

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum

Developing our Green Network

Maintaining and enhancing the unique green environment of Royal Tunbridge Wells for the benefit of residents, visitors and the local economy, improving health and helping to beat congestion



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Executive Summary: Safeguarding and enhancing Tunbridge Wells' undervalued asset, its green spaces, and developing our Green Network

As a major town within easy commuting distance from London but entirely surrounded by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tunbridge Wells enjoys a unique privilege. The green spaces within and immediately surrounding it are one of its principal assets in attracting and retaining residents but they tend to be taken for granted and are thus undervalued. Some may increasingly be vulnerable to change because of commercial housing development pressures on the Green Belt. For several generations our green spaces have not been sufficiently promoted to the world beyond Tunbridge Wells, which is increasingly interested in combining cultural visits to historic towns and heritage assets with green tourism to formal gardens and beautiful countryside.

Originating in the Town Forum Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group (with input from the Transport and Planning Working Groups), this cross-cutting report on our green spaces and links between them demonstrates that they constitute both the heart and lungs of what may be described

as the “Tunbridge Wells Brand Identity”. Safeguarding and enhancement of these assets will produce a whole range of benefits including:

- economic development through increased tourism and leisure pursuits,
- maintenance of a distinct sense of place in an increasingly homogenised world,
- reductions in traffic congestion through localised modal shift,
- improvements in road safety,
- abatement of atmospheric pollution,
- public health benefits through reductions in stress and increased physical exercise,
- maintenance of biodiversity and cherished landscapes through proper stewardship,
- a sustainable future for our children and young people.

The enhancement of existing green spaces and links and the creation or safeguarding of other green spaces recommended in this report will be an on-going process which may take a number of years but this report should help to provide a strategic framework for implementation as resources become available. Lateral thinking will be required with regard to the financing of physical improvements and in many cases it will be necessary to bring together finance from a number of different sources in order to realise a specific project.

The principal outcomes from our investigations and discussions consist of:

- A large scale master map setting out parks, green spaces, local heritage assets, green infrastructure routes for walkers and cyclists and also hotels and tourist destinations. The master map will be of use to TWBC officers in informing their development of specific maps such as the regularly revised tourist information map;
- A map of “utility” walking and cycling routes through the town;
- Recommendations for safeguarding and enhancement of green spaces in and around the town, including by greater awareness and use of the planning system;
- Identification of current impediments to improving the network of green links and possible means of overcoming them by installation of pedestrian refuges, pedestrian crossings, negotiation of additional rights of way and the creation of safe cycle and horse riding routes;
- Recommendations as to how green infrastructure links may be made an integral part of the TWBC transport strategy to assist in reducing traffic congestion in the town;
- Recommendation of a specific follow-up project to determine how tourist and green routes should be identified on the ground through a uniform system of signage, how this might best be achieved and financed without adding to urban clutter, including pursuit of sponsorship opportunities;
- Recommendation of a specific follow-up project to determine how a network of Tourist Information Points could be established within the town and how the hotel, catering and other leisure and recreation trades may assist with their development and also benefit from them;
- Suggestions for achieving dissemination of tourist and leisure and other practical information to the general public, for example by incorporation of interactive links for smart phones on new signage;
- Outlines for a series of themed tourist trails such as “Rocks, Water and Royalty at the Wells”.

We are greatly indebted for the support received in preparing this report from the Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Councillor David Jukes and from the portfolio holder for Sustainability, Councillor Paul Barrington-King, also for the practical assistance received from TWBC officers notably from Landscape Officer David Scully in relation to the green network, Planning Policy Manager Jean Marshall, Economic Development Officers Hilary Smith and

Bartholomew Wren and to Democratic Services Officer Mike McGeary for facilitating our surveys of Town Forum members and Adam Chalmers, Partnerships and Engagement Manager, for help with the publication of this report. The accompanying photographs are all of green spaces or green routes within the Town Forum area, authorship by M Booker or Katharina Mahler-Bech; the view from Dunorlan Terrace courtesy of the Friends Group. Our investigation also obtained valuable data and useful suggestions from individuals and members of Town Forum and other local organisations including Friends' Groups. Friends' Groups are beginning to show how financial, technical and practical input from community groups can combine with input from TWBC and other public bodies to provide cost effective excellence in the enhancement of local green spaces such as Dunorlan and Hilbert Parks.

A South American legend relates that one day a humming bird sees many larger animals and birds observing a massive forest fire. After a moment's reflection it goes to a nearby stream, fills its beak and drops its tiny load on the flames. A pessimistic armadillo berates the humming bird: "*Are you mad? What difference can that possibly make?*" to which the humming bird replies "*I know, but I'm doing my bit.*" The positive message of the legend and of this report is that each of us can contribute in a lesser or greater way to meeting our aspirations for a greener, healthier and also more prosperous Tunbridge Wells and that we should not merely sit there and hope that a massive Canadair flying boat will one day appear with its thousands of gallons of water to put out all our local fires.

Lead author: M Booker May 2015

Chapter 1: Introduction



Undue modesty about the unique green aspects of our town and its surroundings is not a new phenomenon. The Civic Association's comprehensive 1945 report into the post-war future of Tunbridge Wells drew attention to "*its almost perfect situation in the most beautiful parts of Sussex and Kent*" continuing that "*No town in England can offer so wide a variety of short walks in secluded and virgin countryside*". However, it greatly regretted that due to the lack of promotion of individual sites to visitors and residents alike, "*many residents are unfamiliar with it and do not even know how to get to noted*

beauty spots, while it is quite impossible for visitors to get full benefit from their stay without some kind of guidance". The Civic Association advocated the preparation of a guide with comprehensive maps and plans to remedy this, but this worthwhile project does not seem to have been taken forward.

1.1 A catalyst for action today: The NPPF and TWBC Green Infrastructure Plan

In 2012 the Rt Hon Greg Clark, MP for Tunbridge Wells, introduced the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), a single document largely replacing a multitude of earlier planning policy regulation. The concept of a sustainable Green Network is one of its core themes as may be gauged from his Foreword: "*Our natural environment is essential to our wellbeing, and it can be better looked after than it has been.... Our historic environment – buildings, landscapes, towns and villages*

– can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives, rather than withers”.

Following up on the NPPF at a local level, paragraph 2.3 of the recently adopted Green Infrastructure Plan (GIP) for the Borough of Tunbridge Wells, supports:

- *“conserving, enhancing or creating local networks of green infrastructure in order to link green assets within the town and to connect urban areas with the surrounding countryside;*
- *enhancing the multi-functionality of existing green infrastructure assets and seeking the creation of new multi-functional green spaces and/ or linkages where a need or deficiency has been identified*
- *enhancing local distinctiveness and sense of place by preserving and enhancing the town’s rich network of local heritage and landscape features, biodiversity sites and habitats”*

Better connected green routes on desire lines of pedestrian or cycling demand can promote modal shift, bringing health benefits and benefits of social cohesion, reduced traffic congestion and crime reduction. A Green Network also has the potential to increase the average length of stay of visitors to Tunbridge Wells by publicising green activities and facilities and thereby increasing the value of visitors to the local economy.

1.2 Taking up the challenge: Response by the Town Forum

The Town Forum strongly endorsed the draft GIP Supplementary Planning Document but pointed out that it contained no specific strategy for the town of Tunbridge Wells, which accounts for half the population of the Borough living with the greatest housing density and with a particular need for green spaces and green links between them to maintain its physical and mental wellbeing. In its response to TWBC’s *“Our Five Year Plan 2014-2019”*, it advocated development of a Green Network and received a favourable response from the Leader of the Borough Council. The Five Year Plan states *“we will....wherever possible, work with our partners (including Friends Groups and associations) to enable better connections to be made to our parks and green spaces. The council considers this to be a key part of our evolving Cultural Strategy and Green Infrastructure Plan and has benefits of healthy lifestyles, green tourism and the rural economy”*. The Town Forum has investigated how these aspirations might be developed into concrete proposals to enhance and publicise a green network for the town. Its findings and recommendations are set out in this report.

1.3 Methodology

Interviews were held with representatives of local groups seeking information and proposals concerning their specific interests. This was supplemented by a survey conducted among the town’s Residents’ Associations in the Town Forum. The interviews and survey:

- elicited information about existing heritage assets, green infrastructure and green infrastructure links for walking, cycling and horse riding in RTW;
- identified present and possible additional uses for such green infrastructure assets and links;
- identified opportunities for enhancement of existing assets and for designation or creation of additional green infrastructure assets within the area of the Borough represented in the Town Forum;
- identified deficiencies, missing links and traffic hazards that need to be overcome to achieve optimum connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

Responses were collated to produce chapters of this report and a Master Map. Wherever possible, local contacts and personal surveys were used to check out existing and proposed infrastructure links. Ideas concerning enhancement of tourism were mainly developed within the Town Forum Leisure, Culture and Tourism Working Group, following engagement with the hotel, catering and other leisure and recreation trades.

This report provides a platform for further development of its ideas and recommendations in discussion with Councillors and officers from TWBC and KCC responsible for planning, highway, economic development and finance issues.

Chapter 2: Green Spaces

2.1 Green spaces in Tunbridge Wells

There are a number of different types of green space within the area of Tunbridge Wells represented in the Town Forum and these are identified on the Master Map:

- Public parks, recreation grounds and commons, notably the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons, Calverley Grounds, Dunorlan Park, Grosvenor and Hilbert Park, The Grove and Hawkenbury Recreation Ground;
- Natural and semi-natural private urban green spaces (to which the public does not always have rights of access but which may constitute a visual and wildlife amenity), such as the enclosed parts of Calverley Park, Hungershall Park/ Nevill Park and Camden Park;
- Green corridors which may also be developed as green routes for pedestrians and cyclists, such as the extension of National Cycle Network Route 18 along Cabbage Stalk Lane across the edge of the TW Common to Major York's Road and the many footpaths which criss-cross major parks and may be loosely linked to form a green pedestrian network across the town;
- Amenity green spaces and accessible countryside on the edge of town, notably footpaths into the AONB and High Wood on the south eastern edge at Hawkenbury, the network of footpaths that radiate from Reynolds lane and Hurst Wood on the western edge of the town, and a number of similar footpaths, green spaces and woods on the north eastern edge adjoining Sherwood;
- Community allotments at sites across Royal Tunbridge Wells, the largest being that administered by the Hawkenbury Allotments Association at the Marl pits site.



2.2 Why safeguard and enhance Green Spaces?

There are a number of sound reasons for safeguarding and enhancing green spaces in and around our town.

2.2.1 Creating a sense of place

The compactness of Tunbridge Wells and the accessibility of green space for its residents are an important resource and the need for future vigilance to maintain both was already understood by the

authors of the 1945 Civic Association report: *“The town has on the whole remained compact...this advantage is all the more reason for us to be aware of problems that exist elsewhere and to keep a zealous watch for any development which points in the direction of danger”*.



Green spaces help create a sense of place. Tunbridge Wells is set within the surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which laps at its edge. We are privileged to have inherited such a location and it is important to preserve the landscape setting of this surrounding AONB by proper stewardship of the buffer areas of high quality Green Belt countryside on the edge of the town which feather imperceptibly into the AONB. In this way we can maintain the high visual, amenity and cultural value of our landscapes within the town and on its perimeter, something which in no small part contributes to

the economic health of the town. A strong sense of place shared by a whole population through such stewardship also generally brings benefits of greater social cohesion and crime reduction.

2.2.2 Increasing recreational activities and improving health

The outstanding landscape areas mentioned above, a number of which lie within the wider boundary of the town, provide a readily accessible resource for leisure and recreation via an extensive network of footpaths and a smaller network of bridleways. If the bridleways were better linked together and footpaths and bridleways better publicised to the urban population, these resources would reduce the perceived necessity to travel out of the town by car for leisure walking and cycling, activities which are steadily increasing again after many years of decline, and also horse riding, all activities being encouraged as beneficial to physical and mental health.¹



While the Heritage Lottery Fund financing of improvements at Dunorlan Park allowed significant enhancements to its fabric, it is even more striking how the effect of widespread publicity has significantly and permanently increased recreational usage of the park by a wide variety of different visitors. The resource represented by green spaces can be of equal benefit to tourists, potentially extending the length of their stay in the town, with consequent economic benefits for the local economy.

According to “Fair Society, Healthy Lives” (the Marmot Report) *“Prevalence rates for diseases such as diabetes, cancer and depression are lower in living environments with more green space within a 1km radius and mental health may be particularly affected by the amount of local green space”*.²

2.2.3 Enhancement of biodiversity and attenuation of atmospheric pollution

Green spaces and any green routes and corridors between them play an important part in conserving biodiversity and can help to mitigate the potential effects of new development. They help to meet targets set in county-wide and local Biodiversity Action Plans and enable species to migrate and adapt to climate change. In this respect, mention should be made of the value of railway lines, both active and disused, in providing important wildlife corridors through the town.



Additional tree planting of appropriate species having a high capacity to absorb atmospheric pollution could make a worthwhile impact in reducing pollution along the A26 Air Quality Management Area corridor, as well as enhancing the visual environment and sense of place on this important approach to the town centre.

2.2.4 Economic and social benefits

The 2011 Government Command Paper CM 8082 “The Natural Choice” argued that “*a healthy properly functioning natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prosperous communities and personal wellbeing. This is why we must properly value the economic and social benefits of a healthy natural environment while continuing to recognise Nature’s intrinsic value*”. It proposed a whole series of indicators to value the contributions which the natural environment makes to overall economic activity that have not been accounted for in the past, including the value of recreational health benefits.

Additionally, the continued growth of internet retailing is likely to give towns which can offer tourist and leisure attractions, including attractive parks and other green spaces for recreation, a competitive economic advantage over those which merely offer a conventional retail experience.

¹ The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges reports that regular exercise can cut an individual’s risk of breast cancer by 25%, of bowel cancer by 45%, of stroke and dementia by 30% and high blood pressure and diabetes by 50%.

² Marmot found that “*in densely populated urban areas, green space located within walking distance is more likely to promote physical activity outside the home*” while the 2011 UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) stated: “*Green exercise has been shown to be more effective than comparable activities indoors. Participation in physical activity in green settings is associated with decreased feelings of tension, confusion, anger and depression*”. It also found that “*the wellbeing of children is closely linked to their ability to access natural settings close to their homes*”.

2.2.5 Local food production: Allotments and market gardens

Allotments and community gardens can provide opportunities for local food production, which can be particularly valuable for the increasing number of Tunbridge Wells residents who do not have access to a large garden. Allotment gardening is also a means of improving general health and fitness, further enhanced if the allotment is within walking distance. It is pleasing to note that the Knights Wood development will incorporate an allotment scheme. In the context of achieving long term reduction in travel miles for fresh fruit and vegetables for large urban centres such as Tunbridge Wells, development of existing green spaces on the periphery of the town as orchards or market gardens may play a part in building a more sustainable future.



2.3 Sites identified for safeguarding or enhancement

Our survey identified a number of green spaces within the boundary of the Town Forum unparished area, some small and some quite large, which respondents identified as having potential for enhancement or to be in need of protection from creeping urban sprawl or continuing neglect. They made positive suggestions for future stewardship of those green spaces (both public and private) to integrate them into an overall strategy for development of the town's green assets for the benefit of its residents and tourist visitors.

Respondents pointed out that the combination of large public parks and high quality landscape areas within the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on its existing boundaries put large open spaces or open countryside/woodland within 15 minutes walk of nearly all inhabitants of the town, a truly exceptional asset in health and recreational terms in a town with such a large population. In that sense, the health and amenity "green value per resident" of adjoining countryside acres was considered much greater in the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells than in many other parts of the Borough and merited future safeguarding.

Further details of potential enhancements and areas of green vulnerability in relation to the sites discussed below are set out in the accompanying master map and/or in Appendix 1 below. Interviews and survey returns also identified structures which would merit adding to the list of Local Heritage Assets.

2.3.1 Public Parks and other public open spaces

Dunorlan Park

There is a large adjoining overgrown area on a rise to the north west of the park which it would be very desirable to incorporate in the park as an extra wildlife habitat. This privately owned land is vulnerable to development and any urban development would have seriously adverse effects on the setting of the park itself as this land is on a prominent hillside overlooking the park. Comment was also made on the desirability of permanently protecting from development the view from Dunorlan Park to the horizon of the AONB on the eastern side of Halls Hole Road.



Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons

Although protected by Act of Parliament, the Tunbridge Wells Common has in the past been vulnerable to encroachment and remains so. Three sites give cause for concern. There is the former fairground site off Major York's Road currently operated as an informal fee paying private car park. Any further urbanisation of this area such as lighting or permanent surfacing would have adverse effects on the surrounding common land. There is another informal car park at Fir Tree Road and any further urbanisation of this area in the heart of the common would seriously damage the setting of the common. Finally, while plans for a junction improvement scheme at Church Road were abandoned following substantial opposition in 1998, vigilance will be required to prevent a revival of this or any other scheme whose effects would be to degrade the current fairly seamless physical integration of the common on its eastern edge with the very centre of the town. However, connectivity with the common for pedestrians at various points on this eastern edge needs to be improved by the relocation of certain pedestrian refuges and possible provision of a pedestrian/cycle crossing in place of the pedestrian refuge near Lime Hill Road and introduction of a pedestrian/cycle phase at the Church Road/ London Road traffic lights.

Parts of Rusthall Common to the south of the A264 Langton Road lie within the un-parished area of the town. They include a fine ridge walk from St Paul's Church to the Beacon Hotel and Happy Valley with distant views out over East Sussex. This has high potential for green tourism as heritage assets such as the Cold Bath lie along the way. However, the paths are presently degraded and particularly difficult to negotiate in winter and a strong case exists for their improvement if tourist potential is to be realised.

Calverley Grounds

This is the most immediately visible of our parks to residents and tourists arriving at the railway station and it provides a haven of quiet and a number of green pedestrian routes in the centre of the town, while at the same time providing sports facilities and being the location for regular events such as the Mela and the Christmas skating rink. There is presently no scope for expansion of the site itself, but the Friends of Calverley Grounds hope it will be possible further to enhance the amenities by developing a wildflower meadow, a children's play area and a water feature.

Grosvenor and Hilbert Park

This large park is currently the recipient of £2.5M Heritage Lottery funding for a number of improvements which will include the creation of a Community Orchard. The four “dripping wells” or grottoes, designed by the renowned C19th landscape architect Robert Marnock, have already been restored. A restored entrance to the west will improve green connectivity as a walking route while the park also contains part of the 21st Century Way cycle route from the town centre to Longfield Road. We believe this could be extended through to Tonbridge by a shorter and more attractive route for town centre dwellers to supplement the new cycleway which will accompany the A21 improvements-see Ch 3.3.1.



Hawkenbury Recreation Ground

This large recreation ground boasts perhaps the greatest number of well-equipped public sports pitches and facilities in the town, including basketball, tennis, football and cricket, along with a children’s play area. There is an important biodiversity site adjoining the site to the south east and the Friends of Hawkenbury Recreation Ground hope that it will be possible to incorporate this in the Rec.

Woodbury Park Cemetery

There is an adjoining triangular overgrown area to the west of the cemetery containing some fine specimen trees which it would be desirable to rehabilitate and incorporate in the cemetery area. This area is privately owned and vulnerable to development which would adversely affect the setting of the cemetery.



Trinity churchyard

This is a tranquil green space in the heart of the town containing important heritage assets in the form of gravestones and monuments. There has been some recent encroachment on the lawns to the rear of Trinity which need to be restored to their original condition and a long term plan for the churchyard area needs to be devised and adhered to.

Tunbridge Wells Cemetery at Hawkenbury

This is one of the largest green spaces in the town but is relatively unknown apart from the crematorium and its immediate surroundings, which occupy only a small part of the whole. The recently formed Friends’ Group hopes that the design for the new crematorium will see its main axis reoriented to face out towards the main body of the cemetery and not away from it. The cemetery contains important local heritage assets as well as rare orchids and fungi and it is hoped that one of the twin Victorian chapels can be transformed into a permanent exhibition space.

2.3.2 Private Parks

Calverley, Camden, Hungershall and Nevill Parks

The outstanding landscape importance to the town of Calverley Park, Camden Park and the parkland between Hungershall and Nevill Parks should be recognised by the highest possible level of planning protection to guarantee their long term survival as open spaces. In the case of



Hungershall Park, the 1945 Civic Association report recommended that this land should be formally integrated with the Tunbridge Wells commons and this could be a long term aspiration.

Great Culverden Park

The landscape value of the private park at Great Culverden, previously obscured by the buildings of the Kent and Sussex Hospital, is in the process of being put in evidence by the new Berkeley Homes development which will set aside some further green space adjoining that park. The park is also large enough to constitute a wildlife reserve and corridor.

Molyneux Park

This enclosed private park off Earl's Road has no landscape value for the surrounding area but is of considerable amenity value to surrounding householders.

Bishop's Down Park

This large private park borders the un-adopted Bishop's Down Park and Lake Roads. It contains a fine lake, which is partly visible from a point in Lake Road.

The question of **public access** to these private parks is a delicate one because of potential security issues which would arise from wider public access, notably in those parks which are presently totally enclosed having accesses only via the rear gardens of adjoining properties. While there is a public footpath on most of Camden Park and a public highway in Hungershall Park, the enclosed parkland areas mentioned above are reserved for residents and those holding property or private access rights wish this situation to continue. This issue also affects green routes in the town as a particularly useful and level potential pedestrian and cyclist green route crosses Calverley Park between Crescent Road and the top of Grove Hill Road, but it is not a public right of way. However, limited permissive rights for pedestrians do presently exist at certain times and for certain purposes in Calverley Park.

2.3.3 Amenity green spaces and accessible countryside

Hawkenbury High Wood walks

A network of footpaths leads from Hawkenbury Recreation Ground and from High Woods Lane into the open countryside and to High Wood, constituting a significant community amenity. These footpaths link into the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk and High Weald Landscape Trail in the AONB and more could be done to promote these walks as part of the tourism strategy. The area of AONB, extending to the horizon visible from Dunorlan Park, constitutes an important visual and recreational amenity but could become vulnerable to long term development for housing. We recommend that consideration be given to granting increased planning protection to a large part of this area.

Sherwood Lake and Robinsgate Wood

Sherwood Lake and the area around it have recently been permanently safeguarded for the public and the Friends of Sherwood Lake are assisting with an ongoing scheme for its enhancement. Similarly the adjoining Robinsgate Wood is to be safeguarded and enhanced under a management plan being developed by Dandara as part of their comprehensive plan for the development at Knight's Wood. These plans incorporate important new green routes, including a footpath and cycle way linking Sherwood and Knight's Wood with the Skinners' Academy in Blackhurst Lane. It is vital that TWBC ensure synchronised delivery of the section of route which falls outside the Knights Wood development.

Hurst Wood, Smockham, Caen and Caenwood Farms

This area which adjoins densely developed parts of the towns of both Tunbridge Wells and Southborough on 3 sides, at Southborough, Culverden and Rusthall is a major green infrastructure asset in terms of its landscape value, wildlife habitats, existing and potential agricultural and horticultural uses and potential for outdoor leisure and recreation. It was protected as a Special Landscape Area under discontinued Local Plan Policy EN 27. On its western boundary with Broomhill Road, a Rural Lane, it forms an attractive foreground setting to Salomons and the surrounding AONB. On its northern boundary it forms a clear, visible and permanent boundary to Southborough, as Speldhurst Road runs along its periphery. Its eastern border is delineated by Reynolds Lane, a Rural Lane and historic routeway which retains its rural character (with rock outcrops, steep winding gradients and hedgerows) along most of its length. Smockham Lane, which leads off it, is an attractive un-metalled track between high hedgerows leading to bifurcating footpath/bridleways to Rusthall via Hurst Wood and to Speldhurst. Its network of footpaths allows a number of circular walks of different lengths. Consideration should be given to granting increased planning protection to a large part of this area.



Ramslye Greens and Vale Road

The green spaces adjoining Eridge Road could be visually enhanced by appropriate planting schemes. They are on one of the main approaches to the town centre and could play a more important role in announcing Royal Tunbridge Wells as a green and pleasant tourist destination. Similarly, the triangular green space at the Commons end of Vale Road would benefit from visual enhancement through an appropriate planting scheme.

Golf courses

The Spa Golf Course provides a leisure and tourist amenity while at the same time conserving an important open space preventing coalescence of Rusthall with Royal Tunbridge Wells.



Chapter 3: Why promote Green Routes?

There are a number of sound reasons for developing and promoting green routes in Tunbridge Wells and most of them can be shown to generate net economic benefits as a by-product.

3.1 Healthy living

In 2014 59.4% of our local adult population was considered to be overweight or obese (close to the

national average of 61%) and there is also a looming problem with the current generation of school age children. Obese men are 5 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes and obese women some 13 times more likely to do so while such men are more than two and a half times more likely to develop high blood pressure and such women 4 times as likely to do so as those of healthy weight. This is placing increasing pressure on the NHS and the economic cost of dealing with the health side effects of obesity are already diverting billions of pounds from other public spending requirements or costing billions of pounds in unnecessary taxation. Attributable costs are already put at more than £5.1Bn per year and rising fast.

The “Start active, stay active” report by Chief Medical Officers for the Department of Health in 2011 recommended that school age children should aim to take 60 minutes physical exercise per day and adults some 150 minutes per week as one of the ways of combating obesity. Increased use of green routes can play a significant part in improving the health of an urban population by allowing much or all of this exercise to be taken incidentally to getting from one place to another. Green routes can also improve social cohesion and reduce social isolation: People frequently wave briefly at the car of someone they know on the road. If both are using a green route, such chance meetings are the opportunity to stop for conversation and to share information, rather than being cocooned in an isolated capsule.

3.2 Enhancement of biodiversity

The proper stewardship and enhancement of green routes so that they become effective corridors between significant green spaces is important for the maintenance of biodiversity of plants and animals. Green corridors double up as wildlife corridors and, in this connection, railway alignments are shown on the master map as these constitute significant wildlife corridors through the urban fabric of our town.

3.3 Transport Strategy: Congestion reduction

3.3.1 Modal shift to walking and cycling

Green “utility” routes can play an important part in transport strategy as a means of reducing town centre congestion. A 1999 KCC/TWBC traffic survey showed almost half the car journeys in Tunbridge Wells to be of less than 2 miles and, at a national level, 20% of car trips are of less than 1 mile. The cost of traffic congestion is estimated to reach £22Bn nationally by 2025. By far the cheapest and the most effective way of easing traffic congestion and pollution in the town lies not in road building but in persuading as many as possible of our resident motorists to modify their travel behaviour, a proposition supported by the 2013 NICE report on walking and cycling.³

As a start, it is quite easy to get into the habit of consolidating several short motoring trips to different points in the town into one expedition, thereby saving some duplicated road mileage. Even such small changes in behaviour by town residents would allow easier access to the town for retail and leisure purposes by more distant residents of the Borough, tourists and other visitors.

For short journeys (of 3 miles or under) modal switch to cycling or walking can be even more effective in reducing congestion. Also, on each such green journey, one of the limited parking places in the town will not be required.

Worcester, (population 100,000), a County town with a rural hinterland and broadly comparable with Tunbridge Wells, has only one narrow Severn bridge over which traffic is usually heavy (think of the A26 and A264 Pembury Road as similar “narrow bridges”). In partnership with the sustainable

transport charity, Sustrans, the City, County and community organisations planned and assembled the finance for a new pedestrian and cycle bridge linking the two halves of the city, together with new or improved walking and cycle routes, marketed under the brand “Worcester Connect2”. Between 2004 and 2008, walking increased by 19% and cycling by 31% while overall car use fell by 12%.⁴

The master map shows concentric circles of 1, 1.25, 2 and 3 miles out from Tunbridge Wells Town Hall and graphically illustrates the real opportunity for significant modal shift within that area, which would have a major positive impact on current road congestion.

Within the first circle of 1 mile radius lie some tens of thousands of inhabitants. Any normally healthy adult should find it quicker to walk such a radial distance than to access and start their car, drive it into the congested town centre, pay to park it or drive round looking for a parking space and then go on to their final destination on foot. Though average motoring speed along the A26 at rush hour is said to be only 4mph, recent figures show that even for journeys to work of less than 1.2 miles, only 12% are made on foot. We can do better than this, saving money and stress along the way! It will be much quicker still to cycle such a distance on a regular basis, although a little time may be lost in accessing the cycle and locking it up on arrival.

Within the second circle of 1- 1.25 miles (2km) walking may remain competitive with driving on overall time and convenience at peak hours and cycling is more competitive than both on overall time. It is within these two inner circles that the maximum opportunity exists for modal shift.

Within the third circle of 1.25 -2 miles, many adults will begin to flag on foot and beyond a mile and a half, where the *time* required for the journey begins to exceed half an hour, this will deter many more. It is over such distances that cycling really comes into its own, as a 2 mile journey can be comfortably undertaken in 10-15 minutes, which will also be comfortably quicker than a similar rush hour car journey in the town.

Within the fourth circle of 2-3 miles live slightly more distant households in Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Bidborough, Rusthall, Langton Green and most of Pembury Only the more distant parts of Pembury lie further than 3 miles from the Town Hall. Depending on topography and fitness, a 3 mile journey can be covered by bicycle in 15-25 minutes and electrically assisted bicycles can deal easily with even the steepest hills within the lower time figure. Over these distances there should be a realistic prospect of appreciable modal shift to cycling for work, school and other journeys if adequate green routes, with physically segregated space along the main roads, can be provided. As the total population within this 3 mile circle exceeds 60,000, even a small modal shift would make a significant difference in reducing road congestion.

While some fitter and keener members of the cycling community advocate regular use of cycles over 3-5 mile distances and this should certainly be encouraged, we do not consider that major modal shift is likely in the near future over such distances in our town and adjacent villages because of the topography and the present nature of the outer road network. An exception could be Tunbridge Wells to Tonbridge via Grosvenor and Hilbert Park, the edge of the industrial estate and the new cycle way along the A21 (a little over 6 miles) and later a supplementary new cycle way through Apple Tree and Gorse Woods on the line of an existing footpath, finally linking with Pembury Road at Tonbridge (comfortably under 5 miles). These could offer rush hour journeys to Tonbridge for reasonably fit cyclists, time-competitive with car journeys, on routes avoiding Southborough, the congested and polluted A26 and the major obstacle of Quarry Hill.

³ This concluded that “switching journeys away from private motor vehicles to other modes (including walking and cycling) is the best long term way to reduce congestion”.⁴ A Connect2 scheme in Shrewsbury, another County town (population 72,000) managed to secure £50M Big Lottery Fund finance between 2008 and 2013 for a similar scheme. There have been over 80 Connect2 projects .

3.3.2 Occasional modal shift

Even the regular but occasional use of a green route under such initiatives as TWBC Cycle Forum “*Cycle Friday*” can contribute to congestion reduction.⁵ Development of internet based “immediate lift sharing” may also play a part in reducing average individual car use.

3.3.3 The role of buses

Buses could play a greater role within a strategic Green Network yet they are currently mainly patronised by the very young or the elderly. Convenient and frequent bus routes should have an impact on car use (and consequently on road congestion) over short distances but the present pricing structure undoubtedly acts as a significant deterrent to car owners over distances of under 5 miles within the Borough. Brighton Corporation offers incentives to residents to use buses and TWBC should explore the feasibility of financing discounted fares for residents or some form of purchased town bus pass with benefits for residents as a part of its overall transport strategy. In this it might seek contributions from retailers who would benefit from easier access to the town centre by all categories of shopper. The knowledge that heavy shopping could be brought home by bus relatively inexpensively might convert further short car return journeys into *outward* walking and *return* by bus trips, thus not only freeing road space but also parking places in the town.

3.3.4 Park and Ride, Park and Rail and Walk and Rail

Road-based Park and Ride and multimodal Park and Rail (principally from Eridge Station) could figure in a green network for the town but both may require considerable capital expenditure and operating subsidies. However, with the re-opening of the Spa Valley Railway to Eridge, the possible provision of a commuter park and rail service into the old West Station could usefully be explored on a joint venture basis. Much more publicity could be given to the fact that the journey time by rail from Tonbridge station to the centre of Tunbridge Wells and vice versa remains only some 9 minutes during both morning and evening rush hours, making “Walk and Rail” an effective alternative to many commuter car journeys between the two town centres.

Road Park and Ride remains controversial as it could lead to encroachment onto valuable green spaces on the outskirts of the town, so earmarking of potential brownfield sites for such future use should be done in early course. Even if acceptable sites can be found, any Park and Ride scheme is likely to require substantial subsidy in the early years and it would be appropriate to explore whether Section 106 contributions could be required from all new development in the town to help to finance the early years. These issues could be taken forward for further research by the Town Forum Transport and Traffic Strategy Working Group, which, however, expressed strong reservations about some aspects of Park and Ride in its recent report.

⁵ A green routes scheme developed in Watford by Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, generated benefits both in health and transport terms, reducing car-as-driver trips by 13%, car distance travelled by 16%, while physical activity of households increased by 19%, a win-win situation for the public purse on many fronts in the medium to long term.

3.3.5 20mph zones

There are now more than 2000 20 mph zones and 20mph speed limits in operation in England, the majority of which are 20 mph zones. According to a Department for Transport circular of 2013⁶, reducing traffic speeds reduces collisions and casualties. Collision frequency is lower at lower speeds and where collisions do occur, there is a greater chance of survival for pedestrians. On urban roads with already low average traffic speeds, every 1 mph reduction in average speed can reduce the collision frequency by around 6%. Important potential benefits of 20 mph schemes include improved quality of life and encouragement of healthier and more sustainable transport modes such as walking and cycling. There may also be environmental benefits, as the circular states that driving more slowly at a steady pace will generally save fuel and reduce pollution. 20 mph zones and 20 mph speed limits can be self-enforcing where the existing conditions of the road, together with measures such as traffic calming or signing, publicity and information as part of the scheme, lead to a mean traffic speed in line with the speed limit: Where most drivers voluntarily respect the speed limit it tends to constrain the remainder to do so too. At least one traffic calming feature must be placed in any 20 mph zone as well as signage. The last few months have seen the introduction of some 20mph zones in the town. The introduction of additional 20mph zones in the town centre and in other residential areas of Tunbridge Wells, particularly in the vicinity of schools, could help improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and increase the use made of the town's green network.

3.3.6 Transport factors beyond local control: Schools policy

Among the major transport problems facing Tunbridge Wells is the “school Run” which accounts for a significant share of weekday road congestion. This arises from three main factors:

- parental fears for the safety of their primary school age children in the urban environment;
- KCC policy on closure of small schools and expansion of existing larger sites;
- National policy on parental “choice” which in Tunbridge Wells more frequently results in denial of parental choice of the geographically nearest primary school for their child.

The first problem could be substantially lessened by the various measures to improve utility pedestrian and cycle routes in the town discussed in this report, including the installation of safer crossing points at various locations. However, the other two problems are largely outside the control of TWBC and the town's residents. The KCC policy of expansion of existing large sites may find some justification in terms of educational flexibility but it tends to reduce community and the sense of place, both of which are important to the mental health of children. Equally it tends to place a larger and larger number of primary school children beyond walking distance of a local school and is contributing much to the economic costs of road congestion in our town.

There appears to be a lack of “joined up thinking” at County level, as conventional means of attempting to tackle congestion by road building would place major calls on the Highways budget. Similarly, national policy on parental choice of school has the perverse effect of leading to more and more families with children attending two different state primary schools, which again makes the “school run” a necessity. These are political issues outside the scope of this report but to which attention should be drawn when transport problems in the town are raised. TWBC used to claim powers to allocate sites for educational purposes under the 2006 Local Plan Policy CS 3. Restoration of those powers might give the Borough Council more leverage with KCC in these matters.

⁶ DfT Circular 01/2013 Setting local speed limits

3.4 Abatement of atmospheric pollution

Air pollution in Europe is causing asthma among children (23%) and chronic bronchitis (23%) and heart disease (25%) among over 65s. Fine nano-particles, particularly from diesel emissions, go deep into our bodies affecting our hearts, lungs and other organs. The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) estimated that long term exposure to air pollution had an effect equivalent to 29,000 deaths a year in the UK in 2008.

Tunbridge Wells is far from exempt from these problems as the A26 through Tunbridge Wells is sufficiently polluted to have been designated an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) pursuant to EU Directive 2008/50 on ambient air quality. EU legislation obliges Local Authorities to make a local action plan which may include land use regulations, local traffic management and low emissions zones. TWBC must periodically review its action plan to achieve a reduction in atmospheric pollution within the AQMA, although any measures taken must be cost effective and proportionate. The UK may face fines where inadequate action by a local authority leads to a breach of EU law and it has been suggested that the UK government could then seek to claw back fines from failing local authorities. Some major municipal authorities have therefore been taking pollution in AQMAs more seriously since more stringent air standards Regulations came into force in 2010.

As mentioned in 3.3.1 above, the use of Green Routes can significantly reduce overall car journeys and hence overall atmospheric pollution from road traffic. In so doing it can play an important part in meeting a local authority's statutory duties in relation to AQMAs. Local action to reduce air pollution through modal shift can also reduce greenhouse gas emissions and thus help to mitigate climate change.

3.5 Benefits to tourism: a green map and trail based approach

Local green leisure routes and green spaces also have an important part to play in development of tourism within Tunbridge Wells and its hinterland. Tunbridge Wells constitutes a unique "brand" environment in which attractive countryside not only laps all around the town but can actually be found within it in the form of the Commons, so it should be possible to increase the average length of visitor stay by proposing activities based around that environment in addition to our urban attractions. The Master Map shows walking routes between principal green and heritage assets in the town and the location of hotels and other tourist amenities in relation to those assets. This map will help to inform the next edition of the basic TWBC tourist information map.

Tourism today is a multi-stranded affair catering to many different interests, so this report also proposes a number of more specific themed trails and leisure routes:

- A "Rocks, Water and Royalty at the Wells" family trail map linking the town's historic chalybeate spring at the Pantiles with the Wellington and Mt Edgcumbe rocks and the smugglers' rocks underneath St Helena. This would appeal to children as well as adults and could take a similar form to the existing TWBC Heritage Trail map. Draft material for such a map is set out in Appendix 4;
- A wider ranging water features trail map linking with other springs, ponds, lakes and streams emanating from the 5 streams running off the Tunbridge Wells sandstone dome;
- A wider ranging rocks trail map linking the Wellington Rocks with other notable rock outcrops in the town and its hinterland;
- A leisure cycle trail map identifying green routes out of the town and links to rural lanes in the open countryside;
- A leisure walking trail map identifying green routes within the town and links to the network of footpaths in the open countryside including the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk.

Chapter 4: Selecting Utility and Leisure routes for development or enhancement

The Master Map sets out proposed utility and leisure green routes across and out of the town for use by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. The routes are identified by colour codes for ease of recognition. These routes have also been transferred onto the “utility” walking and cycling route map set out in Appendix 5.

4.1 What is a Utility Route?

A utility route is a route which becomes part of a person’s everyday routine as a way of getting from their home to other points in the town. It will probably not be the only way used to reach those points but will become fixed in the person’s mind as a practical way to do so on a regular basis for getting to work, to school, for less bulky shopping trips, to go to the library, the theatre and for other business or leisure activities around the town. To succeed, green utility routes need to achieve

a balance of relative directness along desire lines of traffic demand and transit through a safe and pleasant environment along the way.

4.1.2 Utility Routes for Pedestrians

Utility routes for pedestrians should (where possible without major detour) avoid main roads with their attendant loud motor traffic noise and vehicle fumes which turn into an unpleasant experience after a few minutes. Where such roads have to be crossed, there should be safe crossing points available and Appendix 2 to our report identifies a number of locations where new or improved crossing points should be provided.

We are fortunate that the town has so many quiet streets, alleys and short cuts and routes running through green spaces roughly parallel to main motor



routes that allow designation of an efficient network of utility pedestrian routes. As part of a daily routine these can offer a time to “switch off”, reflect or unwind in a busy life in less or no more time than the equivalent harassing car journey would take. A proposed network of utility walking routes appears on the Master Map and in Appendix 5. Not being aware of how pedestrian short cuts connect up, many residents may have passed by entrances to such routes for years and their being marked on an easily accessible map, and/or signposted, should increase their use.

4.1.3 Utility Routes for Cyclists

Substantial unmet need

The mushrooming of leisure cycling in recent years, which is evident on country roads in the Borough, demonstrates the appeal of cycling as a method of leisure travel. But reports prepared by the Skinners School and Tunbridge Wells Boys Grammar School and most recently by the TW Bicycle Users Group (BUG) show a substantial interest by parents and pupils in the possibility of pupils cycling to school. Yet *utility*, as opposed to leisure cycling, by adults and children alike is still undeveloped in Tunbridge Wells today. Potential for healthy exercise for youngsters and for parallel reduction in the “school run” traffic



(which some believe to amount to 35% along the A26 corridor at peak hours) would be significant if apparent cycling demand could be satisfied. While Denmark’s 40% figure for cycling to school might only be a long term target, Woking’s 10% score would be a worthwhile immediate target in relation to the present 0.5% score for Tunbridge Wells. What might be done to achieve this and to encourage other utility cycling to work and on other business by adults?

Segregated cycle lanes and cycle tracks

The single measure that would most readily unlock this demand appears to be segregation of bicycle traffic from motorised traffic on major access routes to the town centre so as to give not just psychological reassurance, but substantial real increases in safety for cyclists. As far as possible, cycle routes should be safe, direct, coherent, comfortable and attractive.

The Cycle Tracks Act 1984 sets out how footpaths can be converted into cycle tracks or shared space and how part of a highway can be segregated by barriers. Ideally, space should be set aside in a wholly segregated way but as an initially cheaper way of improving the present situation, this report advocates that on the route of greatest potential demand, the A26 from Yew Tree Road to Grosvenor Road roundabout, pavements should be widened out to reach the outer boundary of existing cycle lanes and also widened where a bus lane but no separate cycle lane exists. The extra pavement space created would be given over to cyclists riding only in the same direction as motorised traffic on each widened pavement, with clear carriageway markings continuing the cycle lane across junctions with side roads. This would deal at a stroke with the present problem of cars parking legally or illegally on parts of the existing cycle lanes and should give significantly increased road safety.

Existing facilities for pedestrians would not be degraded by such a scheme, particularly if a raised strip clearly demarcated the pedestrian from the cycleway. The effect on motorised traffic should be either neutral or beneficial, by slightly reducing speeds in periods of non-congestion, in the same way as the narrowing of the highway by creation of the bus lanes on the A26 tended to reduce breaches of the 30mph speed limit outside of peak hours.

A similar segregated and demarcated shared space approach would appear feasible on Eridge Road, Frant Road, Bayhall Road and A264 Langton Road. In Southborough, (outside the Town Forum area

but clearly relevant) though any widening of pavement space would not be possible in the urban area, quiet routes paralleling the A26 exist both to the East and the West. In this way a relatively inexpensive core cycle network could be created but without placing pedestrians at increased danger. The cycleways thus created might also be made available to mobility scooters, with designated parking being created for these at certain town centre locations.

Other measures to promote utility cycling

The provision of **increased and secure (preferably covered) parking** for bicycles in the town centre would help to promote their greater use. Existing cycle parking is identified on the Master Map and sites are also shown on the TWBC website. Additional secure parking should be progressively introduced within any new developments, for example on the cinema site.

Giving priority to cyclists at certain junctions could also promote greater use of bicycles. Where cycle ways or lanes pass entrances to side roads and driveways, clear carriageway markings with priority to cyclists could also encourage more cycling, but as with any system of priorities, should not lead to complacency by the priority traffic. So accident data from existing priority schemes should be carefully evaluated before introduction in Tunbridge Wells, as some critics believe that both cyclists and car drivers may become less aware of one another at junctions where cycle lanes are on pavements rather than on wholly segregated routes which include traffic light systems to allow for the passage of cyclists.

The development of an adequate network of new cycle tracks and designated pedestrian/cyclist shared but clearly demarcated space should naturally reduce the incidence of **pedestrian pavement cycling** in the town centre. Wobbling or sometimes speeding cyclists coming up unannounced behind pedestrians are the potential cause of serious injury and death particularly to older pedestrians. A mixture of public education and enforcement action should aim to put a stop to this phenomenon which often seems to involve very robust younger men perhaps unaware that their behaviour poses a very real danger to others. Permissible shared space should be clearly identified: It should not be left to the discretion of individual cyclists to determine where they consider it is “safe” to use a footway, or to individual police officers to determine where an offence occurs or does not occur. The situation must be made unambiguous to all concerned.

4.2 What is a Leisure Route?

A leisure route is one where the purpose of the journey is the enjoyment of the journey for its own sake. In the 1950s and 1960s, when motoring was still a pleasant experience on Kent roads, people would “go for a drive” without any particular purpose other than to enjoy looking out at different sights, maybe stopping for tea before returning home. While this has become more motoring history than current practice, we are fortunate that the happy sensation of setting out a little at random on discovery, or sauntering in a carefree way along a well known route, remains available to walkers and cyclists based in our town. Many may not be aware of just how many green routes exist on their doorstep within the un-parished area of the Town Forum so this report attempts to highlight some of these on the master map. To the extent that there is uptake of these routes for leisure purposes, there should be corresponding reductions in the number of cars leaving the town to drive to other places for leisure walking and cycling. As peak time for leisure activity at weekends also overlaps with peak time for retail in the town, any reduction in car use for leisure activity should correspondingly reduce road congestion on the approaches to the town centre.

4.2.1 Leisure walking



As mentioned in 3.5 above, there are opportunities to develop a number of short and longer theme-based walking trails within the town and on its outskirts to interest both tourists and local residents. Many of these trails could be sign posted out into the surrounding countryside to link up with the existing Tunbridge Wells Circular and High Weald Landscape Trail, other footpaths and Rural Lanes. Internet based mapping could highlight

points of interest and places of

refreshment along the way, raising sponsorship opportunities. A number of such ramblers' routes are identified on the master map. Some of these pass by existing Water Features in or around the town and they may in future pass by new Water Features under consideration as part of the development of tourism in Royal Tunbridge Wells.



4.2.2 Leisure cycling

Leisure cycling presently appears more developed than utility cycling in our resident population. We hope that our recommendations in relation to utility routes for cycling in our town will help to rebalance this. We also hope that a safer and more comprehensive network of green urban routes will encourage more leisure cyclists, notably families, to leave the car at home rather than using it to access the countryside for a cycle outing. Also, many scenic lanes pass by or close to railway stations such as Wadhurst, Stonegate, Etchingham, Robertsbridge and Battle making possible easy and agreeable rail and cycle trips to points of interest such as Batemans and Bodiam by local residents or visitors basing themselves in Tunbridge Wells.



The development of leisure cycling routes could give rise to the development of bicycle hire businesses aimed at the tourist market as occurs in other tourist centres. For example, cycles might be hired by a family in town to reach High Rocks, with the possibility of coming off hire there and returning to the town on the Spa Valley Railway.

4.2.3 Horse riding

According to a major national survey carried out in 2011 by the British Equestrian Trade Association, 6% of the population had ridden a horse at least once in the previous 12 months. 73% of riders were female and horse riding can play a valuable role in encouraging increased physical activity among women of all ages. 25% of riders were under 16 and 20% over 45 years old. A study for the British Horse Society by the University of Brighton found that horse riding provides moderate intensity physical exercise which also contributes to positive mental health. Of riders questioned in the national survey who rode once a week or less, 46% said access to safe off-road riding would increase

their riding opportunities. However, in Tunbridge Wells there are presently only limited opportunities for the safe riding of horses within the urban area and the riding on Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons, which is allowed from 1st April to 31st October, is of immense importance to the riders who use the commons, especially now that Broadwater Forest is increasingly being closed off to horse riders and the Woodland Trust has closed Hurst Wood to them. The increased volume of motor traffic on the rural roads makes riding horses in and near Tunbridge Wells more and more difficult as there are few bridleways and restricted byways in the area. Measures to slow the traffic on scenic Rural Lanes, which horse riders have to use to access the few off-road paths, through a “Quiet Lanes” strategy, and the provision of some additional off-road routes would help to keep Tunbridge Wells an attractive place to live for the 4% of the population who regularly ride on average three times a week for at least 30 minutes.

The outer edges of the town have potential for development of equestrian pursuits as part of a tourism and development strategy particularly if an enhanced network of bridleways or restricted byways facilitated circular routes which tend to enhance overall safety of riders and other users of shared space where there are horses present. This potential lies particularly on the north western edge towards Speldhurst through the re-opening of Hurst Wood and in and around High Wood to the south east. The opening of Woodland Trust owned Friezland Wood to horse riders would expand the opportunities on the southern edge. Designation of one or two all-year-round riding routes on Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons would also help. Finance which is available as part of the Knight’s Wood development might also enable development of leisure routes on the north eastern edge of the town for horse riders as well as cyclists.

The development of a green route network available to horse riders could help support equestrian businesses on adjoining farmland, providing diversity and thus greater economic sustainability for some local farm businesses within categories of use compatible with permitted use of the Green Belt. Farms such as Smockham and Caen Farms on the north western edge provide potential examples. The average horse in the UK costs over £3000 per year to keep, most of which is spent locally and the figure in the Tunbridge Wells area is likely to be considerably higher than this.

As mentioned above, there are impediments to overcome in order to develop such a network. Nevertheless, the case can be made for carrying out a more detailed study of the economic opportunities for developing equestrian activity within and on the outskirts of our town.

Chapter 5: Overcoming Impediments

5.1 Rights of way issues

Problems with legal rights of way may prevent use being made of potential green routes or may presently interrupt the continuity of some green routes. Besides officially designated public footpaths, there are many pedestrian routes in the town where a public right of way has almost certainly been acquired by constant use without permission, stealth or the use of force over very many years. As many as possible of these additional public rights of way should be verified and recorded so that they may be permanently safeguarded for public use and publicised.

In other cases there may be some ambiguity over the extent of the right of way. For example, the legal status of the part of Fir Tree Road on the Common which has been stopped up for motor traffic is unclear. This is an excellent green route for both pedestrians and cyclists coming from areas north of the Common and wishing to reach the south part of the town centre or to join National Cycle Network Route 18 via Hungershall Park, but it is not clear whether the stopping-up has brought the

section of road within the general Common ban on cycling or not. This section needs to be confirmed as available for all non-motorised traffic as a restricted byway.

Finally there are a few instances where no public right of way currently exists and a case can be made for seeking to negotiate a future right of way on foot only or additionally for bicycles as a restricted byway, in relation both to utility and leisure routes in and around the town. A similar case exists for additional rights of way to link up leisure routes for horse riding.

5.2 Missing infrastructure

5.2.1 Pedestrian routes

There are instances where only a wall or fence physically closes off two sides of a potentially useful green route. In the Sherwood area, a stream currently constitutes a barrier to another potential green route, but will be bridged with finance from the Knight's Wood development. Generally, physical impediments seem less of a problem than right of way issues in Tunbridge Wells. However, the physical condition of some footpaths needs to be improved, for example on the south side of Rusthall Common, and in other cases substantial infrastructure improvements would be needed to make a route suitable for mothers with young children, for example on the very useful footpath linking Rusthall with Bishops Down Primary School at the bottom of Coniston Avenue.

5.2.2 Cycle Routes

Mention has already been made of the need to develop segregated infrastructure on utility routes for cyclists. Besides segregated and demarcated cycle lanes running on widened pavements alongside main roads, new wholly segregated routes could be developed, notably along the A264-A26 west-north corridor to both primary and secondary schools. Between the Tunbridge Wells Boys' Grammar School near the edge of Southborough, the TWGGS and the three schools on Culverden Down, a cycleway and footpath should be built across the playing fields. In accordance with the Cycle Tracks Act, this could have fencing on either side of KCC property with gated entrances to the TWGSB and TWGGS to meet any security concerns. In this way the route would be available on a 24 hour basis to all users. This route could join another segregated cycle way and footpath to Rusthall Primary School and beyond via the golf course at Denny Bottom and/or an improved link as mentioned in 5.2.1 above.

5.3 Pedestrian safety conflicts with motorised traffic

According to the Marmot Report, "*surveys of older pedestrians in the UK found particular concerns about crossing busy roads*" and the location and accessibility of crossings is an important factor in encouraging more people of all ages to walk in urban areas. There are a number of points in the town where pedestrian routes conflict with a highly trafficked motor road, creating danger for pedestrians and potentially high costs to the public purse from road traffic accidents involving pedestrians. These points are identified on the Master Map and listed in Appendix 2. In some cases existing crossing points would be more effective if slightly relocated to better sight lines for pedestrians and motorists alike. In other cases, a new Zebra or light controlled crossing or pedestrian phased set of traffic lights seems to be needed, or at the very least a pedestrian refuge.

Five situations call for priority action:

- A significant flow of pedestrians regularly attempts to cross the A264 on Crescent Road by the entrance to the multi-storey car park to access Calverley Grounds, Calverley Park and St Augustine's Church and Church Hall. A Zebra Crossing at this point should be a priority.
- Similarly, users of the car park on the Common at Major York's Road, or of the Common itself, need a safe crossing point at the bottom of Major York's Road and a better link to the existing pedestrian crossing at Castle Road opposite the Pantiles, from which the town centre can be safely reached via the further light controlled crossing at the bottom of Frant Road.
- The Church Road/ London Road junction at present has no safe crossing point for pedestrians to reach the adjoining Tunbridge Wells Common whether as part of a utility route or for leisure access, and connectivity of the town centre with the Common urgently needs improvement at this and other points on the London Road. It is extremely dangerous to try to guess the time gap which may be available between alternate phases of the traffic lights, especially as the heavy weight of traffic sees more vehicle turns than usual through the final amber phase of the lights. There is a strong case for introducing a brief pedestrian phase at these lights on a push button demand basis and improving disabled access.
- Since the closure of the Post Office in Vale Road, the Zebra crossing there has been of lesser benefit and a strong case exists for it to be relocated to a point between Morrisons and the railway bridge to allow for safe access from the High Street to Morrisons and from the High Street to the main entrance to the railway station.
- Surprisingly, perhaps the greatest regular flow of pedestrians to be observed without adequate crossing facilities is from the town centre via the green space adjoining Lime Hill Road crossing the A26 London Road via a pedestrian refuge to reach Mount Ephraim and the network of streets running west of it. The flow of pedestrians would warrant the pedestrian refuge being converted into a Zebra Crossing or light controlled crossing. The effect on motorised traffic should be at worst neutral, for the temporary stopping of north bound traffic on the A26 would create an opportunity for northbound traffic from Mt Ephraim to filter onto the A26 and for westbound traffic for the A264 to filter onto Mt Ephraim, easing congestion by the old hospital site.

The situation at Carr's Corner is one of equal danger but it is more difficult to envisage a satisfactory solution. Pedestrian demand is for a crossing at the very end of Crescent Road to take pedestrian flows from Hawkenbury safely into the town centre. However, the sight line for left turning motorists on the A264 at that point is so bad that it is unlikely that such a crossing would be authorised and a crossing the requisite distance down Crescent Road would only work if pedestrian barriers were to be placed quite a way up Bayhall Road, along Crescent Road and Calverley Road, against the recent trend for "de-cluttering". A pedestrian refuge is also apparently not feasible as it would not be compatible with minimum tracking of HGVs at the junction. At Carr's corner itself, proposals in the draft Urban Design Framework SPD may result in a complete re-design of the junction.

Similarly there is a safety problem in crossing the A264 Langton Road to reach St Paul's Church and the part of Rusthall Common which is in the un-parished area of Tunbridge Wells. A good case can be made for a Zebra or light controlled crossing at this point but KCC Highways are said to be opposed to a crossing on an A Road outside the urban area. A minimum alternative would be a pedestrian refuge which would at least constitute a refuge for pedestrians to cross in two stages.

The possible introduction of additional 20mph zones in parts of the town could reduce risk of serious injury to pedestrians-see Ch 3.3.5 above.

5.4 Bicycle and horse riding safety conflicts with motorised traffic

Cycling issues are mainly dealt with in Chapter 4.1.3 above. Views about real or perceived cycling danger held in the non-cycling community act as a major deterrent to more widespread uptake of utility cycling. Even within the cycling community, there are numbers of leisure cyclists who presently drive out to cycleways such as the Forest Way or to quiet rural lanes to practise their sport because of fears about safety in leaving the urban area by bike. The single measure that would most readily improve the situation would be segregation of bicycle traffic from motorised traffic on major access routes to the town centre so as to give not just psychological reassurance, but substantial real increases in safety for cyclists, whether on utility or leisure journeys. This report broadly endorses the list of proposed cycle routes set out in the TWBC Draft Cycling Strategy but identifies some additional or alternative routes on the Master Map.

There is a need to consider provision of cycle crossing points at a number of key locations in conjunction with improving certain pedestrian crossing points.

Consideration should be given to improving the safety of horse riders on the Rural Lanes through schemes such as “Quiet Lanes” and also by taking account of horse riders at some key road crossings within the Green Network leisure routes.

Chapter 6: Signage and Public Information Points

6.1 Signage

In discussion with the economic development team at TWBC, it has been agreed that the Town Forum Leisure Culture and Tourism Working Group should assist the team in devising an appropriate strategy for a unified system of signage for tourist attractions including parks in our town. This should also embrace signage of green routes between those attractions, parks and green spaces and in a later phase could be extended to green utility and leisure routes generally. In this way something would at last be done to meet the 1945 Civic Association report’s objectives that there should no longer be any residents or visitors who “*do not even know how to get to noted beauty spots*”.

Signage will need to be attractive and to denote clearly the Tunbridge Wells “Brand” image. In order to avoid urban clutter, many continuation signs on routes could take the form of studs in the ground along the lines of the Princess Diana Walk in London, such studs needing to be horse-friendly on any leisure routes intended to be open for horse riding. At points of tourist attraction, panels similar to that provided on the Common at Mt Ephraim by the Civic Society, could provide further information and should include links for inter-active connection to further information sources via the internet and in particular TWBC’s own tourist information website. This could also provide sponsorship opportunities for local leisure and tourism businesses. Signage should include walking and cycling times to destinations, preferably on the sign itself or by inter-active link.

6.2 Public Information Points

It has also been agreed with the economic development team at TWBC that the LCT Working Group should assist the team in developing the concept of “Public Information Points” at locations in the town where tourist information and publications and information on green routes and green spaces, for both utility and leisure purposes, would be available to visitors and residents alike. The

information points should be readily recognisable with standard exterior signage and internal display areas. They could be situated in shops, hotels and other suitable locations, such as the railway station, on a basis to be negotiated and, where possible, should include interactive facilities.

Chapter 7: Implementation and financing of report recommendations

7.1 Green Spaces



Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that *“Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change unless specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted...for example those policies relating to ...land designated as Green Belt”*. Guidance given in paragraph 83 of the NPPF states that *“Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances”*. Recent ministerial statements have emphasised the relevance of these parts of national planning policy in continuing to protect green spaces around towns, but a degree of vigilance is nonetheless not out of place given the pressures for additional commercial housing in Tunbridge Wells. For this reason, when the existing Local Plan Core Strategy is reviewed, consideration should be given to the feasibility of restoring former Local Plan Policy EN 27 conferring greater protection on former Special Landscape Areas. This might enhance the provisions of the remaining protection under Policies LBD1 and EN 25.

The enhancement of existing green spaces and links and creation or safeguarding of other green spaces will be an on-going process which may take a number of years to complete. This report should help provide a strategic framework for their implementation as resources become available.

The primary route for safeguarding of our green spaces lies in the planning system and many of the sites referred to in this report which lie within the town’s Limits to Built Development already enjoy protection under Local Plan Policies EN 21 or EN 22. Beyond those limits, most of the other sites referred to in this report benefit from designation as Metropolitan Green Belt and/or AONB.



In recent years the Woodland Trust has acquired woods such as Hurst Wood and Friezland Wood in the un-parished area of Tunbridge Wells. Opportunities may arise to safeguard other ancient woodland permanently for the public benefit with its assistance. The National Trust is the owner of substantial areas of land of landscape importance around the country. Its views of what constitutes an “important” part of our heritage have considerably evolved in the last 30 years with regard to the built environment. A case can be put for a similar evolution with regard to heritage landscapes like

some of those around Tunbridge Wells town which are not set in National Parks or on the coast but provide an important part of a rather unique urban/rural environment, as does Hampstead Heath for North London. Should it become available, land such as that between Hungershall and Nevill Parks and Happy Valley could be a candidate for National Trust acquisition or for voluntary designation by the landowner as “Village Greens”.



Four areas, Calverley Park, Broadwater Down, Camden Park and Hungershall/ Nevill Park are designated as Arcadian Areas under Local Plan Policy EN24. Arcadian areas are areas where landscape is the dominant visual element, there is a large proportion of trees and most boundaries are formed by dense hedges and trees. A case could be made for designating a number of additional smaller areas in the town which have these characteristics and would merit permanent safeguarding.

A number of areas on the edge of the town are designated as important landscape approaches under Local Plan Policy EN 23 where they continue the impression of open countryside into the built up area. A case could be made for designating a number of additional areas which have these characteristics.

Finally, Friends’ Groups are beginning to show how financial, technical and practical input from community groups can combine with input from TWBC and other public bodies to provide cost effective excellence in the enhancement of local green spaces such as Dunorlan and Hilbert Parks. These groups may provide the catalyst for additional acquisition (with multi-faceted finance) of plots of land such as those referred to in Chapter 2.3.1 at Dunorlan Park and Woodbury Park Cemetery. Further opportunities to apply for Heritage Lottery funding may also arise.



7.2 Green Routes

Any recommended additions to physical links and improvements at road crossing points may require co-operation and/or financing from the relevant landowner or the Highway Authority and may require formal public consultation. This report focuses on the geographical area represented in the Town Forum but in order to ensure a rational development of green routes it will also be necessary to involve representatives of Southborough Town Council and Rusthall and Speldhurst Parish Councils at an early stage.

Lateral thinking will be required with regard to the financing of physical improvements. In many

cases it will be necessary to bring together finance from a number of different sources in order to realise a specific project.

In relation to development or improvement of cycleways, footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways and the provision or relocation of road crossings and pedestrian refuges, finance may be available from KCC Highways' minor projects budget, but a town wide network might also seek funding from Section 106 developer contributions and from the recently announced national funding pool of £100M for cycling infrastructure improvements. Our County Councillors each dispose of an annual highways improvement budget of £25,000. If they were to co-ordinate their annual expenditure on an accelerated phased development of a Green Network, including financing of additional crossings, much could be accomplished in a five year time horizon in conjunction with other KCC money. The sums required for infrastructure improvements should prove affordable especially on the basis of a phased programme, beginning with priority routes.

Promoting the use of green routes by residents has a number of significant potential public health benefits and funds should also become available from NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Local Authorities under their budgets for improving public health.

Increases in the potential budget for Green Network and other transport related projects might be achieved if revenue derived from TWBC car parks were to be made available in addition to the revenues from parking fines.

7.3 Tourism

For the development of tourist information maps and signage, there may be opportunities to finance a part of the costs through sponsorship from the leisure and tourist businesses in the area. However, there is strong case for TWBC to invest more resource for the development of tourism in and around the town, in line with the policies pursued by major tourist destinations elsewhere in England such as Cheltenham and Harrogate.

Heritage Lottery funding is another possible source of finance for certain projects and might especially be considered in order to finance retention and enhancement of the town's characteristic brick pavements which constitute an important element of the "Tunbridge Wells Brand" for tourism purposes.

Chapter 8: Summary of Recommendations

8.1 Green spaces

1. The strong sense of place associated with the Tunbridge Wells "Brand" should be safeguarded by protecting the landscape setting of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty surrounding the town and conserving the buffer areas of high quality Green Belt on its edge which feather imperceptibly into it, thus maintaining the high visual, amenity and cultural value of our landscapes. These contribute to the economic health of the town and help produce benefits of greater social cohesion and crime reduction.
2. This safeguarding should be done through the planning system and also by further developing appropriate leisure and tourist activities related to our parks, open spaces and adjacent open countryside.
3. The resource represented by our green spaces is not only valuable for residents. It can be of equal benefit to tourists, potentially extending the length of their stay in the town, with consequent

economic benefits for the local economy.

4. Allotments and community gardens should be supported not only as opportunities for local food production but also as a means of improving general health and fitness. The future development of existing green spaces on the periphery of the town as orchards or market gardens may play a part in building a more sustainable future.

5. With open countryside or woodland within 15 minutes walk of nearly all inhabitants of the town, the health and amenity “green value per resident” of adjoining countryside acres may be considered much greater in the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells than in many other parts of the Borough and merits future safeguarding.

6. Some specific proposals to enhance our parks and safeguard our countryside are listed in Appendix 1.

7. Further opportunities may arise for acquisition and safeguarding of green spaces by the Woodland Trust, National Trust and by local subscription and such opportunities should be actively pursued whenever they arise.

8.2 Green Routes

1. Development and increased use of green walking and cycling routes should be encouraged because this can play a significant part in improving the health of an urban population. It can also improve social cohesion and reduce social isolation.

2. Green “utility” walking and cycling routes have an important part to play in transport strategy as by far the cheapest and the most effective way of easing traffic congestion and pollution in the town particularly for the majority of journeys of less than two miles.

3. Even the regular but occasional use of a green route under such initiatives as TWBC Cycle Forum “*Cycle Friday*” can generate worthwhile benefits in reducing congestion.

4. Increased use of Green Routes could significantly reduce overall car journeys in the town and hence overall atmospheric pollution from road traffic. This could play an important part in meeting TWBC’s statutory duties in relation to the Air Quality Management Area along the A26 St John’s and London Roads.

5. Buses could play a greater role within a strategic Green Network if the present service patterns and pricing structure could be improved. TWBC should explore the feasibility of financing discounted fares for residents or some form of purchased town bus pass with benefits for residents as a part of its overall transport strategy. In this it might seek financial contributions from retailers who would benefit from easier access to the town centre by all categories of shopper.

6. Attention should be drawn to the major part parental “choice” of primary schooling is playing in causing traffic chaos in the town by necessitating so many unnecessary car journeys at peak times. TWBC should consider restoring some degree of leverage over the siting of schools by reinstating former Local Plan Policy CS 3 on new school provision.

7. There should be better development, promotion and use of green everyday “utility” routes for pedestrians and cyclists to and from work or school and for other practical purposes. Green utility routes need to achieve a balance of relative directness along corridors of traffic demand and transit through a safe and pleasant environment along the way, with safe crossing points where they intersect with main roads.

8. The single measure that would most readily unlock expressed “utility” cycling demand in the town would be segregation of bicycle traffic from motorised traffic on major access routes to the town centre so as to give not just psychological reassurance, but substantial real increases in safety for cyclists.

9. Uptake of green routes for leisure purposes could also achieve reductions in the number of cars leaving the town to drive to other places for leisure walking and cycling at times overlapping with peak time for retail, thus correspondingly reducing road congestion on the approaches to the town centre.

10. Greater use could be made of Park and Rail from outlying stations into Tunbridge Wells and more publicity given to the fact that the journey time from Tonbridge station to the centre of Tunbridge Wells and vice versa remains only some 9 minutes during both morning and evening rush hours, making “Walk and Rail” an effective alternative to many commuter car journeys.
11. There are many pedestrian routes where a public right of way has probably been acquired by constant use. These additional public rights of way should be verified and recorded so that they may be permanently safeguarded for public use and publicised.
12. In relation to development or improvement of cycle tracks and footpaths and the provision or relocation of road crossings and pedestrian refuges, our County Councillors each dispose of an annual highways improvement budget of £25,000. These budgets, used on a phased basis, could accomplish much in a five year time horizon in conjunction with money from other sources, possibly as part of a Sustrans Connect2 type project for Tunbridge Wells.

8.3 Tourism

1. The resource represented by our green spaces is not only valuable for residents. It can be of equal benefit to tourists, potentially extending the length of their stay in the town, with consequent economic benefits for the local economy through the development of activities based around that green environment in addition to our urban attractions.
2. Tourism today is a multi-stranded affair catering to many different interests, so this report proposes a number of specific themed green trails and leisure routes including an all-weather “Rocks, Water and Royalty at the Wells” family trail as described in Appendix 4.
3. Many of these trails could be sign posted out into the surrounding countryside to link up with the existing Tunbridge Wells Circular and High Weald Landscape Trail, other footpaths and Rural Lanes.
4. A green route network available to horse riders could help support local equestrian businesses and a more detailed study of the economic opportunities for developing equestrian activity in Royal Tunbridge Wells would be worthwhile.
5. There should be a unified system of signage for tourist attractions including parks in our town, embracing signage of green routes between those attractions, parks and green spaces. Such signage might in part be sponsored by local leisure and tourism businesses.
6. Signage should be attractive and clearly denote the Tunbridge Wells “Brand” image. In order to avoid urban clutter, many continuation signs on routes could take the form of studs in the ground.
7. At points of tourist attraction, panels could provide further information and should include links for inter-active connection to TWBC’s own tourist information website.
8. “Public Information Points” should be developed at locations in the town where tourist information and publications and information on green routes and green spaces, for both utility and leisure purposes, would be available to visitors and residents alike.
9. Heritage Lottery funding is a possible source of finance for certain projects and might especially be considered in order to finance retention and enhancement of the town’s characteristic brick pavements which constitute an important element of the “Tunbridge Wells Brand” for tourism purposes.

Appendix 1: List of issues relating to green spaces

Green spaces for possible enhancement

1. Incorporation of additional land to the north of Dunorlan Park.
2. Incorporation of additional land to the West of Woodbury Park Cemetery.
3. Incorporation of land to the south of Nevill Park in the Commons.
4. Incorporation of bio diversity site with Hawkenbury Recreation Ground.

5. Planting schemes for Ramslye Greens, Vale Road and A26 tree planting.
6. Footpath improvements on south side of Rusthall Common towards Happy Valley.
7. Wildflower meadow and water feature in Calverley Grounds.
8. Restoration of Holy Trinity churchyard.
9. New footpath from bottom of rifle range off Speldhurst Road to link to network of footpaths to Speldhurst and Rusthall.
10. Heritage assets at Tunbridge Wells Cemetery at Hawkenbury
11. Footpath improvements between Hawkenbury Recreation Ground and High Wood

Green spaces in need of permanent safeguarding

1. The view to the horizon from Dunorlan Park.
2. High Wood Hawkenbury and surrounding AONB.
3. The view from Speldurst Road through to the escarpment above Smockham Farm and to Rusthall to the south and to Salomons Estate to the west.
4. The view from the end of Pembury Road towards Pembury Grange.

Appendix 2: List of proposed new, relocated or enhanced pedestrian crossing points

1. A Zebra or push button controlled crossing from the town centre via the green space adjoining Lime Hill Road crossing the A26 London Road to reach Mount Ephraim and the network of streets running west of it.
2. A Zebra or push button controlled crossing on the A264 Crescent Road by the entrance to the multi-storey car park to access Calverley Grounds, Calverley Park and St Augustine's Church and Church Hall.
3. A Zebra or push button controlled crossing at the bottom of Major York's Road from the car park on the Common and a better footway link to the existing pedestrian crossing at Castle Road opposite the Pantiles.
4. A brief pedestrian phase on a push button demand basis at The Church Road/ London Road junction to reach the adjoining Tunbridge Wells Common to achieve connectivity of the town centre with the Common and its green routes.
5. Location of an additional or alternative Zebra crossing to the one at the old Vale Road Post office at a point between Morrisons and the railway bridge to allow for safe access from the High Street to Morrisons and from the High Street to the main entrance to the railway station. The Post office crossing might be considered for relocation closer to London Road. A further crossing should be considered at the entrance to the High Street to complete improvements in pedestrian connectivity.
6. Urgent study required into possible solutions to the pedestrian/vehicle conflicts at Carr's Corner possibly involving a complete redesign of the entire roadway area.
7. A Zebra crossing or pedestrian refuge somewhere between Farncombe Road and Camden Park on Forest Road to serve the pedestrian routes which parallel those roads.
8. A Zebra crossing or pedestrian refuge near the intersection of Castle Road with the top of Church Road to serve an important pedestrian route from the bottom of the town to Mt Ephraim via the Common.
9. A Zebra crossing or pedestrian refuge and pavement improvements in the area of St Peter's Church and Kingswood Road on Bayhall Road to provide safe access to Dunorlan Park from the south of the town.
10. A Zebra crossing or pedestrian refuge further up Grove Hill Road to allow safe access from the town centre to Claremont Primary School and the network of streets off Claremont Road.
11. Relocation of the existing pedestrian refuge on the London Road from a point below the

junction with Inner London Road to a point to the north side of the junction with Mt Edgcumbe Road to provide a safer sight line and thus better connectivity with the Common.

12. Relocation of the existing second pedestrian refuge from its poor sight line on a blind bend on the London Road adjacent to the junction with Vale Road to a point further north adjacent to the junction with Vale Avenue, with consequential changes to the footpath emerging from the Common.

13. A pedestrian refuge on Major York's Road somewhere between Nevill Park and Fir Tree Road to link up a number of green routes.

14. Urgent study required into the pedestrian/vehicle conflicts on the A264 at the level of St Paul's Church, with, at a minimum, the installation of a pedestrian refuge.

15. A Zebra crossing or pedestrian refuge on Frant Road adjacent to Birling Road to serve the network of streets off Birling Road.

16. A pedestrian refuge at a point somewhere between Nevill Terrace and Brighton Lake on the A26 to allow safe access to the lake and to a number of footpaths across the Common.

Appendix 3: List of proposed utility cycle routes

TWBC Cycle Forum recommendation of priority routes

1. A26 Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells.
2. Southborough to North Farm via Barnettts Wood.
3. A264 Pembury to Tunbridge Wells.
4. National Cycle Route 18 through town centre including via the Common.
5. Langton and Rusthall to town centre.
6. Hawkenbury to town centre.
7. Ramslye to town centre.
8. Frant Road to town centre.
9. 21st Century way from Longfield Rd to town centre.

Town Forum additional/alternative routes

1. Tunbridge Wells to Tonbridge via 21st Century Way, Apple Tree and Gorse Woods to Pembury Road Tonbridge avoiding Quarry Hill.
2. Langton/Rusthall to Southborough "schools link" via Denny Bottom, Coniston Ave, Culverden Down, St John's Rec and the school playing fields.
3. Sherwood and Knight's Wood to Skinners' Academy Blackhurst lane to join Pembury Road Cycleway (already programmed to happen).
4. Farmcombe Road to the Pantiles via Upper Cumberland Walk on shared & segregated space.
5. Farncombe Road/Camden Park to the station via Grove Hill Road on shared & segregated space.
6. St John's Church to Grosvenor and Hilbert Park via Queen's Road.
7. High Brooms to the schools via improved A26 Cycleways and improved shared space & cycleway along the north side of Powder Mill Lane.

Appendix 4: Material for Rocks, Water and Royalty at the Wells trail map

Brief description of trail

The trail, taking in rocks and water features, townscape views and points of interest on Tunbridge Wells Common, starts and finishes on the Pantiles. It has a basic walking time of between 45 minutes and 1 hour. The distance, including any slight deviation to view adjacent sites, is just under 2 miles. It can be managed in ordinary shoes on an all-year basis and requires an average level of fitness. The

trail is passable with baby buggies but using extra care at one or two locations such as around the Wellington Rocks. The crossing of Church Road at the traffic lights requires extra care on the return leg of the walk for at present the lights do not have a pedestrian phase. The trail will allow for children's play on the Wellington Rocks and coffee, lunch or tea and sampling of local ales at a number of nearby establishments along the way.

Specific features

1. Dippers Well and the Chalybeate Spring

The trail begins at Bath Square in front of the Chalybeate Spring and the Bath House dating from 1804. The word "Chalybeate", pronounced "kallibbiate", is derived from the Greek for "iron", and the Chalybeate Spring is rich in iron which gives it its distinctive rusty colour. When accidentally discovered by Lord North in 1606, when crossing what was then a forest, it was thought to have health-enhancing properties and led to the foundation of Tunbridge Wells as a spa town. It is sometimes still possible to taste the waters dispensed by "Dippers" dressed in period costume. With your back to the Bath House proceed up the steps and along the upper colonnade until you reach a passage on your right which will take you out to London Road, where you should cross by the Zebra Crossing to the Common opposite.

2. York Cottage

Proceeding along the footpath to the left on a slight diagonal you will see York Cottage on the opposite side of Major York's Road. This white early 19th century weather-boarded cottage is a rare survivor of several small cottages on the Common which were replaced by grander structures such as Romanoff Lodge in the Victorian era - see item 15.

3. The racecourse

The old racecourse, last used as such in September 1851, crosses the path at a point some 200 yards from the start. It was a U shaped point to point track and not a continuous circle and remains as a wide green way which is somewhat muddy in the winter months. In 1834, before her accession to the throne, Queen Victoria and her mother, the Duchess of Kent, watched the races from separate carriages under an awning nearby.

4. Victoria Grove

Just before the wooded path emerges alongside the Upper Cricket Ground, a double avenue of trees may be seen to the right. This avenue was planted in 1835 to commemorate visits by Princess Victoria. Further trees were planted in commemoration of Queen Elizabeth II's Jubilee in 1992.

5. Upper Cricket Ground

The climb from the Pantiles is well rewarded by the fine panorama which opens out as you emerge from the wooded path alongside the Upper Cricket Ground, in use since the mid 18th century. The Wellington Rocks to the right appear to full advantage especially when caught by a ray of sunshine.

6. Wellington Rocks

This major sandstone rock outcrop has been the delight of generations of small children as it is easily and relatively safely climbed. It takes its name from the hotel on nearby Mount Ephraim, which until recently was known as the Wellington Hotel in honour of the Duke, though no actual connection exists with him. However, his wife Kitty stayed at Tunbridge Wells on numerous occasions to escape the pressures of public life.

7. Mt Edgcumbe Rocks and former pond

There is another very fine rock outcrop, surmounted by a magnificent beech tree, adjacent to the Mount Edgcumbe Hotel. There was formerly a pond at its base, used as a watering hole for cattle grazing on the Common.

8. Molyneux House

The philanthropist Francis Molyneux sponsored construction of the Friendly Societies Hall in Camden Road with its distinctive elephant heads on its facade. His huge mansion, Earl's Court, now converted into luxury flats and known as Molyneux House, is visible on the far side of Mount Ephraim.

9. Gibraltar Cottage

Gibraltar Cottage, remodelled around 1828 with parts possibly dating back to 1700, is built right up against a substantial rock outcrop. In the 18th century, the firm of Burrows began to manufacture Tunbridge Ware there, before moving to Jordan House - see item 13. The outcrop and cottage form a very romantic view when seen from the footpath below St Helena - see item 11.

10. Orientation board and panorama

This board, set in two blocks of local sandstone, was sponsored by the Tunbridge Wells Civic Society. It identifies the many local landmarks visible from this point.

11. Belleville and St Helena

The first cottage beyond the orientation board is the aptly named St Helena, built around 1830, which perches on top of another rock outcrop. The outcrop contains caves, which were used as air raid shelters during the Second World War and are reputed to have been used by smugglers in earlier times. Belleville is the second cottage on the right, set a little bit further along Mount Ephraim. A waiting place for donkeys used to be provided on the grassy bank below. The novelist William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-63) stayed at Belleville or Gibraltar cottage as a child. Behind St Helena may be seen the Royal Wells Hotel, dating back to 1834, replacing the earlier Hare and Hounds Tavern. It has a fine first floor enclosed glass loggia and is surmounted by a Royal coat of arms of lion and unicorn.

12. Panorama view of Thackeray's House

Thackeray also briefly stayed at this late 17th century lodging house, formerly known as Rock Villa, in 1860, composing there a feature article entitled "Tunbridge Toys". Rock Villa gave its name to the nearby street and is now a restaurant known as "Thackeray's".

13. Panorama view of Inner London Rd and Jordan House

Retracing your steps, a footpath just beyond St Helena and opposite the Royal Wells Hotel, will take you down to the left towards the Lower Cricket Ground. This starts somewhat steeply but soon flattens out. The large rock outcrop on which Gibraltar Cottage is built appears to full advantage to your right. On reaching the cross roads at Church Road/ London Road, a tiled building, Jordan House, may be seen to the left on the far corner of Church Road. This was once occupied by Messrs Burrows who manufactured Tunbridge Ware there. Princess Victoria is shown in a well known print passing this building after a morning ride on her donkey in 1822.

14. Lower Cricket Ground

The Lower Cricket Ground was used for a military encampment during the First World War and is now a popular place for informal cricket and other games and fitness training.

15. Romanoff Lodge

This attractive house was built in 1852 by Thomas Alfree who had been a tutor to the Russian royal family and was proprietor of Romanoff House School on London Road. The lodge has a particularly fine conservatory and a Russian imperial eagle surmounts the porch.

16. Cold Bath

The Cold Bath was constructed in the mid 18th century and fell out of use after the Bath House was built on the Pantiles in 1804. It was restored in the 1970s.

17. Source of the Chalybeate spring

Another source of the Chalybeate spring is to be found here, next to the Cold Bath.

18. The Forum

Just above the Cold Bath is the music venue, with room for 250 standing guests, known as The Forum. This opened in 1993 in a building formerly used as a public lavatory. In 2012 the New Musical Express declared The Forum to be Britain's Best Small Venue. Many well known artists, including Adele and Oasis, performed here before becoming household names.

From the Forum you return to the Pantiles via the nearby Zebra Crossing.

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