



Battle CP Active Travel - Project proposal:

Saxonwood Road to Battle Abbey shared-use path

1. Introduction

The following project proposal derives from a BTC Planning & Transport Committee initiative, which formed a bid to ESCC for funding under an Active Travel scheme they promoted. That proposal was unsuccessful despite the community's long-desired improvement to cycling and walking options/availability to avoid the busy High Street in Battle.

This 'Saxonwood Road to Battle Abbey shared-use path' project proposal would provide a safe cycling & walking route between the environs of Battle & Langton Primary School and the Abbey Gatehouse, with links to the High Street.

This project proposal has been elaborated by the BTC Cycling and Walking Working Group (C&W WG), which reports to the Planning & Transport Committee. A detailed site survey was undertaken on 2020-July-08. This version includes all the information gathered by the C&W WG, having undertaken assessment of the impact on adjacent land that may occur when the project is implemented.

NOTE: Abbreviations used herein

BTC = Battle Town Council

B&L = Battle & Langton (school)

BW = Bridleway (numbers used accord with ESCC Rights of Way practice)

C&W = Cycling and Walking

ESCC = East Sussex County Council

FP = Footpath (numbers used accord with ESCC Rights of Way practice)

PRoW = Public Rights of Way

NTR = North Trade Road

2. Background

The 'Saxonwood Road to Battle Abbey shared-use path' route described forms part of the larger project known as the Battle Schools Greenway, which would in due course make off-road connections for walkers and cyclists between the Abbey Gatehouse and Claverham Community College further to the west.

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The Battle Schools Greenway route in turn would be further developed in stages as proposed in the Sustrans report (2018-March) particularly to the Railway Station to the east. This Active Travel route, now known as the 'Saxonwood Road to Battle Abbey shared-use path' is included within the East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan report, has been presented to ESCC's Cabinet (2021-Sept-30) and accepted by them as a long-term outline planned intention for development; this confirms the County Council's approval of the Battle Schools Greenway route.

It is therefore assumed that the case for this route is already made with regard to the Active Travel need.

This route is also included in the Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan, which received an overwhelming "Yes" vote on 2021-09-16 (see Reference 9.3) and is expected to be "made" by Rother District Council on 2021-Oct-18.

3. Document intention and purpose

The BTC C&W WG have drafted this document with the intention of describing the 'Saxonwood Road to Battle Abbey shared-use path' in enough detail that a contractor can provide a 'Design & Build' Order-of-Cost for the necessary work to achieve completion of the proposed project. Additionally, contractors will be asked to provide a working time estimate, because the route uses an existing Public Right of Way that would require closure during the works.

By requesting a 'Design & Build' Order-of-Cost, BTC is assuming that contractors will include provision and installation of all necessary signs, posts, hardware such as fencing and barriers, as required by ESCC specifications for PRow works and generally mentioned in the following sections.

At this stage contractors' responses will be used to understand the potential Order-of-Costs involved and their responses will only be used to inform BTC about the required need for funding the project. No information received will be published with source attribution, to preserve contractor anonymity. It is most likely that the funding stage will be quite lengthy and will require negotiation with multiple parties.

Contractors willing to provide an Order-of-Cost will subsequently, if funding can be obtained, asked to provide a full project cost quotation on a competitive basis.

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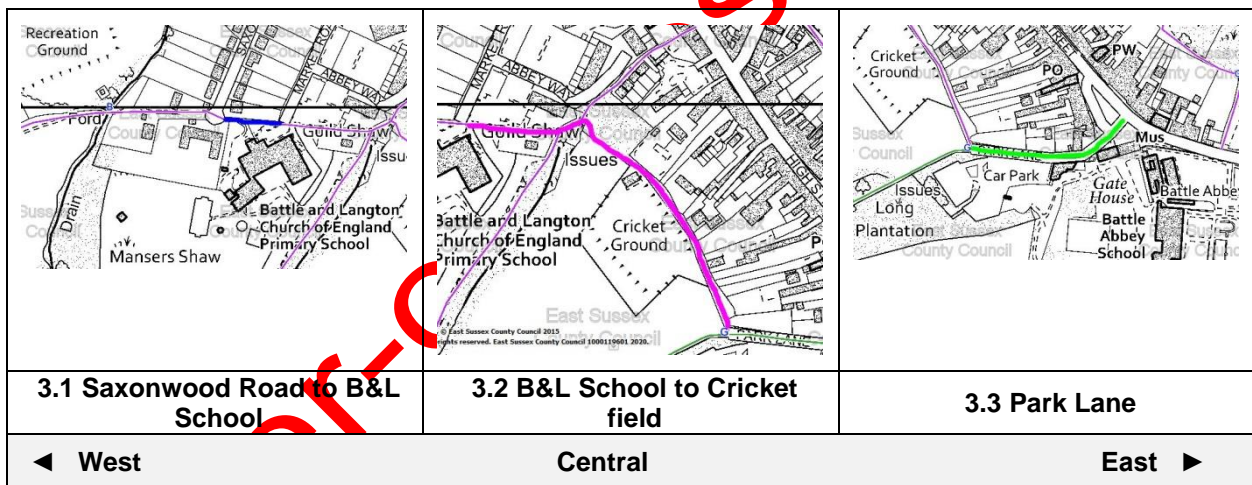
4. Description

The proposed 'Saxonwood Road to Battle Abbey shared-use path' route development (totalling 584m in length) is situated in the town centre area part of the longer Battle Schools Greenway. The segment chosen in this project runs from Saxonwood Road (in the north-west) to Battle Abbey car park entrance just west of the Gatehouse (in the south-east) along an existing Public Right of Way route, comprising designated Footpaths and a Bridleway.

The width of the proposed pathway is to be a minimum of 2.5metres where possible and have a tarmacked surface finish. Signage boards will be required at both ends and directional arrows for those joining the route midway.

This route is naturally segmented into three, which are described, from west to east:

- 4.1. Saxonwood Road to B&L School (works length: 57m)
- 4.2. B&L School to alongside the Cricket field (works length: 358m)
- 4.3. Park Lane (works length: 88m)



5. Saxonwood Road to B&L School (Blue coloured segment)

This segment would give access to users from the west of the town, either using FP82 from the North Trade Road (NTR) Recreation Ground or by using the Saxonwood Road (cul-de-sac) from NTR.

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The existing tarmac path between Saxonwood Road and Market Road is narrow and runs between a manufactured open-mesh metal fence bounding the school's northern perimeter and to its north a close-boarded wooden fence. For user safety it is proposed to install two drop kerbs on the Market Road footway and the path would then need to be graded to provide 2.5m width by under cutting its current northern bank to achieve adequate flat surface width. Adjacent to the Market Road there is a sub-surface services cover above the required level which would need to be lowered somewhat. (Sustrans were of the opinion that this lowering is possible.) Midway along this short segment a street lamp sits mid pathway. There seem to be two options: move it to one side or hard surface the path either side of it. Due to excellent potential sightlines and the short length of this segment either option would seem to be satisfactory.

6. **B&L School to Cricket field** (Purple coloured segment)

The junction with Market Road is currently formed by a wider area (more than 2.5m width) which gives users good sight lines. Two drop kerbs onto Market Road would start this segment safely for all users and some tidying of the surface, including realigning roadway drain gratings to be perpendicular to direction of travel for cyclists would be required, as it has several sub-surface services covers within the area.

The path gently descends towards the water pumping station corner, past a bungalow. As the path turns southwards around the pumping station, the existing wooden fence obstructs the view and should be replaced by 'manufactured open-mesh' metal fence to allow visibility for users, since at present there is no view of another user around the corner.

The path (FP82) has two pinch points due to street lamp siting, but overall, it can be made a 2.5m wide hard-bonded surface path from Market Road. The hedge to the path's north side will need significant cutting back, however it runs parallel to the RDC car park and a housing area's vehicle access and parking. It is proposed that the new path alignment uses the current path's southern edge and the new surface extends towards the car parks. Some hedging, though much reduced, will probably remain. There are vestiges of old fence pieces within the much-overgrown hedge, which it might be considered necessary to replace.

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The proposed route now meets FP83 at the pumping station corner, which comes from the east (Western Avenue, that connects with the High Street) and the shared-use path turns sharply southwards at the junction adjacent to the pumping station. There is a natural pinch point here that will function as a “slow-up/watch-out” point for all users and some mitigation may be required for safety reasons. However, to allow for best possible sight-lines for all users in the *three* directions at this junction, it is proposed to replace the pumping station’s solid wooden fencing by manufactured open-mesh metal fencing¹. (e.g. 3 panels on the north side, 2 panels on its east side where the access gate is situated and 3 panels on its south side).

On the ascent from the corner the wooden railings should be moved further out, but retained to help less-able users, from the existing tarmac edge and soil removed to maintain as the 2.5m width, if possible. It looks possible to camber the surface somewhat to help users and to provide some bank protection to replace the old soil erosion measures (near vertical railway sleepers) that have now rotted beyond usefulness.

Just before the path passes the cricket pavilion there are two modern posts either side of the path, whose function is unknown. They restrict the path width to 2.3m – this seems unnecessary and could be moved, together with some hedge trimming on the east side to allow 2.5m width to be achieved. The existing tarmac FP along the east side of the cricket field is well graded and should be widened generally either side of its current line to make a 2.5m wide hard-bonded surfaced route.

In the vicinity of the cricket field’s access gate the path will need to be widened to the east of the current path centre line as it gradually veers somewhat to the west before taking a line past the current fixed bench seats. Only one bench would need to be moved further to the east (advantageously onto a slightly higher location) to accommodate the wider path in front of them, to allow seating as now with good distant views.

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¹ For example: Safeogril™ Open mesh fencing system



In the same area the FP passes the western perimeter of an area known as “Tills Yard” that currently has a solid brick-wall separated from the path by a grass verge. The wall is in a very poor state and demolition on safety grounds is under consideration [2021-October]; rebuilding or replacement would result in securing the Yard, as before. However, the C&W WG has identified that another access to the High Street would be advantageous both for users of the path and potentially for traders on the High Street to encourage free movement between the two. It is therefore proposed that BTC P&T should seek permission in its negotiations about the wall replacement to install a doorway that would allow access for users. Historically other doorways have been used in this wall. Ideally designating and signposting a route, via a doorway between FP and High Street at this mid-point of the segment as a Permissive Cycleway *within* the Yard would suffice and potentially increase footfall for businesses in Tills Yard. It is understood the doorway would need to be lockable to secure the Yard, as is done by High Street gates overnight, with suitable ‘hours of access’ signs installed facing the path.

7. Park Lane (Green coloured segment)

This segment is characterised by the unmade-up lane, which has several pot holes that fill from local spring(s), leading eastwards from the field gates and pedestrian gates leading further westwards along the 1066 Country Walk (BW86a) and splitting to lead north (FP84) from the cricket field. Subsequently this becomes a standard tarmac roadway and adjacent footway leading from the English Heritage car park to the Abbey Green and imposing Gatehouse.

On a point of detail, the junction between BW and FP currently has both a locked field gate and a pedestrian gate. It is understood that the field gate is installed to stop vehicle traffic from intruding along FP, yet allow cricket field machinery access to the playing grass area via another field gate further along the path. It is appreciated that this arrangement should be retained. However, since other ends of the footpath network do not have pedestrian gates there seems to be no reason to retain the pedestrian gate; having no gate would improve accessibility for all users.

From the field gate and pedestrian gate to the car park entrance the lane has a high brick wall with buttresses (part of the English Heritage land).

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It is proposed that a 2.5m wide hard-bonded surface is installed adjacent to the wall, offset by 30cm to allow for a sub-wall drainage channel and that the used surface is slightly raised (above the existing level) to allow drainage off to the north where it may require another drainage channel to ensure user access safety year-round.

Whilst Park Lane does have an old concrete stub post showing it is a Bridleway at the Gatehouse end, being the start of an off-road route, it requires new visible signage particularly showing the shared-use designation and (school) destination, which could be installed on existing lighting/signposting adjacent to the Abbey Green.

8. Other parties to be informed

The path route already comprises a network of Public Rights of Way, however neighbours and other parties should be informed of the intention to make the route a shared-use path and of the need to undertake surface works and fencing works adjacent to/on their properties.

The BTC C&W WG have undertaken extensive enquiries and await some responses, but overall, there have been no “show stopping” responses to date.

- 8.1. Saxonwood Road to B&L School – ‘Aysgarth’, Saxonwood Road and B&L School/LEA
- 8.2. B&L School to Cricket field – ‘Saxon Cottage’ and Battle Town Council, Cricket Club
- 8.3. Water Pumping Station - Southern Water
- 8.4. Park Lane – English Heritage
- 8.5. RDC 1066 Country Walk project leader - Donna Hall, RDC, Cultural Development & Events Officer
- 8.6. ESCC RoW team – Matt Harper, ESCC Principal Rights of Way Officer

9. References

- 9.1. Battle Schools Greenway proposal leaflet © 2012
- 9.2. East Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan report: ‘Let’s get cycling & walking’, Figure 14 and Table 11, page 29
- 9.3. Battle Town Council: “Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2028 Plan Proposal Final Version 2021-June, Fig 2, page 19

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Revisions / Versions:	
Date	Item
2020-07-12	Proposal for Active Travel implementation at Battle, under COVID-19 Tranche 2 government funding to ESCC – <i>effectively</i> v1.0
2020-09-23	Initial proposal, titled: “Proposal for Active Travel development: a School Street in Battle Town centre” – <i>effectively</i> v2.0
2021-05-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retitled for improved clarity• Revised order for text and maps, to be consistently described west to east.• Inclusion of May-17 WG decision to add idea for gate/door through Tills Yard wall – now v3.0
2021-10-13	Document redrafted, retitled and saved with new name: BTC C&W Active Travel proposal_Saxonwood Road to Battle Abbey shared-use path_v1, following BTC C&W investigations and agreement to deliver as an ‘Order-of-Cost’ invitation document.
2021-10-14	Minor edits – proposed by WG members - now v1.1
2021-10-14	Reference numbering corrected- now v1.2
2021-11-09	No edits: approved WG 20211108 to obtain Order of Costs – now v2.0

Order-of-Costs