

Wellington Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan

Working Group

Transport Sub-Group

working paper on a safe route

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1. introduction

A task of the Transport Sub-group is to identify possible safe walking and cycling routes between Wellington Heath and Ledbury. This working paper is to identify such routes and weigh up their advantages and disadvantages.

At this stage, no consideration has been taken of the attitude of the landowners. Some are known to be averse to allowing permissive paths on their land. However, if we initially exclude all paths where land-owners are averse, we shall have a very short working paper.

Note: a sensible safe route for walkers need not be a safe route for cyclists, and vice versa.

Note: there are diagrams at the end of the paper.

2. the need for a safe route (or routes)

From observation, one of the main needs for a safe route for walkers and cyclists is to avoid walking along Ledbury Road and Beggars Ash from Jacks Lane to Bromyard Road and thence to Ledbury. The walkers who use this route are mainly pickers (ie: the people who work at Withers Farm), but there are also other people from all parts of Wellington Heath who use significant parts of this route.

One might include more of Ledbury Road but this is much less used. The line has to be drawn somewhere.

The other main need can be encompassed by taking the Farmers Arms as a starting point and going via Horse Road and Beggars Ash to Ledbury. This is representative of the people who live on The Common, Ochre Hill, lower Floyds Lane, and Horse Road.

There are two principal destinations in Ledbury: the station; and Tesco and beyond. Unfortunately these two need to be separated as if you take one rather than the other as a destination you might get to different conclusions.

So, for a safe route we have two starts and two ends.

3. conclusions (interim)

If you look at the options, you find that all the feasible routes go via the large oak tree on Beggars Ash at the bottom of the drive to The Frith. This is hereafter called the Oak. So, we have four sub-routes to consider:

1. Jacks Lane to the Oak (via Ledbury Road and Beggars Ash);
2. The Farmers Arms to the Oak (via Horse Road, Long Acre, the foot-bridge, and the orchards);
3. the Oak to the bottom of Knapp Lane;
4. the Oak to the station.

Each of these needs to be considered in terms of distance, land ownership, and cost (ie: engineering difficulty). In this working paper, we ignore land ownership and address cost only very approximately (see Section 4 for the definitions of "low cost" etc).

3.1 Jacks Lane to the Oak

This route is currently via Ledbury Road and Beggars Ash. It is rather dangerous as the road is used by a number of lunatics in motor vehicles (as evidenced by the speed at which they take blind corners).

Two thirds of the new path would run to the west of the road – behind Twinkelows, along the verge south of Horse Road, across the road near the stream, then over the stream and through the orchards next to the road. See the details in Section 4.1.

The length of the new path would be a little longer than going by road (c.1030m), but by only a small amount (too small to measure on my maps – maybe 5% more).

Almost none of it is on existing footpaths; all would require new permissive paths (with 4 or 5 landowners). However, it would be possible to implement it in independent sections.

It would not be cheap: about half is low cost; half is medium cost.

3.2 The Farmers Arms to the Oak

This uses existing rights of way: Horse Road, Long Acre, over the footbridge, across the orchards to the Oak (c. 1020m). It would be low cost.

Although it is much more feasible than Route 1, it is of lower priority as fewer people would use it.

3.3 the Oak to the bottom of Knapp Lane

There are three options:

- a. by road;
- b. via the orchards, Little Frith, and Knapp Lane;
- c. via a new route to cut the corner at Beggars Ash / Bromyard Road (see s.5.3).

Route (b) has the major disadvantages that it is 23% further than by road and involves a useless 30m climb and descent (the road ascends but it doesn't go up and down as the path does). Its end part (Knapp Lane) is not safe either. Its cost would be 850m of low cost work.

Route (c) is only 12% further than the road (with no useless climb). Its disadvantage is that it is not on existing paths. Its cost would be 700m of low cost work.

3.4 the Oak to the station

Here, there are four options:

- a. by road;
- b. via the orchards and Knapp Lane;
- c. via the orchards and down by Wilce's orchard parallel to the railway;
- d. via a new route to cut the corner at Beggars Ash / Bromyard Road (see s.5.3).

Routes (b) and (c) are not viable: they are 100% and 50% further than by road and they involve a 30m useless climb. No-one would use them.

Route (d) is 16% further than by road (no useless climb); it's mostly the same route as route (c) in Section 3.3.

3.5 summary of conclusions

Getting from Jacks Lane to the Oak is feasible (given a lot of landowner permission) but it wouldn't be cheap.

The Farmers Arms to the Oak is on existing paths, but getting landowner agreement to make them weatherproof could be tricky. The work would all be low cost.

The best route from the Oak to Knapp Lane would be via a new path cutting the corner at the Bromyard Road junction. It would need about 700m of low cost work, but would need landowners' permissions for a new path. An alternative, via the orchards and Little Frith, is on existing paths but is 23% further than the road; I have doubts as to whether it would be much used.

For the Oak to the station, going via the orchards is not viable (50% and 100% further than by road). The only alternative to the road is via a new path cutting the corner at the Bromyard Road junction. This doubles the case for this new path.

4. details of alternatives

This section considers each of the 4 sub-routes (1 to 4) in the previous section.

Land ownership is ignored in this working paper.

I have no easy way to estimate costs. I have simply made a best guess and said they are low, medium, or high (per kilometre). Roughly speaking:

- low cost is where you are simply starting with flat(ish) ground and laying a path;
- medium cost is where there would be significant earth moving and carting or where bridge-like structures might be needed;
- high cost is where you have medium cost but more so (ie: where the cost is likely to be beyond the realm of reason).

4.1 Jacks Lane to the Oak

This route is currently via Ledbury Road and Beggars Ash. It is rather dangerous as the road is used by a number of lunatics (see Section 3.1).

The length of the new path would be a little longer than going by road, but by only a small amount (too small to measure on my maps – maybe 5% more).

Almost none of it is on existing footpaths; all would require new permissive paths (with 4 or 5 landowners). However, it would be possible to implement it in independent sections.

If we take this route in sections, we can examine them.

4.1.1 Jacks Lane to Horse Road (c.380m) A-C

It would be quite feasible to put a footpath to the west of the road. This would run along the top of the blueberry field, round to the west of Twinkelow's garden, through the next field, and up to the gate opposite Horse Road. This would be a low cost path.

4.1.2 Horse Road to the gate (c.100m) C-D

This would run to the west of the road. From the gate opposite Horse Road, the path would run along what looks like an ancient track to emerge at a field gate on Beggars Ash. This would be a medium cost path.

4.1.3 along the verge (c.160m) D-E-F

There is a verge along the west side of the road here; it could (if widened slightly) be used as a footpath. There is quite a drop (several metres in places) through the hedge to the field, so this would be medium cost work.

The path would then cross the road to a gate on the east side. It is desirable to cross the road here as bridging the stream on the west side would be a much harder job, and we have to cross the road somewhere anyway.

4.1.4 crossing the stream (c.160m) F-G

It is not obvious from the road, but the road crosses the stream here. The road has been built up (by 3 or 4 metres) and the stream runs through a large pipe rather than a bridge as such. However, a footpath would not want to descend to stream level and then ascend so a bridge-like structure would be needed. It would be only a footbridge (possibly for bikes too) but it would need to be built to bridge standards and would be medium cost work.

4.1.5 along to the gate opposite Hilltop's drive (c.50m) G-H

From crossing the stream, we emerge up a ramp and then to the road. It would be desirable to go through the hedge into the orchard and then along to the gate opposite to the end of Hilltop's drive. This would be low cost work.

4.1.6 avoiding the narrow section of Beggars Ash (c. 180m) H-J

This is one of the most dangerous sections of the road. There are two possibilities. First is to go east from the gate for 30m to connect with the footpath that runs from Long Acre to the Oak. Second is to make a new path inside the orchard for 100m and there join the footpath. Both would be low cost.

4.2 The Farmers Arms to the Oak

This is an existing right of way – along roads and footpaths.

If we take this route in sections, we can examine them.

4.2.1 The Farmers Arms to Long Acre (c.300m) K-L

This is along Horse Road. There is no sensible alternative and there is little traffic anyway.

4.2.2 Long Acre to the footbridge (c.190m) L-M

This is a grassy path. It would be low cost work to make it a weather-proof path.

4.2.3 footbridge to the Oak (c.530m) M-J

This section is an existing footpath. It would be low cost work to weather-proof it. However, it would be more expensive than superficially expected as it crosses an orchard which is used extensively by tractors – so the path would need to be strong enough to avoid tractor damage.

4.3 the Oak to the bottom of Knapp Lane

There are three options:

- by road;
- via the orchards, Little Frith, and Knapp Lane;
- via a new route to cut the corner at Beggars Ash / Bromyard Road

The figures are clearer in a table.

	option	distance	distance ratio v. road option	extra height
a	by road	1180m	1	0
b	via the orchards, Little Frith, and Knapp Lane	1450m	1.23	30m
c	via a new route to cut the corner at Beggars Ash / Bromyard Road	1320	1.12	0

The road is shorter than via the orchards – the orchards are 23% further. Also, via the orchards you ascend and descend (30m climb is wasted); on the road you ascend progressively; you never lose height. Even if there were a nicely paved safe route through the orchards, it is not obvious to me that people would use it when the road takes less work. Cyclists might use it.

Cutting the corner at Bromyard Road has attractions: it's not much further; you don't climb 30m uselessly. There is further discussion in Sections 4.5 and 5.3.

So, what would be involved in making the existing footpath past Little Frith weather-proof?

4.3.1 the Oak to The Frith (c.100m) J-N

This is along the drive to The Frith. No work needed.

4.3.2 The Frith to Little Frith (c.500m) N-P

This is an existing footpath through the orchards. It would be low cost work to weather-proof it. However, it would be more expensive than superficially expected as it crosses an orchard which is used extensively by tractors – so the path would need to be strong enough to avoid tractor damage.

4.3.3 Little Frith to Frith Wood House driveway (c.350m) P-Q

This is an existing footpath. It runs through Little Frith's garden and then along the top of two fields below Frith Wood House. The work would be low cost.

4.3.4 Frith Wood House driveway and Knapp Lane (c.500m) Q-R

This runs along hard roads on existing rights of way. No cost. However, this is not wholly suitable a part of a "safe route" as Knapp Lane itself has is dangerous for walkers and cyclists.

4.4 the Oak to the station

Here, there are four options:

- by road;
- via the orchards and Knapp Lane;
- via the orchards and down by Wilce's orchard;
- via a new route to cut the corner at Beggars Ash / Bromyard Road.

The figures are clearer in a table.

	option	distance	distance ratio v. road option	extra height
a	by road J-V-S	880m	1	0
b	via the orchards, Little Frith, Knapp Lane, and station J-N-P-Q-R-S	1770m	2.0	30m
c	via the orchards, little Frith, down by Wilce's orchard, and station J-N-P-Q-T	1350m	1.53	30m
d	via a new route to cut the corner at Beggars Ash / Bromyard Road J-W-V-U	1020	1.16	0

It seems clear to me that no-one would use options (b) or (c) as they are so much longer than the road - never mind that they cost 30m in useless climbing. Option (d) might be used were it available.

The main benefit of option (d) is that it avoids the road traffic at the bottom of Beggars Ash. In fact there are two options that could be used; both start at the Oak. See the next section.

4.5 cut the corner at Beggars Ash and Bromyard Road

The traffic on the hill at the bottom of Beggars Ash is a danger to walkers. If a footpath across the fields could be found, it would solve this problem.

The obvious route would be a path just to the east of the hedge along Beggars Ash. However, this is not feasible because of cost – see Section 5.1.

The next obvious route would be along the hedge to the east of the old brickworks. However, this is not sensible because of its distance – see Section 5.2.

Another option would be a path which ran from the Oak, round the back of Frith Cottages, through the orchards, and then across the sheep pasture to Bromyard Road next to Blossoms (opposite Wye Valley Fruit on Bromyard Road). See Section 5.3.

Although this option is about 140m further than by road (+26%), taken as part of the walk from the Oak to the station it is only 16% further. It's hard to know whether walkers would choose to use it though.

One general benefit to this option is that it could be used as the safe route for both the Oak to Knapp Lane and the Oak to the station.

5. details

5.1 a path through the old brickworks

When you drive from Ledbury and turn right into Beggars Ash, you drive up a hill to the Oak. For the first 200m there is a wood on your right. This would be an ideal place for a footpath you might think. Except it's not really a wood; it's an old brickworks – used to make bricks for the viaduct. At one place, quite close to the road, there is a bank about 10m high which would need to be made level. To make a footpath here would require a lot of earth moving and the removal of several large oak trees (some 3m round). I can't see this being done. If the required earth moving were to be done, it would make sense simply to widen the road by 15m as far as the Oak and put a footpath along the side. I don't see this getting much public support (not to mention a budget). I discarded this option reluctantly.

5.2 a path to the east of the old brickworks

Having discarded the brickworks, I investigated a path around the edge of the brickworks. You can see this as route BCA on the diagram below. The problem with this is that it is 50% further than by road. I can't imagine walkers using such a route on account of the extra distance. Thus, I discarded this route too.



5.3 cut the corner next to Blossoms

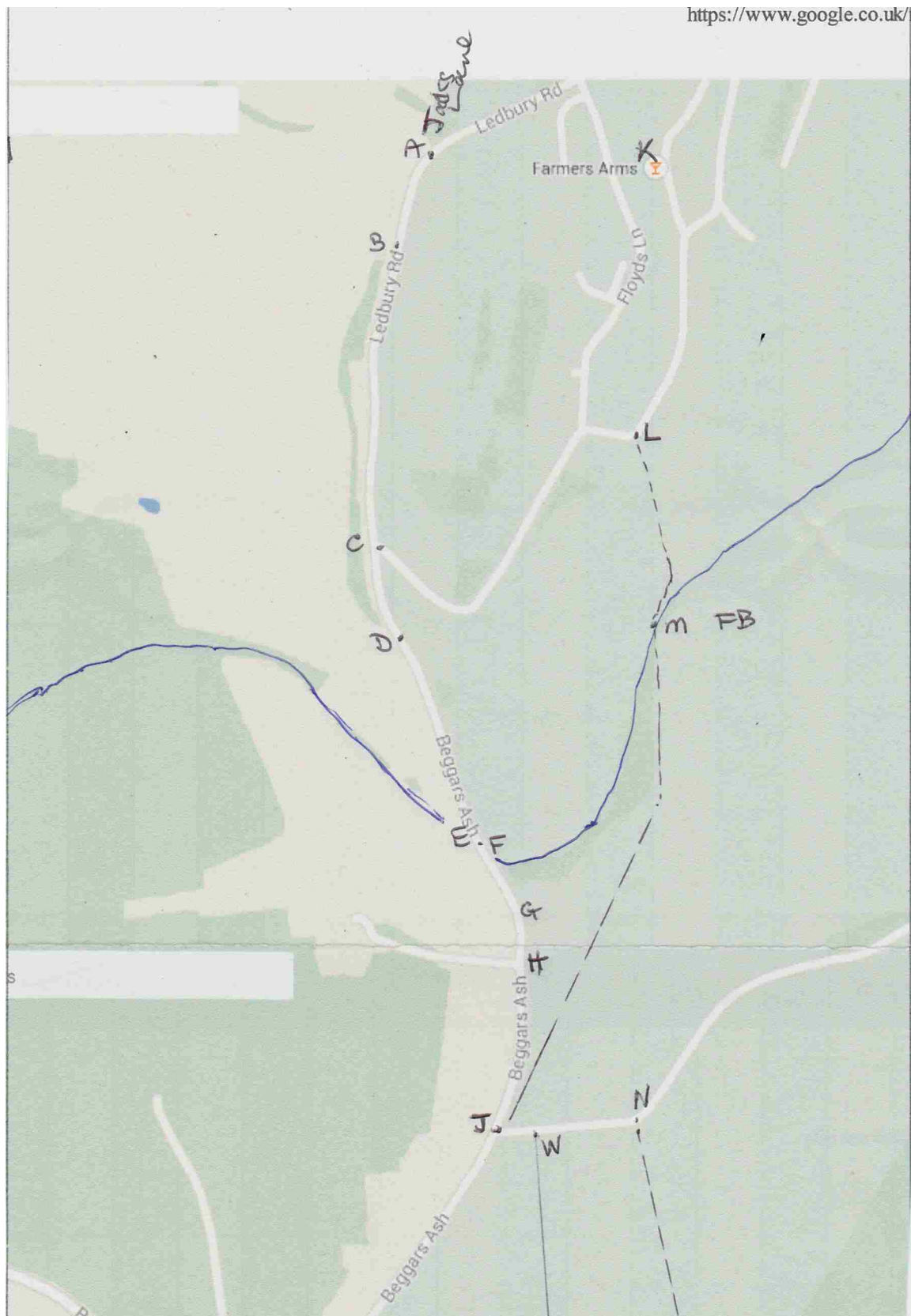
In looking at the map, it would be possible to create a route from the Oak to the Bromyard Road which cuts the corner at the junction. By creating a route which cuts the corner, you still end up with a route which is longer than via the road (by between 26% and 30%). There are two possible routes (taking account of the roads through the orchard); the ideal route is not possible as it's blocked by apple trees. The possible routes are shown on Diagram 5.3A. They are A-D-F-C and A-D-E-C.



Diagram 5.3A – showing the optional footpaths which cut the corner at the Bromyard Road

5.4 map of the northern section

This map shows the two routes at the north end of Wellington Heath. These run from the end of Jacks Lane (A on the map) and the Farmers Arms (K on the map) to the Oak (J on the map) at the end of the drive to The Frith.



5.5 map of the southern section

This map shows the two routes at the south end of Wellington Heath – from the Oak (J on the map) to the station (S on the map) and to the end of Knapp Lane R on the map). Note: the Oak is at the end of the drive to The Frith.

