

## Headcorn – Tenterden cycleway

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A feasibility study for Kent  
County Council – December  
2008



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Head Office  
Sustrans  
2 Cathedral Square  
College Green  
Bristol  
BS1 5DD

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## Introduction

Sustrans has been commissioned by Kent County Council to investigate possible routes for pedestrians and cyclists along former railway line from Tenterden to Headcorn.

This report considers:

- suitability of the existing alignment
- appropriate mitigation to overcome obstacles along the current alignment
- appropriate and safe means` of crossing of A274 and A262
- establish whether any structures are required, eg. bridges
- establish land ownership along the route and carry out negotiations as appropriate
- establish appropriate widths and surface materials
- establish whethere there are any safer routes to school opportunities

## Greenways

### What are the crucial characteristics of a successful Greenway?

#### **a. Greenways should be well connected**

A Greenway should be well connected both to local authority policies, to local communities and, crucially, to local places. Many Greenways are inadequately linked to adjacent streets and nearby villages. It should be possible for every nearby resident to reach the Greenway by foot or cycle without conflict with heavily trafficked roads. Where necessary, the Greenway needs to be extended to bring this about

#### **b. A Greenway must win local support**

Winning local support is not always either obvious or easy, especially where the opportunities for walking and cycling opened up by the new Greenway simply do not exist at present and so are not part of any local person's routine journey or even their concept of what might be different in their lives.

A Local Steering Group, or the promoters such as Sustrans, must be prepared to nurse a new Greenway through to the stage where it is firmly lodged in the mental map of the local community or, in the case of a tourist route, in popular culture.

#### **c. A good Greenway will overcome real problems**

A good Greenway will overcome real problems of severance, or of traffic. It makes all the difference if a new Greenway can be seen as a local solution, a route which has a real purpose. All too often a railway path can fail because it may be missing key bridges crossing roads and so does not deliver essential continuity. Or it may be so circuitous that it does not fulfil any real journeys.

#### **d. A Greenway should be memorable**

A Greenway should be memorable, so that users will return to it, and encourage their friends to do so too. It should have an attractive outlook, be easy to use, be free of barriers, give a feeling that walkers and cyclists are welcome.

It must have a smooth and dry surface in all weathers, be easy to reach, have seats and sculpture, good maps and easy signing. Whilst all these points may be obvious, and are discussed in detail in subsequent chapters of this Guide, there are numerous traffic-free routes which are not memorable, are not popular, and so represent a wasted opportunity.

#### **e. A popular Greenway will fulfil many functions**

A popular Greenway will fulfil many functions and for this reason it will be well used. The journey to work is often put forward as the only real journey, simply because it is seen as an essential journey and the one which causes the most congestion. However, the journey to work accounts for less than 20% of all trips and a truly popular Greenway will not only offer an attractive route to work, but also to school, to the shops, to hospitals and stations, to visit friends, for daily exercise, for recreation and as a destination in its own right.

#### **f. A successful Greenway**

A successful Greenway will have become part of the fabric of its local area and an integral component of many local journeys. Once you have reached the position where it would be inconceivable that the Greenway would be closed or damaged, then you can be confident that your Greenway project has been a success.

This description of Greenways is taken from the Connect2 and Greenway Design Guide, Sustrans, July 2007.

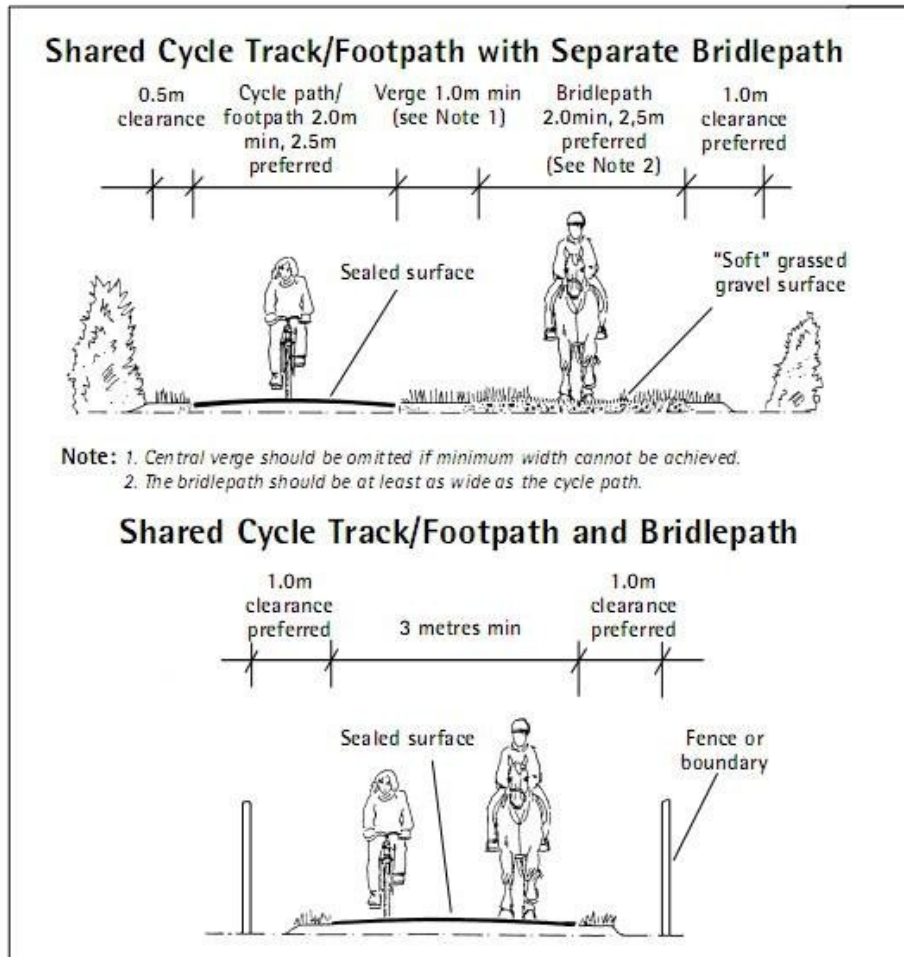
## **Technical specification**

Horse riding routes should be carefully laid out, and would typically be circular routes originating from horse stables, grazing areas or other equestrian facilities.

Typical path widths would be 2.5m bound surface for walkers and cyclists next to a 1m wide verge next to a 2.5m soft (grassed) bridlepath (see below). Equestrian and walking / cycling users should not normally be using the same path surface.

In areas where usage is likely to be low, a shared surface for all users may be appropriate. A minimum width of 3 metres is recommended.

The walking / cycling surface would be bituminous macadam. Where required, clear binders and coloured aggregate can be used to create a path surface colour that fits in better with the local environment. Self-binding path materials may be used for secondary paths, where an alternative bituminous path exists that is better suited to all weather use.



This diagram is taken from Sustrans Information Sheet FF27, Ways Through the Countryside, December 1999.

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/webfiles/Info%20sheets/ff27.pdf>

Bridlepaths should be grassed areas set on a suitable foundation where necessary, to minimise damage by the impact of horses.

Lighting is not required on rural routes. Path furniture will be occasional benches, signposts (low-level timber posts) and information boards. Path sections should be developed to create interesting destinations for walking and cycling leisure trips, e.g. viewpoints, artwork features, rest areas etc. Signing of the routes should incorporate provision for circular leisure routes as well as direction signs that can be used for longer distance trips.

### Path construction materials (general)

Much use should be made of recycled path materials, in particular incorporating locally available materials. This might include crushed concrete, railway ballast or road planings instead of quarried aggregate. Tyre chippings may be mixed in as foundation material to bridle routes. It is unlikely that significant amounts of high quality fresh quarried material will be required, as path loads for walking and cycling routes are generally less significant.

Vegetable binders may be used as alternative to bituminous binders for macadam paths.

## St. Michael's to Biddenden Road

1.1 The existing path on the old railway line comes to an end at Grange End (A). This path is built to a high standard with a tarmac surface and street lighting. If the railway alignment is to be developed further to the north, we recommend the same kind of high quality treatment to maximise accessibility and usage (although other materials may be more suitable in rural areas).

1.2 Immediately north of Grange Road the railway alignment is no longer available and we recommend the use of the quiet residential road Orchard Road.

1.3 Shoreham Lane (B) crosses the old railway at a high level and the tunnel under the road is still in place. There is space to provide a ramped access to the railway cutting at this point, which will require the import of a significant quantity of fill material. This does not have to be very expensive – indeed it may be possible to obtain the material at no cost if the cutting is opened as a mini-landfill site.

1.4 The section from Shoreham Lane to the hotel (B to C) is intact, albeit heavily wooded. The line crosses a number of access roads and these will need to be carefully designed to ensure good visibility for all users. The ideal solution for these

crossings is a raised platform to give continuity for the route and to act as a speed-reduction device for motor traffic.

1.5 From the hotel to the A262 Biddenden Road (F), the line is largely intact, with the exception of a short section across a field at Beechwood Bungalow (C to D). A new path along the field boundary close to the railway alignment is the preferred solution – this could be separated from the field with a fence.

1.6 To the south of High Chimney Farm, part of the line is used as an access road (E to F). This does not appear to be heavily used by vehicles, so could possibly be shared with Greenway users.



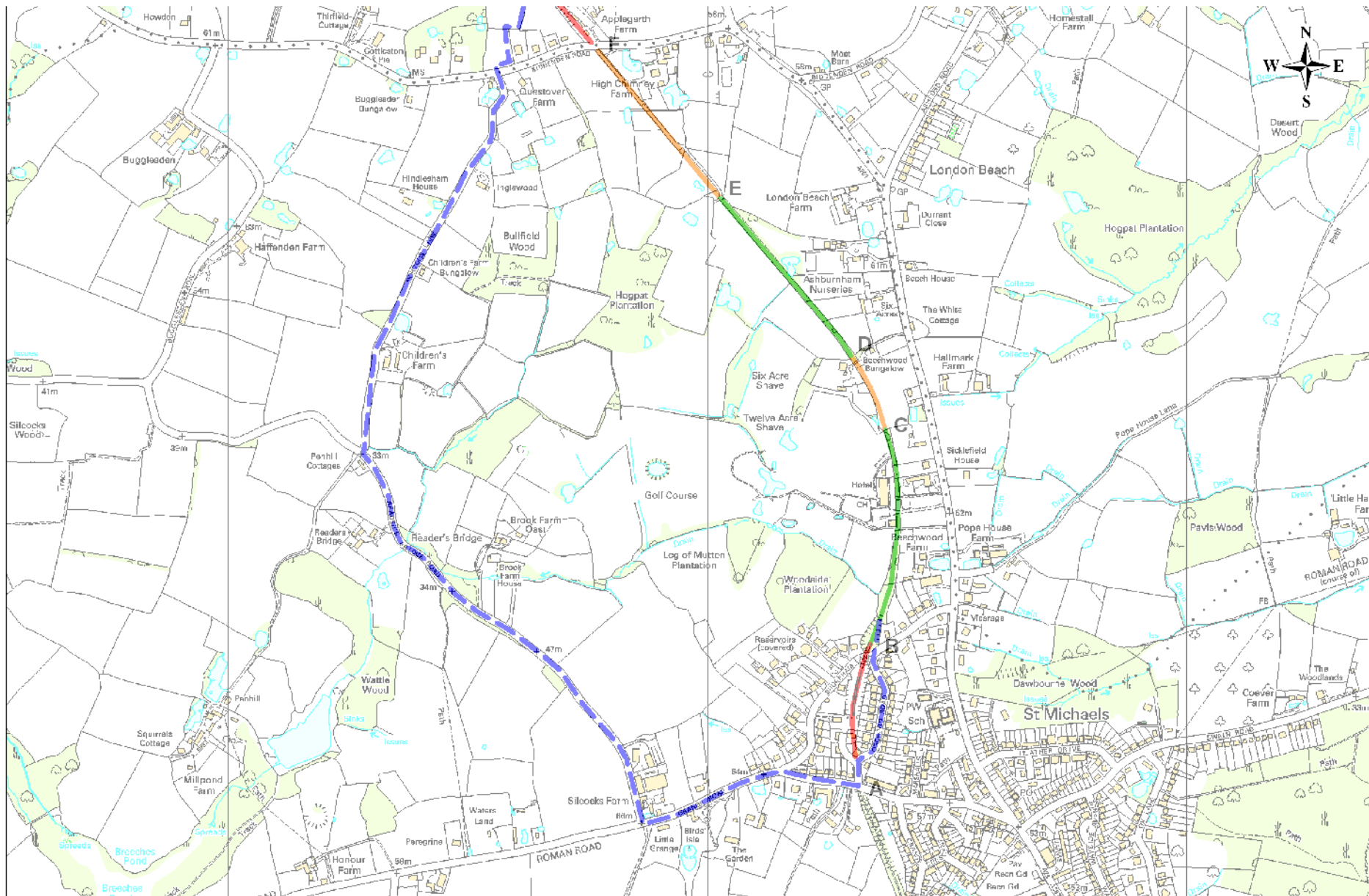
*Point E, looking south*



*Point E, looking north*



*Existing railway path in St Michael's*



**Tenterden to Headcorn**  
**Map 1; St Michael's to Biddenden Rd**

Scale 1:10,000. Printed 28/11/2008  
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- Key**
- Railway alignment (built over)
  - Railway alignment (can restore)
  - Railway alignment (intact)
  - Alternative route

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## Biddenden Road Crossing

2.1 The most obvious place to cross this road is on or close to the railway alignment, where there was historically a level crossing. The former railway station site on the north side of the road has been developed for commercial use and there is a private access road which could be shared by Greenway users. The old station building would be an attractive feature of the route. If access to the former railway land is not possible, a slight diversion into an adjacent field would be a satisfactory alternative.

2.2 The A262 is the busy main road between Tunbridge Wells and Ashford. The speed and volume of traffic would justify a signalised crossing, but this will be difficult to achieve at this location on a rural road with the national speed limit of 60mph. There are a number of good examples on other parts of the National Cycle Network.

2.3 Sight lines are not good as the crossing point is on a slight bend in the road. We recommend that a slice of land is acquired so that a central refuge crossing can be installed and the sight lines improved. Although a refuge island is not as good as a signal crossing, it has the dual purpose of protecting vulnerable road users and preventing vehicles overtaking.

2.4 An alternative crossing point could be provided close to the junction with Nortons Lane. This would be particularly

useful if this road was chosen as an alternative to the railway alignment between St. Michaels' and Biddenden Road. Sight lines are slightly better at this point, but it would still be necessary to acquire land to install a central refuge.



*Entrance to Applegarth Farm*



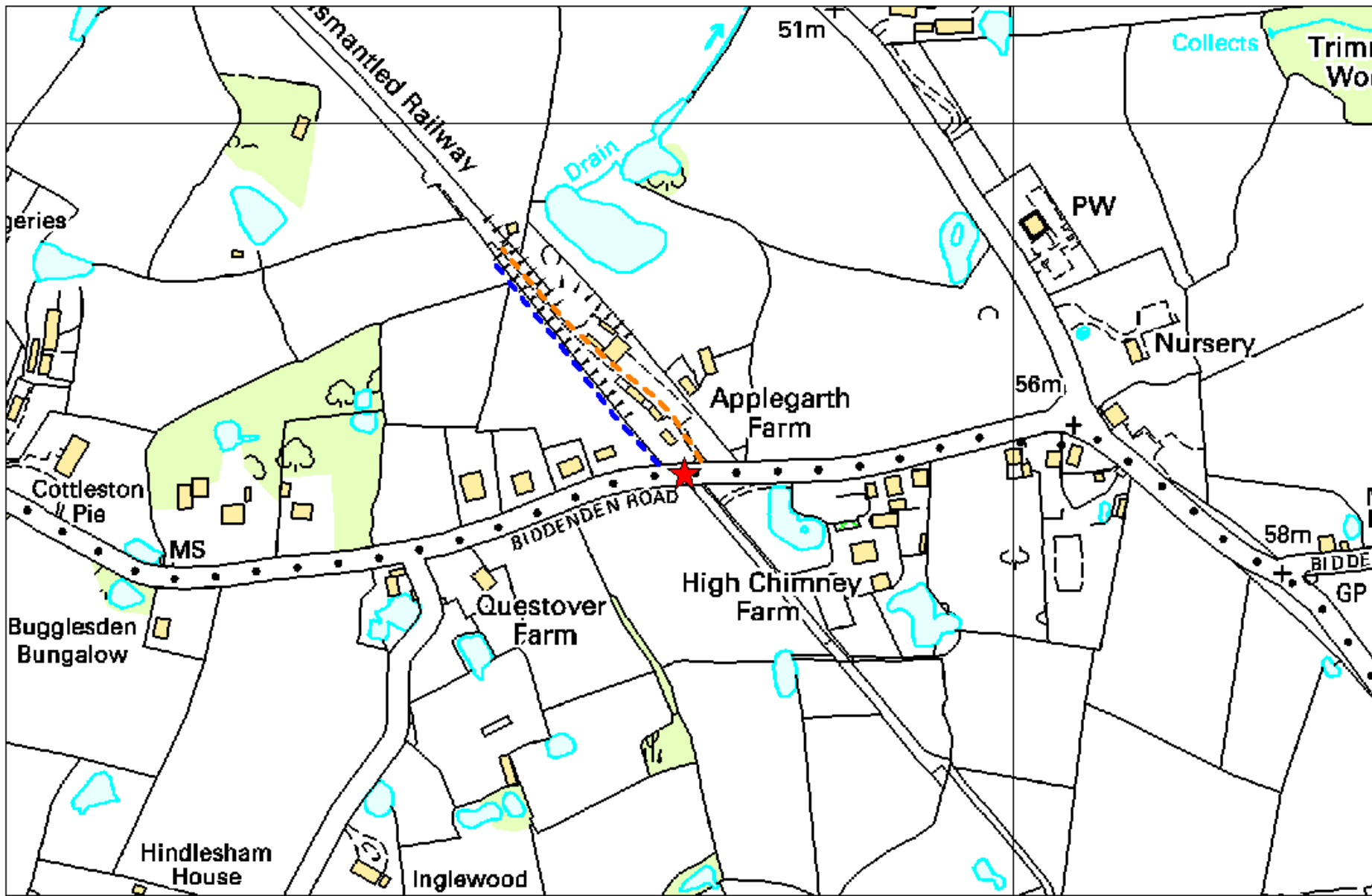
*Old station building*



*A262 Biddenden Road/Applegarth Farm*



*A262 Biddenden Road/Nortons Lane*



**Map 2: Biddenden Road**

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## Biddenden Road to High Halden Road

3.1 This is one of the best preserved sections of the old railway line and one of the most useful as it would create a link from Biddenden village to Tenterden for school journeys, shopping and leisure trips. A short section has been lost to farmland, although a hedge still marks one side of the old railway. It would be relatively easy to construct a path on this alignment.

3.2 Parts of the old railway have become overgrown, but it would not be difficult to remove this scrub growth. Mature trees lining the route would be retained as they are an important landscape feature and add to the attractiveness of the route as well as providing shade.

3.3 The last 1000 metres or so of this section is used as a private access road, which could be shared by Greenway users if the path is widened or regular passing places are provided.

3.4 High Halden Road is fairly quiet and no special provision is required.



*Point I, looking south*



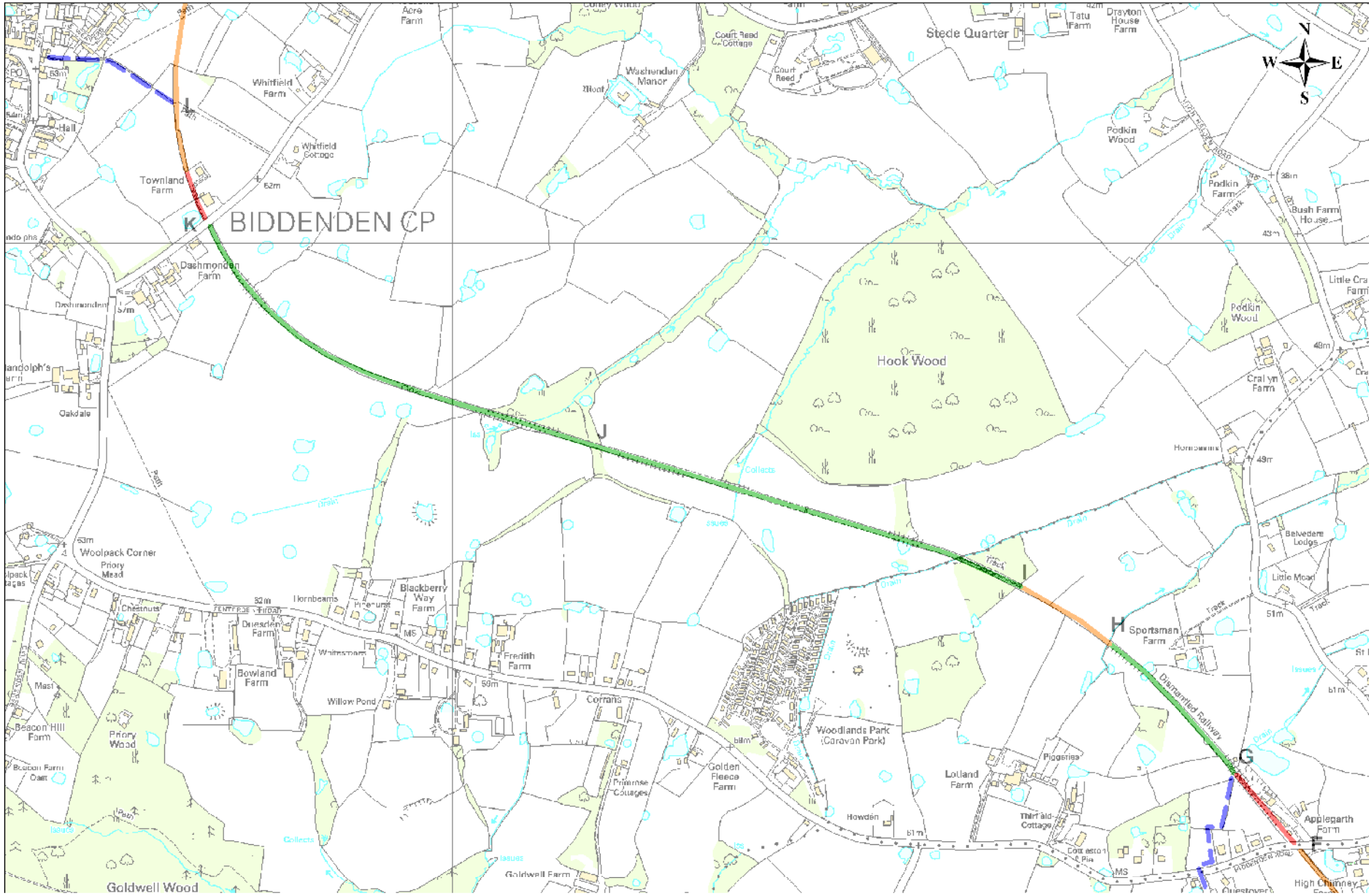
*Old railway between points I and J*





*Point J, looking south*



*High Halden Road, looking south*



	<p><b>Tenterden to Headcorn</b>  <b>Map 3; Biddenden Rd to High Halden Rd</b></p>	<p>Scale 1:10,000.           Printed 28/11/2008          Page 2 of 6 of Tenterden_to_Headcorn</p>	<p><b>Key</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: orange;">—</span> Railway alignment (built over)</li> <li><span style="color: green;">—</span> Railway alignment (can restore)</li> <li><span style="color: blue;">—</span> Railway alignment (infact)</li> <li><span style="color: purple;">—</span> Alternative route</li> </ul>	<p>Digital Mapping Solutions from Cotten: Fyres          © Crown Copyright 2005.          All rights reserved.          Licence number 1000138418</p>
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## High Halden Road to North Street

4.1 Townland Farm (K) has been developed on the former station site and although access is physically possible, it may be preferable to negotiate a route away from the railway alignment.

4.2 To the north of Townland Farm, the old railway has completely disappeared for just over 200 metres. The route would need to be reconstructed over this section, with allowances for drainage and access to adjoining fields. The path could be taken around field boundaries if the direct route is no longer practical. A small bridge would be needed to cross a ditch and rejoin the old trackbed at point M.

4.3 The last section of 600 metres to North Street (M to N) is well preserved and well used by local people. Some vegetation clearance would be needed, but this is relatively minor works.

## Biddenden Links

4.4 To ensure good accessibility for residents of Biddenden, at least one good quality link to the village is required. Two existing public footpaths connect the old railway line with the village and we recommend that at least one of these is upgraded to allow use by wheelchairs, pushchairs and cycles.

4.5 The easiest link to achieve is probably the northerly one (from point M) across one field to the gravel road, which in turn links to North Street. A new path would be needed for about 200 metres across the field. The alignment of this path could be moved closer to the field boundary to reduce the impact on the field.

4.6 The second possible link follows a narrow footpath between fences (from point L). One of these fences would need to be moved to allow shared use by pedestrians and cyclists. The most direct route passes between houses and emerges at the village green. This is unlikely to be acceptable due to the restricted width. An alternative link into The Weavers is possible.



*Point N, looking south*



*Point L, looking west to Biddenden*



*Point L, looking north*



## North Street Crossing

5.1 As at Biddenden Road, this location was historically a level crossing of the railway. The A274 North Street is the main road between Maidstone, Headcorn and Tenterden. The speed limit here is currently 40mph, which is the upper limit for the installation of a signal crossing.

5.2 The sight lines for signal heads will need to be checked, but these appear to be satisfactory. Visibility of approaching traffic is not good for an uncontrolled crossing or central refuge, so sight lines would have to be improved by cutting back vegetation and/or land acquisition as at Biddenden Road.

5.3 The exact location of the crossing will be partly determined by the availability of land on the north side of the road, which has been developed for residential use. The old station platforms are still visible in the private garden, but it may be necessary to provide an alternative route alongside the railway alignment to the west.



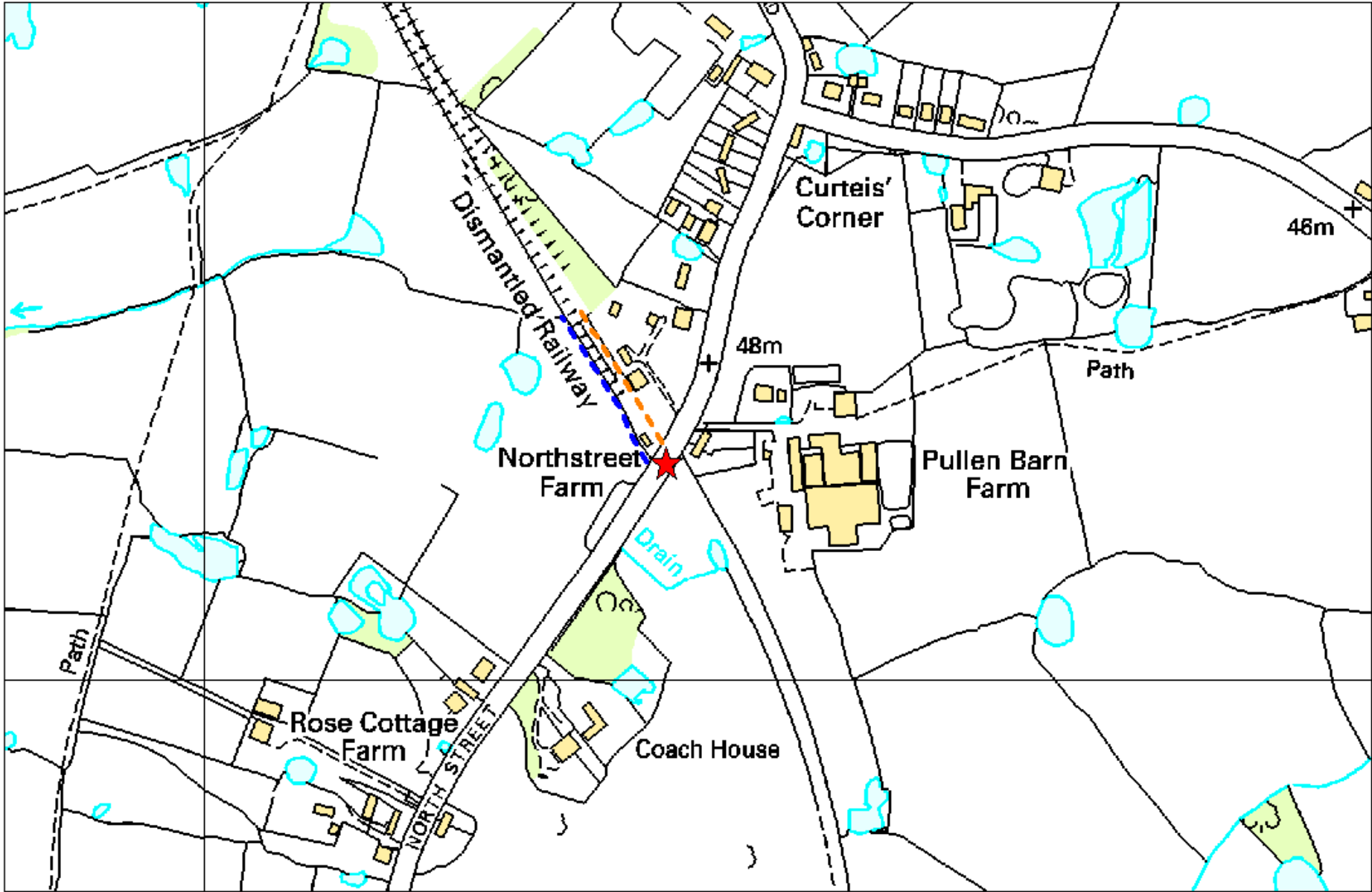
*A274 North Street, looking east*



*A274 North Street, looking west*



*The Old Station*



**Map 5: North Street**

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## North Street to Frittenden Road

6.1 The first section immediately to the north of North Street (N to O) has been developed, but it would be possible to run alongside the railway boundary to the west. This type of solution has been used in numerous similar locations around the country, such as the railway line between Newport and Sandown on the Isle of Wight.

6.2 Most of the remaining section to Frittenden Road is largely intact, including an important embankment adjacent to small fishing lakes (Q). This stretch is very attractive, with a number of mature trees. It is within sound of the busy A274 but it is a world away. It would make an excellent alternative to the main road, which has no footways on significant lengths between settlements.

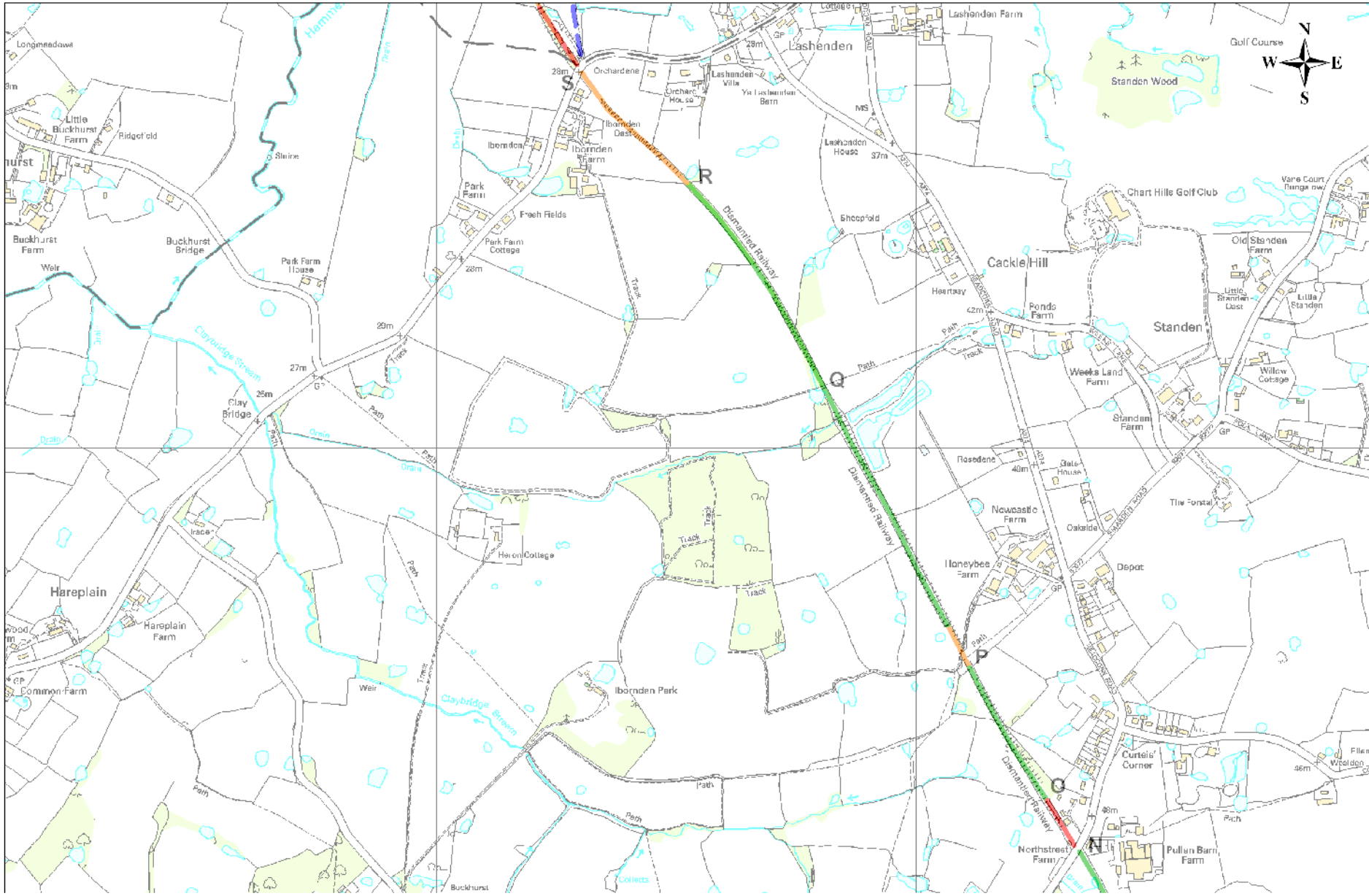
6.3 The last section of 300 metres at Ibornden Farm (R to S) has disappeared and a new path on the original alignment, or an alternative route around the field boundaries, would need to be provided.



*Former railway alignment near point P*



*Former railway alignment near point Q*



**Tenderden to Headcorn**  
**Map 6; North Street to Frittenden Rd**

Scale 1:10,000. 200m  
 Printed 28/11/2008  
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**Key**

- Railway alignment (built over)
- Railway alignment (can restore)
- Railway alignment (infill)
- Alternative route

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## Frittenden Road to Coldharbour Farm

7.1 From Frittenden Road to Ayleswade Farm, the former railway can be traced, but it does not exist as an intact corridor for the whole length. It is mostly farmland, so it would not be physically difficult to construct a Greenway on the original alignment. The former station site at Frittenden Road is occupied by a commercial enterprise.

7.2 The railway has disappeared for around 500 metres across farmland near Ayleswade Farm. The route can be traced on the ground, but there are no obvious old boundaries remaining. A new path would have to be integrated with current farming activity.

7.3 The last section to Coldharbour Farm is intact, but heavily overgrown. We recommend that an avenue of trees is retained if this section is cleared.



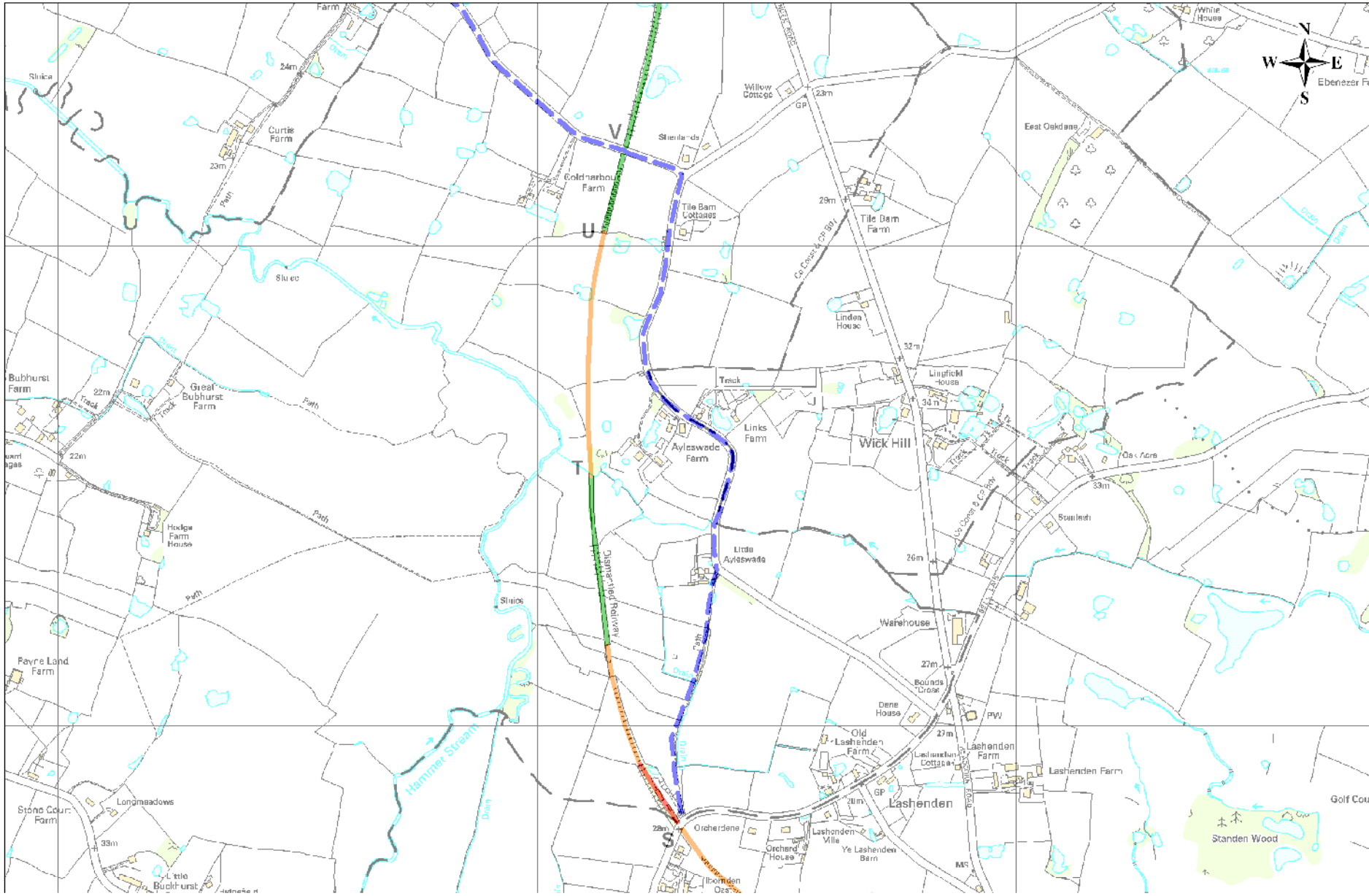
*Old Frittenden Road Station*



*Former railway alignment at point U*



*Former railway alignment near point T*



**Tenterden to Headcorn**  
**Map 7; Frittenden Rd to Coldharbour Fm**

Scale 1:10,000. 200m  
 Printed 28/11/2008  
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Key	
	Railway alignment (built over)
	Railway alignment (can restore)
	Railway alignment (infact)
	Alternative route

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## Coldharbour Farm to Headcorn Station

8.1 From Coldharbour Farm (U) to the River Beult (Y) the railway is a well preserved tree lined corridor, with boundary fences on both sides. Apart from one or two exceptions, it does not appear to have any current use for access and would be relatively easy to convert into a Greenway.

8.2 The exceptions are a horse paddock and barn (W to X) on the railway alignment and a mobile home park (north of X). Both of these can be avoided by diverting into adjacent fields.

8.3 The bridge over the River Beult (Y) has disappeared, although the old abutments are still in place. However, there is a wooden footbridge 90 metres downstream, which although narrow, offers a satisfactory alternative. The route will need to deviate from the railway alignment in any case due to the commercial development on old railway land immediately to the north of the River Beult.

8.4 There is a second missing bridge across the River Sherway (Z), although this is a shorter span than the Beult. The abutments are still in place on the north side.

8.5 The remaining railway corridor to Headcorn Station is intact and well used by

the public. An existing footbridge gives access to the platforms and the village centre. Replacing the steps with ramps, or a lift, would greatly improve accessibility. On the south side, this could at least partially be achieved with earthworks.



*Former railway alignment at point V*



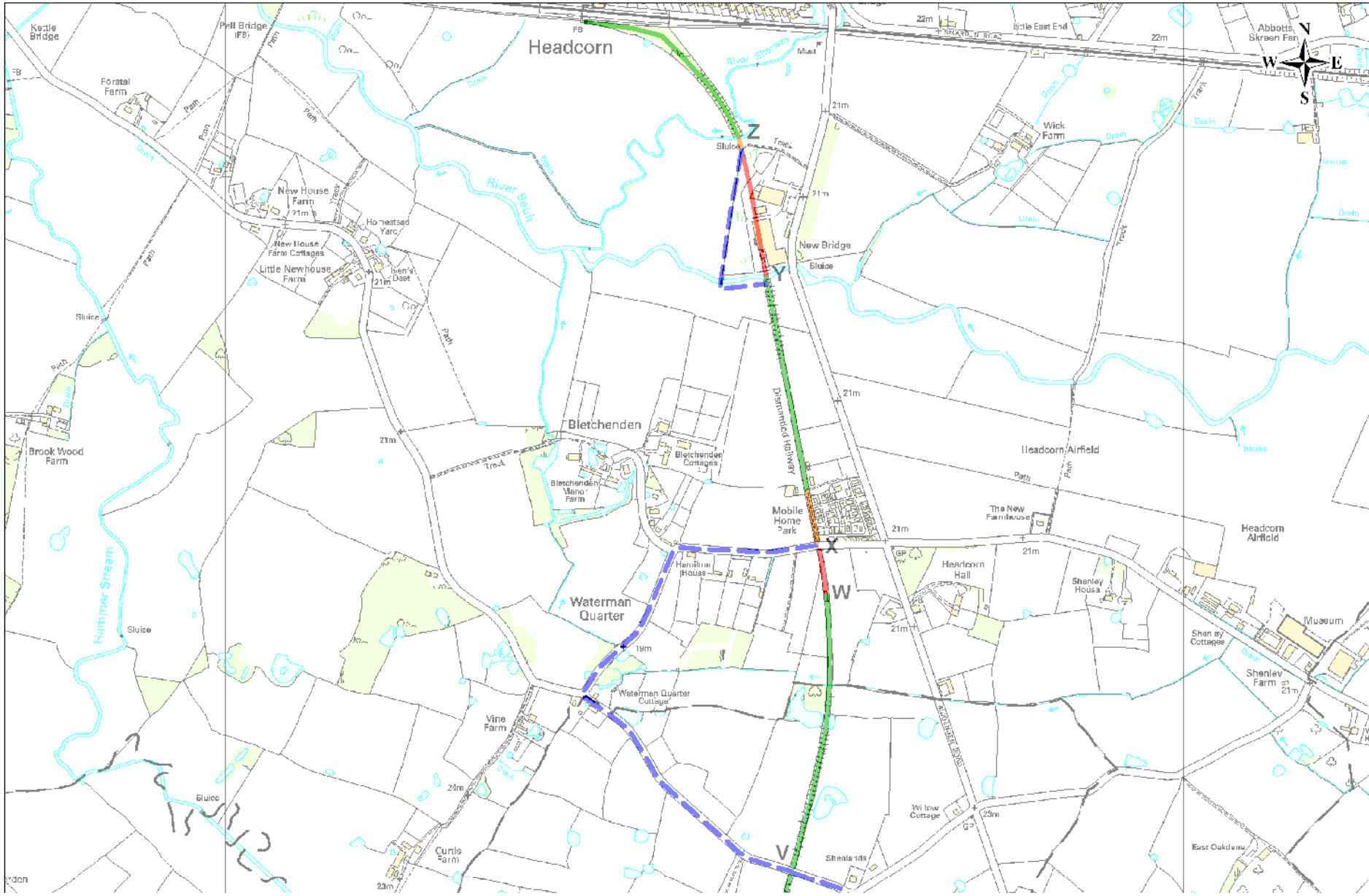
*Point V, looking north*









*River Beult*



*River Sherway*



	<p><b>Tenterden to Headcorn</b>  <b>Map 8; Coldharbour Fm to Headcorn Stn</b></p>	<p>Scale 1:10,000.  200m          Printed 28/11/2008          Page 6 of 6 of Tenterden_to_Headcorn</p>	<p><b>Key</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Railway alignment (can restore)</li> <li> Railway alignment (built over)</li> <li> Railway alignment (infact)</li> <li> Alternative route</li> </ul>	<p>Digital Mapping Solutions from Cotten Eyes          © Crown Copyright 2005.          All rights reserved.          Licence number 1000138418</p>
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## Alternative Routes

A continuous Greenway route with safe crossings of the A262 and A274 is the preferred solution, but alternative routes using minor roads are possible in some places. These could be used as temporary solutions until the land becomes available or in some cases as permanent alignments where the old railway has disappeared.

9.1 Nortons Lane links to National Cycle Route 18, which follows Readers Bridge Road and Grange Road in St Michael's. These roads are relatively quiet, but undulating. If a satisfactory link from Nortons Lane to the old railway line at Applegarth Farm can be achieved, this would provide a reasonable alternative for section A to G – see Map 1.

9.2 At the old Frittenden Road station, an existing public footpath along the field edge links to the road at Little Ayleswade. This footpath could be upgraded to a bridleway so that it can be used by horses and cycles – see Map 7.

9.3 The road past Ayleswade Farm is very quiet and avoids a section where the old railway has disappeared. The railway alignment can be rejoined at Coldharbour Farm, or the route could continue on road through Waterman Quarter to the mobile home park – see Maps 7 and 8.



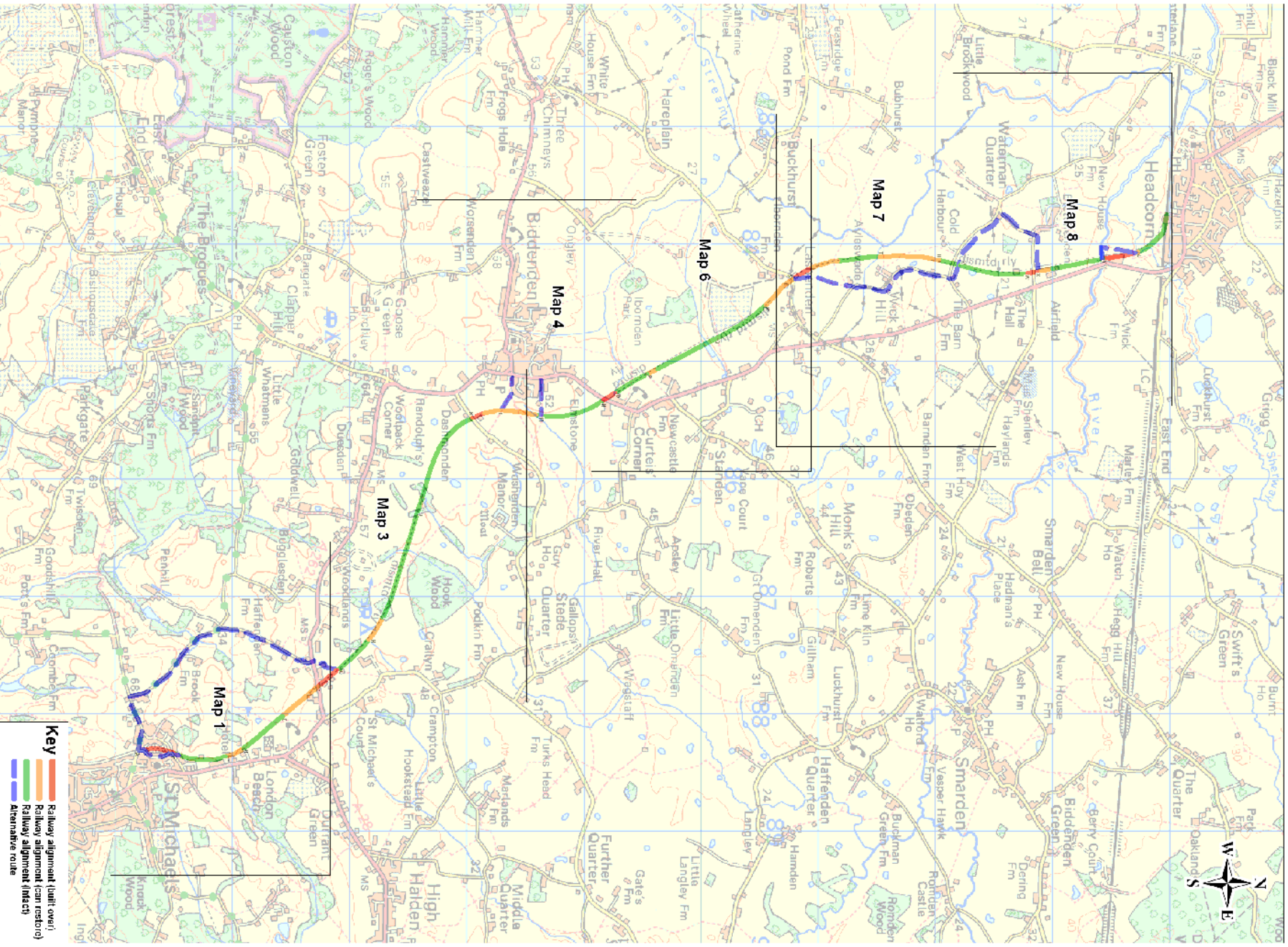
*Public footpath, Little Ayleswade*



*Minor road at Ayleswade Farm*



*Minor road at Coldharbour Farm*



- Key**
- Railway alignment (built over)
  - Railway alignment (can restore)
  - Railway alignment (impact)
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**Tenterden to Headcorn  
Overview**



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