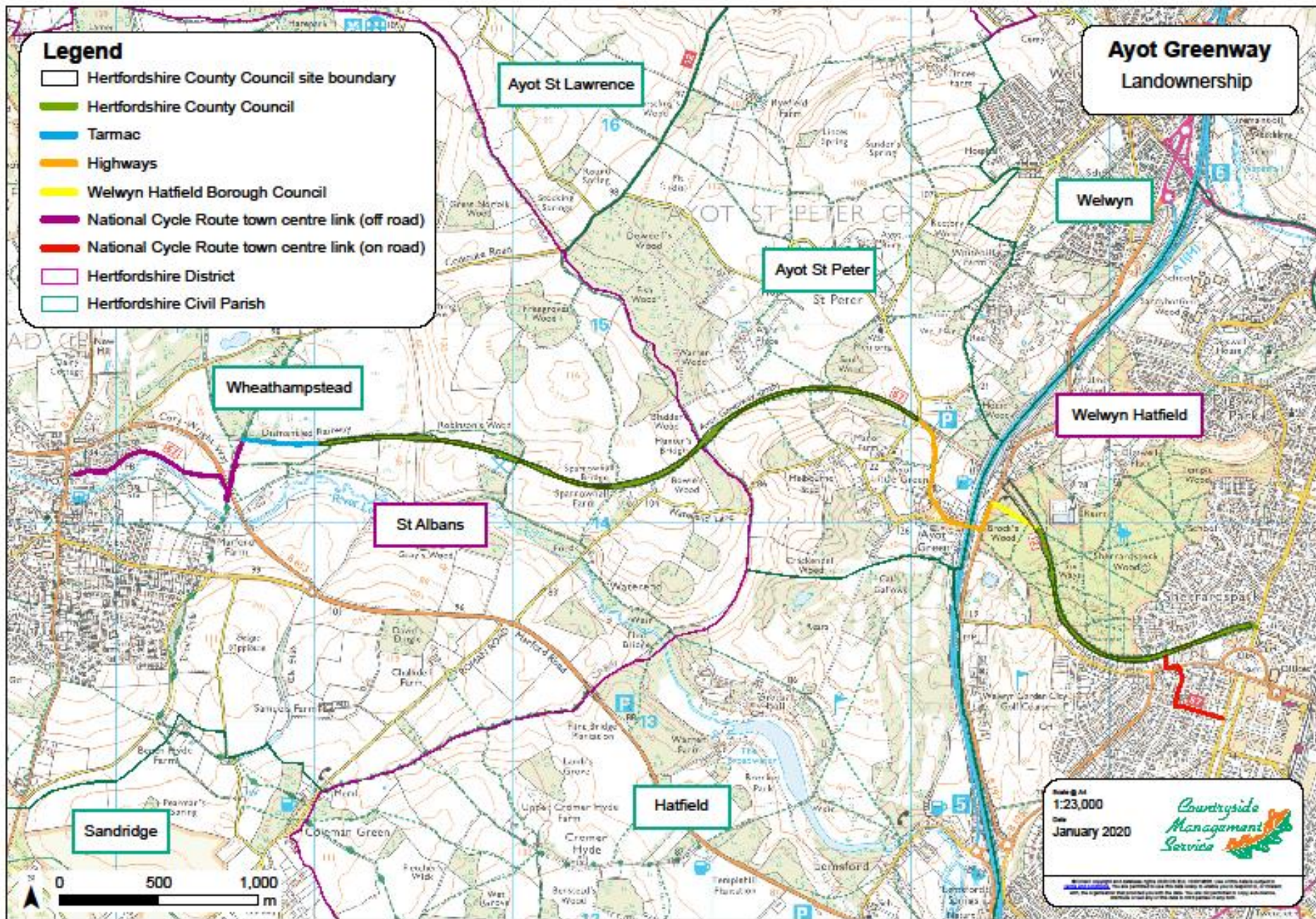
The Ayot Greenway is split between St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield districts, and between two town and parish councils: Wheathampstead and Ayot St Peter.

This is the first five year Greenspace Action Plan to be produced for the route, and has been produced in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including:

Hertfordshire County Council
St Albans City and District Council
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council
Wheathampstead Parish Council
Ayot St Peter Parish Council
Ayot St Lawrence Parish Council
Hatfield Civil Parish
Welwyn Civil Parish
Natural England
Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust
Hertfordshire & Middlesex Butterfly Conservation
Hertfordshire & Middlesex Bat Group
Hertfordshire Local Access Forum
British Driving Society
British Horse Society
Cycle Herts
Welwyn Wheelers
South Herts Cyclists
St Albans Cycle Campaign
WelHat Cycling
Sherrardspark Wood Wardens
Ramblers Association
St Albans and District Footpath Society
Sustrans

Tarmac Ltd
Hertfordshire Association for Local History
Hertfordshire Natural History Society
Wheathampstead History Society
Welwyn Natural History Society
Wheathampstead and District Preservation Society
Neighbouring landowners and the local community

The Ayot Greenway is a popular route, used by various user groups – for walking, running, cycling, horse riding and carriage driving. To date there has only been small scale volunteer involvement in its management, including very occasional tasks by practical conservation volunteers, litter picking organised by local parish councils and active groups.



3.0 AIM & OBJECTIVES

The aim and objectives of the GAP are as follows:

Aim

To maximise the value of the Ayot Greenway as an attractive, functional, multi-user route, well-used for active travel and recreation alike and rich in biodiversity and heritage.

Objectives

A. To maintain and improve the Ayot Greenway as a core component of Hertfordshire's strategic non-motorised transport network.

- A1 Improve the surface of the route to enable use throughout the year by all user groups.
- A2 Improve drainage along the route.
- A3 Maintain access points that are welcoming and suitable for users of all abilities.
- A4 Install appropriate and attractive signage to, from, along and at the entrances to the route.
- A5 Establish links to the wider green infrastructure network, businesses and schools, residential areas, public transport, shops, local amenities and local green spaces.
- A6 Manage and maintain the surface, signage and drainage of the route.
- A7 Remove graffiti and fly-tipping.
- A8 Carry out regular litter picking and small scale vegetation management.
- A9 Maintain regular vegetation cutting along the margins of the route.

B. To increase use of the Ayot Greenway for both active travel and recreation.

- B1 Develop and implement a promotional strategy to increase awareness and usage of the route.
- B2 Improve the visitor experience by providing appropriate and relevant interpretation.
- B3 Provide benches in an appropriate and consistent style.
- B4 Update the Ayot Greenway leaflet and distribute it widely.
- B5 Develop appropriate branding for the Ayot Greenway to build a recognisable and consistent image for all sections of the route.

C. To maximise financial sustainability of all management operations on site.

- C1 Through a pre-planned, proactive approach, improve financial sustainability of ongoing maintenance costs.

C2 Support improvements to the route and reduce future revenue cost liability by securing external capital investment, including developer S106, Department for Transport funding rounds etc.

C3 Offset vegetation management costs through production and sale of timber where feasible.

D. To protect and enhance the natural environment and heritage of the Ayot Greenway.

D1 Celebrate the heritage associated with the former Welwyn Garden City to Wheathampstead branch line along the route.

D2 Undertake proactive rotational woodland and vegetation management along the route to secure the future of high quality habitats and strengthen the continuity of vegetation.

D3 Work to enhance key habitats and secure priority species found along the route.

E. To ensure that users of the Ayot Greenway feel safe and welcome at all times.

E1 Ensure that the Ayot Greenway provides a safe route for all user groups.

E2 Respond proactively to any misuse of the site.

E3 Carry out reactive tree works to address safety issues.

E4 Ensure that woodland management for conservation achieves multiple objectives where possible, including improved sight lines and increased light levels. **To develop and maintain an informed, involved and enthusiastic local community.**

F1 Engage the local community as widely as possible through the GAP development process to build understanding and support for the plan, enabling them to shape and influence the outcomes.

F2 Enable the local community to contribute to the management of the Ayot Greenway in a structured and supported way and ensure all involved operate towards achievement of the objectives of the GAP.

F3 Work with private landowners to ensure that the full length of the route is in positive management.

4.0 MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

4.1 Maintain and improve the Ayot Greenway as a core component of Hertfordshire's strategic non-motorised transport network

The Ayot Greenway has an unsealed aggregate surface, which while largely in good condition suffers from considerable accumulation of mud and other organic material. Large sections remain wet and muddy for much of the year, with poor drainage. In its current form, the surface is unsuitable for many users during the winter.

Any changes to the surface must be appropriate to the rural setting, suitable for all user groups and proportionate to need. The surface should be restored with unbound aggregate to the same standard that was achieved previously when the route was resurfaced, this standard was agreeable to all user groups and has worn well over time. There is insufficient space for a split surfacing approach, and therefore a minimum width of 3m should be provided to enable the surface to be shared safely by all users.

All of the route owned by Hertfordshire County Council should therefore be resurfaced using crushed concrete to a similar standard to the existing surface. This will involve the removal of mud and organic material and the construction of a new wearing course with a minimum camber of 1:40 to ensure it sheds water laterally, and to a width of 3m wherever space allows. It is recommended that the section of the route owned by Tarmac Ltd between Sheepcote Lane and Blackbridge Tip is also resurfaced to the same standard as drainage is poor in places with substantial accumulation of leaf litter and mud.

In addition, although any elaborate drainage structures would not be cost-effective, French drains should be constructed along the wettest parts of the route to aid drainage. These would intercept surface water flows from either side of the path and collect surface water from the path. As the Ayot Greenway is largely flat, surface water cannot easily run away, but can be encouraged to percolate gradually into the ground, rather than running over or sitting on the surface.

Given the setting, further accumulation of mud and leaves is inevitable. There is no budget available for annual maintenance of the surface or removal of leaves, but to maintain the surface in reasonable condition allowance should be made for the removal of accumulated mud and the maintenance of French drains every five years.

The surface of Wheathampstead Byway 004, which forms part of the link from the end of the Ayot Greenway into Wheathampstead, is in poor condition with large potholes and requires resurfacing to the same standard as the rest of the Ayot Greenway. The track often floods under the bridge and a drainage ditch running north from here should be restored to alleviate this problem. Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 joins this Byway at an acute angle causing users to follow a tight bend to head north along the Byway. Scrub management should be undertaken here to widen and flare the junction, creating more space for all users to turn. The surface of the bridleway is also poor and uneven in places, this should be resurfaced to the same standard as the Ayot Greenway to improve accessibility for all user groups.

Existing directional signage is reasonable, however requires refreshing in some places to ensure all signs are fit for purpose and provide easy and welcoming access for all users. Signage to, from, along and at the entrances to the route should be improved using a standard and custom-designed style to help build an identity for the Ayot Greenway and celebrate its railway heritage.



Figure 5 NCN sign in Sherrardspark Wood needing updating to include 'Ayot Greenway'

Most access points to the Rights of Way network are signposted with waymarker posts and/or discs, however some are in poor condition and have become confusing in places. These require replacing to ensure all access points to the Rights of Way network are suitably signposted for all users. All access steps along the route are well worn, in poor condition and also in need of replacing, including those by the B653 underpass, Wheathampstead Bridleway 18 by Blackbridge, Wheathampstead Footpath 84 and where the route descends onto Ayot St Peter Road to join National Cycle Network Route 12. The three gates located along Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 are unnecessary for their location and cause inconvenience to users such as cyclists and horse riders, particularly individuals with limited mobility. These gates should be removed to facilitate easy access along the bridleway for everyone. The steel bar currently restricting access to steps by the B653 underpass from Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 should be removed and the steps replaced, providing an alternative connection to Byway 004.

An informal layby has developed along the Cory Wright Way which links to Wheathampstead Byway 004 along land owned by Tarmac. This area often accumulates litter left behind by cars parking in the layby and has also become a hot spot for fly-tipping. Local volunteer groups led by Wheathampstead Parish Council often undertake litter picking in this area. It is recommended that the informal layby is closed to prevent access by vehicles and subsequent fly-tipping. This area would also benefit from a regular litter picking schedule.

When considering the links between the Ayot Greenway and the wider green infrastructure network, the key missing link is the lack of a safe cycle route between Wheathampstead and Leasey Bridge, where it is possible to connect back onto the former railway line and continue to Harpenden and from there towards Hemel Hempstead or Luton. This gap in the network is a significant check on the value of the Ayot Greenway, as it is not easy to continue beyond Wheathampstead. While this is beyond the scope of this plan, it is a priority for Hertfordshire County Council, and is noted as part of Package 16 within the [current consultation on a South Central Growth and Transport Plan](#).

The on-road section which follows National Cycle Route 12 through Ayot Green to Sherrardspark Wood is a weakness in the route. There are concerns about road safety along this section with regard to speed of vehicles, particularly in areas where the road meanders and visibility is poor. This issue should be discussed with Highways to investigate whether any improvements to road safety could be made in this area. In Welwyn Garden City the route starts/ends by the white bridge on Digswell Road, however a track continues east of the bridge towards Oaklands College west car park. Located at the campus east car park is a cycle route connection which provides a

valuable link to residential areas, Shire Park Business Park and beyond. The potential to improve access to the rail bed east of Digswell Road should be investigated to improve connectivity between the Ayot Greenway and the campus east cycle route.

Regular routine maintenance of the route is important to ensure that it feels cared for and to encourage regular use. This should include promptly removing any graffiti or fly tipping when it is reported, although this is not currently an issue for the Ayot Greenway, carrying out regular litter picking particularly around Ayot Green car park, and undertaking small scale vegetation management.

The regular programme of vegetation cutting along the margins of the HCC-owned section of the route should continue, to keep the full width of the path and access points, as well as signage and furniture, free from encroaching vegetation throughout the year. Grass verges are currently cut once or twice annually depending on growth throughout the season. A path corridor which is at least 4m high and extends 1m to either side of the track should be kept free of vegetation, with the minimum number of cuts to maintain good access but allow wildflowers in the verges to flower. Any scrub or large branches encroaching on this area should be cleared to establish this minimum standard of maintenance.

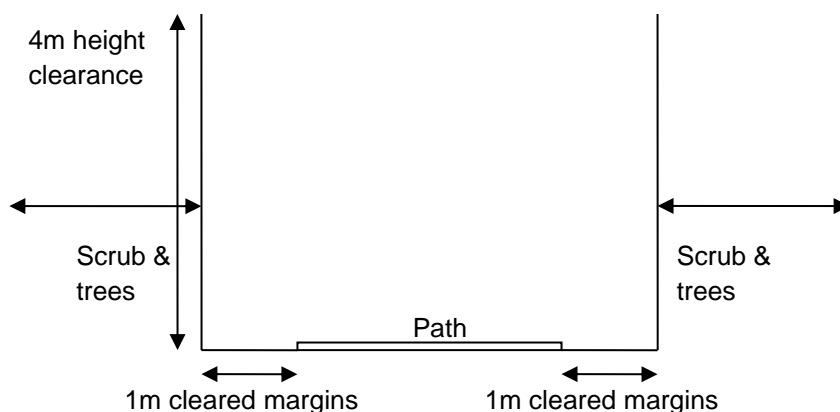


Diagram: Minimum standard of maintenance along the route.

4.2 Increase use of the Ayot Greenway for both active travel and recreation

A starting point in better promoting the Ayot Greenway would be to build its identity. This could include a logo based on its railway heritage, similar to that already developed for other disused railway lines in the county. The logo would be used on all signage, both on- and off-route, to make it very clear to users when they are heading towards or following the Ayot Greenway and develop a recognisable and consistent image for all sections of the route, whether managed by HCC or Tarmac Ltd. New attractive and welcoming signage should be installed, replacing existing signage where present, at Ayot Green car park and the entrances to the Ayot Greenway at Ayot Green and Sheepcote Lane.

The three interpretation boards installed several years ago as part of the Lost Rails project are now in poor condition and should be updated with attractive new oak framed boards of a customised design, perhaps similar to those recently installed on the Alban Way and Cole Green Way. Four new interpretation boards should be installed to replace the existing boards, with an additional one located at the Ayot Station car park. These boards will help new visitors understand the route of the Ayot Greenway, identifying key points along it with distance

information and suggesting alternative options for walking, cycling, riding and carriage driving in the area. They will also provide some information on the historical significance and value to wildlife of the route.

The existing leaflet for the Ayot Greenway should be reviewed, updated and reprinted. It should be distributed as widely as possible, including to standard outlets like tourist offices and libraries, as well as significant employers in Welwyn Garden City and Wheathampstead. The leaflet and other information about the Ayot Greenway should also be made widely available digitally, through sources such as the Hertfordshire County Council website and the Parks Herts website. The Ayot Greenway should also be promoted in the media and through social media, particularly as the improvements associated with this plan are implemented and celebrated.

There are three benches along the Ayot Greenway, although these are now very worn and damaged in places and require replacing. Encroaching vegetation around some of the benches makes reaching them difficult, so this should be added to the vegetation management programme. Two additional picnic tables are located at Robinson's Wood, both of which are also in poor condition and should be replaced to include a wheelchair accessible option. This formal picnic area has become neglected and over shaded, vegetation management here should focus on establishing the area as an open glade. The fencing separating the picnic area from the track should also be removed to facilitate improved access for all. Simple wooden benches such as sawn timber should be installed here and at several other locations along the route, to provide resting points and opportunities for visitors to sit and enjoy views of the countryside.

It would be desirable to monitor user numbers for the Ayot Greenway, before the start of any work, as it takes place and in the years afterwards. This will provide valuable information on the impact both of the work itself and of additional promotion of the route, informing future investment in similar schemes.

4.3 Maximise financial sustainability of all management operations on site

The improvement actions set out in this plan are largely subject to external funding which has not yet been secured. Securing this funding is central to achieving the goals of the plan and should therefore be a primary early focus. Funding sources could include:

- S106 funds currently available from developments in St Albans or Welwyn Hatfield districts.
- Direct contributions through the S106 or Community Infrastructure Levy process from future developments in St Albans or Welwyn Hatfield districts.
- Department for Transport funding.
- Funding administered by Sustrans.
- HCC internal capital funding.

Any investment should include provision for future maintenance, to ensure that HCC does not incur additional maintenance costs as a result of the work. Maintenance costs should also be taken into account when considering surfacing choices.

Where feasible, the costs of vegetation management along the route should be offset by the sale of timber or other wood products. This will only be used to subsidise the cost of woodland management and there is no expectation of felling trees where the value of timber exceeds the cost of felling. This will not be sufficient to make such works cost neutral, but should reduce the total cost of the work.

Enabling volunteers to contribute to the management of the Ayot Greenway wherever possible will reduce the cost implications of some actions proposed, with the added benefit of community engagement in the GAP. Tasks which are well-suited to volunteers include scrub management, installation of signage and furniture, small-scale construction and litter picking.

Timings set out in the action plans in section 5 are indicative and may be brought forward or set back depending on the availability of funding.

4.4 Protect and enhance the natural environment and heritage of the Ayot Greenway

The primary environmental value of the Ayot Greenway is as a wildlife corridor of woodland, scrub and grass verges. This value should be maintained and enhanced. A proactive programme of rotational woodland and vegetation management would contribute to the development and maintenance of the secondary woodland and scrub habitats which predominate.

The main purpose of woodland management is to enhance this habitat and benefit biodiversity. Secondary woodland along the route will benefit from respacing for its future maturity, both providing mature trees the space to grow into and allowing natural regeneration to diversify age and species structure. In the long term, this work will improve the resilience and habitat value of the woodland. Woodland management will be carefully planned and carried out sensitively.

Habitat management should focus on light thinning (approximately 20% of total stems along the route, this may appear more in some areas where needed and less in others) and occasional glade creation through the wooded sections, and coppicing scrub in places where this is the dominant habitat type. This management will help the development of the remaining trees and provide opportunities for natural regeneration. To maintain this habitat value, tree planting can be considered but management of the woodland will prioritise natural regeneration. By maintaining or increasing light levels along the verges, this will also help secure the floristically rich verges which prompted the designation of the Ayot Greenway as a Local Wildlife Site and improve the potential of the habitat for grassland butterflies and moths. There are also several additional potential benefits which can be achieved from well-planned woodland management, as discussed in section 4.5.

The HCC owned section of the route should be divided into three zones so that woodland management work can be undertaken in stages, focusing on one zone per year. At the western end, zone one would begin at Blackbridge and end at Sparrowhall Farm. Zone two continues from Sparrowhall Farm to Ayot St Peter Road. At the eastern end, zone three should begin where Route 12 re-joins the old railway track in Sherrardspark Wood, ending at the White Bridge on Digswell Road.

Woodland management should be considered in the context of tree pests and diseases, of which ash dieback and Oak Processionary Moth are the most locally significant. Ash dieback will already be present in ash trees along the Ayot Greenway, and its impact on mature trees is expected to increase over the next ten years. When planning woodland management work on the Ayot Greenway, stands of ash trees along the route should be specifically reviewed. Pre-emptive clear felling of ash as a result of ash dieback is not appropriate, but ash should be prioritised for thinning as this should increase the resilience of the remaining trees. Where ash trees have to be felled, replanting with alternative native species will be considered.

Oak Processionary Moth is now present across southern Hertfordshire. The established population spreading from London is not yet known to have reached the vicinity of the Ayot Greenway, but is likely to do so within the next five years. A protocol for managing its occurrence on the Ayot Greenway is contained in Appendix 1. This protocol is based on current guidelines from the Forestry Commission and may require updating if those guidelines change.

Non-native species are not especially prominent along the route. Those worthy of note and which should be removed are a few patches of laurel bordering Sherrardspark Wood at the Welwyn Garden City end.

All works carried out along the route should take into account the requirements of protected and priority species, including bats, badgers and nesting birds. The site of the former Ayot Station and goods yard contains the foundations of a number of buildings, however these have deteriorated significantly over the years and should not be exposed any further. The former goods yard has become neglected and overgrown and would benefit from small scale scrub clearance to enhance the woodland and scrub habitat for wildlife. At the south end of the station there are two sets of surviving crossing gate posts, these heritage features are in good condition and would benefit from light maintenance of surrounding scrub so that they are not lost to encroaching vegetation. Scrub and bramble around the car park perimeter should continue to be routinely managed to maintain sight lines for parking and discourage anti-social behaviour. The track which joins Ayot St Peter Footpath 015 from the car park should also be widened and fence repairs undertaken to make the path more welcoming to users. The rear fence line prevents unauthorised vehicle access to the former goods yard and should be retained and maintained as needed. As discussed in section 4.2, installing a new interpretation board that provides information about Ayot Station's history will celebrate the heritage associated with this route and improve visitor experience.



Figure 6 Overgrown former goods yard with fence line and track leading to Ayot St Peter Footpath 015

The large pond within Sherrardspark Wood, adjacent to the track, should be brought into management to improve this important habitat. There is a swallow hole within the pond resulting in water being regularly lost and the pond subject to drying up during periods of low rainfall. The pond is also currently over shaded making the habitat cooler and reducing available light for plant growth, while submerged fallen trees and leaf litter have increased water nutrients resulting in a species poor habitat. These conditions make the pond less favourable for wildlife and improving the health of the pond will help support a variety of species whilst also creating an attractive feature for users. Tree works should be undertaken around the pond to increase light, promote growth of marginal plants and improve the health of this valuable habitat.



Figure 7 Over shaded pond with fallen trees, Sherrardspark Wood



4.5 Ensure that users of the Ayot Greenway feel safe and welcome at all times

The Ayot Greenway must provide a safe, high quality route for all user groups. This is best achieved by maintaining its status as an unsegregated, shared use route. No user group has priority over any section of the track and promoting shared use is likely to encourage more considerate, less territorial behaviour by path users.. A code of conduct should be developed and signed at entrances that uses the 'Share with Care' message used along similar routes, emphasising that none of the user groups have priority and helping encourage good behaviour by all user groups. An example of a code of conduct for the Cole Green Way, with railway style branding which could be echoed on the Ayot Greenway, can be seen to the left. A symbol to represent carriage drivers should also be

included on shared use signage.

While larger motor vehicles can easily be excluded from the route, it is very difficult to physically restrict motorbikes or quadbikes, which are no wider than legitimate users. This is particularly difficult due to the length of the Ayot Greenway and the number of potential access points. Illegitimate users should instead continue to be discouraged by signage and reported to the police when observed. HCC does not have sufficient resources to regularly patrol the route and relies on the communities along the route to report any kind of misuse, either to the County Council or to the police by calling 101, as appropriate.

There are also concerns over misuse of the car park at Ayot Green, and a risk of theft from vehicles here. The secluded location of the car park cannot be changed, however undertaking regular management will make the space feel more welcoming to legitimate users. Any increase in the number of visitors as a result of the actions in this GAP will also improve the safety of the car park. Again, any misuse of the car park should be reported to the County Council or to the police.

The Ayot Greenway is zoned as a medium risk area for tree safety by the County Council's Rural Estates team. Tree safety surveys are currently being undertaken along the HCC owned section of the Ayot Greenway by professional surveyors. Re-surveying will occur every five years. A six monthly visual check of trees is carried out alongside other works, in time a focus on potential deterioration in ash trees will become part of this. Reactive tree works are undertaken whenever a safety issue is identified.

Woodland management is described in detail in section 4.4. Whilst undertaking proactive woodland management for the long-term benefit of the woodland along the Ayot Greenway, opportunities should be sought to achieve multiple benefits, including maintaining sight lines, preventing any encroachment of trees onto the track bed which reduces the width available for users and increasing light levels in places. Develop and maintain an informed, involved and enthusiastic local community

Greater involvement of the local community in the management of the Ayot Greenway has started through the process of developing this plan. Two stages of community engagement have enabled stakeholders and local people to shape and influence the outcomes of the plan, and should help build understanding and support for its objectives.

No formal Friends Group for the Ayot Greenway is planned at this stage. Local practical conservation volunteers should be engaged to work along the route where management objectives can be achieved, for example to coppice shrubs and small trees or to install signage. These practical tasks will provide regular opportunities for the local community to contribute to management of the route.

As the work in the Greenspace Action Plan proceeds, occasional guided walks should be arranged to give local people the opportunity to find out more about plans and to explore the rich heritage of the route.

While the County Council owns and manages the majority of the route, to maximise the impact of this plan and ensure that the full length of the route is in positive management it is vital that Tarmac Ltd and other private landowners are engaged. Tarmac Ltd are supportive of the process and prepared to consider recommendations which emerge from this plan. The short off-road section at the Wheathampstead end of the route follows public rights of way, and therefore engagement with the private landowners here to implement any relevant recommendations should be agreed through the Rights of Way team in the County Council.

Works identified in the action plan below for land outside the control of the County Council are recommendations only.

5.0 ACTION PLANS AND MAPS

5.1 ANNUAL AND REGULAR ACTIONS

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
0.1	Maintain width of the track which heads towards Ayot St Peter Footpath 015 from the car park	A3	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
0.2	Carry out an annual inspection of surface, drainage and signage and identify any maintenance requirements	A6	Annual	HCC Rural Estates		Site maintenance budget			
0.3	Remove any graffiti or fly tipping when reported	A7	Ongoing	HCC Rural Estates		Site maintenance budget			
0.4	Carry out small scale vegetation management as required	A8	Ongoing	HCC Rural Estates		Site maintenance budget			
0.5	Carry out regular litter picking around Ayot Station car park	A8	Ongoing	HCC Rural Estates		Site maintenance budget			
0.6	Carry out regular litter picking around informal layby on Cory Wright Way	A8	Ongoing	Tarmac					
0.7	Continue regular vegetation cutting along verges in HCC management	A9	Ongoing	HCC Rural Estates		Site maintenance budget			
0.8	Undertake regular vegetation cutting along verges between Sheepcote Lane and Blackbridge Tip	A9	Ongoing	Tarmac					
0.9	Routinely manage vegetation around car park perimeter	A9	Oct-Feb	HCC Rural Estates		Site maintenance budget			

0.10	Promote the Ayot Greenway using social media and promotional events/press releases	B1	Ongoing	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
0.11	Maintain seats and benches along route and replace if necessary	B3	Ongoing	HCC Rural Estates		Site maintenance budget			
0.12	Seek external funding to implement GAP	C1	Ongoing	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
0.13	Maintain 'no motor vehicle' signage at all main entrances	E1	Ongoing	HCC Rural Estates		Site maintenance budget			
0.14	Carry out reactive tree works to address any safety issues	E3	Ongoing	HCC Rural Estates		Site maintenance budget			
0.15	Engage volunteers where appropriate in practical conservation and heritage projects	F2	Ongoing	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			

5.2 YEAR 1 2020-21

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
1.1	Clear vegetation around entrances to rights of way and roads	A3	Oct-Feb	HCC RoW/ CMS	CMS	Volunteers		17	
1.2	Clear scrub to flare junction between Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 and Wheathampstead Byway 004	A3	Oct-Feb	HCC RoW/ CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
1.3	Remove metal bar and replace steps between Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 and Wheathampstead Byway 004	A3	Apr-Sept	HCC RoW/ CMS	CMS	Volunteers/ RoW maintenance budget	£1000	4	
1.4	Remove three gates along Wheathampstead Bridleway 012	A3	Apr-Sept	HCC RoW	CMS	Volunteers			
1.5	Restrict vehicle access to informal layby along the Cory Wright Way in Wheathampstead	A3	Apr-Sept	Tarmac					
1.6	Remove all disused and broken wooden signage and access furniture	A4	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
1.7	Remove and replace all damaged/ missing waymarking posts and discs along route	A4	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Volunteers/RoW maintenance budget	£500	8	
1.8	Investigate potential to improve access to the rail bed east of Digswell Road	A5	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
1.9	Clear vegetation from drainage ditches by B653 underpass	A6	Sept	CMS	CMS	RoW maintenance budget			
1.10	Design a new logo for the Ayot Greenway	B5	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External	£500	14	
1.11	Cut vegetation back to expose heritage features around Blackbridge/start of HCC ownership	D1	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			

1.12	Remove tree guards and black membrane around scrub planted between Sheepcote Lane and Blackbridge	D2	Oct-Feb	Tarmac					
1.13	Remove tree guards and black membrane around scrub planted between Blackbridge and Robinson's Wood	D2	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
1.14	Coppice scrub along north side of path within Zone 1 in sections	D2/D3	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers		16	
1.15	Carry out glade creation and tree thinning within secondary woodland along Zone 1, including Robinson's Wood	D2/D3	Oct-Feb	CMS	Contractor	External	£20,000	18	
1.16	Cut back encroaching scrub around 3 benches along route	D2	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
1.17	Discuss road safety around Ayot Green with Highways and investigate whether any improvements can be made.	E1	Apr-Sept	CMS	Highways	Officer time			

5.3 YEAR 2 2021-22

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
2.1	Install a new 3m wide unbound crushed concrete surface along Wheathampstead Byway 004	A1	Apr-Sept	HCC RoW	Contractor		£15,000	1	
2.2	Resurface Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 with unbound crushed concrete	A1	Apr-Sept	HCC RoW	Contractor		£10,000	1	
2.3	Install a new 3m wide unbound crushed concrete surface from Sheepcote Lane to Blackbridge	A1	Apr-Sept	Tarmac			£75,000	1	
2.4	Install a new 3m wide unbound crushed concrete surface throughout Zone 1	A1	Apr-Sept	CMS	Contractor	External			
2.5	Install French drains on both sides of path along wettest sections of Zone 1 cuttings	A2	Apr-Sept	CMS	Contractor	External	£33,000	2	
2.6	Remove fencing separating Robinsons Wood picnic area from track	A3	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
2.7	Design and install two entrance signs at main entrances by Sheepcote Lane and Ayot St Peter Road	A3	Apr-Sept	Tarmac/ CMS	CMS	External	£2000	5	
2.8	Design and install two entrance signs for Ayot Greenway car park	A3	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External	£1500	5	
2.9	Repair fence line along Ayot St Peter Footpath 015	A3	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
2.10	Increase width of the track which heads towards Ayot St Peter Footpath 015 from the car park	A3	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers		17	
2.11	Replace the 5 large wooden fingerposts along route with updated signage	A4	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External	£5000	6	
2.12	Establish minimum standard of maintenance in zones 1 and 2	A9	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	External			

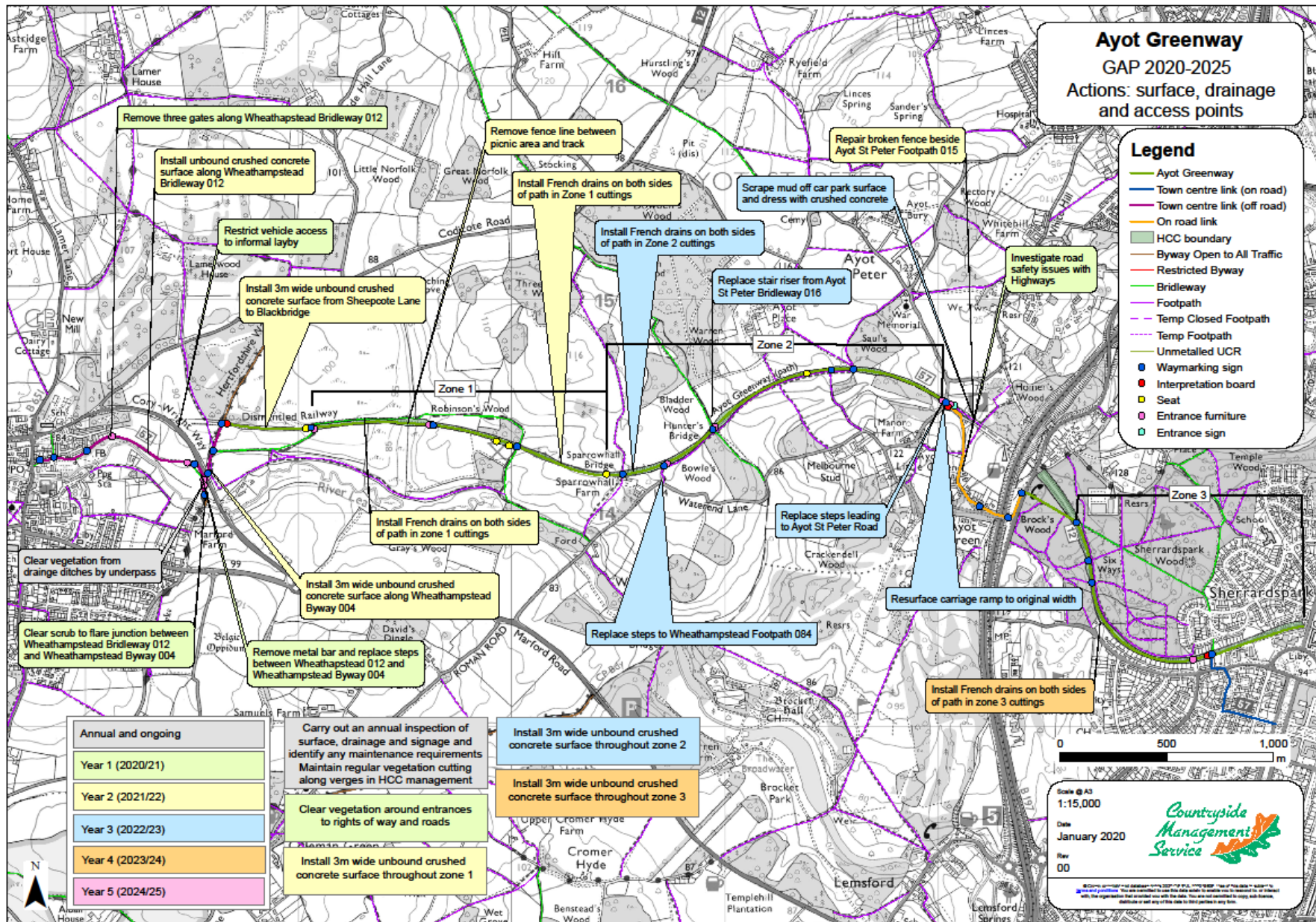
2.13	Improve online provision of information on the Ayot Greenway	B1	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
2.14	Design and install three new interpretation boards in place of existing boards	B2	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External	£4500	10	
2.15	Replace picnic tables at Robinson's Wood	B3	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	External	£3000	12	
2.16	Remove 3 existing benches along route and replace with simple sawn benches	B3	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External		11	
2.17	Redesign and reprint the Ayot Greenway leaflet	B4	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External	£1500	13	
2.18	Distribute site leaflet as widely as possible	B4	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Officer time			
2.19	Maintain vegetation around crossing gate posts at Ayot station	D1	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
2.20	Design and install additional interpretation board that illustrates history of Ayot Station	D1/B2	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External	£1500	10	
2.21	Manage vegetation in former goods yard to create open areas	D2	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
2.21	Carry out glade creation and tree thinning within secondary woodland along Zone 2	D2/D3	Oct-Feb	CMS	Contractor	External	£20,000	18	
2.22	Install shared use signage at all main entrances	E1	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External	£5000	19	

5.4 YEAR 3 2022-23

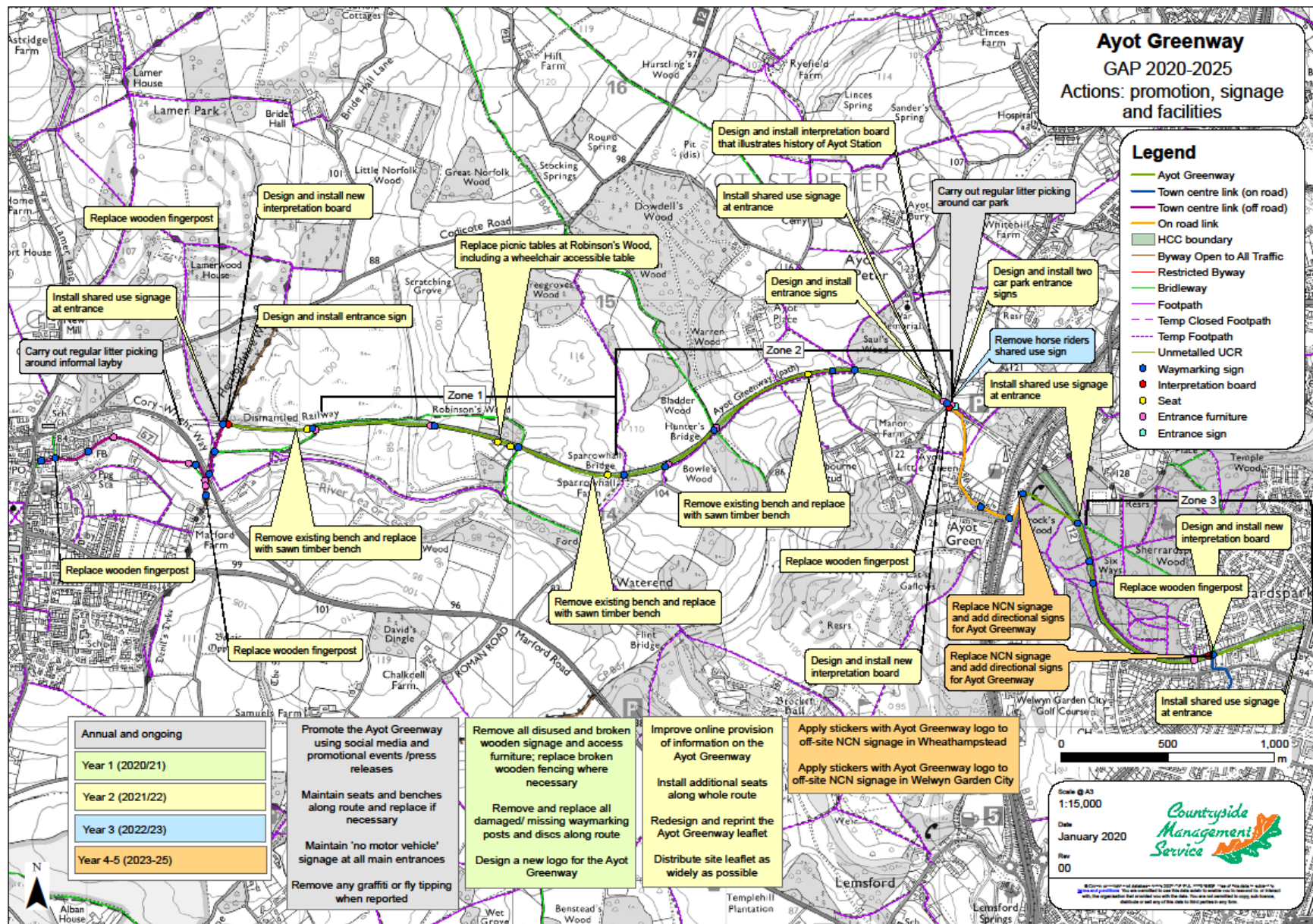
Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
3.1	Install a new 3m wide unbound crushed concrete surface throughout Zone 2	A1	Apr-Sept	CMS	Contractor	External	£80,000	1	
3.2	Resurface carriage ramp at Ayot St Peter Road to original width	A1	Apr-Sept	CMS	Contractor	External		3	
3.3	Scrape mud off surface of Ayot Station car park and dress with crushed concrete	A1/A3	Apr-Sept	CMS	Contractor	External			
3.4	Install French drains on both sides of path along wettest sections of Zone 2 cuttings	A2	Apr-Sept	CMS	Contractor	External	£15,000	2	
3.5	Remove and replace steps to Wheathampstead Footpath 084	A3	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Volunteers	£3000	4	
3.6	Replace stair riser leading to Ayot St Peter Bridleway 016 from Hunters Bridge	A3	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
3.7	Replace steps leading to Ayot St Peter Road	A3	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Volunteers		4	
3.8	Remove horse riders shared use sign by Ayot St Peter Road	A6	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
3.9	Clear vegetation to expose bridge west of Sparrowhall Farm	D1/D2	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers		15	
3.10	Carry out vegetation management to remove patches of laurel in Zone 3	D2	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS	Volunteers			
3.11	Carry out glade creation and tree thinning within secondary woodland along Zone 3	D2/D3	Oct-Feb	CMS	Contractor	External	£20,000	18	
3.12	Undertake tree works around pond in Sherrardspark Wood	D2/D3	Oct-Feb	CMS	CMS/ Contractor	External			

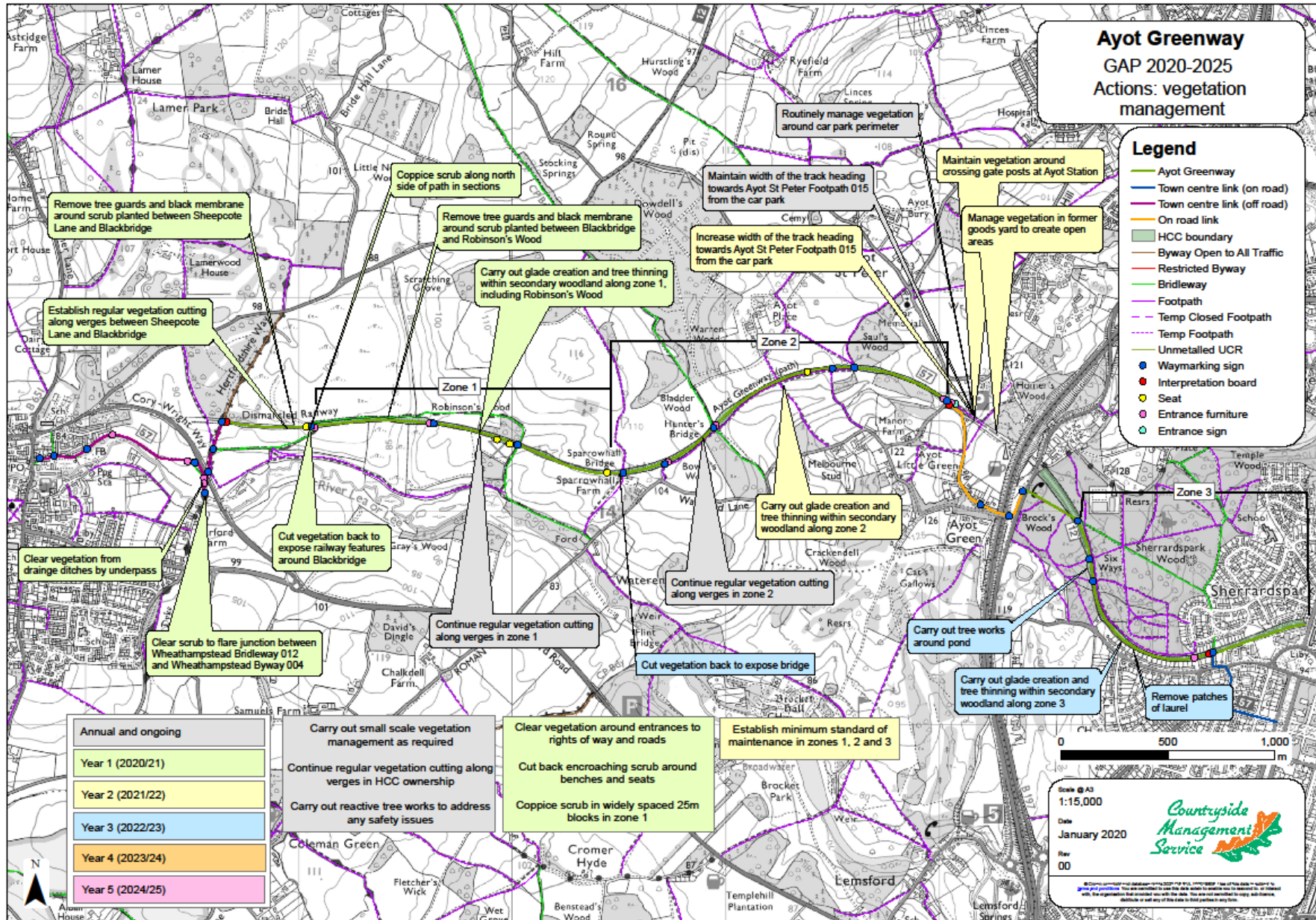
5.5 YEAR 4-5 2023-25

Ref no.	Action	Obj. Ref	When	Lead	Delivery	Funding	Est. Cost	Spec. Ref.	Status
4.1	Install a new 3m wide unbound crushed concrete surface throughout Zone 3	A1	Apr-Sept	CMS	Contractor	External	£75,000	1	
4.2	Install French drains on both sides of path along wettest sections of Zone 3 cuttings	A2	Apr-Sept	CMS	Contractor	External	£15,000	2	
4.3	Replace NCN signage by Reddings and Welwyn Garden City Bridleway 013 and add directional sign for 'Ayot Greenway'	A4	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External		7	
4.4	Replace NCN signage along Digswell Hill and add directional sign for 'Ayot Greenway'	A4	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External			
4.5	Apply stickers with Ayot Greenway logo to off-site NCN signage in Welwyn Garden City	A4	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External		9	
4.6	Apply stickers with Ayot Greenway logo to off-site NCN signage in Wheathampstead	A4	Apr-Sept	CMS	CMS	External		9	



Ayot Greenway Greenspace Action Plan 2020-25





6.0 SPECIFICATIONS

1. Install new unbound surface
 - a. Applicable to entire length of Ayot Greenway, Wheathampstead Byway 004 and Wheathampstead Bridleway 012.
 - b. Install a crushed stone, unbound surface with a width of 3m wherever possible
 - c. Scrape any organic material back to the edges of the path. Regrade material to fill any hollows and roll to ensure an even, firm base.
 - d. Lay surface according to its specific requirements.
2. Install French drains
 - a. Install French drains along sections of the route within cuttings, on both sides of the track where space allows.
 - b. Approximately 1km of the route requires drainage. Cuttings of 300m are located to the western end of HCC ownership, 400m around Robinsons Wood and 300m immediately east of Sparrowhall Farm.
 - c. Excavate a 300mm wide trench to 400mm below ground level.
 - d. Dispose of the excavated spoil on site at agreed locations if possible.
 - e. Line the trench with lightweight permeable geotextile sheet, allowing for 300mm overlap at edges.
 - f. Install perforated land drain, 150mm diameter in the trench.
 - g. Backfill to 200mm below top edge of trench with graded aggregate 40mm to 20mm, no fines.
 - h. Wrap geotextile over the aggregate before filling the remaining trench with graded aggregate 40mm to 20mm.
3. Resurface and regrade carriage ramp (self-binding surface)
 - a. Applicable to carriage ramp from Ayot St Peter Road (east side).
 - b. Site preparation: clear overhanging branches and encroaching vegetation to enable good access to the work area. All clearance work to be agreed in advance with supervising officer.
 - c. Scrape any organic material back to the edges of the path. Regrade material to fill any hollows and roll to ensure an even, firm base.
 - d. Lay chosen surface to a width of 3m according to its specific requirements.
4. Replace steps
 - a. Applicable to steps between Wheathampstead Bridleway 012 from Wheathampstead Byway 004 (west side), steps leading to Wheathampstead Footpath 084 (central), the stair riser leading down to Ayot St Peter Bridleway 016 (central) and steps leading to Ayot St Peter Road (east side).
 - b. Remove steps leading to Wheathampstead Bridleway 012, Ayot St Peter Bridleway 016 and Ayot St Peter Road and dispose of the waste timber at an appropriate waste disposal site.
 - c. Install steps in each location, revetting bank where required. Steps to be constructed of timber risers and stobs.
 - d. Steps to be a minimum of 1200mm wide.
 - e. Riser height to be constant, not less than 150mm and not more than 165mm. Tread width to be not less than 260mm and not more than 300mm and constant if angle of slope allows.
 - f. Risers to be made of sawn, pressure-treated softwood, 200mm x 50mm x 1200mm (min). Retain with two stobs, 50mm x 50mm x 450mm, on the outside of the riser. Weather the stob-tops once installed. Risers to be nailed to stobs from inside of step.
 - g. Handrail to be installed along whole flight, on the outside (open) edge where appropriate. Handrails to be set at 1000mm and 750mm above ground level.

- Grip to be 40-50mm in diameter. Timber to be treated softwood, planed, with corners and ends rounded off. Post tops to be one-way weathered.
5. Design and install new entrance sign
 - a. Design a large wooden entrance sign for the route and an entrance sign for the car park, routed with the site logo designed in 14 and the Hertfordshire County Council logo, both in-filled with paint of the appropriate colours which is suitable for external use.
 - b. Provide two proof stages of design in PDF format.
 - c. Produce two to the agreed route design and one to the agreed car park design using semi-seasoned English oak, with a smooth sanded natural finish, to be mounted on two posts of semi-seasoned English oak.
 - d. Install on site at identified locations along the route.
 6. Replace five large wooden fingerposts
 - a. Design large wooden fingerposts for the route, with NCN route numbers, engraved route length and engraved distance to nearest towns.
 - b. Provide proofs of design in PDF format.
 - c. Produce five posts to the agreed design using semi-seasoned English oak with a natural finish.
 - d. Install on site at identified locations along the route.
 7. Install new NCN signage
 - a. Install replacement or new blue NCN signage at the locations detailed on the action map.
 - b. All signage to include new Ayot Greenway logo, symbols for cyclists and walkers and indication of NCN routes 57 and 12 where appropriate.
 8. Install new RoW signage
 - a. Install replacement or new green RoW signage at the locations detailed below.
 - b. All signage to include the HCC logo and follow naming and colour conventions for RoW signage.
 - c. Hertingfordbury Footpath 014 to north: Birchall Lane ½; new post required
 - d. Hertingfordbury Footpath 014 to south-east: A414 250 yds
 - e. Hertingfordbury Bridleway 027 to north: Cole Green ½
 - f. Hertingfordbury Footpath 009 to north: The Old Coach Road ½; new post required
 - g. Hertingfordbury Footpath 009 to south: Letty Green ¼
 - h. Hertingfordbury Footpath 007 to north: Birch Green ¼; new post required
 - i. Hertingfordbury Footpath 007 to south: Letty Green ¼
 - j. Hertingfordbury Footpath 004 to north: Birch Green ½; new post required
 - k. Hertingfordbury Footpath 004 to south: East End Green ¼
 - l. Hertford Byway 056 (at St Mary's Lane car park) to east: Continues as footpath only to Hertford 1½
 - m. Hertford Byway 056 (at top of steps to south) to east: Hertford 1; new post required
 - n. Hertford Byway 056 (at top of steps to south) to west: Hertingfordbury ½
 - o. Hertford Footpath 055 to north-east: Hertford ¾
 - p. Hertford Footpath 055 to south-west: Hertingfordbury ¾
 9. Design and apply Ayot Greenway logo stickers to off-route NCN signage
 - a. Design Ayot Greenway logo stickers with a blue background identical in colour to NCN signage.
 - b. Provide two proof stages of full colour design in PDF format.
 - c. Print and deliver to CMS for installation by volunteers.
 10. Design and install new interpretation
 - a. Design and produce three A2 orientation panels which provide information for visitors on the route of the Ayot Greenway along with its key features, and provide PDF version of the same.
 - b. Panels to be identical with the exception of the 'you are here' marker.

- c. To include a full colour hand drawn 3D watercolour map of the Ayot Greenway showing the route and key features.
 - d. Text and photographs to be supplied by the customer.
 - e. Provide two proof stages of full colour design in hard copy and PDF format.
 - f. Supply three lectern oak frames, twin leg, incorporating a GRP panel.
 - g. Deliver to CMS for installation by volunteers at Sheepcote Lane, Ayot St Peter Road and the Reddings.
 - h. Design and produce one A2 interpretation panels featuring historic photos of Ayot Station, to be located by the former goods yard.
 - i. Text and photographs to be supplied by the customer.
 - j. Provide two proof stages of full colour design in hard copy and PDF format.
 - k. Supply one lectern oak frame, twin leg, incorporating a GRP panel.
 - l. Deliver to CMS for installation by volunteers.
11. Design and install traditional sawn timber benches
- a. Establish a single style of bench, befitting of the rural nature of the Ayot Greenway's surroundings
 - b. Use this bench to replace all existing seating along the Ayot Greenway where existing seats and benches have reached the end of their useful life.
12. Replace picnic tables at Robinson's Wood
- a. Supply two picnic tables of a wheelchair access design, both with wooden frame and slats
 - b. Install using anchor system or in concrete
13. Redesign and reprint Ayot Greenway leaflet
- a. Redesign and update the existing map-based site leaflet for the Ayot Greenway.
 - b. Replacement images and text to be provided.
 - c. To be double sided, full colour and gate folded with seven sides to DL.
 - d. Provide two proof stages of full colour design in hard copy and PDF format.
 - e. Print 5000 copies on 130gsm recycled paper or similar and deliver.
 - f. Provide final version in PDF format.
14. Design new Ayot Greenway logo
- a. Design an Ayot Greenway logo which reflects the railway history of the route, in a similar style to the Cole Green Way and Alban Way logos.
 - b. Provide two proof stages, if required, prior to completion.
 - c. Provide full colour and black and white versions of the logo in high resolution.
 - d. Incorporate this logo into all future signage and interpretation.
15. Thin vegetation to expose Sparrowhall bridge, Hunters bridge and Digswell bridge
- a. Clear all scrub within 5m of bridges, on both east and west sides.
 - b. Clear all vegetation from the sides and top of the bridge, including all ivy, taking care not to damage the brickwork.
 - c. All cut material to be removed from the site.
16. Coppice scrub
- a. Coppice scrub in widely-spaced 25m blocks, alternating between the north and south sides of the route.
 - b. Aim for a period of rotation of 25 years to maintain this habitat.
 - c. All cut material to be removed from the site.
 - d. All scrub work to be undertaken between October and February to avoid the bird nesting season.
17. Clear encroaching trees and scrub
- a. Establish a universal minimum standard of maintenance along the Ayot Greenway by keeping a minimum of 4m height and 1m on either side of the surfaced path free from encroaching vegetation. This includes all access points to the route.

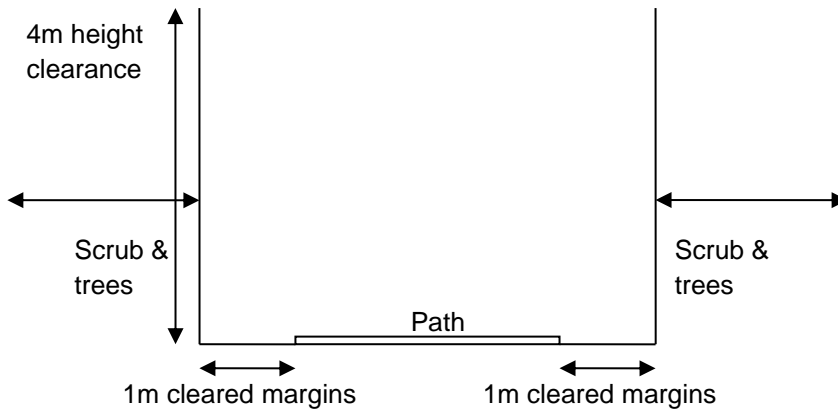


Diagram: Minimum standard of maintenance along the route.

18. Glade creation, thinning and removal of overhanging branches
 - a. Carry out light thinning (maximum 20%) in areas of heavy shade along the route, to create a more diverse woodland structure, give the remaining trees more space to develop and increase light levels to aid ground flora.
 - b. Trees to be marked individually for removal, targeting less healthy or less desirable species such as sycamore and ash and halo-thinning around oaks to aid their development.
 - c. Substantial overhanging branches are to be removed; these will also be marked individually.
 - d. All of the cut material to be removed from the site.
 - e. All tree work to be undertaken between October and February to avoid the bird nesting season.
19. Design and install shared use signage at all main entrances
 - a. Design, produce and install four blue shared use signs similar in design to the image below.



- b. Sign to be titled 'Share with care' with subtitle 'Please keep left', symbols for pedestrian, cyclist, horse rider and carriage driver, the Ayot Greenway logo and the National Cycle Network Route 57 symbol.
- c. Below a line there should be two additional messages: 'Please keep dogs under control and clean up after them' and 'No motorised vehicles', each accompanied by an appropriate symbol.
- d. Each panel to be mounted to a post.
- e. Provide two proof stages of design in PDF format.

7.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Guidance on oak processionary moth (OPM) control

If oak processionary moth is suspected on site:

If a potential oak processionary moth (OPM) sighting is identified on site, either through the course of regular inspections, maintenance activities or reported by a third party or member of the public, the following actions will be taken within the first 48 hours:

1. The exact location will be recorded, and photographs of observable caterpillars, nests and webbing will be obtained and sent to the Forestry Commission (FC) for official identification.

Email: OPM@forestrycommission.gov.uk

2. Notices will be posted at prominent access points and close to the location of the sighting to alert people accessing the site to the possible presence of OPM.

Link: [../OPMPublicInformationPoster_06APR16_print.pdf](#)

3. Relevant partners will be informed to ensure that activities are conducted safely or cancelled where necessary.
4. The specific location of the sighting will be assessed with consideration to the typical use of the site. If OPM is identified within close proximity to areas assessed as posing a high risk of public contact, then additional precautions such as additional signage or temporary fencing will be taken to reduce the risk of public contact with OPM caterpillars and nests.

Once OPM is confirmed on site:

If OPM is confirmed on site by the FC – either a) following submission of photos from a suspected sighting to the FC or b) through the FC issuing a statutory plant health notice following OPM identification as part of the FC's monitoring programme – then appropriate control measures will be determined within five working days of the FC's confirmed identification.

Initial OPM control measures

Insecticide spraying which targets OPM may not be considered appropriate on this site due to its ecological impact. A coordinated approach to OPM control will be agreed with FC on a case by case basis, involving Natural England if within the SSSI. This will be determined by the location and extent of the infestation, the timing of the discovery and the proximity of OPM to high risk areas (outlined above). While this document outlines the intended process, this must be agreed by FC on a case by case basis.

Should it be agreed that insecticide spraying is not appropriate, the OPM infestation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- If the infestation is small and is discovered prior to moth emergence (late-July to mid-August) then nest removal represents a viable control to limit further advancement of the population.
- If the infestation is already substantial or the infestation is discovered after moth emergence (late-July to mid-August) then nest removal does not represent a viable control to limit further advancement of the population. As such nest removal should be conducted only when nests are in close proximity to high risk areas.

If insecticide spraying is appropriate, the OPM infestation will be assessed using the following criteria:

- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable and is discovered in time to complete spraying before caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying represents the best control to limit further advancement of the population.
- If the infestation is found in areas where limited insecticide spraying is considered acceptable but is discovered after caterpillar development renders it resistant to the insecticide (late-May), then spraying in the current season does not represent a viable control to limit further advancement of the population. In this case nest removal should be conducted if a) the infestation is discovered prior to moth emergence (late-July to mid-August), or b) if nests are in close proximity to high risk areas. Insecticide spraying should then be conducted within acceptable areas the following season.

Following assessment, if spraying in the current season or nest removal is appropriate then a suitably qualified and experienced arborist will be instructed to take appropriate action as soon as possible (typically within five working days). Arborists will be required to conduct insecticide spraying, nest removals and waste disposal in line with FC guidance as set out in chapters 6-7 of the OPM Manual.

Chapter 6: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-processionea/opm-manual-6-chemical-control-larvae/>

Chapter 7: <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/pest-and-disease-resources/oak-processionary-moth-thaumetopoea-processionea/opm-manual-7-manual-removal-nests-and-larvae/>

Woodland management

When oak trees are felled on site, no brash or small arisings (<10cm) should be removed if oak processionary moth (OPM) is known or strongly suspect to be present, unless it has first been chipped. Larger oak arisings (>10cm) can be removed from site after a thorough visual inspection for OPM nests or caterpillars.

If OPM is detected, works should be halted immediately while the Forestry Commission's OPM team are consulted. Based on the proximity of the Ayot Greenway to the current OPM migration range, it is expected that works would be permitted to swiftly resume. OPM-infested arisings must remain on site and be addressed according to the guidance on OPM management (Appendix 1). Other large oak arisings which are found to be OPM-free following a thorough visual inspection can be removed.

Subsequent OPM control measures

If OPM is known to have been on site in the previous year then proactive inspections will be scheduled for the following spring after caterpillar emergence (late-March to mid-April depending on annual climatic variance). The range of the inspection area will depend upon the location of previous infestations and will utilise a common sense approach to determine what is feasible given the surrounding environment. For instance, on publicly accessible open land and along linear paths an inspection range of 100m from previously infested trees would be reasonable, however in dense woodland set back from typically accessible routes an inspection range of 50m

may be more appropriate. New infestations will be reported to the FC and will be assessed to determine suitable controls measures using the principles outlined above.