

Swale Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Executive Summary

Swale Borough Council

May 2025

Introduction

Active travel, which comprises **walking, wheeling and cycling**, is becoming increasingly important as challenges around climate change become more pressing and the demand for active travel solutions grows. Investment in cycling and walking can have **wider positive impacts on people and places**, making roads quieter and safer, improving air quality, improving physical and mental wellbeing and creating attractive places for people to live.

LCWIPs aim to both **encourage and facilitate the modal shift** away from motorised vehicles to more active modes, transforming areas in ways which **support active travel, reduce congestion, support local economies and improve physical and mental health** in line with sustainable visions at a local to a national level.

LCWIPs outline a “strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements required at a local level”.

Policy Context

Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

In 2017, the Department for Transport (DfT) published their first **Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS)**. The aim of this was to encourage cycling, walking and wheeling to become a key mode of travel for shorter journeys or as a stage of a longer journey by delivering better safety, mobility and streets. In 2021, the Government announced the second CWIS which reflects new active travel policies, financial investment into active travel in England and performance monitoring against both the first and second CWIS objectives. Alongside the CWIS, the DfT published practical, strategic guidance on developing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for local bodies.

The LCWIP Process Includes...



Defining the geographic scope of the LCWIP

Gathering information on current cycling and walking patterns and review relevant transportation and land use policies.



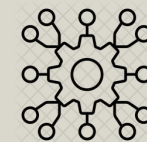
Identifying origin and destination points and cycle flows. Convert flows into a network of routes and identify improvements.

Identifying key trip generators and walking and wheeling zones. Creating a network of routes and improvements



Prioritising proposed routes and improvements to develop a prioritized programme of delivery

Integrating outputs into local planning and transport policies, strategies, and delivery plans.



Introduction

Gear Change: A bold Vision for Cycling and Walking

Gear change describes the vision to make England a great walking and cycling nation. One of its aims is for half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030.

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan sets out the government's commitments and the actions needed to decarbonize the entire transport system in the UK. The first strategic priority it sets is "Accelerating modal shift to public and active transport [making them] the natural first choice for our daily activities".

Local Transport Note 1/20

The Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) for cycle infrastructure design establishes five design principles for active travel networks and their routes: cohesion, directness, safety, comfort, attractiveness.

The Inclusive Mobility Guidance

Inclusive Mobility is the government's guide to best practice on improving access to public transport and creating a barrier-free pedestrian environment. Creating and maintaining accessible public realm is crucial for ensuring that disabled people are not excluded from playing a full role in society.



Determining Scope

Study Area

Swale is one of the 12 districts in Kent, it is bounded by Medway, Canterbury, Ashford and Maidstone. The LCWIP study area is covering the whole of Swale.

Given the importance of encompassing both rural and urban areas as well as connections between key settlement clusters, additional smaller-scale study areas have been identified within Swale as shown in Figure 1: Sittingbourne, Faversham, Sheppey towns and rural Swale.

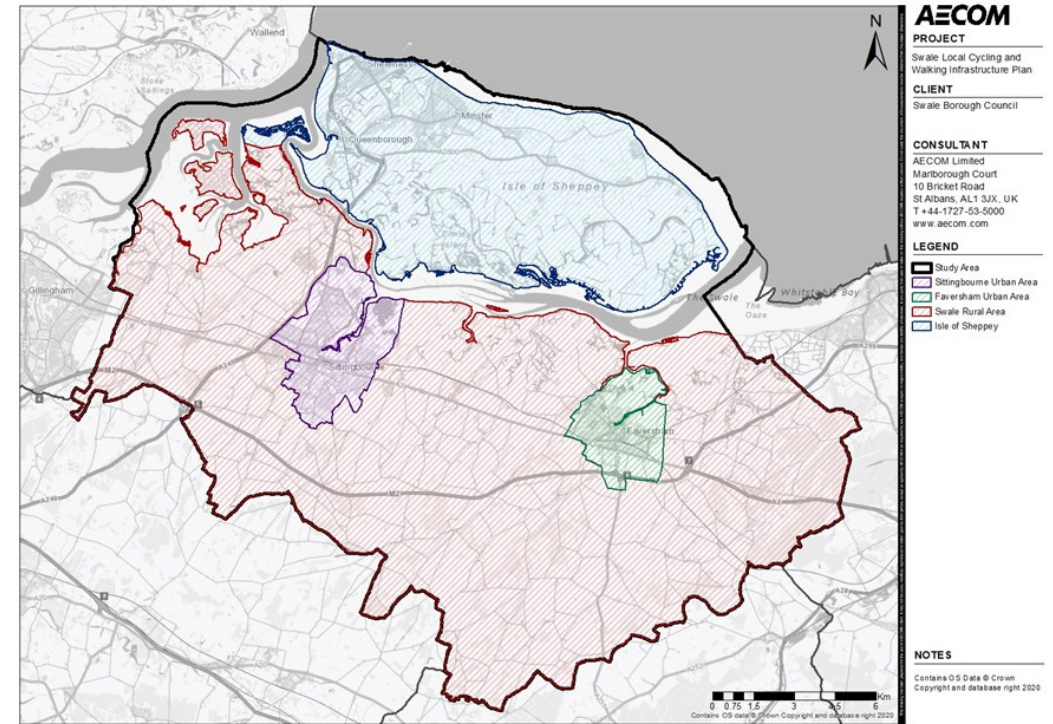


Figure 1: Study Area - Swale

Swale LCWIP Approach

The aim of this integrated **Swale LCWIP** is to build on existing active travel work and merge several local LCWIPs into a single borough-wide plan. It addresses gaps in the proposed network and suggests new routes to close them, presenting a coherent active travel network to support future funding bids. Specifically, it incorporates the existing **Faversham LCWIP** (developed by Faversham Town Council) and the draft **Sheppey Towns LCWIP** (developed by WSP), and identifies walking and cycling routes in other areas of Swale, including Sittingbourne and rural parts of the borough. It also aligns with the KCWIP by proposing several cross-border routes that connect Swale with the wider Kent network.

As the Faversham LCWIP and KCWIP routes have already undergone public consultation, the upcoming consultation for the Swale LCWIP will focus on all other active travel routes.

Gathering Information

During Stage 2 of the Swale LCWIP, a comprehensive review was undertaken of the local area context to understand the existing and future active travel provision, Swale's demographics and any barriers to active travel, as summarised below:



Swale is bounded by Medway, Canterbury, Ashford and Maidstone. According to the 2021 Census, Swale's population is around **151,700** - an **increase of 11.7%** since the 2011 Census



Swale has high **employment density** in Sittingbourne, Faversham and the Sheppey Towns. Swale has large **disparities in levels of deprivation**, from prosperous parts of Faversham to pockets of deprivation on the Isle of Sheppey such as Sheerness and Queenborough, which are some of the most deprived wards in England.



The spatial redistribution of people towards urban areas results in pockets of **low car dependency in towns** and **higher car dependency in rural areas**. There are a number of

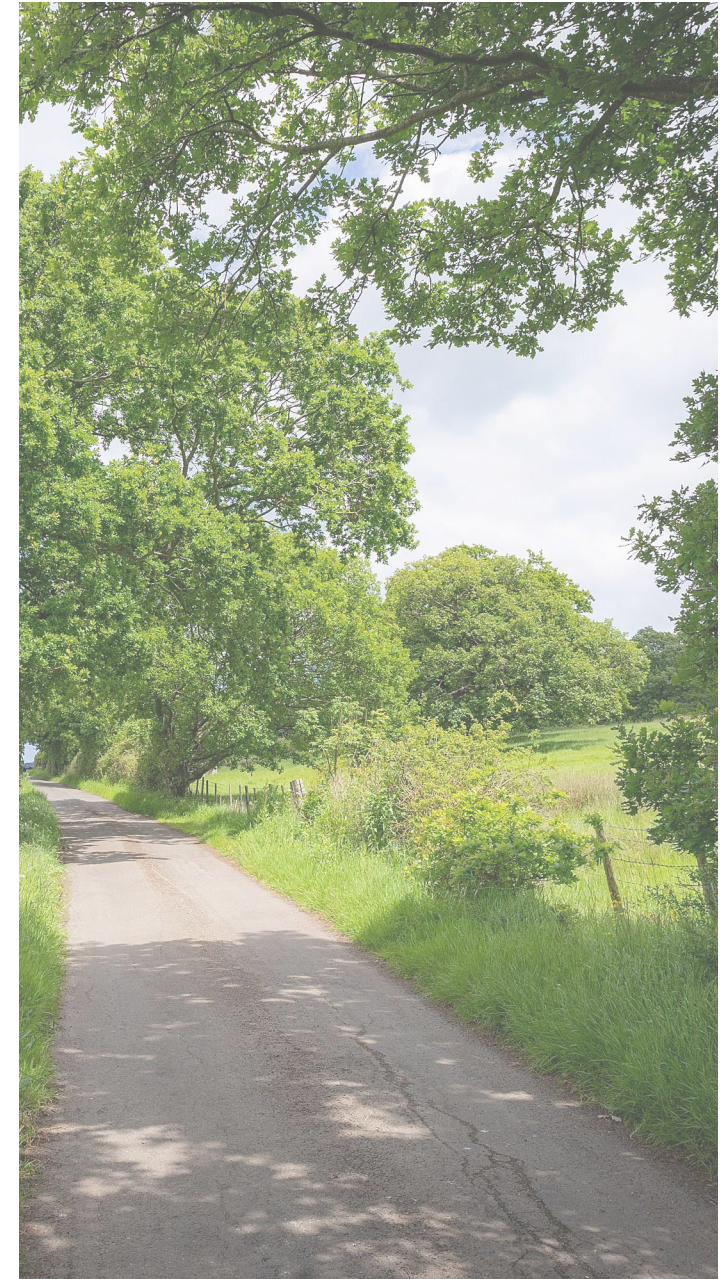
committed developments across Swale, largely located on the urban peripheries of Sittingbourne and Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey.



The walking network across Swale is diverse in terms of the **network density and quality**. Whilst there are significant **network gaps** on the Isle of Sheppey and across rural Swale, there are several **well-established and signposted longer and shorter walking routes**. There are also more dedicated walking facilities in the urban areas of Sittingbourne and Faversham.



The existing cycling network across Swale is largely comprised of the **National Cycle Network (NCN)**, which offers some **inter-urban connectivity** across Swale. There is also a network of cycling infrastructure across Swale, however this is **sparse, fragmented and substandard** in some locations. Additionally, it is mainly located within Sittingbourne, with notable gaps in rural areas.



Gathering Information



Swale's rail network offers **direct links** from Sittingbourne and Faversham to St Pancras, Victoria and Charing Cross with 5 services per hour in peak times. The bus network, is concentrated around urban areas and in rural areas, it is more **unreliable and infrequent**.



Swale is bounded north-south and east-west by some of the most **dangerous rural roads [1]**, which are typically associated with high vehicle speeds, a high number of road accidents and are key indicators of **community severance**.



The potential for modal shift is indicated by the **Propensity to Cycle Tool** which shows that there is low levels of cycling between towns on the Isle of Sheppey and also between Sittingbourne and Faversham.



Sittingbourne, Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey have a high number of **key trip generators and attractors**, with a number of major employment

sites, such as the HMP Sheppey Cluster on the Isle of Sheppey whilst rural Swale has fewer trip generators and attractors.

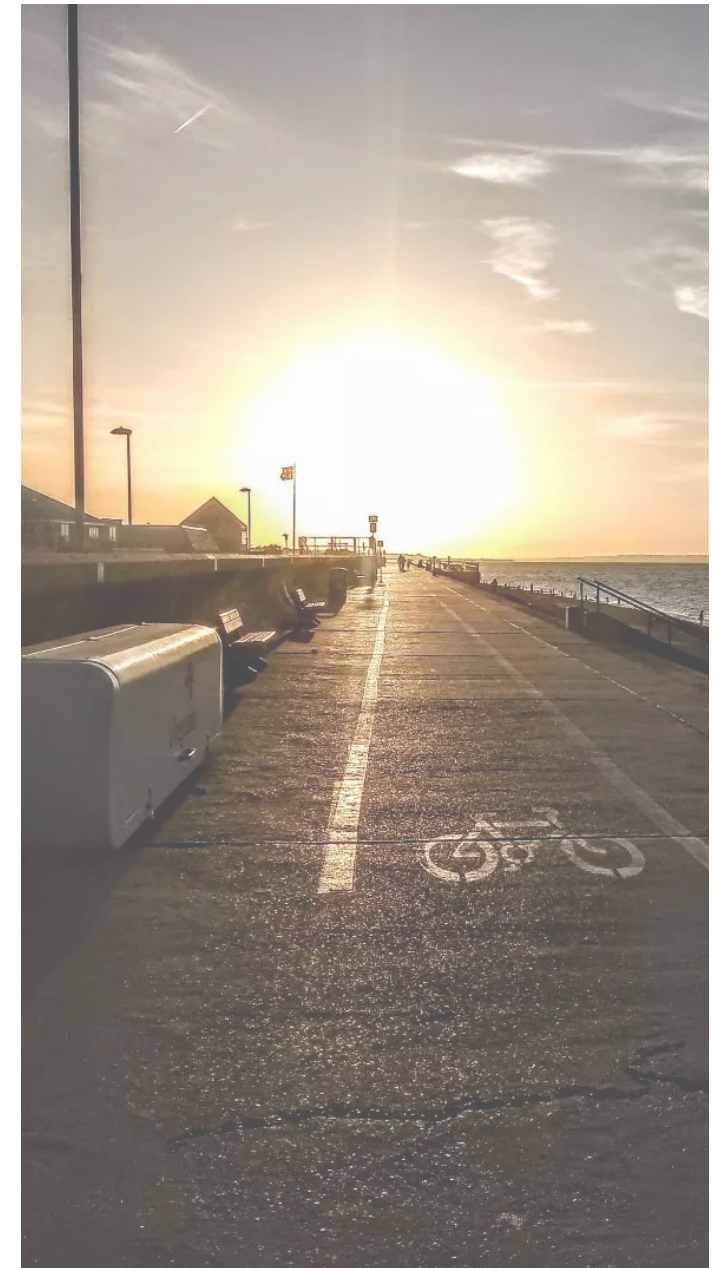


The **proposed active travel schemes**, studies or audits which have been undertaken across Swale include: Sustrans Sheppey Audit, Faversham Town Audit, Swale Cycling and Walking Framework Consultation, Active Travel 4 Proposals, Kent Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan, Faversham LCWIP, Faversham to Teynham Quietway, the Sheppey Light Railway Greenway Route and the Sheppey Towns LCWIP.



To better understand the perception of the existing network and active travel facilities, information was gathered through the online '**Widen My Path**' tool and the '**Your Everyday Trips**' survey which was undertaken in 2022. These tools help to understand barriers and opportunities for active travel in Swale.

[1] The AA Charitable Trust, <https://www.theaa.com/about-us/newsroom/rural-roads>



Additional Information

Sheppey Light Railway Greenway Route

The SLRG Group was formed by Islanders in 2022 to **promote a safe walking, wheeling and cycling route**, or Greenway, across the Isle of Sheppey, inspired by the path of the disused **Sheppey Light Railway**. The ambition is to better **connect communities** by giving people the choice to travel across the island under their own steam.

As shown in Figure 2, the Greenway connects Leysdown, Bay View, Eastchurch, Brambledown, Minster on Sea, Halfway, Sheerness and Queenborough.

The volunteer-led project has gathered support from **local residents, businesses, town & parish councils, Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council**. With landowner support, the Group's volunteers have already improved part of the route between Power Station Road and Scrapsgate. An example of the work which the Group is doing can be seen in Figure 3.

Much of the Group's time is focussed on **negotiating with all the landowners** along the proposed route, which wherever possible, follows the former railway.

The SLRG route is visible on the LCWIP consultation map in black. It connects with the proposed active travel networks across the Sheppey towns.

Please feel free to include feedback on the SLRG route as part of this public consultation.



Figure 3: Sheppey Light Railway Greenway
Source: Sheppey Light Railway Greenway Group

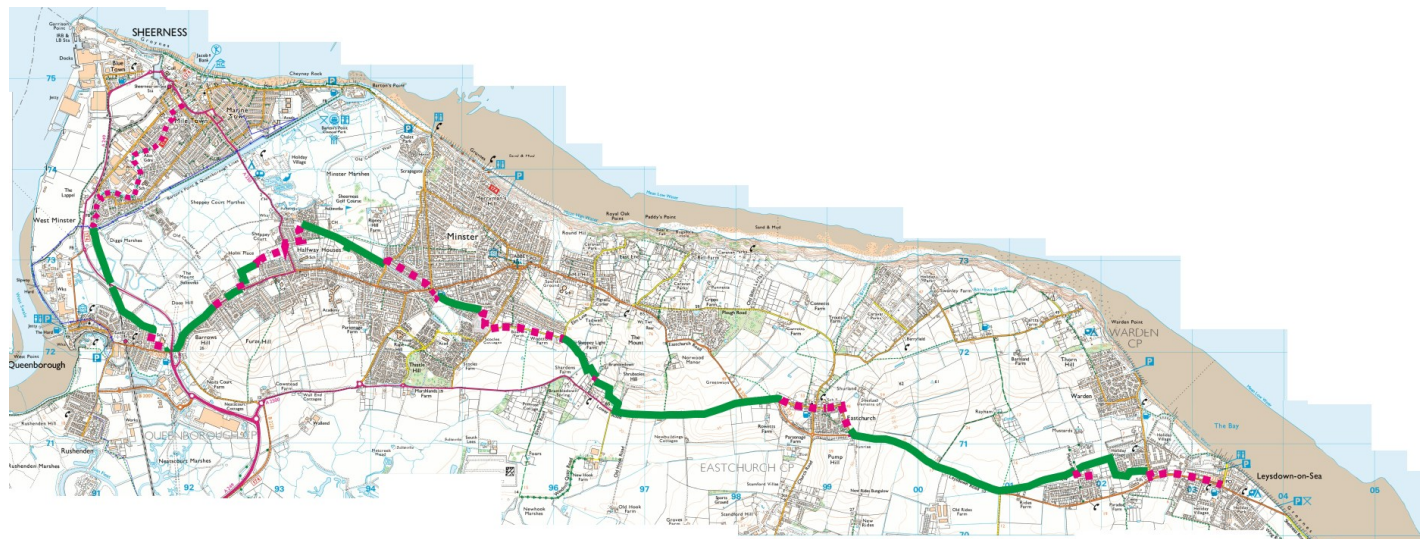


Figure 2: Sheppey Light Railway Greenway Route

Network Planning for Cycling

Want more information?
Please see [Appendix A](#)

Introduction

The evidence gathered in Stage 2 informed the identification of potential cycling **infrastructure improvements** and key cycle **routes**.

Figure 4 shows an overview of the Network Planning for Cycling stage of the LCWIP, as outlined in the DfT's LCWIP Guidance.

The routes emerged from comprehensive data analysis and were informed by various data sources as detailed in previous sections of this report. Stakeholder engagement was undertaken to gather real-world opinions on the identified networks.

Alignment decisions considered the **existing and forthcoming active travel** network, **local conditions** such as gradient, terrain and **cycling accessibility** were also factored into the route selection, ensuring they achieve the **core design outcomes** of being coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive. High-level interventions along the final cycling routes are presented at the end of this section.

The proposed Swale LCWIP cycling network is presented in Figures 5 to 7.

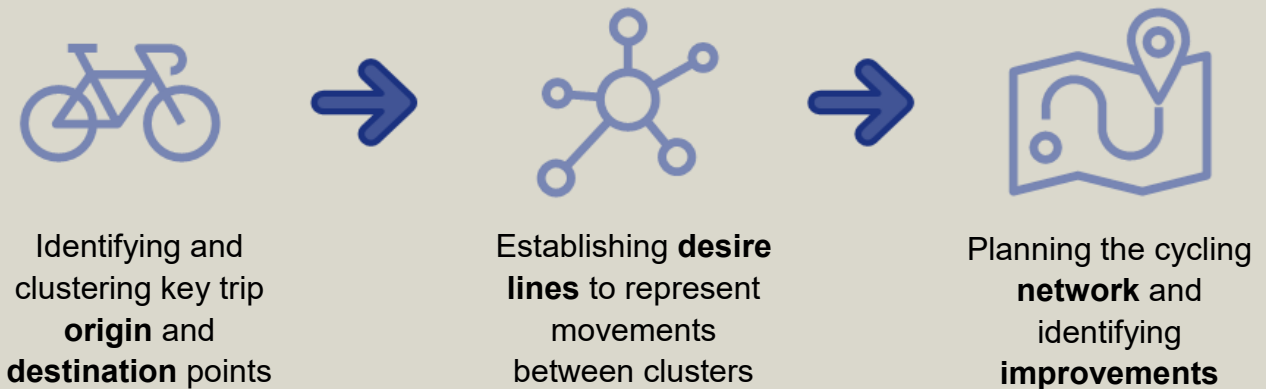


Figure 4: Summary of Cycling Network Generation Stages



Network Planning for Cycling

Want more information?
Please see Appendix X

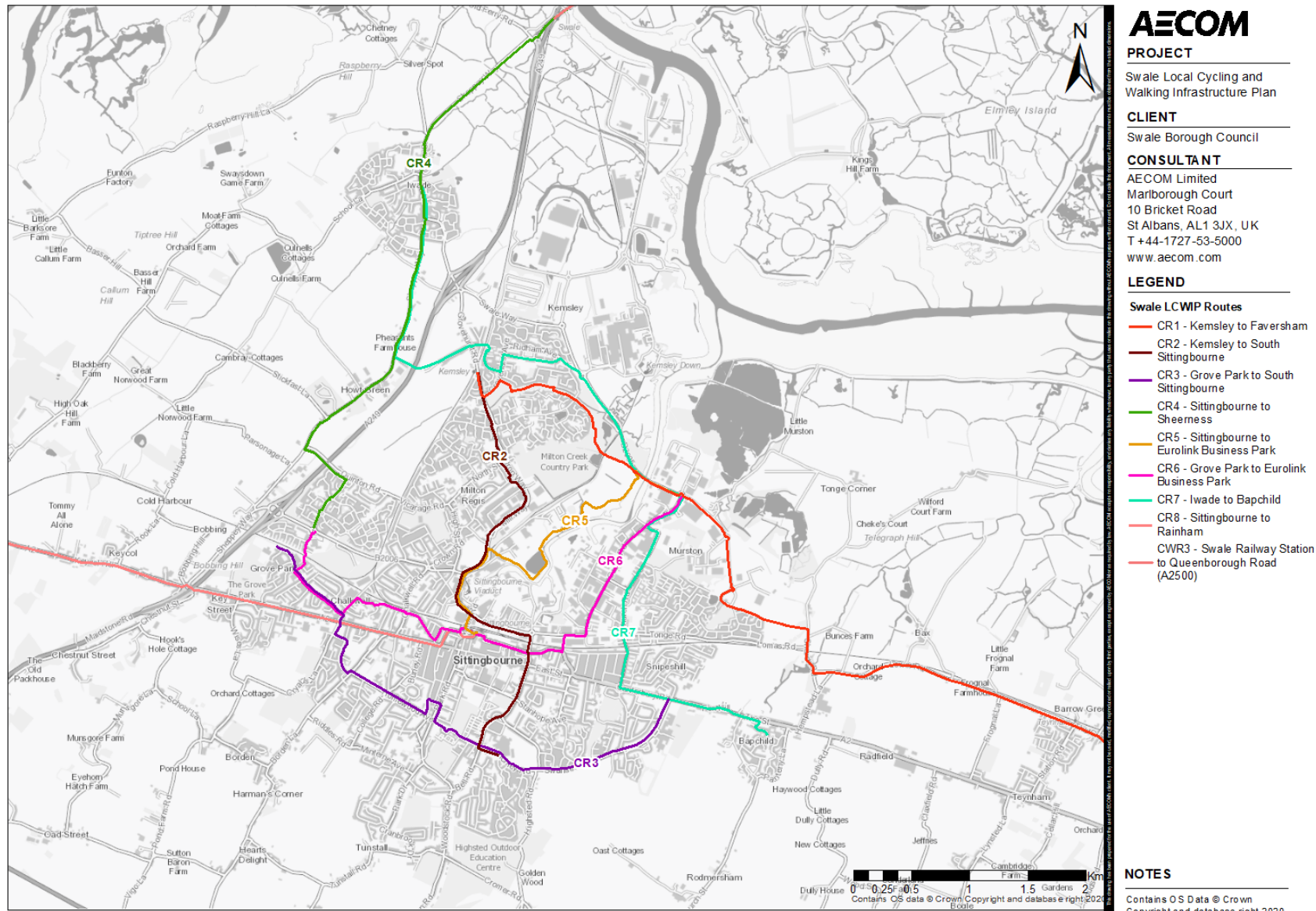


Figure 5: Identified Cycling Network - Sittingbourne

Network Planning for Cycling

Want more information?
Please see Appendix X

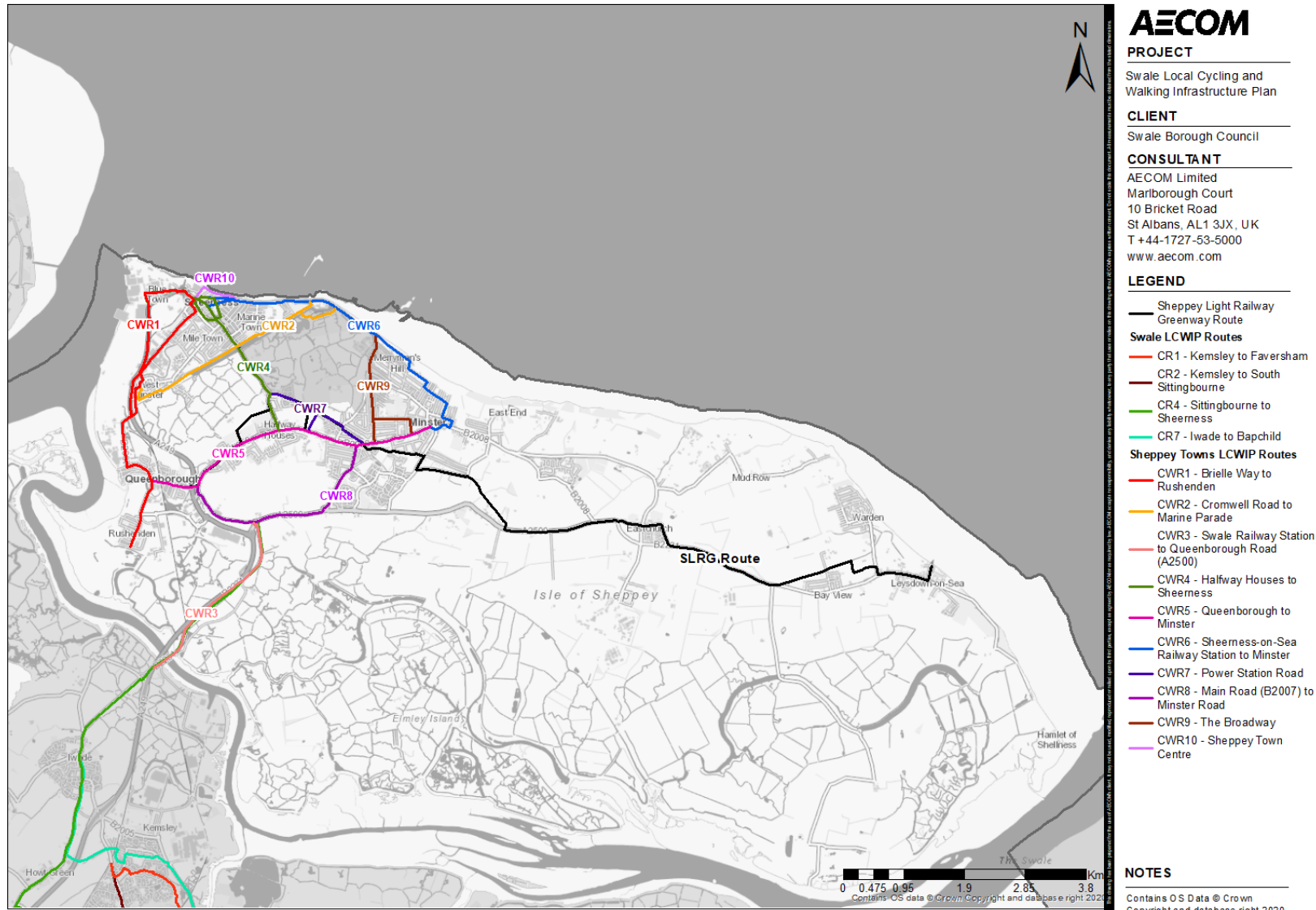


Figure 6: Identified Cycling Network - Sheppey Towns

Network Planning for Cycling

Want more information?
Please see Appendix X

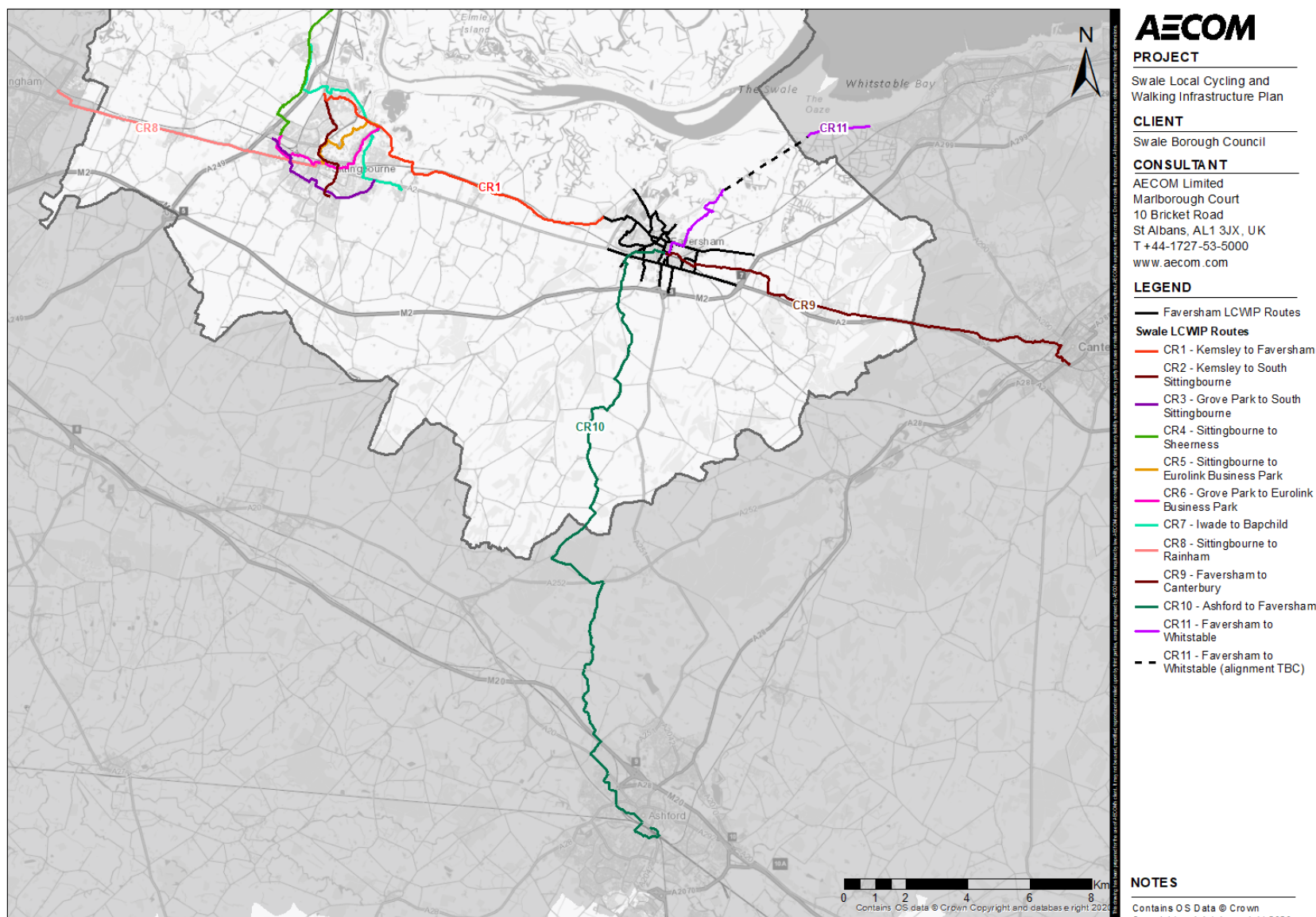


Figure 7: Identified Cycling Network - Rural Swale

Network Planning for Cycling

Want more information?
Please see [Appendix A](#)

Identifying Interventions

Proposed interventions were identified through a comprehensive desktop analysis (and route audits for the Sheppey Towns LCWIP routes). Proposed cycling interventions included:

- Improving **route continuity**, overcoming barriers and severance
- Installation of **new and improved crossings** for cyclists
- Provision of **segregated cycle lanes** (or introduction of segregation to existing facilities)
- Introduction of **speed limit reductions**, **traffic calming** and other measures to reduce motor traffic speed and dominance and promote a more comfortable cycling environment, and
- The installation of **improved wayfinding and signage** and enhanced street lighting.

It is important to note that these are high-level interventions and further study and a greater level of investigation and assessment is required prior to design, consultation and implementation. The deliverability in terms of constraints, risks and costs for multiple

options are all important considerations.

An example cycling route along with the proposed interventions can be seen in Figure 8. The final network of planned/ proposed cycling routes can be seen in Figure 9 and

the detailed route maps and interventions can be seen in **Appendix X** to **Appendix X**.

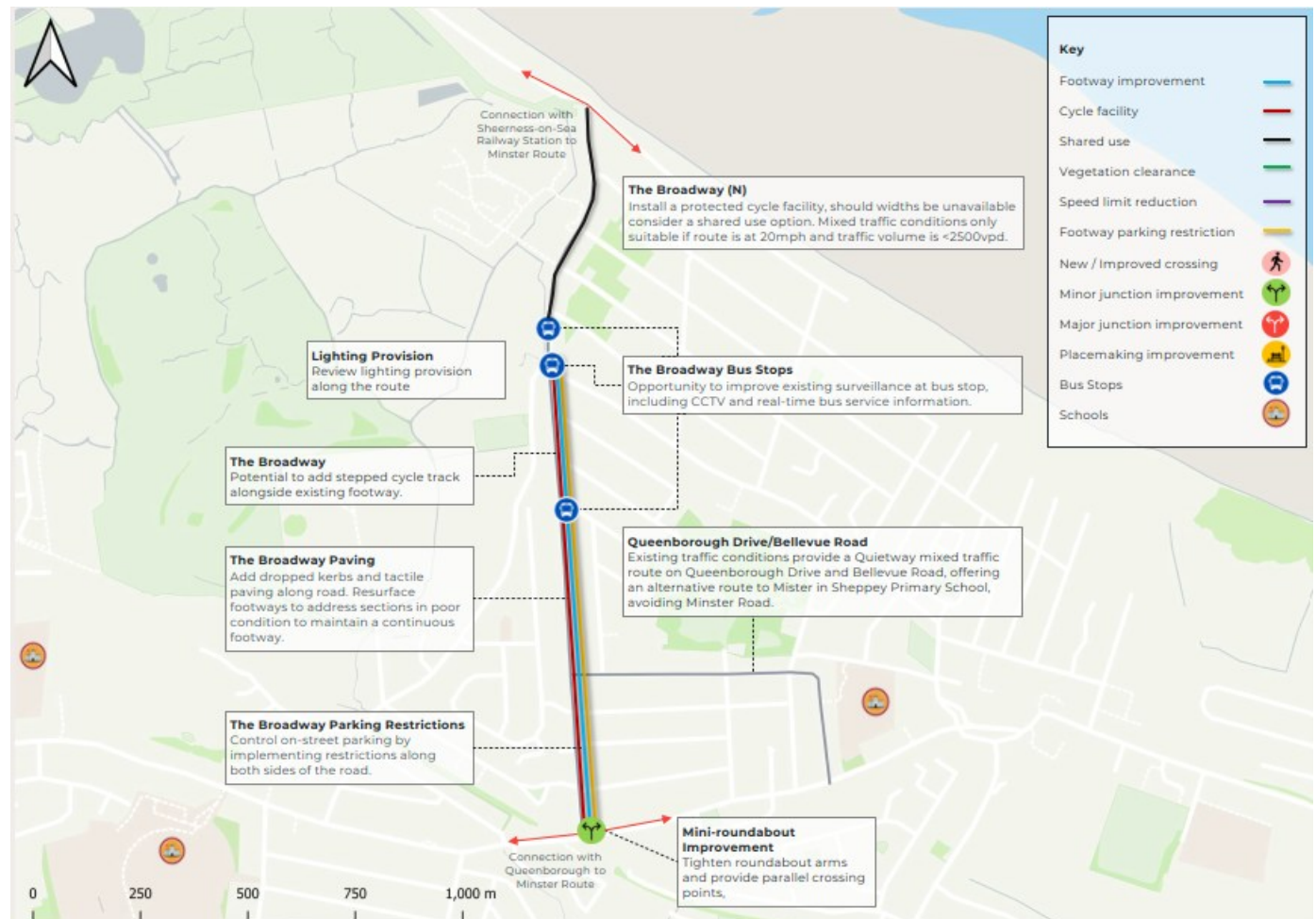


Figure 8: Identified Cycling Improvements Along CR1

Network Planning for Cycling

Want more information?
Please see Appendix X

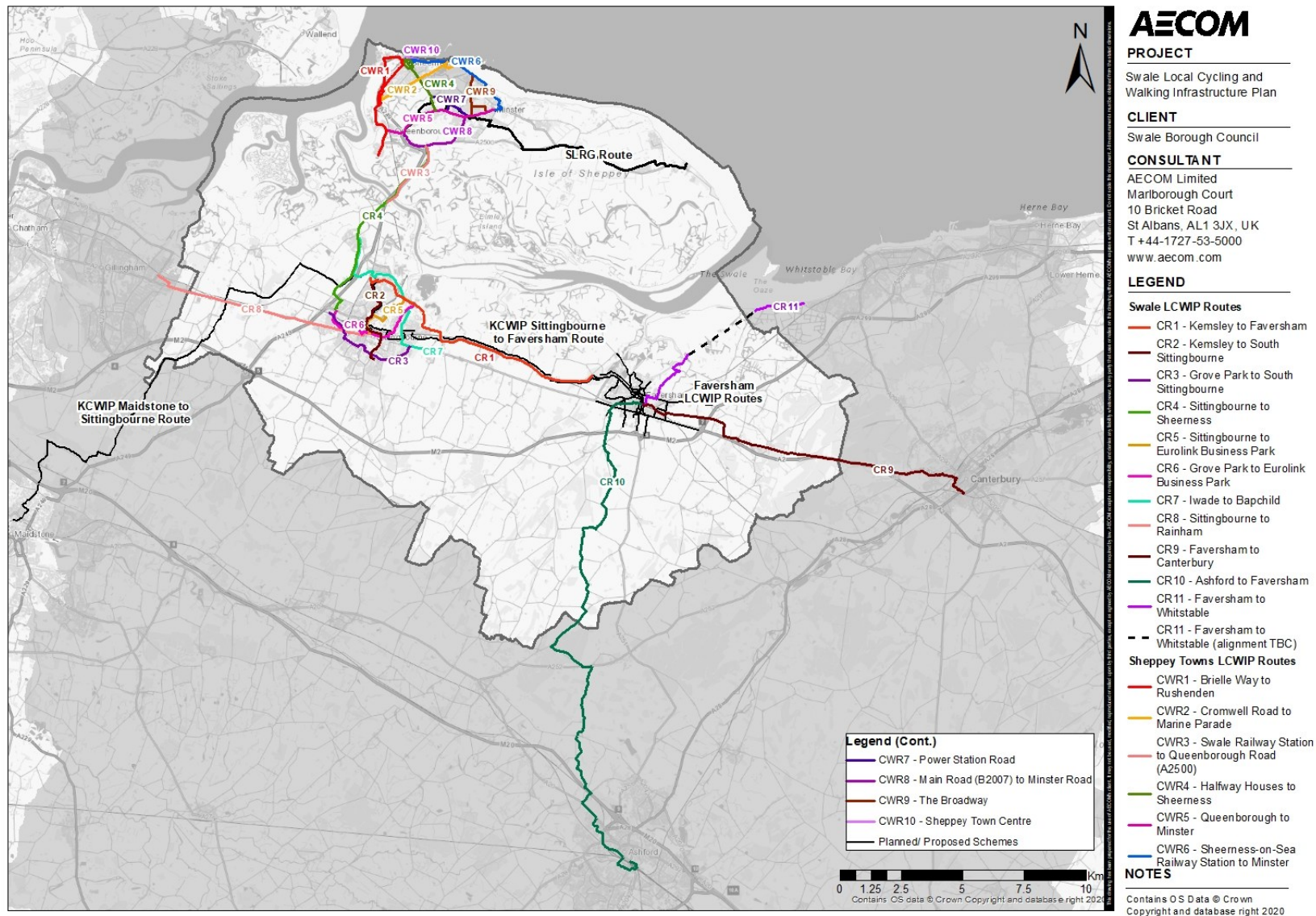


Figure 9: Identified Cycling Network for Public Engagement

Network Planning for Walking & Wheeling

Want more information?
Please see [Appendix B](#)

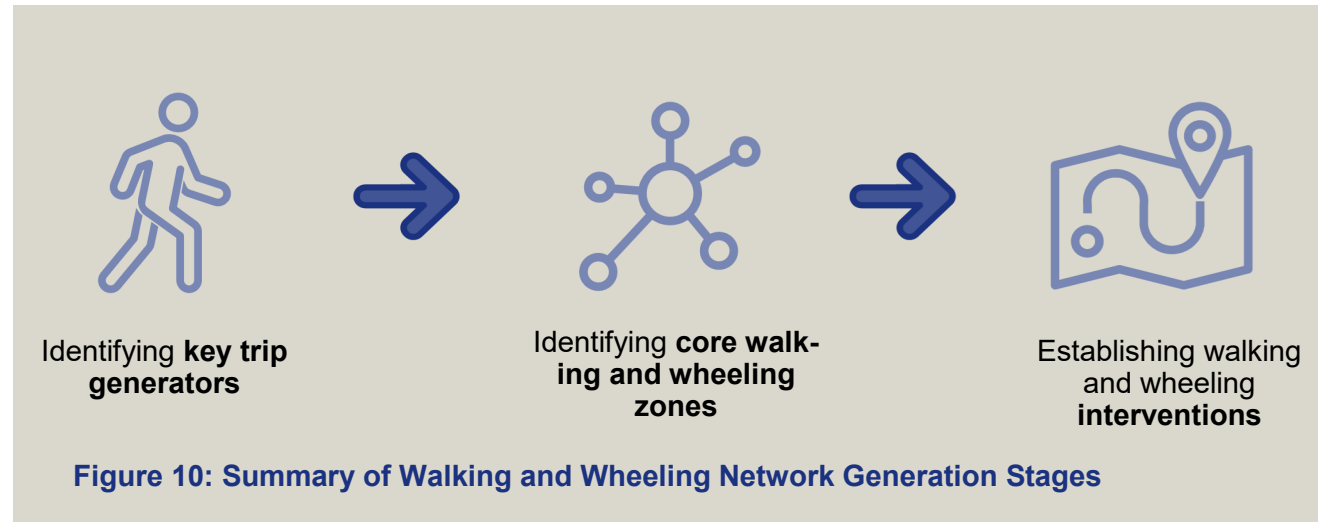
Introduction

This section outlines the steps followed to map the future walking and wheeling network, as defined by the DfT Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans guidance, and shown in Figure 10. This process incorporated **current and future trip generators**, **walking patterns**, the **existing and planned active travel network**, and feedback from key **stakeholders**.

This section uses the phrase ‘walking and wheeling’. Sustrans defines this as “representing the action of moving at a pedestrian’s pace, whether or not someone is standing or sitting, walking or wheeling unaided or using any kind of aid to mobility, including walking aids, wheeled aids, personal assistants or support animals.”

The walking and wheeling routes aim to encourage short trips to be made on foot rather than by car. The routes were developed from various data sources and stakeholder engagement was undertaken to help identify **local daily travel needs** or **barriers** to walking and wheeling to ultimately define the final network. High-level interventions along the final walking and wheeling routes are presented at the end of this section.

The Swale LCWIP walking and wheeling network is presented in Figure 11 and Figure 12.



Network Planning for Walking & Wheeling

Want more information?
Please see Appendix X

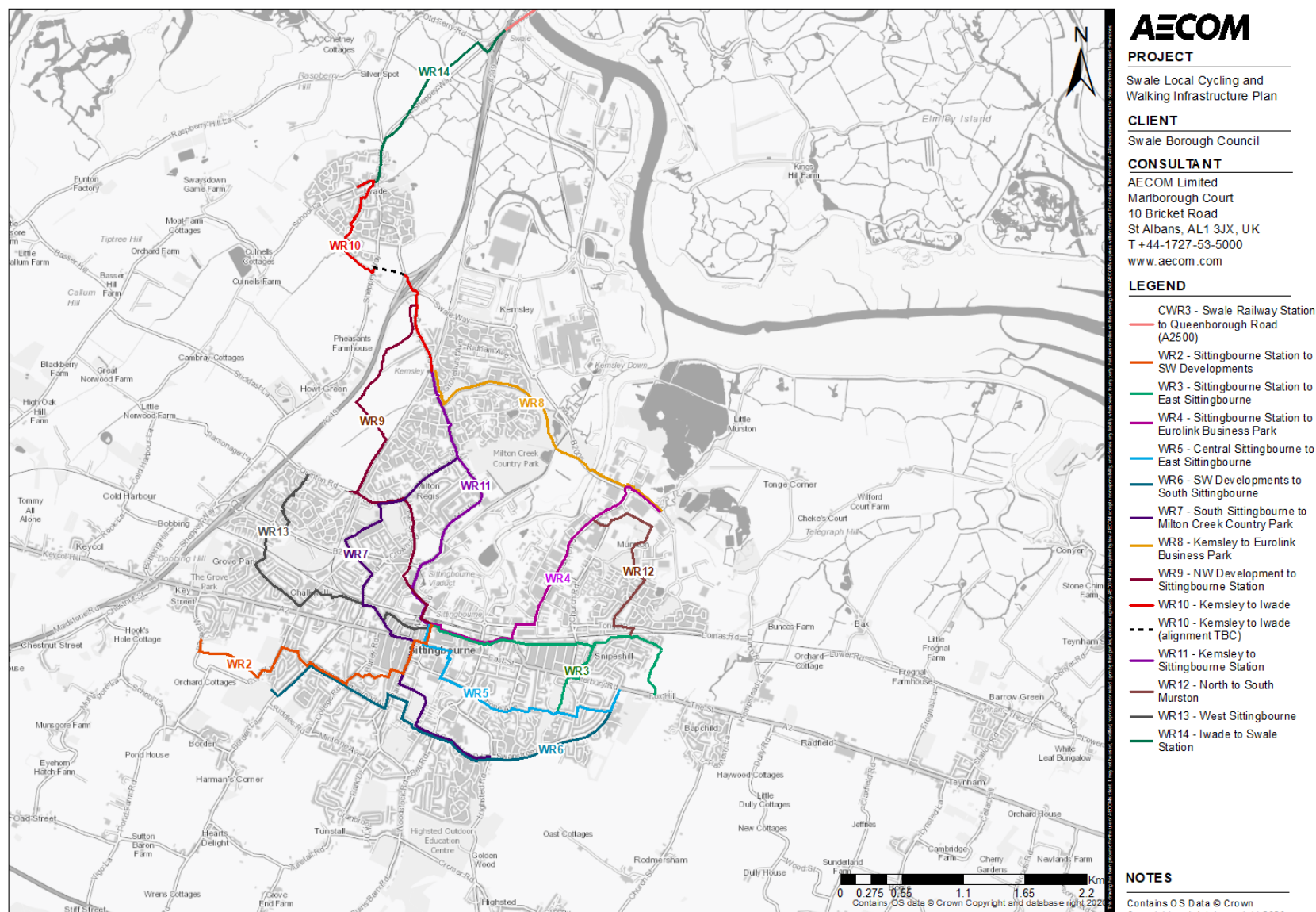


Figure 11: Identified Walking and Wheeling Network - Sittingbourne

Network Planning for Walking & Wheeling

Want more information?
Please see Appendix X

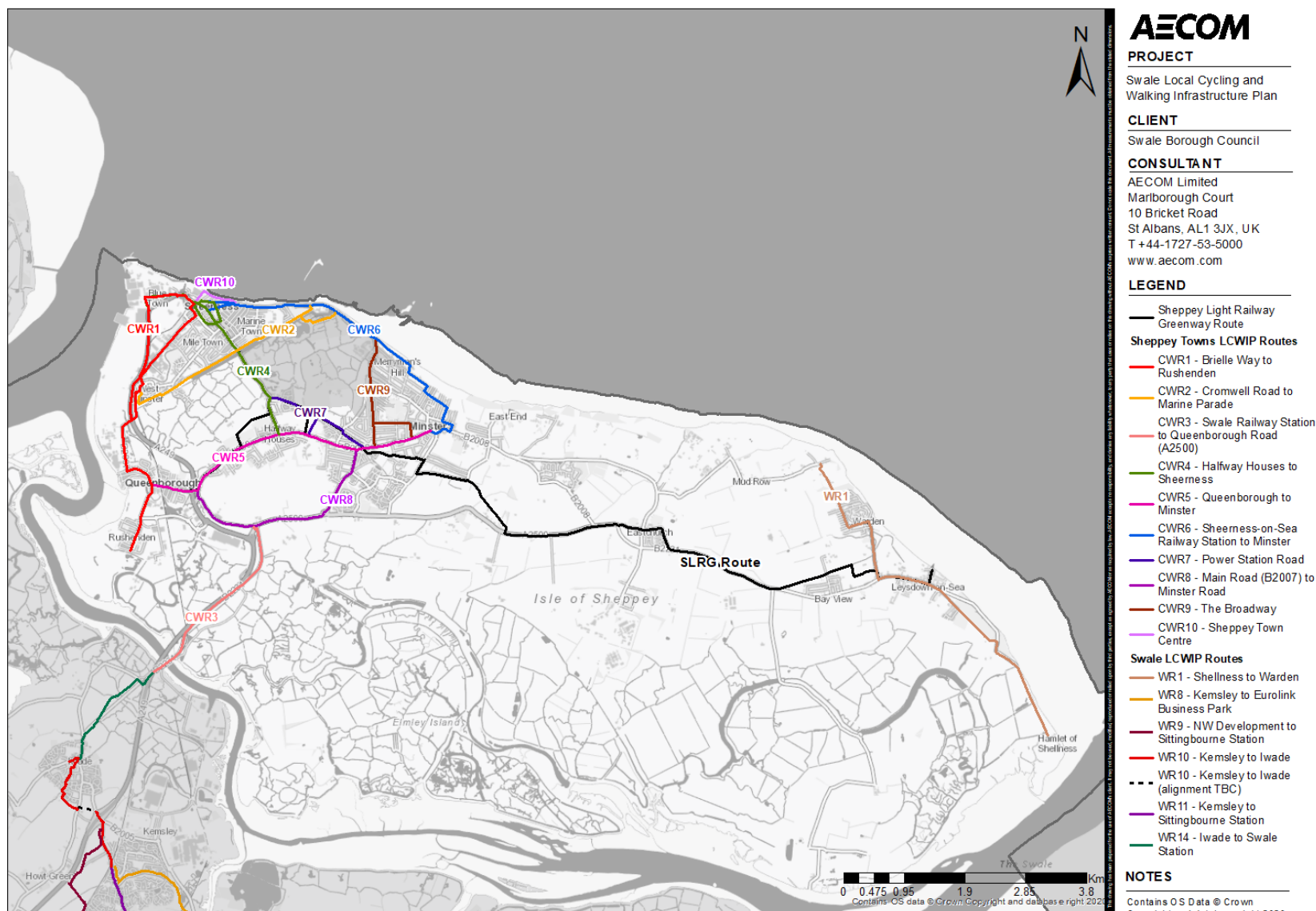


Figure 12: Identified Walking and Wheeling Network - Isle of Sheppey

Want more information?
Please see **Appendix B**

PROJECT
Swale Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

CLIENT
Swale Borough Council

CONSULTANT
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LEGEND

- Study Area
- Route 2 - Sittingbourne Station to SW Developments
- Walking Interventions

NOTES
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Network Planning for Walking & Wheeling

Want more information?
Please see Appendix X

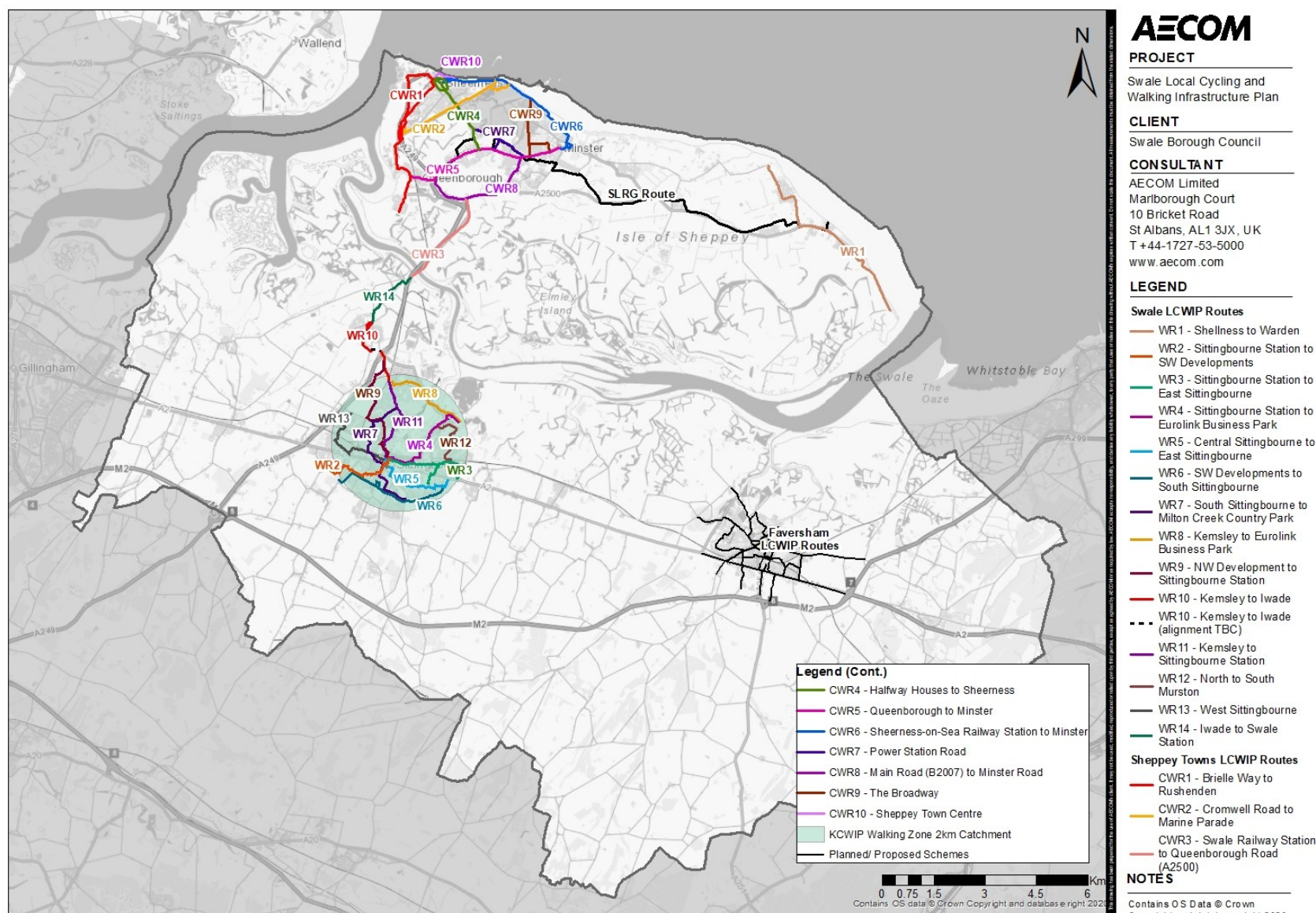


Figure 14: Identified Walking and Wheeling Network for Public Engagement

Next Steps...

At the next stage, public consultation will be conducted to ensure the proposed networks address the needs and concerns of local residents, the future users.

For the realistic and practical implementation of the plan, the walking and cycling routes will be assessed and prioritised based on policy, strategy, deliverability and financial priorities. The result of this process will suggest which routes should be prioritised in order to achieve the most benefits.





Appendix A - Network Planning for Cycling - Methodology

Network Planning for Cycling

Key Origins and Destinations

To identify the potential demand across the proposed cycling network, key origin and destination points across Swale were mapped. This mapping was based on data collected during the Information Gathering stage, specifically the locations of key trip attractors and generators.

Desire Lines

Desire lines in this context are **indicative links** between origin and destination clusters that reflect the “desire” of the local population to travel between two locations. These desire lines do not connect to existing infrastructure, nor do they reflect the proposed routes.

The identification of desire lines was an **iterative process** undertaken overlaying data from the **Propensity to Cycle Tool (PCT)**, 2011 Census **Travel to Work data**, and **traffic model (VISUM)** 2019 flows. Additional cross-border desire lines which were identified as significant to the county-wide network (KCWIP) as part of the analysis were also included in the desire line identification.

Desire Line Classification

The relative importance of each desire line to the wider network needs to be understood to assess the potential future number of cyclists they could serve. Desire lines were classified as based on the following characteristics:

- **Primary:** High flows of cyclists are forecast along desire lines that link large residential areas to trip attractors such as a town or city centre.
- **Secondary:** Medium flows of cyclists are forecast along desire lines that link to trip attractors such as schools, colleges, and employment sites.
- **Local:** Lower flows of cyclists are forecast along desire lines that cater for local cycle trips, often providing links to primary or secondary desire lines.

As can be seen from the above desire line classifications, the desire line classification process is deeply rooted in demand. Whilst demand is an important facet of desire lines, the geographic scope and objectives of this LCWIP required the consideration of other factors to ensure an even balance between urban and rural areas as well as focusing on connecting smaller towns into larger settlements.

Classified Desire Lines

As shown in Figure 1, the outputs of the desire line classification process show **Primary desire lines between Sittingbourne and Faversham and connecting to the Isle of Sheppey**. There are also several Primary desire lines connecting the towns on Sheppey, as well as rural towns outside of Sittingbourne. The local desire lines, in turn, represent longer routes that connect to the primary desire lines.

Desire Lines for Route Selection

Figure 2 demonstrates the desire lines taken forward for route selection. Overlapping desire lines or those with similar origins and destinations were merged to create a network of cycling routes which reflect the key movement corridors highlighted by the desire lines.

As shown, cross-border KCWIP desire lines were included, along with the highest scoring desire lines, to ensure the alignment with the county-wide network.

Network Planning for Cycling

Desire lines in Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey were excluded from selection since they are part of the Faversham LCWIP and Sheppey Towns LCWIP respectively.

The focus of the proposed cycling network was on **Sittingbourne** and the east-west and north-south movements connecting the town.

The **desire lines taken forward for route selection represent current priorities for SBC**. Other desire lines are not discarded for future analysis but have not been identified as primary at this stage. This prioritisation is subject to further updates based on changes in local/national policy or progress towards the identified priority desire lines.

Route Selection Process

Identifying routes for inclusion in the Swale LCWIP was an iterative process and was one of the most important elements of the LCWIP process. Unlike the desire lines, these routes connect to existing cycling infrastructure, support existing and future cycle demand, and accommodate the forecast needs of the local community in moving between specific areas. At the same time, they achieve the **core design outcomes** of being coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive.

The routes emerged from comprehensive data analysis and were informed by various data sources as detailed in previous sections of this report. Alignment decisions considered the **existing and forthcoming active travel** network, **local conditions** such as gradient, terrain and **cycling accessibility** were also factored into the route selection.

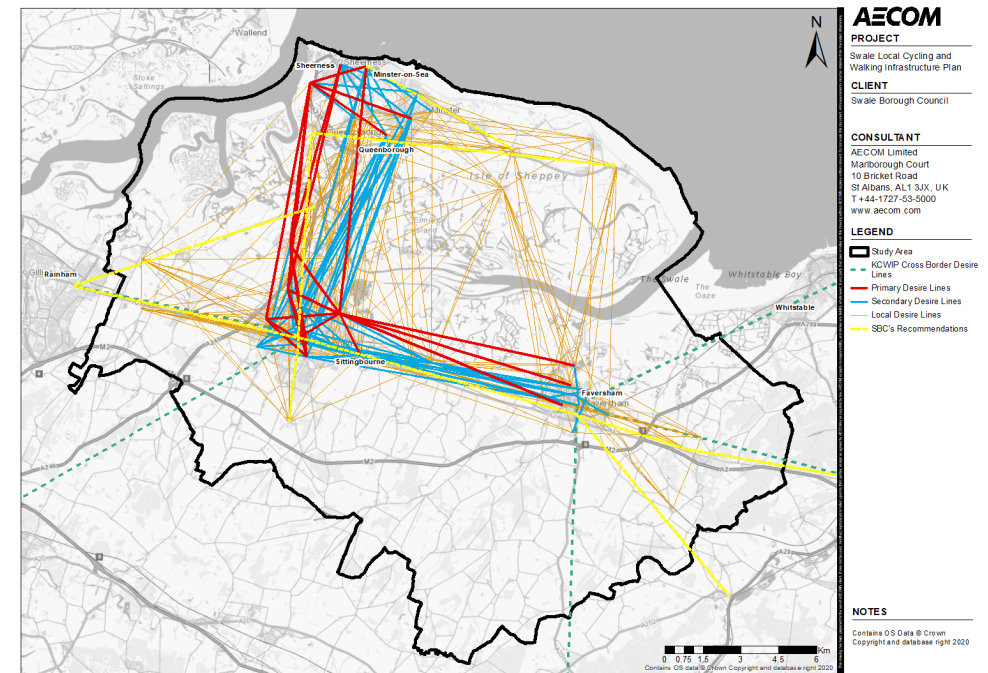


Figure 1: Classified Desire Lines

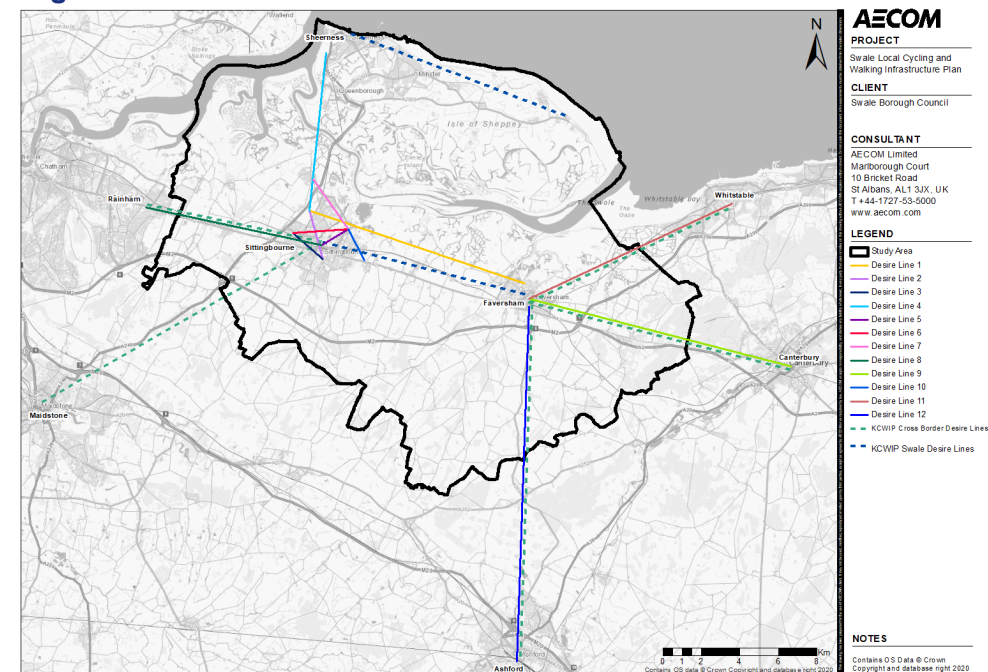


Figure 2: Primary Desire Lines for Route Selection

Network Planning for Cycling

Stakeholder Engagement

Swale LCWIP

The identified cycling network, shown was presented to local stakeholders in a **stakeholder engagement** session held in February 2024. The meeting provided a platform to gather the stakeholders' opinion on the identified network.

Overall, the stakeholders welcomed the identified cycling routes and used their local knowledge to make some suggestions such as altering the alignment of proposed routes to make them more attractive to local residents and receive longer-term support.

The key outcome of this meeting was to **ensure the routes are direct**, where possible **avoiding car-dominated or fast roads**.

Sheppey Towns LCWIP

A hybrid stakeholder engagement session was conducted through both **in-person and online workshops** on the 18th of October 2023 (as shown in Figure 3). Stakeholders and Council officers provided direct comments on the draft network plans. The window for comment remained active via the online Miro board until the 27th of October 2023, allowing for further stakeholder feedback.

The consultation attracted:

- 23 visitors including representatives from Kent County Council, Parish Councils, Sheppey Light Railway Greenway Group, and other local groups.
- 71 contributions: 69 in-person stakeholder comments and 2 online Miro board inputs.

The consultation highlighted several key issues preventing people from walking or cycling in the proposed area including the **accessibility issues around the coastal path** and **Neptune steps**.

Following the identification of the network, a series of active travel audits took place on 30th November 2023. The 40km network was cycled and audited by several trained auditors from WSP and a representative from Swale Borough Council.

The ATE Route Check Microsoft Form was completed during the audit, with photos being taken continuously throughout. The results of the audit were downloaded and analysed in Microsoft Excel to determine the existing level of infrastructure feasibility, to inform the next concept planning stage.

The integrated Swale LCWIP cycling network is presented for each of the four study areas, as follows:

- **Sittingbourne** - identified as part of this analysis and presented in **Appendix X**
- **Faversham** - identified as part of Faversham LCWIP and presented in **Appendix X**.
- **Sheppey Towns** - identified as part of draft Sheppey Towns LCWIP and presented in **Appendix X**.
- **Rural Swale** - identified as part of this analysis and presented in **Appendix X**.



Figure 3: Stakeholder Engagement Workshop Undertaken by WSP on 18th October 2023

Appendix B - Network Planning for Walking and Wheeling - Methodology

Network Planning for Walking & Wheeling

Walking and Wheeling Zones

Developing the walking and wheeling network involved mapping the key trip generators. This stage focuses on the key sites which generate **significant pedestrian demand** among the high number of destinations across Swale. These included:

- Education sites with over 500 pupils
- Town centres
- Healthcare sites
- Retail sites
- Employment sites
- Community/ Leisure sites
- Key transport interchanges
- Planned/ committed developments

After identifying and mapping the key trip generators, **walking isochrones** representing an approximate 15-minute walk were drawn. Overlapping isochrones were then used to identify areas with the **highest density** of key destinations. **Core walking zones** (CWZ) (400m buffers) and **walking zones** (2km buffers) were drawn around areas with multiple overlapping key destinations. This analysis is shown in Figure 1.

As Figure 2 illustrates, walking and wheeling zones were identified in Faversham, Sittingbourne, and on the Isle of Sheppey. Only the zones in Sittingbourne and Leysdown were taken forward to the route selection process because of the completed/ in progress LCWIPs in Swale.

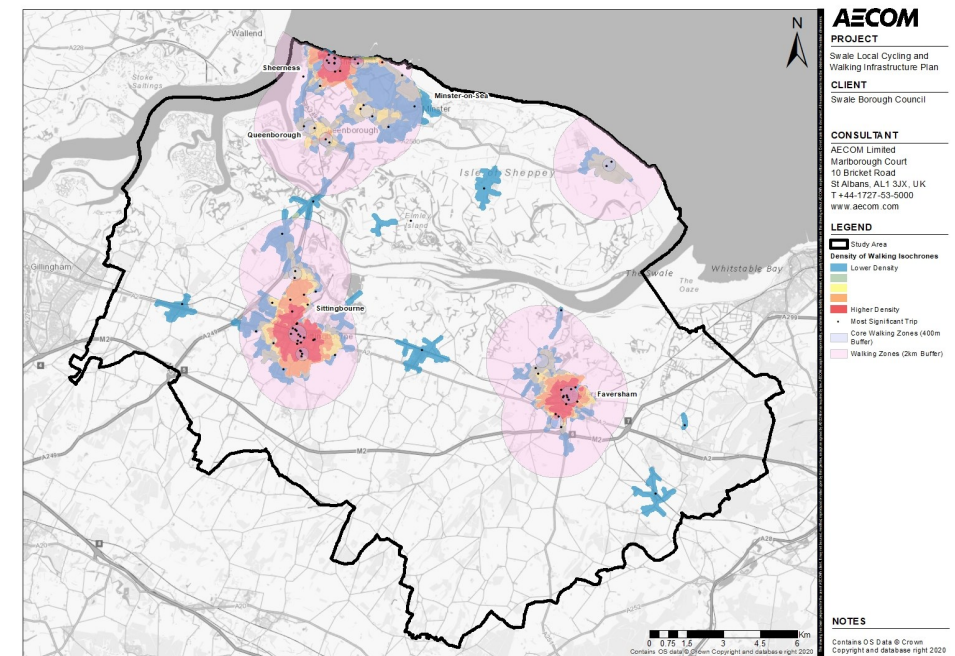


Figure 1: Density of Key Trip Attractors - Walking Isochrones

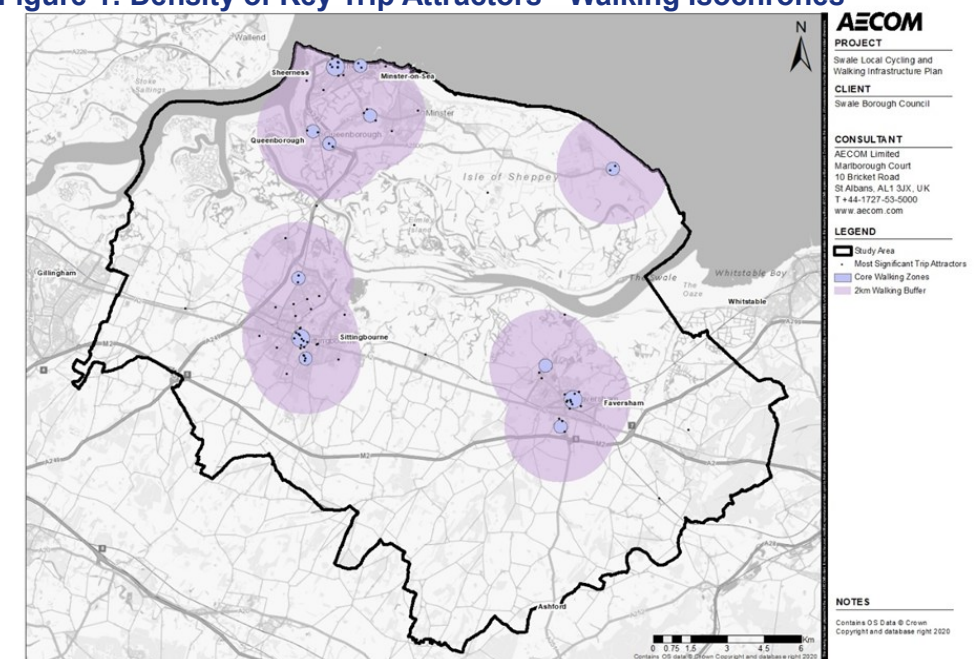


Figure 2: Identified Walking and Wheeling Zones

Network Planning for Walking & Wheeling

Route Selection

Converting the CWZs into routes for inclusion in LCWIPs is an iterative process and, along with the route selection for cycling routes, is one of the most important elements of the LCWIP process. The objective was to identify walking and wheeling routes that meet **core design outcomes** to create a **coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive** walking and wheeling network and which connect to the existing network and key destinations.

The identified CWZs and the existing walking and wheeling infrastructure serving them within the 2km buffer zones, were taken into consideration to identify walking and wheeling routes that would **bridge gaps** in the existing network and create a **continuous** and **seamless** walking and wheeling **network**.

The routes were developed from data analysis conducted up to this point, informed by various data sources, such as the existing active travel network and Google Maps data. They also aligned with Kent County Council's Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Improvement Plan.

Stakeholder Engagement

Swale LCWIP

The identified walking and wheeling network was presented to local stakeholders to gather feedback on the identified network.

Overall, the stakeholders welcomed the identified walking and wheeling routes and used their local knowledge to make some suggestions such as altering the alignment of proposed routes or ensuring the proposed improvements contribute to creating safer, more direct walking and wheeling routes.

Sheppey Towns LCWIP

The stakeholder engagement which was undertaken for the Sheppey Towns LCWIP was detailed on Page 16 of this report.

The integrated Swale LCWIP walking and wheeling network is presented for each of the four study areas, as follows:

- **Sittingbourne** - identified as part of this analysis and presented in **Appendix X**.
- **Faversham** - identified as part of Faversham LCWIP and presented in **Appendix X**
- **Sheppey Towns** - identified as part of

draft Sheppey Towns LCWIP and presented in **Appendix X**.

- **Rural Swale** - there were no routes identified in rural Swale.