

# Village Footpath Audit Report 2024

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## Section 1: Introduction

### 1.1 What is being audited and why?

Missing sections of footpath can create major barriers to travel on foot or by mobility aids such as mobility scooter or wheelchair. This is particularly problematic for villages where some lack of footpaths can also create safety concerns for the local community and make it difficult for residents to access local amenities. To identify and address this issue across the district a programme of audit work is included in the Fenland Cycling, Walking and Mobility Aid Improvement Strategy.

A series of audits are planned to identify missing sections of path or disconnected route links through site visits to each village. Where gaps are present, a visual assessment will be undertaken to determine the impact and potential safety risk of the missing infrastructure. This is based on:

- Assumed demand (how many dwellings are near to the location),
- Expected desire line (is this the most direct route),
- Alternative route options (is there a path on the opposite side of the road that can be accessed easily).

Included in the audit is an assessment of the availability and location of dropped kerbs. This is an important accessibility issue, particularly for mobility scooter or wheelchair users and for those with prams or pushchairs. The audit identifies locations at junctions and crossing points where dropped kerbs are not present or

require improvement, ie too steep, broken or narrow. These locations are mapped in this annual report to be considered for next steps.

### 1.2 Which villages will be audited and when?

To maximise opportunities to help the most people at the earliest opportunity, Fenland’s villages have been prioritised in order of population size. This prioritisation criteria was adopted following feedback received through the ongoing, online surveys undertaken as part of the strategy action plan.

The table on the next page shows Fenland villages based on population size.

Large Village	Medium Sized Village	Small Village
Elm	Coates	Coldham
Wisbech St Mary	Eastrea	Foul Anchor
Gorefield	Friday Bridge	Four Gotes
Leverington	Tydd St Giles	Guyhirn
Doddington	Murrow	Pondersbridge
Manea	Benwick	Rings End
Wimblington	Christchurch	Thorney Toll
Parson Drove	Newton	Turves

Given the number of villages in Fenland it is not possible to audit all of them at the same time. The village audit programme therefore commits to the completion of two village audits per year.

This report details the results of the audits completed during year one (2023/2024). These were conducted in Elm and Wisbech St Mary during March 2024.

### 1.3 What will we do with the audit results?

Where appropriate, missing paths and route links will be worked into scheme proposal packages for feasibility, design and construction works. This will depend on available funding but will provide a starting point for exploring options to get these interventions delivered.

## Section 2: Audit Results

### 2.1 Elm Audit

Elm is a large Fenland village with a population of 4,029 (Source: 2021 census). It is situated on Fenland’s border with Kings Lynn and West Norfolk District and is just

south of Wisbech. It contains one Primary school which serves the village and surrounding area. It also has two pubs and one convenience store. It is served by one bus route (Stagecoach 56). The NCN63 cycling route runs through the village linking to March via designated country lanes to the south and to Wisbech via a controlled crossing across the A47 to the north.

Each road and cul-de-sac within the village, inside the Fenland District Council boundary, was audited for footpath and dropped kerb provision on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024. This day was reasonably dry with no standing water or puddles present. Therefore, issues relating to pooling water on pavements or at dropped kerbs could not be considered as part of the assessment.

Tactile paving was observed in some locations where relatively new housing developments have been created. In the older sections of the village and along some of the main road (B1101) tactile paving is not present.

There are a number of quiet lanes and cul-de-sacs in Elm that have no footpath provision at all. The details of these are listed below:

- Low Road (northern section) – This is a quiet section of Low Road which provides access to multiple domestic properties. It is not a through route for motor vehicles but does link the NCN63 route to Wisbech.
- Halfpenny Lane – This is a single-track lane leading to a number of domestic properties. There is a segregated footpath link which provides access to a small number of bungalows at the beginning of the lane. The properties beyond this link are larger family dwellings in a particularly quiet and rural setting.
- Rose Lane – This is a short road directly off the busy Main Road (B1101) which provides access to a small number of domestic properties. A footpath is provided on one side of the lane to the first few properties. The few properties beyond this do not have any footpath provision. Limited off-road parking in this location means that cars regularly line one side of this narrow access road.
- Begdale Road – The section of road closest to the village has single footpath provision along varying sides of the road. From Elm Self Store onwards there is no footpath provision as this route leads out of the village and into the countryside. As a result, there is no pedestrian provision to access the playing area/sports field.
- Gosmoor Lane – The grass area at the entrance to Gosmoor Lane has linking paths through but not around its perimeter. There is footpath provision on the opposite side of the road only. Further along the lane, beyond the entrance to Oldfield Avenue, there is no footpath provision. This route leads out of the village but also provides access to some farming properties and an employment site (Fenmarc).
- Wales Bank – This is a narrow country lane which provides access to around 15 domestic properties. Beyond these properties the lane leads out of the village into the countryside.

Footpaths are provided on at least one side of each road in the rest of Elm. However, this results in the need to cross the road repeatedly to remain on a footpath, particularly when travelling along Main Road (B1101). Crossing places are provided at regular intervals by way of dropped kerbs with tactile paving and one zebra crossing is present near to the Primary School.

Most of Elm has good dropped kerb provision. A cluster of missing dropped kerbs are noted south of the village centre, around Birch Grove, Roseberry Road and Abington Grove. Missing dropped kerbs are also noted around All Saints Close to the north of the village.

The full results of the audit have been mapped out on figures 1 and 2 on the following pages. This shows sections of missing pavement in **red**. Locations where dropped kerb provision is required are shown as **blue** markers.

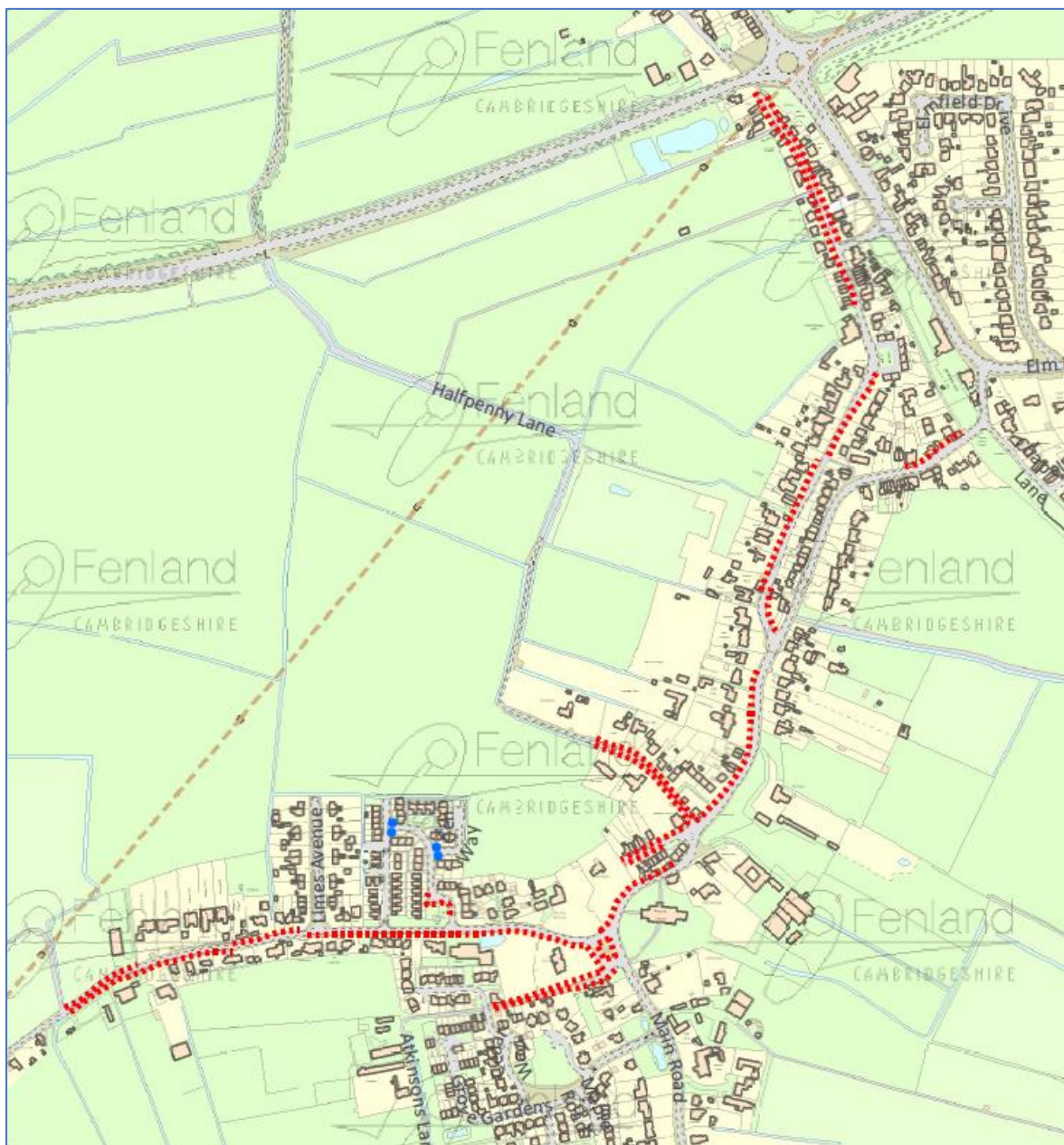


Figure 1: Elm Village (North)

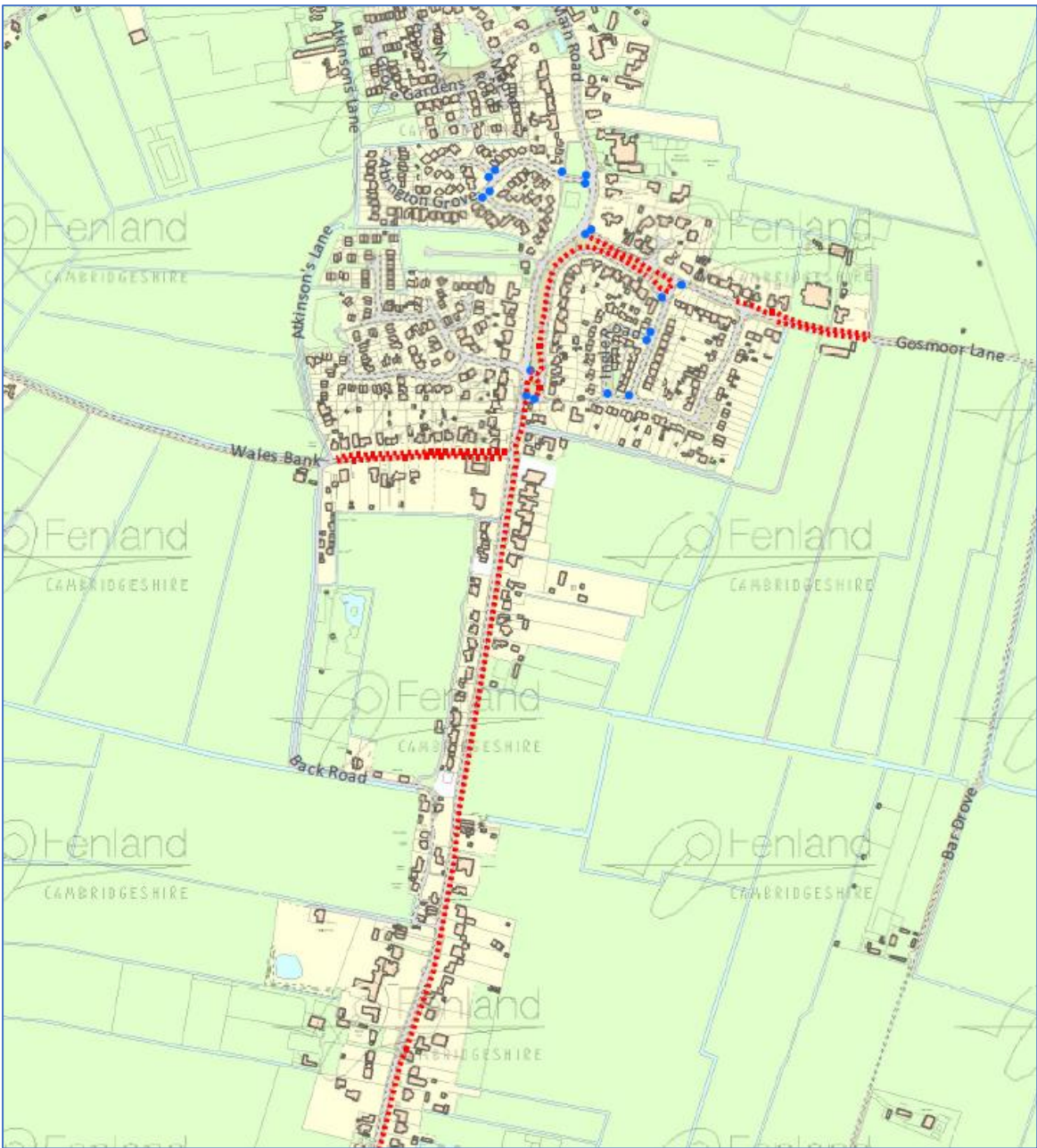


Figure 2: Elm Village (South)

## 2.2 Wisbech St Mary Audit

Wisbech St Mary is a large Fenland village with a population of 3,939 (Source: 2021 Census). It is situated to the west of Wisbech. The village contains one Primary School which serves the village and surrounding area. It also has two public houses, a sports and community centre, a petrol station and convenience store. It is service by one bus service (Stagecoach 46).

Each road and cul-de-sac within the village was audited for footpath and dropped kerb provision on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024. This day was reasonably dry with no standing

water or puddles present. Therefore, issues relating to pooling water on pavements or at dropped kerbs could not be considered as part of the assessment.

A few sections of tactile paving were observed in locations where new housing developments are being created. Throughout most of the village and along the main road (High Road) tactile paving is not present.

Most of Wisbech St Mary has footpath provision along at least one side of the road. However, as with other Fenland villages, this results in the need to cross the road repeatedly to remain on these paths. Dropped kerb provision throughout the village is good, providing suitable access points to cross the road and access existing paths. Only three locations were identified where dropped kerb provision is missing, these are:

- High Road/Rummers Lane junction – to connect to Sand Bank foot path opposite.
- Church Road, opposite the parish church.
- St Marys Close, on the corner of number 21.

A few locations within Wisbech St Mary have no footpath provision on either side of the road. Some of these are on the routes leading out of the village where there are limited/no access requirements for local residents. Locations where paths are missing despite potential access requirements are listed below:

- Sandbank – This is a main route leading out of Wisbech St Mary to the north-west. There is footpath provision on one side of the road to the boundary of the village. Beyond this point there are no footpaths. As a result, residents of the caravan park have to walk in the road to access the village.
- The Jetty – This is a short section of road linking High Road with Church Road, providing access to a small number of residences.
- Station Road – This road leads directly off High Road to the western edge of the village. The junction includes a sharp bend around a small green space with no footpath provision on either side of the road. Residents wishing to access the western end of High Road are forced to walk in the road or on the narrow grass verge.

The full results of the audit have been mapped out on the two images overleaf. This shows sections of missing pavement in **red**. Locations where dropped kerb provision is required are shown as **blue** markers.



Figure 3: Wisbech St Mary (West)



Figure 4: Wisbech St Mary (East)



## Section 3 - Recommendations And Next Steps

Based on the audit results and initial assessment of missing footpaths and dropped kerbs the following recommendations should be considered:

- To create a consistent opportunity to support active travel for those with visual impairments it is recommended that tactile paving is included at all main junctions and crossing points.
- Funding should be explored to introduce dropped kerbs at the locations identified in this report. Opportunities for this could include S106 Developer Funding or use of Local Highway Improvement Funds allocated to Town and Parish Councils.
- Locations where footpaths are missing, or only present on one side of the road should be discussed with relevant Parish Council Members to determine the impact of this on local residents. This feedback will inform how interventions should be prioritised, enabling funding opportunities to be explored.
- The audit results set out in this report should be shared directly with relevant colleagues at CCC and CPCA and wider stakeholders to raise awareness of the issues identified through this study.

This report will be published online as part of the Fenland Cycling, Walking and Mobility Aid Improvement Strategy Annual Report.