The Shepton Mallet Railway Path

Millennium Way Extension at Mendip Council Offices to Station Road and Tesco

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Strawberry Line Group
1. **Introduction**

Shepton Mallet's Millennium Way runs along the former railway for a distance of 0.8kms from Whitestone Road to Collett Park. At that point it is blocked by the Council Carpark and a short section of overgrown railway which passes under Cannard's Grave Road bridge to reach the former station area, Tesco’s and residential areas further west. The missing section is just 200 metres long. Its completion would greatly enhance the value and use of the existing Millennium Way, and would create an east-west walking and cycling route to serve the whole town.

1. **Tesco**
2. **Whitestone School**
3. **Existing railway path**
4. **Mendip Council Car Park**
5. **Overgrown railway cutting**
6. **Station Road**

**Map showing the opportunities of a completed Millennium Way**

This document sets out the proposals for this missing link and draws together all the documents attached to the current planning application.
2. Location Plan
The section of route covered in this application runs from the end of the existing railway path in Collett Park, through to Station Road.

The works comprise:

1. A new ramp and link off the end of the Millennium Way in Collett Park.
3. A signed route through Mendip Council Carpark and across its access road.
4. A new path constructed along the overgrown railway cutting at the back of the Council Buildings.
5. A link to Station Road under Cannard’s Grave Road Bridge.
6. Improvements to the existing link path to Compton Road.

3. Detailed Plans and arrangements of the proposed path
The route is described on the enclosed plan shown at a scale of 1:500 when printed out at A3 size. Key points of detail are described by way of sketch cross sections and photo montages. The proposed path will be a “standard” 3m wide tarmac surfaced path illuminated by a single row of PV, LED lights running down the centre line of the path and through the carpark area.

The path will be for shared and equal pedestrian/cycle use as in the existing Millennium Way Railway Path.

![Standard path cross section on new ground](image-url)
1. The existing footway is separated from Station Road and links through to Compton Road. In the railway days this path would have been fenced off from the railway operation by the remaining fence. This is not needed now and its removal would open up more space.

2. Cyclists can join the lightly trafficked Station Road to go west via the Sidings or around to Tesco’s.

3. This path to Compton Road is a useful local link.

4. Construct the new path (extension of Millennium Way) 3m wide and over this section dropping down at a gradient of 1:20 in order to provide as much headroom as possible once the path reaches Cannard’s Grave Road Bridge.

5. Pass centrally under the brick arch as shown in sketch section.

6. Run along the side of the former railway cutting on a low causeway as shown in the sketch. This will allow the path to bypass all the trees on the land to the south of the cutting. The northern side of the cutting should be left at its original level to act as a sump for any run off water as at present, and to minimise the likelihood of trespass onto the Council boundary.

7. Secure this boundary with a new fence and plant up bank to add interest to the way through the cutting.

8. At the eastern end the cutting is filled with rubble upto the level of the Council Road and carpark both of which are constructed on the filled in cutting. Arrange the levels so that the fill rises to a height of 2m from the floor of the cutting and then the path continues rising at 1:20 in a shallow groove to reach the roadside.

9. The natural way through to Collet Park and the existing Millennium Way is down the aisle of the Council carpark where the walking and cycling route could be marked out by lines and logos. However, it is understood that the Council intend to develop this area so it might be better to put in place a route along the aisle of the northern carpark in order that the public can bypass these works.

It is hoped that any Council plan for redevelopment will include the provision for a good quality greenway link through the length of the site. But for now, our proposals look to the way through of minimum intervention as the route is likely to evolve and improve.
10. Ramp down off the pavement with a flush kerb and mark crossing as a “zebra” to ensure that motorists coming to the carpark recognises the passage of pedestrians and cyclists.

11. Ramp down at 1:20 into the “smokers” area. This appears to be very little used. Mark out the two nearest parking bays as “short cars only” in order to allow the passage of pedestrians and cyclists without loss of precious car parking spaces.

12. Define route through carpark circulation area with white lines and cycling/pedestrian logos.

13. Use “zebra” crossing markings at the link road between the two carparks.

14. At this far end construct a short section of new path in the wide verge with a flush kerb back to the carpark, or remove one car parking space to let the path through.

15. Cross the end of the Town Council depot area. Space for this can be achieved by shifting the blue container some 3m away from the boundary, and by relocating the existing occasionally used gates onto this new boundary lined up with the edge of the container. This is shown in the sketch.

16. Link through fence and hedge to Collett Park. Reposition existing notice boards and railings to design of town council.

17. Location of very useful café and toilets.

18. Make new ramps on fill to drop down at 1:20 to make the whole route suitable for wheelchair users.

19. Tidy up link to road by replacing the inappropriate chain-link carpark fence with a hedge boundary.

20. Join the existing Millennium Path and continue eastwards to various destinations.
A  **Cannard's Grave Road Bridge**

This key bridge provides a safe way through to the woodland cutting and the existing Millennium Way beyond. It remains in the ownership of Highways England who have inherited the former Railway Property Board Portfolio of isolated fragments of former railway land and bridges.

1. **Cannard’s Grave Road bridge.** Clear all vegetation from masonry arch and fell any trees within 5m of the wing walls in order to avoid future damage to the brickwork.
2. **Fill the cutting under the bridge to allow the path through with a clearance of 2.5m at the centre of the arch.** This can be achieved by commencing the path at the south-west corner of the wing wall and dropping the path down at a fall of 1:20 from that point.
3. **Construct the path 3m wide, and 2.5 below the crown of the bridge.** It will be best to run centrally through the arch even though beyond the path moves to the right hand side of the cutting.

B  **The path through the cutting**

The path needs to run through the cutting on a low causeway so as to be well clear of any possible flooding. To this end the northern part of the cutting should be left at its present level so as to act as a catch pit or pond in wet weather.

1. **Existing high level ground adjacent to main road to be left unchanged although a certain amount of careful management would be beneficial to the specimen trees.** Some lower branches across the cutting will need to be removed.
2. **The railway cutting is falling towards the main road bridge and the former station site.** This end tends to collect water after heavy rains.
3. **Construct a causeway 4m wide and 0.75 – 1.5m above the floor of the cutting depending on the volume of fill material available.** The final levels should be such that the path gradient from each end does not exceed 1:20.
4. **3m wide asphalt path with grassed verges.** The edge of the path should be 0.5m from the exposed rock wall of the cutting which can be seen as a feature.
5. **Plant this slope as an extension of the wood.**
6. **Encourage the Civic Campus to arrange its buildings to look out over the cutting, which will be a public space, rather than to be fenced off.**
C  The ramp up from the railway cutting to the Campus access road
This section of the path should follow the line of least damage to established trees. It should take a gently curved alignment as shown in the plans and all the material from the excavation will be suitable to run through to make the causeway through the cutting.

1. Existing ground level.
2. Cut side slope to 1:1.5, and the gradient of the path should be less than 1:20 (so as to provide access for all).
3. Path to be asphalt 3m wide.
4. Existing trees towards the main road to remain.

D  Sketch of link to car park area

1. Path marked out through ‘Smoking’ Area, rising on a shallow ramp to meet the access road fooway
2. White line of logos to define route through car park.
3. Hatch out ends of existing bays to leave space for smaller cars, thereby not reducing car parking space.

E  View of route through car park looking towards Collett Park

F  View past Council Depot

Move gates
Move container
4. Comments on reason for refusal of previous application by Sustrans (2016/2473/FUL) relating to an unacceptable loss of trees

This approach by Greenways and Cycleroutes Limited directs the planned cycle route along the length of the remaining railway cutting in order to avoid all the trees growing on the adjacent ground. The existence of the path will have no effect on the lineside trees, except for the necessary cutting off a few lower branches.

At the eastern end of the cutting, where it is infilled leading upto the Council’s access road the project will cut close to one large ash tree which maybe better removed, and require the removal of a number of saplings. This section of the path will be excavated into the filled material so not cutting through any tree roots. As a consequence, there will be no need for any “rootguard” or similar cellular material as part of the path construction.

Plan showing line of proposed path through cutting, compared with the route sought be an earlier application which ran through the trees on the higher level to south of the cutting.
The causeway will occupy the southern side of the cutting, leaving a part of the floor of the cutting at its original depth to provide for a wetland habitat and for flood storage in the event of storm runoff. This “ditch” will have the added advantage of providing a barrier to the north side of the cutting, its vegetation and the adjacent Council property.

Notwithstanding the much reduced effect on the woodland of this revised project, Greenways would still wish to install bird boxes as recommended by the Council’s ecologist in the earlier application.

The effect of this scheme on road junctions and other matters will be largely unchanged, although the additional detail provided here sets out the detailing and visibility of crossing of the Council access road with measures to enhance visibility and to slow down vehicular traffic.

The proposals for continuing the route along the edge of the northern carpark provides for a through access for pedestrians and cyclists and the markings and logos proposed for the road are similar to provision in car parking elsewhere. Vehicle speeds will be very low and volumes small, all of which are compatible with a route of this type.

5. Supporting Document; - The Shepton Greenway (Appendix 1)

The Strawberry Line Group and Greenways carried out a small study of the Shepton Greenway in July 2017 in order to understand the context of the Missing Link and to see how it might fit into the wider opportunities for cycling routes in Shepton Mallet.

This report was discussed with the Council and our proposals at that time have been modified as a consequence of our site meeting and discussion.

The summary pages of that report are reproduced here. See pages 10-11.

6. Promoters of the Project.

The promoters of this Missing Link Project are the Strawberry Line Group (Eastern Section Wells and Shepton Mallet) and local specialised charity Greenways and Cycleroutes Limited. Greenways is responsible for promoting, delivering and maintaining the route. It works in close partnership with the Strawberry Line Group.

Depending upon the timing of the scheme, Greenways would anticipate constructing this path as part of its programme of annual camps so as to enable local people to join in the construction, and the future maintenance of the route.

Greenways and Cycleroutes Limited are a local charity focussed on delivering good quality traffic free cycling routes and working in partnership with local interest groups – in this case the Strawberry Line Group. Their most recent work in Somerset has been the Weston and Brean Down Way cycling route which has been very popular and successful since its opening last summer.
Strawberry Line through Shepton Mallet

There have been proposals for extending the Millennium Way railway path hovering around on the horizon for some time. Following a recent planning refusal for a path through the Council Office Cutting, the Strawberry Line Group has teamed up with Greenways and Cycleroutes Limited, to submit revised proposals for a useful local route running from the Shepton Mallet Recreation Ground to the west of the town all the way through to the Webber Road residential area to the east. This creates a route altogether over 2 miles long.

This page summarises the key points and indicates the areas to be covered in further details for this revised planning application.

1. Shepton Mallet Recreation Ground. The planned Greenway route would terminate at the edge of these fields with the route providing access from right across the town. It may be useful to construct a path across the playing field to make for a route continuing to the Hospital.

2. Cross this Lane on the level to reach the former railway.

3. Run along the line of the railway, and manage the adjacent rough land as a wildlife site.

4. B3136 main road. The abutments of the old railway bridge remain in massive masonry and brickwork. Raise their height by approximately 1m to give 5.75m clearance for a new 12m span steel bridge to cross this busy road where otherwise it would be difficult to make a safe crossing.

5. Ramp down from bridge at a gradient of 1:25 running past the trackbed level and reaching the original ground about 70m from the bridge.

6. Either widen the existing back path (Berryman Close) or construct a parallel one on the spare land inside the railway boundary fence.

7. Continue on railway land behind the rank of garages and past the end of Buckland Road houses. Screen the garden of the last house with a new fence.

8. Construct a new path through Queen’s Road Park, winding through the mature trees to create a shady woodland feeling. Cross the Kent Lane link path where the portal of the railway bridge is a striking feature. Link to local streets.

9. Remove most, or all of the railway embankment opposite Strode Barn. This will allow plenty of space to plant a new boundary hedge along that property, and to take a level path through to the Sidings (new housing).

10. Run along the Sidings Estate access road and make an improved link with Hitchin Lane.

11. Continue along the Hitchin Lane access road to railway housing and then along the industrial unit access road.

12. Enhance existing link to Compton Road.

13. Mark out a convenient crossing of Station Road to run through to the existing ramped link to Tesco.

14. Use the material from the Queen’s Park embankment to make a new causeway all through the old railway cutting and ramp up at 1:25 to reach the Council Campus access road.

15. Mark out a zebra crossing over this road and run centrally through the Council carpark by means of a defined walking and cycling route OR much better make a greenway link along the boundary of the two car parks.

16. Provide a shared zebra crossing of Cannard’s Grave Road to reach through to the paths planned in the Duchy development.

17. Proposed paths in the Duchy Development.

18. Mark the existing pedestrian route through Car park for shared use to reach Park Road for the Town Centre.

19. Reconstruct ramp to railway path to make a 1:25 slope suitable for wheelchairs.

20. Existing Millennium Way railway path.
21 Make a new link to Tadley Acres formalising the existing well-trodden path and a new direct link to the railway path.

22 Negotiate with the Town Council to allow shared use on a single path through Collett’s Park in order to give access to the school. Whilst for most of the way one could widen the existing path, the last part would better be a new link to the corner of the Park so as to be as close to the school entrance as possible.

23 Make a new ramp to supplement the existing steps to Allyn Saxon Drive in order to make the Millennium Way accessible to all.

24 Existing purpose built cycleway running along Cooper’s Mead.

25 End of Millennium Way at Whitestone Road.

The sections of the Strawberry Line and Millennium Way which are the subject of this current planning application are ringed in red and coloured pink and comprise:

- Duchy Recreation Field to Queen’s Road Park
- Queen’s Road Park to the “Sidings”
- Woodland cutting and car park area south of Council offices
- Additional ramps and links to Tesco, Four Acres, across Collett Park and Allyn Saxon Drive.
7. **Schedule of Land Ownership**

Starting at the western end, Station Road is an unadopted highway, over which permissive access is granted to the public including to the residents of the Sidings and beyond.

The Cannard’s Grave Road Bridge and immediate environs is owned by Highways England who have inherited the remaining fragments of railway formerly owned by the Railway Property Board. Greenways will pass under this bridge by way of Licence.

The Railway Cutting is owned by Mendip Council with whom Greenways would seek to complete a lease. The Carpark is also owned by Mendip and on account of the fluid nature of the future of the Carpark, a Licence maybe more appropriate. Finally, the Town Council Yard can also be covered by a Licence because the route may evolve once Mendip Council’s redevelopment plans are finalised. The small works to modify the Millennium Way at the end of Collett Park could be carried out by letter of agreement.

8. **Design and Access Statement**

The design of this Millennium Way Missing Link will provide a dry, sound, smooth all weather path with a sealed surface to be suitable for all types of everyday journeys and by all sorts of people – children, families and novices, as well as experienced cyclists, and for all pedestrians, and for those with wheelchairs or buggies. Path gradients will be limited to 1:20.

As this is a town centre route it is judged that a 3m path width is required for the possible surges of shared use going to and from school or Tesco.

The Missing Link Path will extend the existing Millennium Way to make the existing path much more useful. It will provide a well graded ramp to Colletts Park, it will link direct to Mendip Council’s offices, and through to Tesco’s as well as residential areas further to the west.

The Missing Link intersects the Council Access Road at a point well back from its junction with Cannard’s Grave Road and with Station Road at a point with excellent visibility.

Whilst the section through the carpark is necessarily of a different characteristic to the railway cutting, running adjacent to the wide margin of the carpark a semblance of green is maintained over the whole length of the Missing Link.

![View through the car park](image)

Whilst it is not in our power to determine the quality of any redevelopment in this area, we do hope that Mendip Council, as beneficent owners, will incorporate a memorable greenway route through their site.

The whole of the Missing Link will be freely available to the public at all times, we intend to light the route with bat-friendly, photo-voltaic LED’s along the middle of path.

The Missing Link will be carefully signed to all destinations and map based information boards used to communicate the central role of this Greenway Route.

9. **Construction Matters**

All construction will be managed from the end of the railway cutting at Station Road where lorries transporting fill and other material can have a convenient access to avoid obstructing the public highway.
If the opportunity and timing allows, Greenways will seek to provide an opportunity for the local public to be involved in the works via one of their summer workcamps. Any site storage of tools and equipment required for maintenance will be at the Town Councils Depot which is very conveniently located adjacent to the Missing Link.

10. Flooding and Drainage
The Missing Link will not bring about any change to the current situation. It will not introduce further run off into the area and the current drainage pattern will continue, although the railway cutting is infilled at both ends there is no sign of water having ever ponded to any depth over the last 40 years since the line was wholly abandoned. The catchment area is very small and the ground permeable.

11. Supporting Studies
This application submits the ecological and tree studies which accompanied 2016/2473/FUL as there has been no significant change in the vegetation or use of the area.

This planning application comprises a resubmission of an application by Sustrans (2016/2473/FUL), and in Appendix 2 we submit the various studies which accompanied that application. They are still relevant as there has been no detectable change in the passage of time over the last few years.

The studies comprise;
2. Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey by Stark Ecology November 2014.
4. Tree Survey by Thomas Owen in February 2015
5. Case officer report 2015/0964/FUL

We submit that the findings and recommendations of these reports remain valid and appropriate for this revised planning application.

The very short section not covered comprises the link from the end of the Council Depot to Collett Park and the old railway – Millennium Way. Here the removal of a short section of hedge will be compensated by planting the whole end fence of the Council carpark, and some infill planting under the direction of the Town Parks Management to enhance the connection with the Millennium Way.

Future Work
The Council’s Policy is to extend the corridor the whole length of the town, and this aspiration is set out in our earlier note – The Shepton Greenway July 2017 – which is attached as an appendix for information.