

Supporting Document TA1

Traffic & Infrastructure 'SWOT' data

Topic 1: Physical Infrastructure – Table 3

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| Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking at present; • Mobile library; • Community Shop & Post Office. | Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularity in bus service; • Speeding; • Lack of local input; • Road safety / signage; • Bad quality fixing of pot-holes; • Cell-phone reception. |
| Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better signage; • Local bus service improvements (range and frequency) to medical facilities (e.g. elderly) and work (for young people); • Decentralisation of funds for solutions. | Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future possibility of increase in parish population due to new housing; • Increase in speeding; more & bigger modern cars; • Big lorries. |

Topic 2: Community Infrastructure– Table 6

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|---|---|
| Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iden Green Pavilion, Village Hall, Memorial Hall, Recreation Field; • Clubs — St George's, Tennis, Bowls, Golf, Scout hub & club, wine-tasting; • 2 Pubs, Community Shop, Post Office and Café, Butchers, Nail Bar; • Street-cruiser, Benenden Players; • Churches — St George's & Catholic; • Primary School; • Mobile Library, Keep fit classes etc. | Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding volunteers for all the clubs & Shop; • Club facilities for teenagers; • No Doctors, no dentists; • Poor interest in rural community; • Current facilities at capacity — e.g. Shop / Café; • Lost the use of tennis courts at Hospital; • Taxi availability. |
| Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance existing facilities; • Build relationships with existing businesses; • Land for community use; • Use of unused farm buildings; • Large Community / Farm Shop centre. | Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any facilities not provided make people travel to other areas = increase in traffic; • More houses will require expansion of local infrastructure. |

Supporting Document TA2

Development of a cycle path/footpath between East End and Benenden

Introduction

Following the publication of the initial draft of the Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNDP), it was suggested that an additional piece of work was done exploring the feasibility/desirability of the development of a cycle/footpath to link the proposed development in East End to the main settlement of Benenden.

Potentially the benefits of development of an accessible foot, cycle and pram-friendly 'safe' route between the two settlements are:

- Reduced number of local car journeys
- Health from additional exercise
- An inclusive route for disabled cyclists and wheel chair users.
- Encouraging a 'one-village' feeling — making it easier to visit shops, amenities and friends across the two centres.

Geography

Virtually any route, be that by existing roads/footpaths or by a new route, between East End and Benenden Village is about 4km (2 miles) in length. To put that in some perspective in terms of travel time, it is approximately an hour by foot or in the region of 12 minutes by bicycle.

There seems to be no opportunity to dramatically shorten the travel distance between the two points. Furthermore, there is no way of avoiding the valley that lies between the two points. It is worth noting that there is an element of incline to be covered no matter what route is chosen.

Existing options

There are several options for travel by road, either running west along Goddards Green Road turning off either at Walkhurst Road or New Pond Road and running into the village (both approx. 4.2km) or heading south from East End using Green Lane and Stepneyford Lane, before turning right onto the B2086, Benenden Road and running into the village from the east. This latter route is substantially longer at 5.7km.

None of these routes is particularly cycle/pedestrian-friendly. Poor road surface, no foot/cycle path, and generally narrow carriageways make walking/cycling between East End and Benenden Village very unattractive.

As far as current non-road routes are concerned there is a mix of footpaths and bridleways which do provide an option for a multi-purpose route linking the two settlements. However, they are currently limited as far as cycle use is concerned.

In terms of off-road or cross-country access:

Cyclists are permitted by the Countryside Act 1968 to use bridleways, though they must give way to pedestrians. Cyclists have no right to cycle on footpaths away from the road, but they only commit an offence where local bylaws or traffic regulation orders create such an offence. Footpath landowners can undertake a civil action if property is damaged, but this applies also to walkers. Cycling on footways, however, is illegal unless specifically marked as a shared use cycle path (Highways Act 1835, S.72).¹

Alternative route options

Any potential, at least in part, non-road route linking East End and Benenden would run predominantly across the ground that lies between Walkhurst Road and Stepneyford Lane (see map on Page 7). Any off-road route would ideally run from East End via Pypmne Manor, heading south and crossing Pump Wood, Tinker Wood and running down the west edge of Tinker Wood to join the existing path. The cross-country route would end on Walkhurst Road (Grid Ref TQ 82225 33761) by Coggers Cottage.

Work would have to be done at both ends of the route to make the initial road portions (Goddards Green Road or Green Lane at East End and Walkhurst Road at the Benenden end) suitable.

However, running an all-weather surfaced route through fields in an AONB seems problematic.

An alternative, which utilises more of the existing road routing, would follow Green Lane, Stepneyford Lane and then turning right on the metalled road towards Mount Hall Farm and picking up the existing pathway that eventually links to Walkhurst Road.

This route would minimize the amount of 'new' path to be constructed, would require the least distance of 'new' right of way to be negotiated, and at the same time not run across fields in the AONB.

To be absolutely clear, although all of these routes do utilize, at least in part, existing paths, none of them currently provide a complete right of way for a bicycle. Moreover, rights of way for the building and general access would have to be negotiated with the land owners.

Governmental input

Both National and local government is currently committed to increasing the use of walking and cycling to provide basic access for local communities, and are seemingly prepared to back it. The National Government has a policy document 'Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy'² in which it says:

We aim to double cycling activity by 2025 and each year reduce the rate of cyclists

¹ Chartered Institute of Highways & Transportation; *Planning for Cycling*, page 11.

² UK Government, Department of Transport; *Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy* - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874708/cycling-walking-investment-strategy.pdf

killed or seriously injured on English roads. We aim to reverse the decline in walking that we have seen over the last few years. For that to happen, we want cycling and walking to be the natural choices for shorter journeys in every urban and rural community in England. For cycling or walking to be normalised in this way, they need to be safer, and be perceived to be safe, normal and enjoyable ways to travel.

It also claims to have put its money where its mouth is by making available ‘over £1 billion of Government funding available to local bodies that may be invested in cycling and walking over the next five years.’

Kent County Council’s *Active Travel Strategy*³ is clear in its approach to developing and encouraging sustainable and useable transport options. In its 2016 draft, KCC outlines the benefits of an Active Travel Strategy in an annex⁴ to the main report.

Active travel means walking or cycling as a means of transport in order to get to a particular destination such as work, the shops or to visit friends. It does not cover walking and cycling done purely for pleasure, for health reasons, or simply walking the dog.

Currently, there seems to be a political will to support the development of cycling/walking within rural communities and it would seem that a development, such as an improved link between East End and Benenden would be covered by any schemes available.

What sort of path

Effectively, there is a national standard for cycle paths drawn up by Sustrans — a charity ‘that makes it easier for people to walk and cycle.’ Its handbook, ‘Handbook for Cycle Friendly Design’⁵ outlines the physical design parameters for the development of people friendly cycle/footpaths.

While much of the organisations work looks to developing the urban infrastructure it also addresses rural needs. The suggestions are not radical but look to provide safe and accessible routes. It acknowledges that; ‘Fewer options are available to make roads outside villages more friendly for cyclists and pedestrians, where speeds are higher and traffic movement is the main function.’

For any of the route options put forward here, there would be a mix of use of existing quieter roads and, possibly, newly developed traffic-free routing.

³ **Kent County Council**; *Active Travel Strategy* — <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/transport-and-highways-policies/active-travel-strategy>

⁴ **Kent County Council**; *Benefits of Active Travel* — https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/71934/Benefits-of-Active-Travel-annex-2.pdf

⁵ **Sustrans**; *Handbook for Cycle Friendly Design* - https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/cycling-guidance/sustrans_handbook_for_cycle-friendly_design.pdf

The Handbook suggests the following:**For new off road/traffic-free sections:**

Minimum effective path width:

2.5m on all main routes, major access paths and school links

2.0m possible on lesser routes and links

Type of surface

Sealed surface required on any route within 5km of urban area or 2km of village environment

Sealed surface required on routes linking villages where school traffic or other utility trips will benefit.

Surface dressed top to bitumen base course may be appropriate

Use of unsealed surface requires a rigid maintenance plan Use of unsealed surface not recommended on paths:

- with gradient steeper than 1 in 20
- shared with equestrians
- where significant run off expected

As far as the use of existing roads outside the village is concerned it recognizes that where changes do need to be made to the road, 'these must be sensitive to the nature of the rural environment'. It suggests that measures to consider include:

- Quiet Lane designation, or similar
- 20mph limits
- area wide 40mph limits
- access restrictions/closures
- road narrowings
- changed priorities
- surface treatments
- removal of centre lines and other signs and lines
- selective warning signs (including vehicle activated)

Within the village the recommendations are for things that we see often implemented in villages close by (Goudhurst, Sandhurst, Sissinghurst all have some of the following elements):

- identify and strengthen entry points to village
- emphasise location of village centre to traffic
- create visual features at junctions and key locations
- encourage slower speeds: reduce visual width of carriageway, remove centre lines, reduce signing, lower speed limits, emphasise pedestrian desire lines and crossing locations

There is nothing in the Sustrans' suggestions that is notably radical or, seemingly, would provide a financial barrier to developing an East End/Benenden link that met national standards.

It would mean upgrading existing road surfaces and adding an all-weather surface to a short section of existing path. It does not require new path building across fields within the AONB.

Beyond the initial link

While this paper set out to look specifically at establishing an East End/Benenden link as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, it would be remiss not to highlight an additional opportunity for East End to develop or link into another outlined cycle way/footpath plan.

In 2008 Sustrans carried out a feasibility study for Kent County Council looking at establishing a 'Headcorn to Tenterden Cycleway'⁶ along the route of the old railway line. The potential for linking into this providing a safe, predominantly off road, route into Tenterden (approx. 10km/6.2 miles) and the mainline station at Headcorn (approx 10.5km/6.5 miles) from East End is hugely attractive. Potentially it could provide a 30 minute cycle link for commuters to Ashford, Tonbridge and London as well as a safe cycling route to students attending Homewood School in Tenterden.

Conclusion

By using a mix of existing road infrastructure and upgrading a short run of approx. 1.3 km it would be possible to create a 4.9km safe, cycle-friendly route between the two centres. The route would run from the Hospital down Green Lane, turn right into Stepneyford Lane, then right again down the metalled road to Mount Le Hoe Oast. From there it would pick up an old track that runs through to join Walkhurst Road at Coggers Cottage. The final part of the route would be up Walkhurst Road and into the village. Approximately 14 mins. by bike and just over the hour on foot.

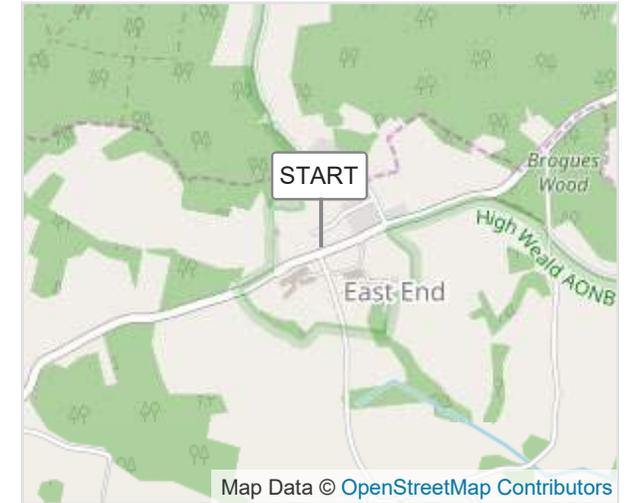
The route would provide car-free access between the two centres and the shop, public house and other amenities. It also delivers against local and central government aims to increase Active Travel.

⁶ Kent County Council/Sustrans; *Headcorn – Tenterden Cycleway | A Feasibility Study*
<https://www.mytenterden.co.uk/upload/di/ot/1/dilisting-1071-listingdoc2.pdf>



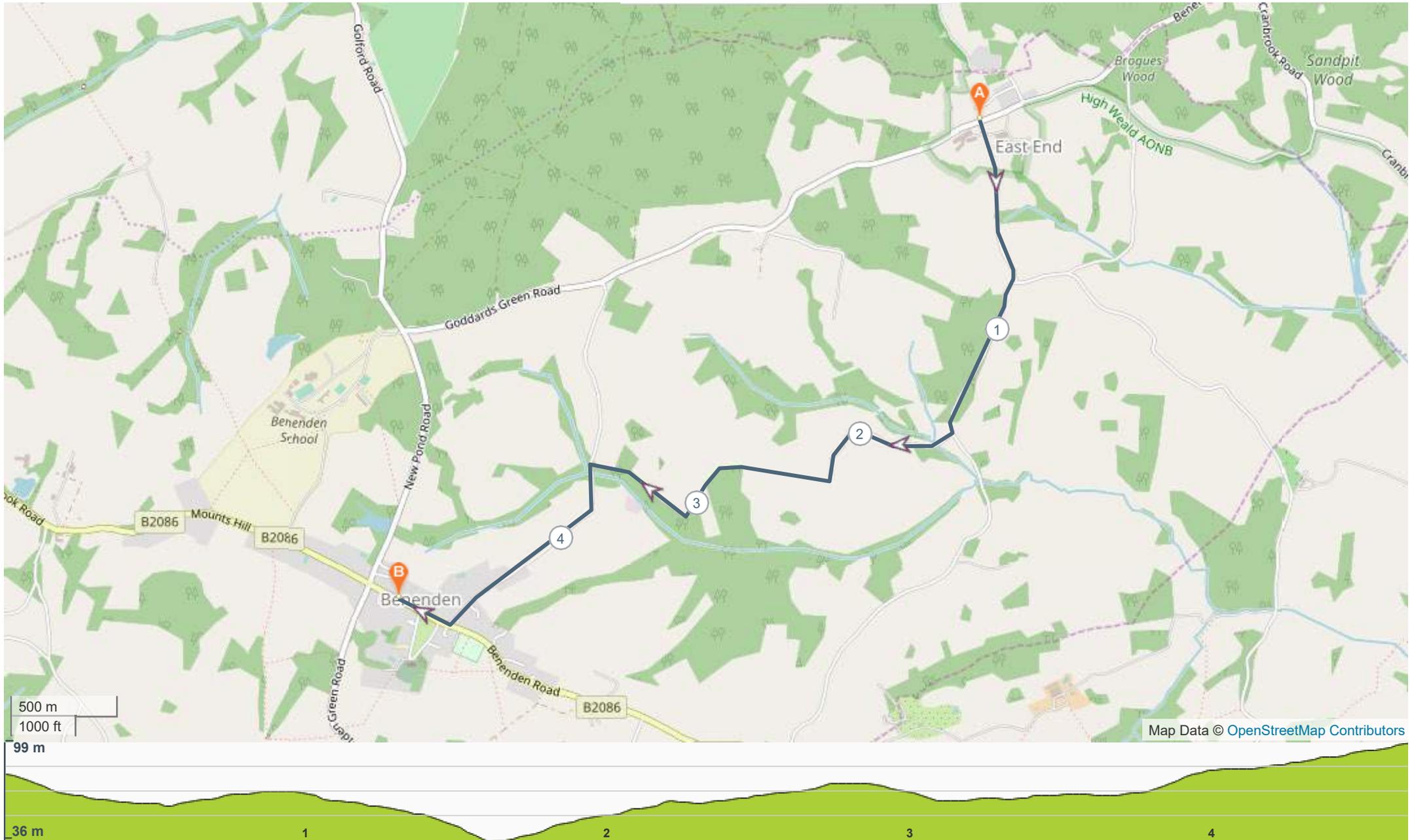
ROUTE INFORMATION

| | |
|---------|---|
| LENGTH | 4.918 km |
| ASCENT | 82 m |
| DESCENT | 65 m |
| HILLS | b 59.3% c 35.2% a 5.6% |
| TERRAIN | Mixed |
| START | LAT: 51.087405, LNG: 0.617123 |



NOTES

Mixed road/bridleway route



ROUTE DIRECTIONS

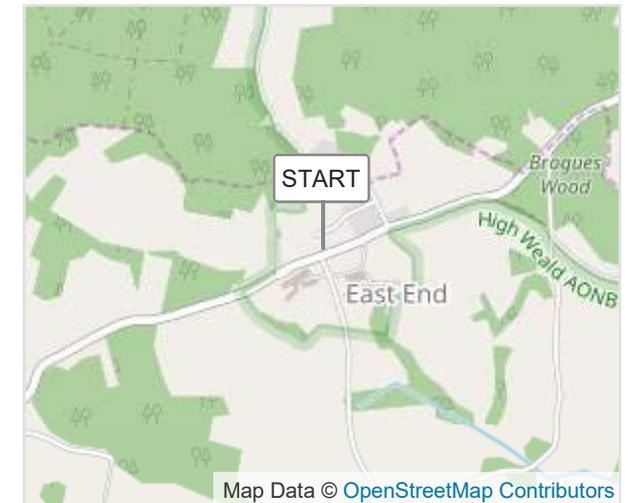
| No | Km | Turn | Directions |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 4.652 | | |

Alternative Routing

ROUTE INFORMATION

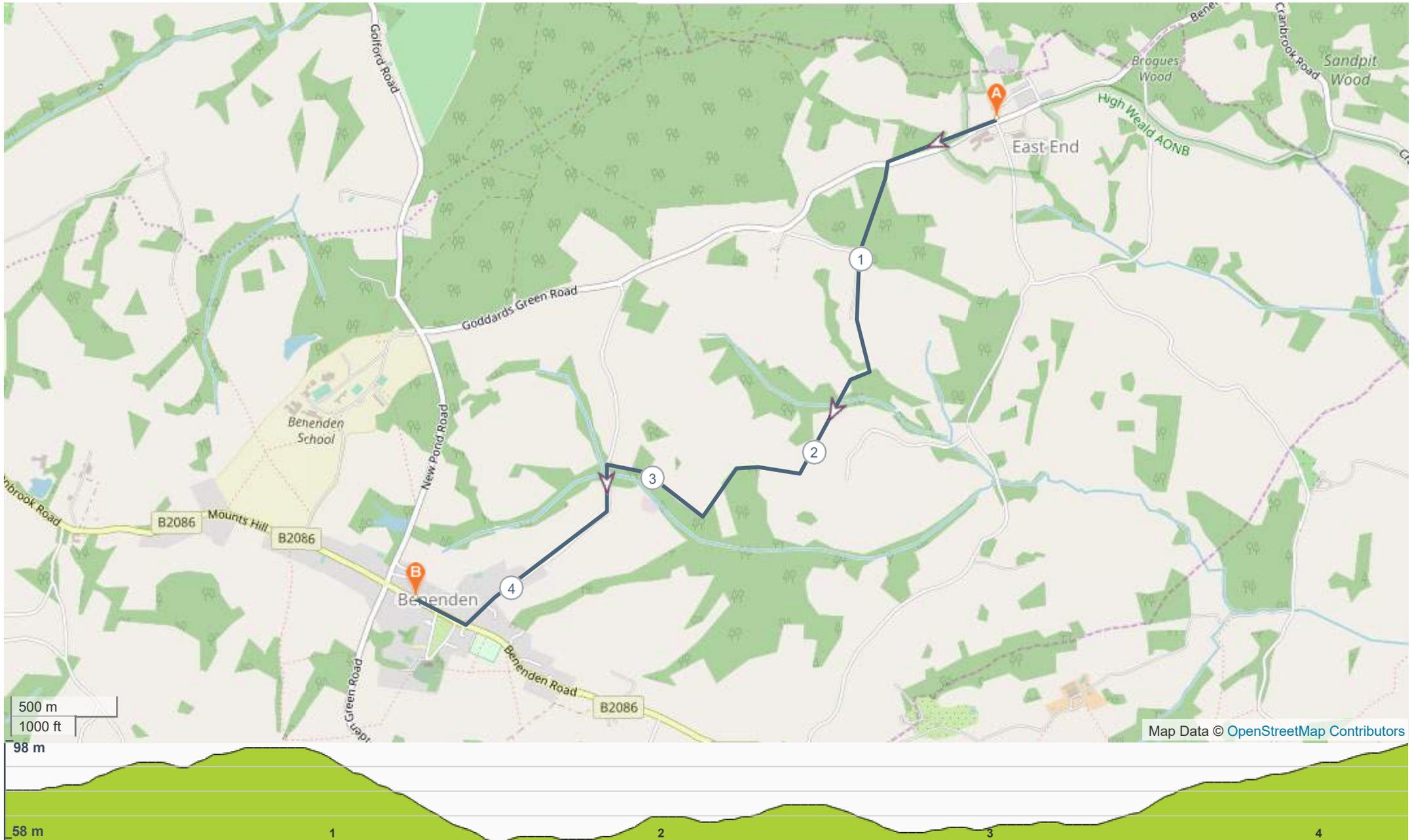


| | |
|---------|--|
| LENGTH | 4.537 km |
| ASCENT | 69 m |
| DESCENT | 52 m |
| HILLS | b 56.0% c 34.0% a 10.0% |
| TERRAIN | Mixed |
| START | LAT: 51.087405, LNG: 0.617123 |



NOTES

optional routing from East End but joining up to complete as before.



| No | Km | Turn | Directions |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 4.270 | | |