



Have yourself a Greensand Country cycling adventure

Greensand Country Cycleways: **Heath Way**

This 12-mile (20km) ride is mostly on the Greensand Ridge where sandy soils predominating ensuring good riding most of the year round. The route includes the historic market town of Leighton Buzzard and a stretch alongside towpath the Grand Union Canal with its locks and narrow boats, The ride begins amongst the woodlands and lakes of Rushmere Country Park now a well-used location for walking. This area of the Greensand has many sand quarries notably around Heath and Reach: those which still operate provide fine quality sands to the building industry.



There is a way marked trail called "The Sands of Time Trail" with nine yellow plaques at key locations. <http://thesandmuseum.org/sotrail/index.html>

Key facts:

Route marker:



Length: 12 miles (20km)

Route type: On and Off road

Options: None.

Links to other routes: NCR6, Greensand Cycleway

Terrain: Up & down. Four steep hills going up if ridden clockwise

Sites:

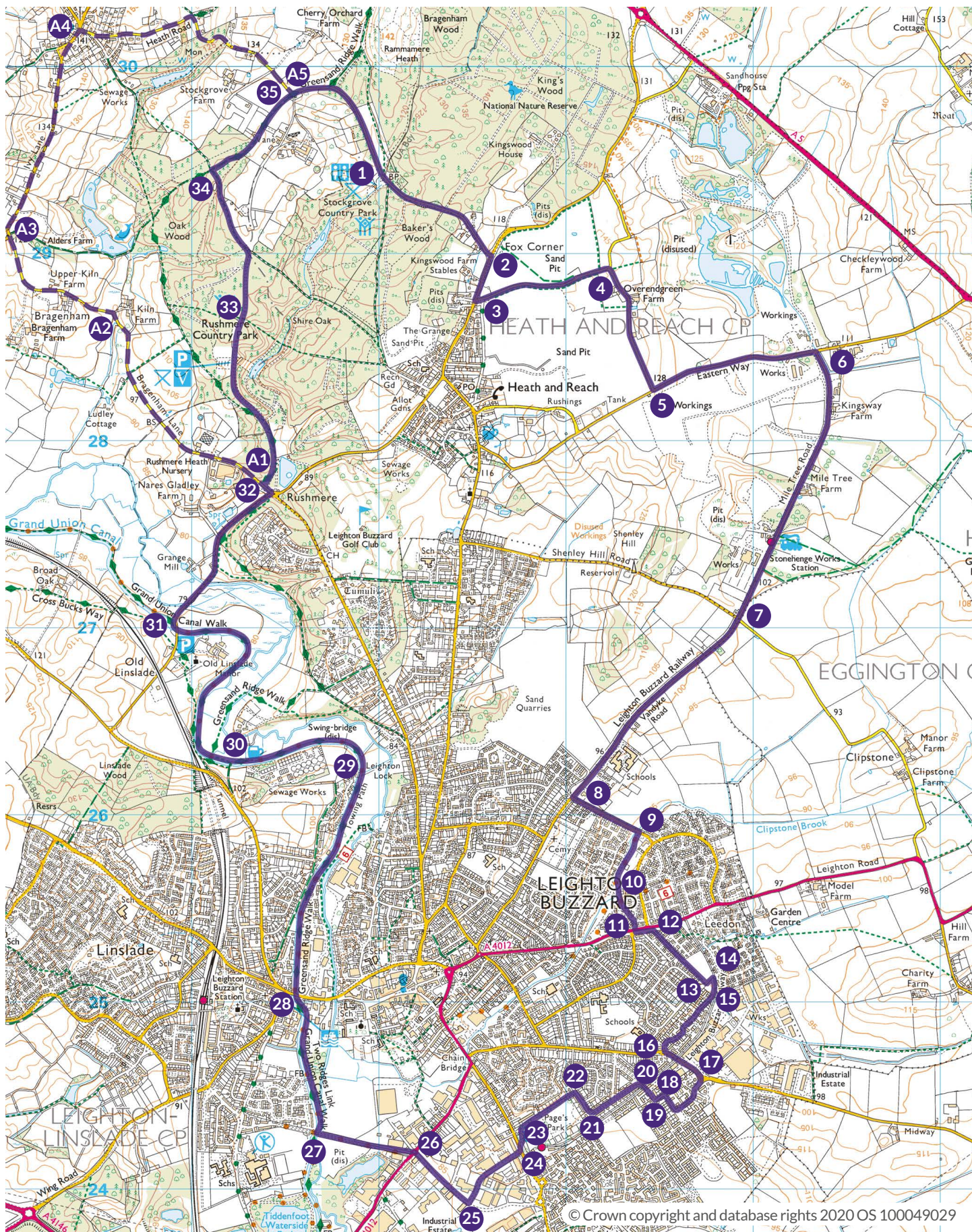
Car park: Rushmere-Stockgrove entrance. Parking charges apply
LU7 0BA

Train station: Leighton Buzzard

OS Explorer maps: 192
(Orange 1:25,000)



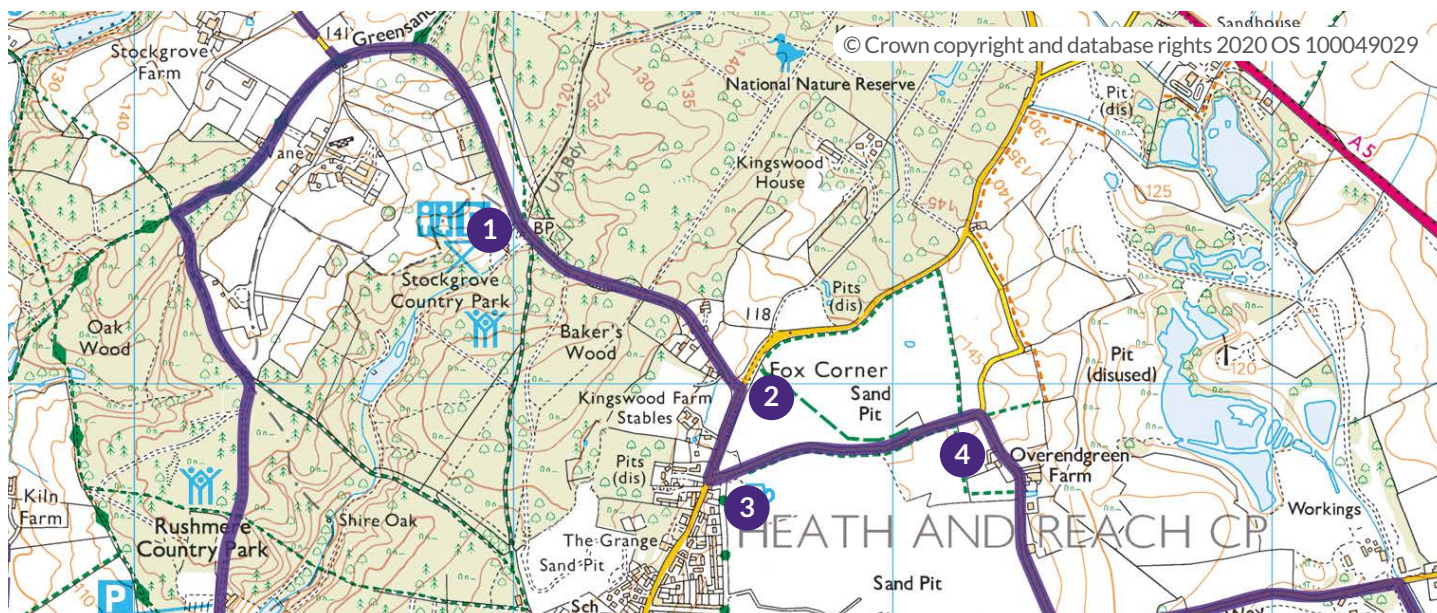
Route map





Rushmere Country Park

The ride begins in the Bedfordshire Country Park at Rushmere. The attraction of this well used facility is the combination of several different habitats including the parkland associated with the former large estate of Stockgrove house complete with a small lake; extensive conifer plantations; heathland dominated by heather and scattered birch saplings; and ancient woodlands with oak. Substantial areas of the Country Park are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).



- 1 Start from the car park at Rushmere Country Park, Stockgrove entrance (there is a charge to park here) and turn right, carefully, out of the entrance onto Brickhill Road.



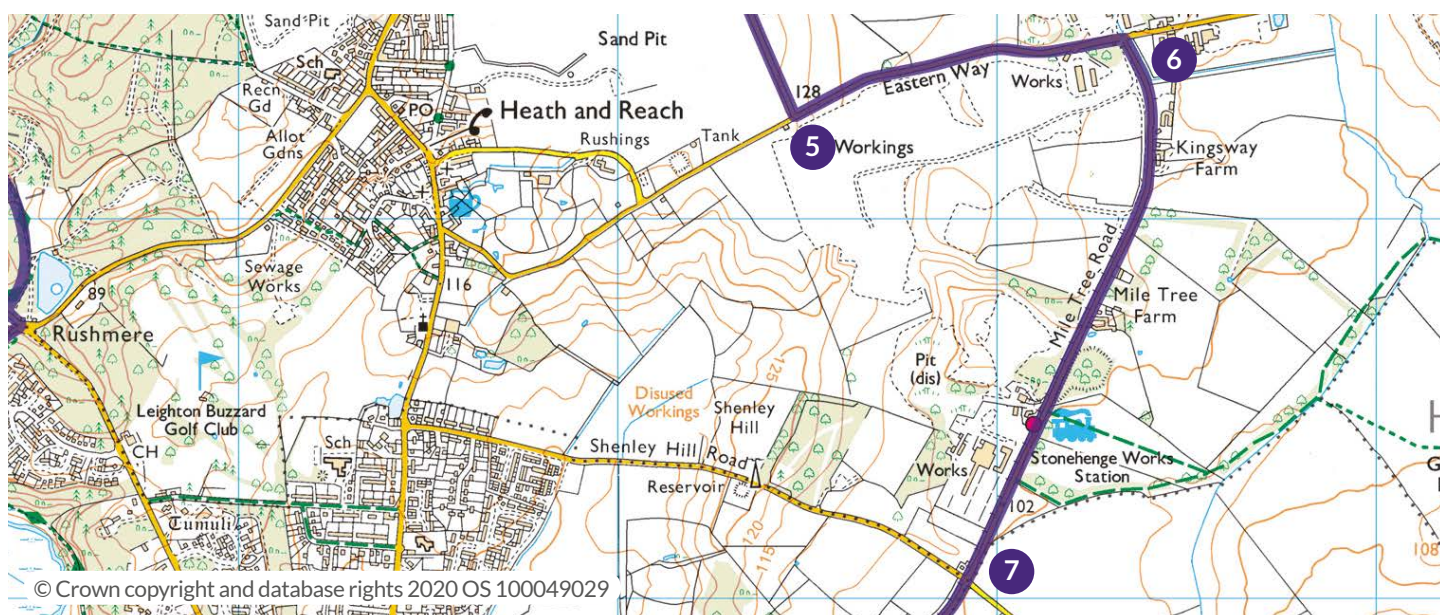
Kings Wood

Kings Wood on the left of the ride is a relic of royal woodland which was a common feature across southern England in the medieval period, mostly reserved for hunting. The entire wood is bounded by a prominent woodbank which defined the ownership of the land: this ancient boundary still marks the county boundary of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

- 2 Cycle along the lane through the trees past King's Wood NNR on the left and Baker's Wood SSSI on the right until you reach a T junction. Turn right, carefully, onto Woburn Road.
- 3 After 200m turn left then left again into Overend Green Lane.
- 4 Bear right with Overend Green Farm on the left. Carry along Overend Green Lane to the T junction.

Sand

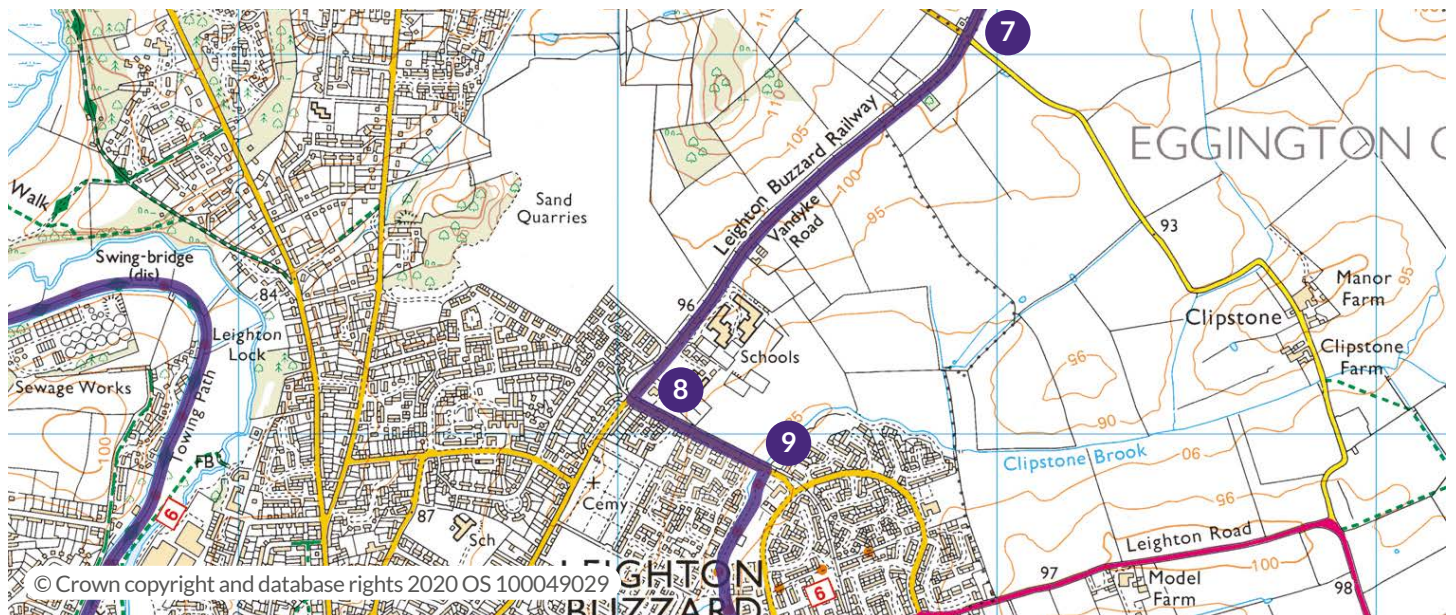
The ride now passes through the sand pit extraction area with extensive pits which have been abandoned, and a few which remain open for the extraction of a special grade of sand valuable to industry. The farm at Overend Green is surrounded by sand pits. The characteristics which make this sand resource valuable are the purity of the deposit and also the uniform grain size. In the past there was a market in the glass making industry and more recently in the supply of sand for sports areas and golf bunkers. As the reserve declines the potential of these extraction sites for new development and nature reserves becomes important.



- 5 At the T junction turn left and cycle along Eastern Way past the Double Arches sand quarry works on the right.
- 6 Just past the works take a right turn (with care) into Mile Tree Road.
- 7 At the cross roads with Shenley Hill Road, carry straight on. Continue along the road, past the Stonehenge works on the right and the narrow gauge railway, also on the right. The narrow gauge railway was constructed in the 1920s from war surplus equipment to move sand from the quarries to the mainline railway as sand trucks did too much damage to the roads. Go past Vandyke Upper School and Gilbert Inglefield Middle School.

Narrow Gauge Railway

The Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge railway, on the right of the ride continues to delight both children and adults. Opened in 1919 the narrow gauge railway was constructed from war surplus equipment to move sand from the quarries to the mainline railway as sand trucks did too much damage to the roads. This line has operated a steam hauled passenger service since 1986. As this was designed for industrial use the line is different from traditional tracks, being a 2 foot narrow gauge which copes with steeper gradients and tighter curves and the line crosses numerous paths and roads. A passenger service operates from July to September.



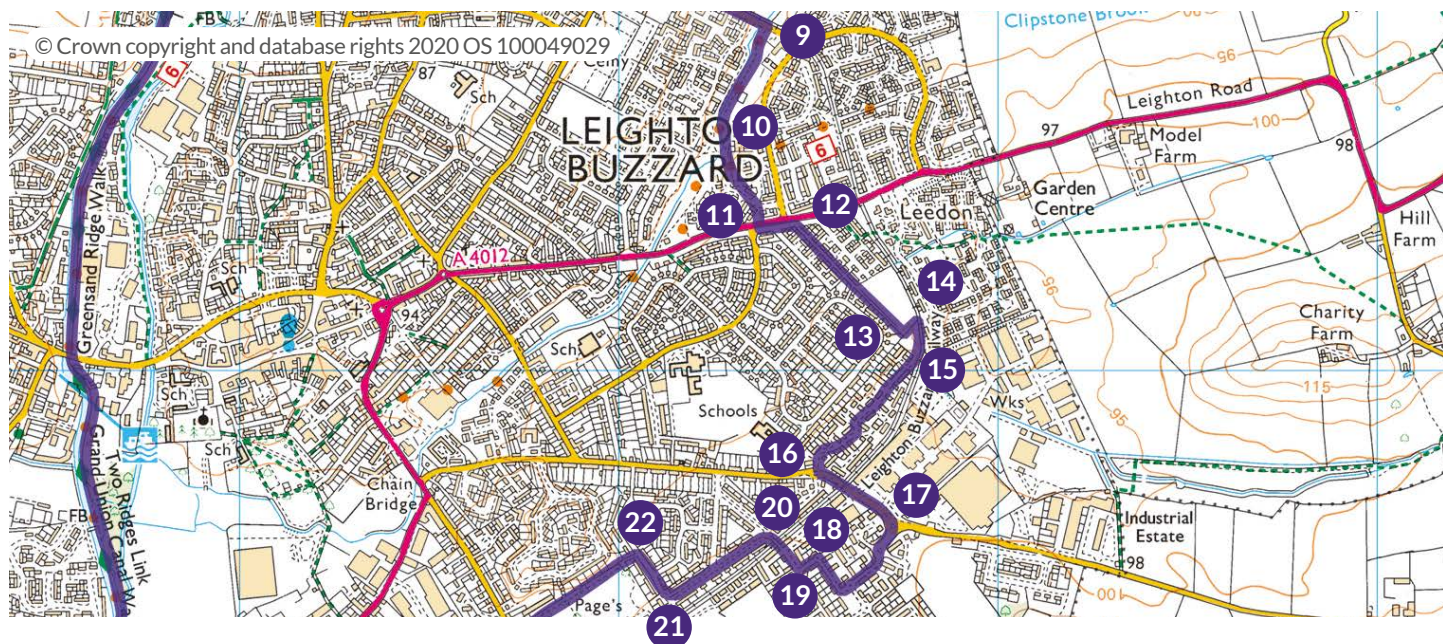
- 8** Turn left onto Mead Way.



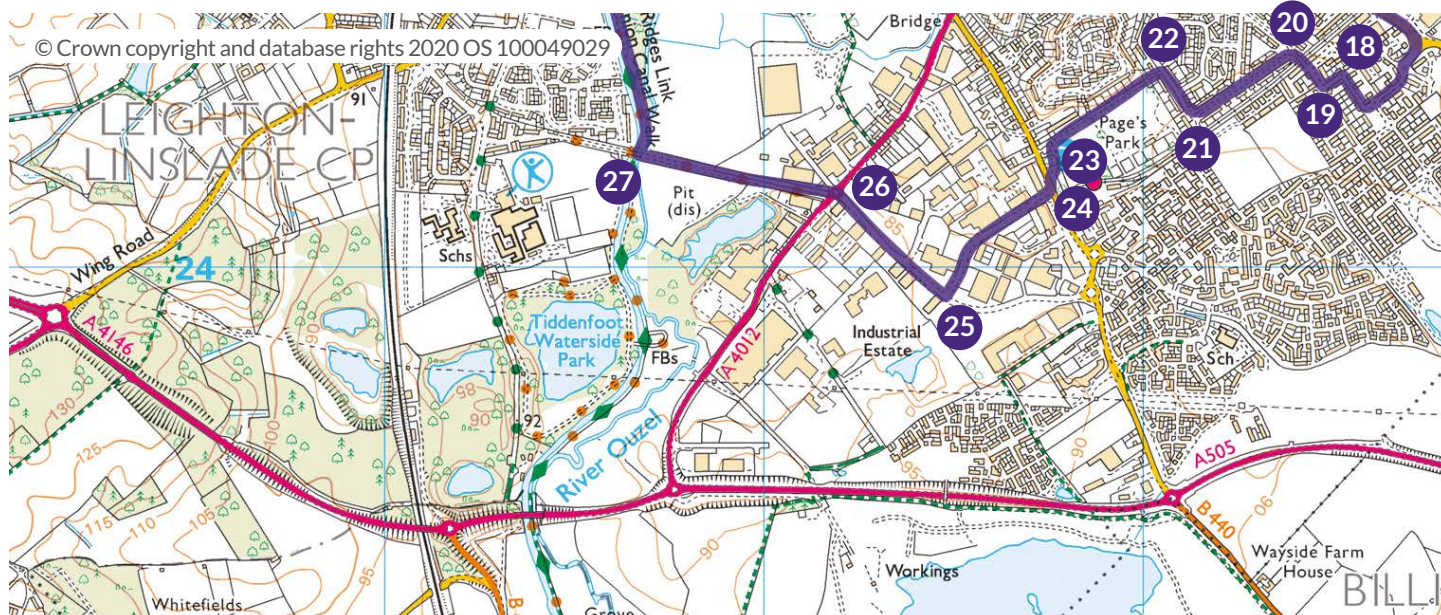
Leighton Buzzard

The ride now weaves through the outskirts of the town of Leighton Buzzard. This is now a busy commuter town linked by a fast rail link to central London, the North and Midlands. The Grand Union canal contributed greatly to the development of the town and the canal and towpath remains a valuable leisure amenity. Leighton still has an independent local newspaper and a vibrant market, making the town attractive, to new residents. This area had an important sand extraction industry reaching back to early 19th century, and more recently historic links to the RAF through the former air base at RAF Stanbridge. The roads on the housing estate built on the site are named after aviators who won VCs.

- 9** Just after the bridge over Clipstone Brook turn right onto the cycle path with Clipstone Brook on your right. Follow the cycle path to Carina Drive.



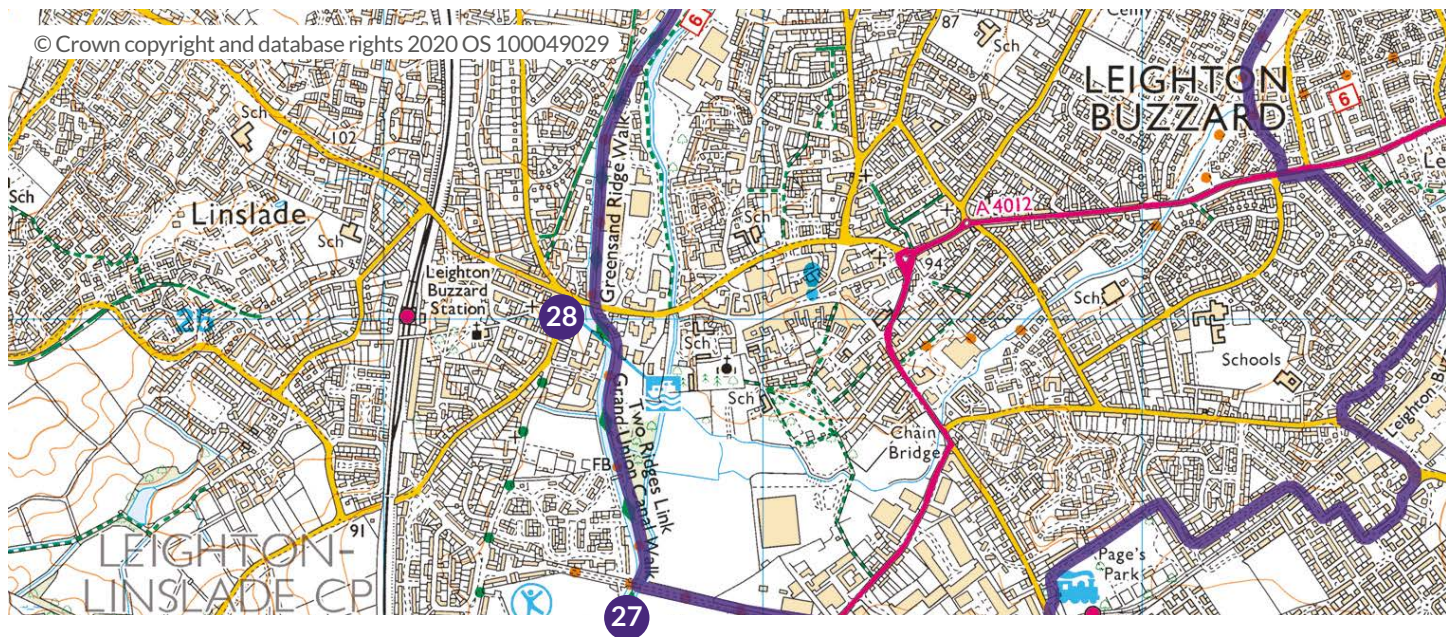
- 10 At the junction where NCR6 continues parallel to Clipstone Brook, veer left towards Carina Drive.
- 11 Turn left onto Carina Drive and after 100m turn right onto the cycle path. Cross Hockliffe Road at the Toucan crossing and turn left onto Danes Way.
- 12 After 100m turn right onto the cycle path.
- 13 Follow the cycle path to the end at the far end of Danes Field and turn left towards the railway.
- 14 Turn sharp right and head towards Marleyfields. The road is called Marleyfields as it was the site of the Marley Tiles factory.
- 15 Follow Marleyfields to Stanbridge Road.
- 16 At Stanbridge Road turn left and take the cycle path heading out of town towards Billington Park.
- 17 Take the first exit at the second roundabout, onto Roundel Drive.
- 18 Follow Roundel Drive to the T junction then turn left into Newton Way.
- 19 At the next T junction turn right
- 20 Cycle straight ahead across Jerrard Close and over the narrow gauge railway (checking for trains first). Then turn immediately right onto Weston Avenue.
- 21 Following Weston Avenue bear right into Richmond Road
- 22 Turn left and into Pages Park which is named after its benefactor. Keeping to the cyclepath cycle down the side of Pages Park.



- 23 Turn left when you reach the playground. Follow the path round and onto Billington Road.
- 24 Cross the road at the Toucan crossing into Eden Way.
- 25 At the end of Eden Way turn right at the T junction into Chartmoor Road.
- 26 At the T junction at the end of Chartmoor Road cross at the Toucan crossing over Grovebury Road and cycle along the Blackbridge cyclepath.
- 27 Use the link ramp on your right to drop down to the towpath.

River Ouzel

The ramp brings the ride into the valley of the Ouzel River and the parallel Grand Union Canal, which together form a green avenue through the town. The towpath now a designated cycle path (National Cycle Route 6) leads directly north. The Ouzel is now a small river which has however played an important part in history. The invading Danish/Viking army eventually reached a settlement with the Saxon kingdoms and the Ouzel became the boundary of what historians call the 'Danelaw'. Land to the east was settled and governed by the incoming settlers and to the east by the Saxon kingdom of Mercia. This agreement is marked by an interpretation board in the field now called Peace Field on the east of the towpath.

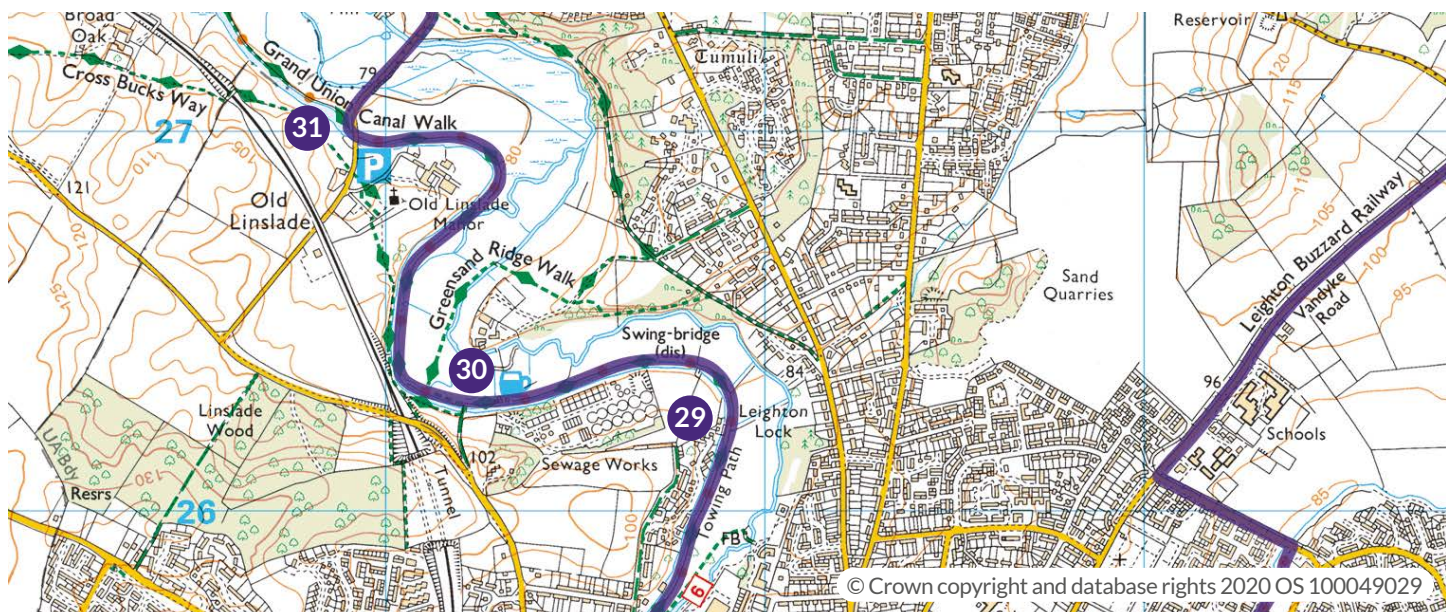


- 28** Cycle carefully along the Grand Union canal towpath and under Leighton Road then past Tesco's (on the right).



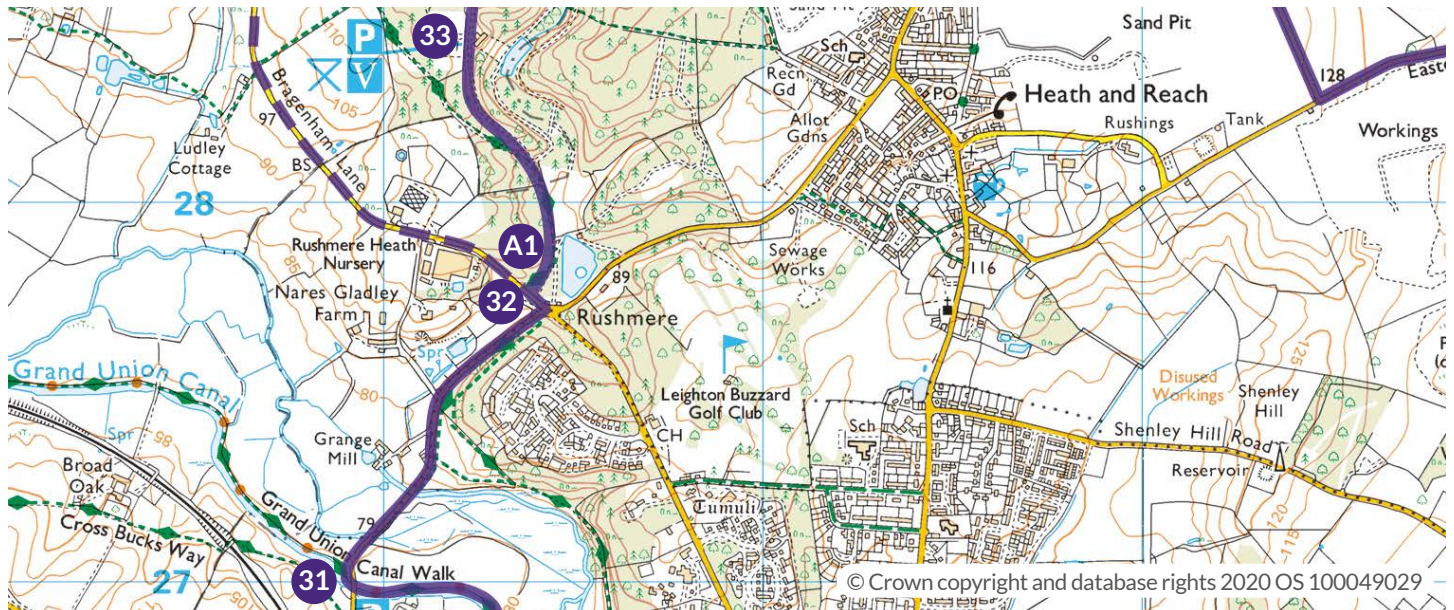
Old Linslade

Old Linslade is an historic settlement with an interesting parish church dating from the 12th century. The arrival of the canal and railway encouraged the villagers to move south into the growing town of Linslade.

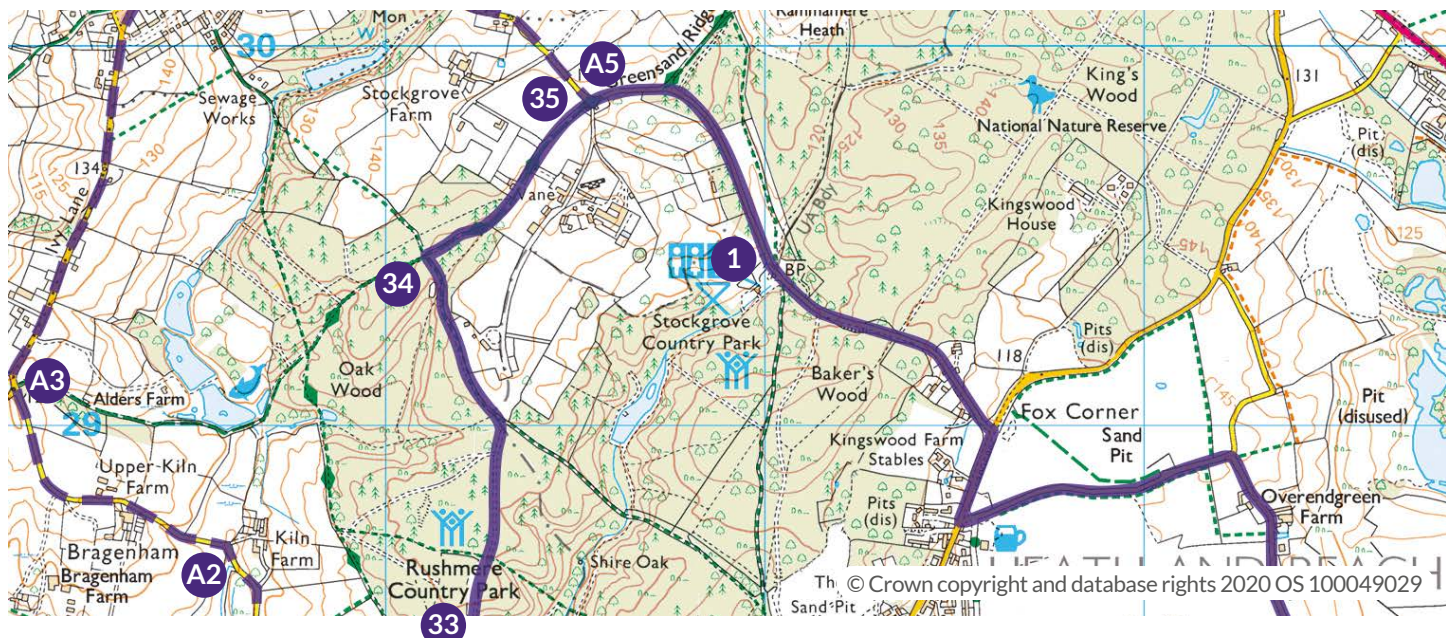


- 29** Continue to follow the towpath past Leighton Lock (Lock 27) with the Ouzel Water Meadows on the right then past The Globe PH on the right.
- 30** Under the canal bridge (Bridge 111) stay on the right hand side canal towpath and continue to follow the canal until the Old Linslade Road canal bridge (Bridge 110).

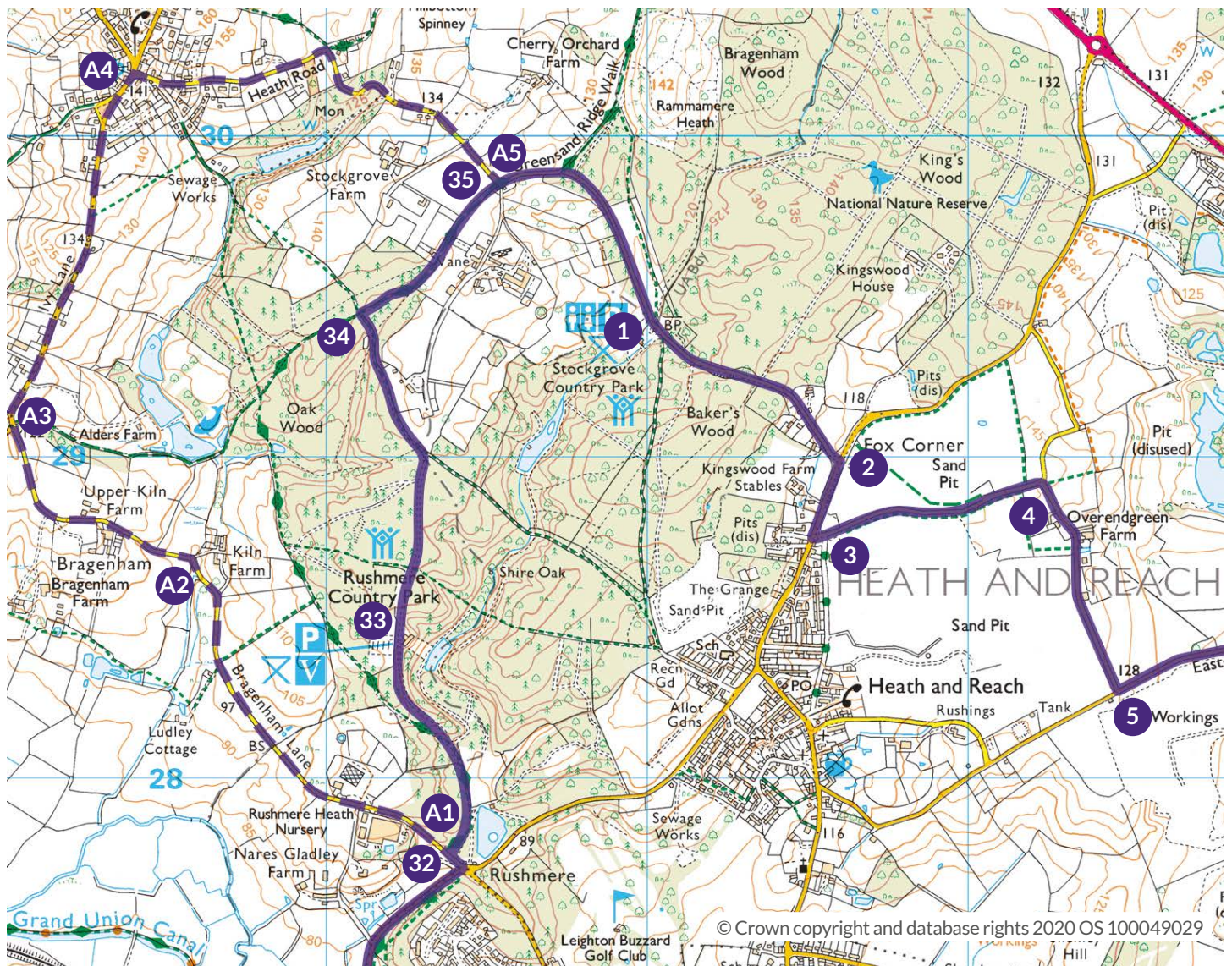
- 31** Turn right at the bridge and up onto Old Linslade Road. Cycle carefully along the road (it is narrow and twisty) until the Rushmere/Bragenham Crossroads. St. Mary's Old Linslade can be seen to the South East



- 32** Alternative A starts here (see overleaf) otherwise: At the crossroads turn left into Bragenham Lane then right and follow the public off-road cycle route through the Rushmere Country Park stopping to admire the view, herons and for refreshments.
- 33** Continue past the Visitor Centre following the waymarked trails, past the large wooden storytelling chair and through the Estate.



- 34** At the crossroads in Oak Wood bear right onto the bridleway and cycle past the entrance to Stockgrove Park House on your right and continue up the drive to the Lodge House.
- 35** Turn right here (be aware of potential traffic) onto Brickhill Road and cycle down the hill to the entrance to Stockgrove Country Park, on your left, and back to the car park.



- A1** Alternative on-road route using the Greensand Cycleway. From the Rushmere/ Bragenham Crossroads continue along Bragenham lane up the hill past Rushmere Heath Nursery and past Kiln Farm, on the left.
- A2** Bear left with Bragenham Manor on the right and continue along the lane until the T junction.
- A3** Turn right at the T junction and cycle along the lane into Great Brickhill.



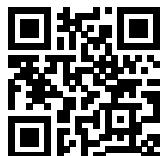
Great Brickhill

Great Brickhill, is an interesting village which was in previous times, regarded as strategic and close to the A5 route to the north. A large Parliamentary army camped close to the village for many weeks in 1643.

- A4** At the village centre turn right along Heath Road and follow the lane past Blue Gate Farm
- A5** and rejoin the main route back to the Stockgrove Country Park car park.

Refreshments

Details of refreshment outlets can be found on the Greensand Country website



www.greensandcountry.com/experience

Remember when cycling

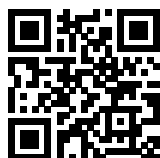
- If possible start your ride from your front door
- If you do drive to the start point then please park with consideration
- Please DO NOT cycle on footpaths.
- Always keep to the waymarked routes and do not enter private land.
- Always ride in single file when roads are narrow and never ride more than two abreast.
- Make sure you are visible to others.
- Always use lights after dark or in poor visibility.
- Plan your route according to the weather and daylight hours.
- Be aware of animals, other cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders and car drivers when cycling.
- Keep your speed down and give way to walkers and other path users.
- Be polite and considerate towards landowners and farmers.
- Keep away from farm machinery or farm/forestry operations.

More information

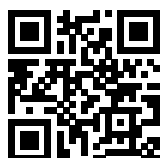


What 3 Words: Download this app to your smartphone to help you find locations and to tell others where you are. Each 3m square in the world has been assigned a unique 3 word address that will never change.

The route passes a number of churches. More information on them including services, facilities and what else they have to offer can be found online.



www.achurchnearyou.com



www.explorechurches.org

This website may also tell you what is special about the buildings and makes them worth visiting.

Churches are attractive and worthwhile stopping places steeped in community history. They usually have benches to rest on and a porch in which you can shelter from the elements.

Signage for promoted routes throughout Greensand Country has been part-funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.