



Bookham Station Accessibility

Tunnel Car Park to Platform 1 Footpath
Improvements

Ver 1.0

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Introduction

Bookham Station is Grade II listed, and lies at the North of the Bookham villages. It has long been an issue that the London-bound Platform One cannot be accessed by people using wheelchairs or mobility scooters, due to the lack of facilities at the station.

The ideal solution is to provide a new footbridge with lifts, designed to be sympathetic to the station architecture, and carefully located so as not to impose on the listed structures. However, this is a long-term project and may take some years to provide.

A more immediate solution is to utilise a path across Bookham Common, which could facilitate wheelchair access to the kissing gate entrance at Platform One. The current condition of the paths are poor, and will need improving for wheelchair access.



Introduction

Possible Routes

There are a few options that have been considered for the route of the path, from simple quick solutions, to more complicated and radical designs.

A focus on delivering the optimal route could mean lengthy discussions with Network Rail, The National Trust, and Natural England, which would delay and possibly stall the project. The most direct routes would also need to tackle very steep gradients, which would require considerably more funding.

For a surfaced path to be delivered in a more immediate time frame, the quickest cost effective option is preferred.



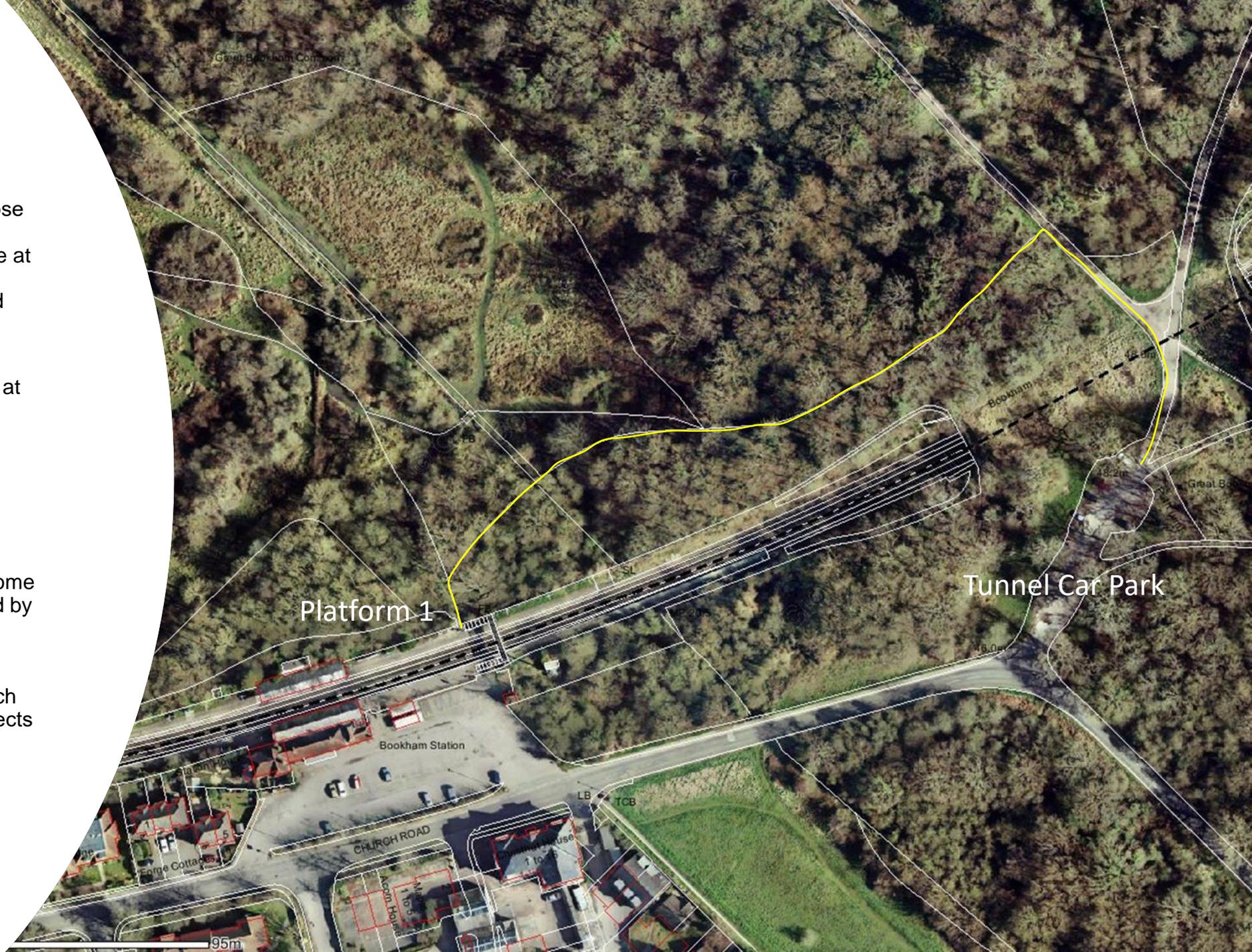
Proposal

The Bookhams Residents' Association propose to improve the path from the National Trust Tunnel Car Park, to the kissing gate entrance at Platform One, by providing an all weather durable surface, with an adequate width, and gradient for wheelchair use.

The path must permit year round wheelchair and mobility scooter access to Platform One at Bookham Station.

The improved path should be delivered as quickly as is practicable, to avoid further inconvenience to disabled passengers, and facilitate more people with disabilities to use public transport.

It is proposed that the path be financed by some of the Shanly Homes development fund, held by the National Trust and intended for footpath projects, and Community Infrastructure Levy funding from Mole Valley District Council. Other sources of funding will be explored such as Surrey County Council's Community Projects Fund.



Evaluation

The existing path links Byway five, with Footpath seven over Bookham Common and has some uneven terrain, with a short steep gradient section about half way along.

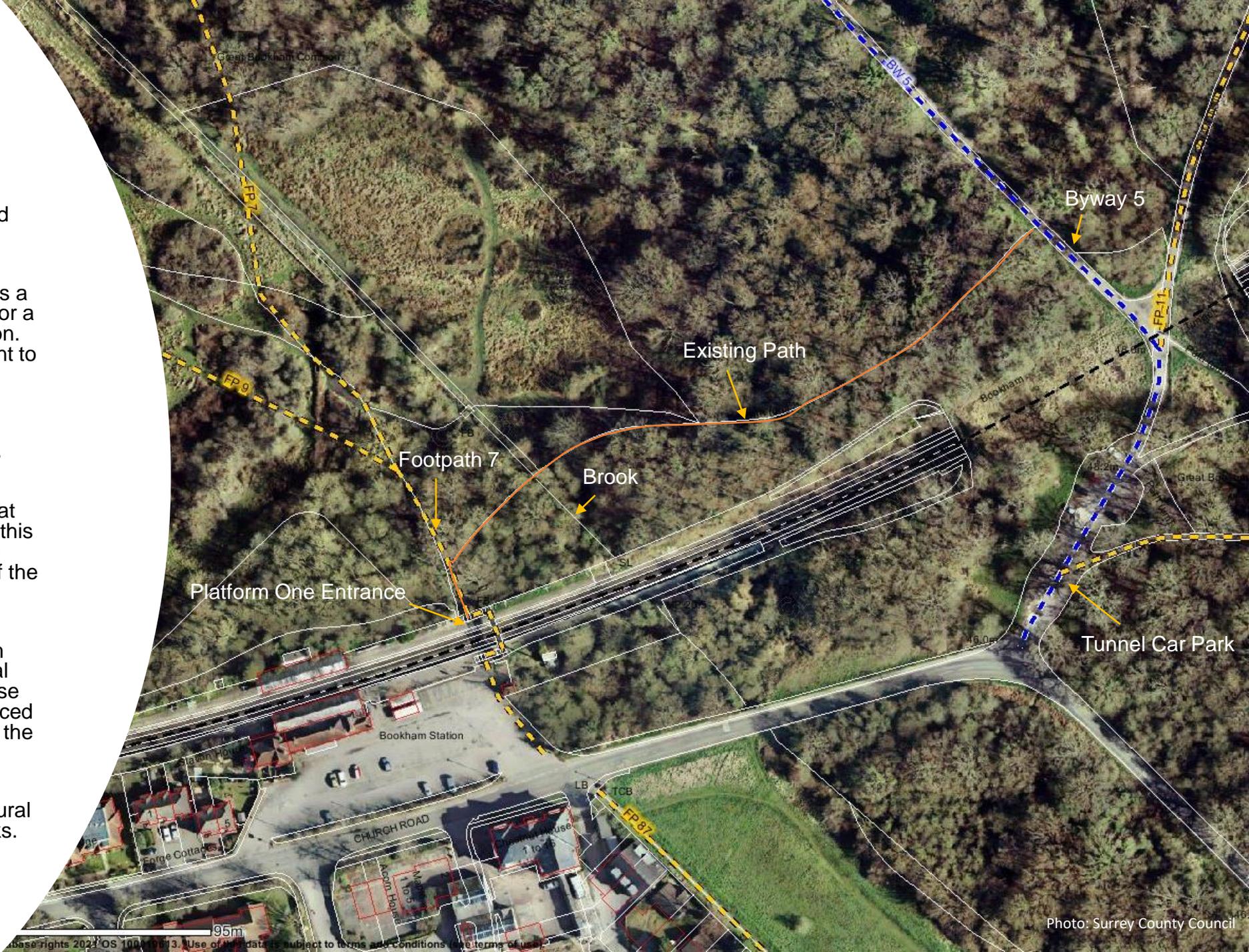
The path becomes very boggy as it traverses a small brook, before joining Footpath seven for a slightly inclined approach to Bookham Station. Footpath seven will also require improvement to this short section to connect the accessible route to the station.

A new bridge crossing the brook may be required as the existing one is narrow and is showing signs of deterioration.

At the station there is an old kissing gate, that has had the swinging gate removed. Ideally this could be widened, but propose this could be done separately to avoid delaying the rest of the project.

The length of the path is long and totals 320 metres from the Tunnel Car Park to Platform One. This will concern people, and additional measures may be required to ensure safe use of the path. A risk assessment can be produced and every effort should be made to facilitate the use of the path by those who need to.

The area concerned is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Consent from Natural England is required before starting any works.



Evaluation

Width of the path.

There are challenges at the following points:

- Entrance to the path from Byway five.
This area currently has a narrow entrance by the side of a vehicle access gate, the gate post will need to be moved or the undergrowth cleared to facilitate disabled access.
- Bridge over the brook.
The bridge is narrow and would benefit from widening to make crossing easier for wheelchairs and mobility scooters
- The kissing gate.
This presents a narrow entrance to the platform which could be made wider.

The Sensory Trust advises accessible paths should have a two metre width, if two wheelchairs are expected to pass each other. This may not be possible for the entire length of the path but should be considered in the planning.



Evaluation

Gradients.

There are challenges at the following points:

- Steep gradient half way along the path.
This area has a short section of steep gradient which will require levelling out, or a suitable diversion around it to be made.
- Gradient up to the kissing gate.
There is also a slight gradient on the approach to the kissing gate that will require levelling.

The Sensory Trust advises accessible gradients for paths and routes should be no steeper than 1:20.

Discussions are required with the proposed contractor on practicalities, and also with The National Trust, and Natural England on the preferred solution.



Evaluation

Wet ground conditions.

There are some areas of boggy ground which will need to be addressed.

It may be necessary to form a base layer of ballast or hardcore substrate with suitable drainage pipes, before laying the finished surface.

Alternative solutions could be to provide wooden duck boarding with an anti-slip surface of chicken wire, or possibly an elevated walkway. These options would have to be stable, and secured to prevent any movement. They may also require hand rails.

Discussions are required with the proposed contractor on practicalities, and also with The National Trust, and Natural England on preferred materials, and method of construction.



Evaluation

Materials

Aggregate materials could consist of a finished surface of road planings which may be compacted.

A base layer of crushed hard core material could be used to build up areas which are waterlogged, or to level gradients.

Alternative materials such as crushed limestone may also be considered for the finished surface.

Discussions are required with the proposed contractor on the suitability of materials, and also with The National Trust, and Natural England on preferred materials, and method of construction.



Evaluation

Materials.

Timber duck boarding has provided a solution previously on the common at the Isle of Wight pond, and may be suitable for the boggy areas around the brook. It is covered with chicken wire to provide a grippy surface.

There are concerns that Autumn leaf fall will cover the surface and make it slippery. The area by the Isle of Wight pond has fewer trees so it is less of an issue there.

Discussions to be had with The National Trust, and Natural England on the preferred materials and method of construction.



Evaluation

Bridge crossing the brook.

The current bridge is showing some signs of deterioration, and is narrow making it difficult for wheelchairs to use.

The bridge could be overlaid with duck boarding spanning the brook and the muddy areas, making a seamless crossing.

The existing bridge belongs to Surrey County Council and permission should be sought before any work on the bridge is carried out.

This could be upgraded at a later stage.



Evaluation

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Bookham Common is a SSSI location.

It is home for a variety of species, and is particularly noted for its plant, invertebrate, and bird communities.

Discussions with the National Trust and Natural England will be required to establish the following:

- Method of working/Supervision
- Choice of materials
- Any protected species on site

Permission is required from Natural England before work can begin.



Evaluation

Platform One old kissing gate.

There is a narrow section when passing through the redundant kissing gate, and also at the bottom of the footbridge.

A short section of fence at the footbridge directs people to walk along the platform and is possibly positioned for safety reasons.

Clarification is required from the National Trust and Network Rail as to whether this gate should be restored to protect the railway from fauna straying in from the common.

If Network Rail is supportive, then the opening could be widened to make it easier for wheelchair access.

This could be done at a later stage.



Evaluation

Lighting.

This is a controversial subject which the National Trust has already expressed concern over.

The benefits of lighting are that it would allow the route to be used after dark, and improve safety.

Some disadvantages could be that it disturbs wildlife, contributes to light pollution, and detracts from the natural beauty of the common.

Clarification is required from the National Trust and Natural England on whether providing lighting to provide a safe route after dark would be permitted through the SSSI area.

Discussions would also need to take place with Surrey County Council and their contractor Skanska regarding a suitable supply from the street lighting.

This could be done at a later stage.



Results

The Bookhams Residents' Association, have approached local construction contractors for advice, and to provide quotations for a simple scope of works.

The works are to include the construction of a path, using road planings with a rubble hardcore foundation where required. The path will have a two metre width, with the existing gradients levelled out to be more manageable. The path will be built up over the boggy ground, and have drainage pipes installed to allow water to dissipate, and a new bridge of timber construction will be provided to cross the brook.

Quotations

A local firm has provided a quotation for the works with the costs estimated at £25,000. Additional quotations are being sought and will be reviewed to confirm the best way forward and compare prices.

The National Trust and Natural England

Preliminary discussions have been established with the National Trust.

Further discussions with the National Trust are in the process of being arranged, and will include Natural England, to ensure the project meets their requirements.

Future Stages

If the initial scope is successful, then additional staged works could be completed to further enhance the path.



Conclusion

It is clear, that there is a demand for good accessible pathways, and whilst the provision of an accessible bridge at Bookham station is still being pursued, this path offers an opportunity for people in wheelchairs, and mobility scooters to seek independent travel on public transport in a more immediate timeframe.

The hope is that this project will increase the disabled passenger numbers to the the station, which will in turn strengthen the case for an accessible bridge to be provided in the future.

We hope our residents, and local groups will support the project, and help The Bookhams Residents' Association, and its friends provide a solution that offers better accessibility at Bookham station.

