

## Notes on route from Bedford Priory Park to Sandy

The path is mainly asphalt; compacted gravel or earth is used for some stretches. It is generally well maintained. Trees and hedges provide cover from the elements along much of the way. The path is straight in some areas (ex railway) but very contorted in others. So it is 7.5 miles on the map, but is probably slightly longer. Except for a short section through Blunham and parts of the route in Sandy it is all off-road. On the road sections pedestrians use the normal footpath and cyclists use cycle lanes or quiet streets. Only two road crossings are involved, neither busy. (A busy road has to be crossed for the short route – see below)

Signage is good throughout – National Cycle Route 51. East of Blunham, NCR 51 is joined by NCR 12 - signs show either or both. Slightly confusing but just follow 'Sandy'. When near Sandy follow 'Town Centre'. The path twists and turns among the houses but all turns are signed. There is one hidden sign at the end of Waverley Ave. Here turn right and then almost immediately left at the pedestrian crossing on to a dual use walk / cycle path. Then keep following Town Centre and you come to the Market Square.

A short route is possible and pleasant. Turn right off route 51 at Willington or Danes Camp. Walk through Willington village – using Ball Lane (signed 'Dovecot') or Station Road to the A603 Bedford Road. Ball lane is a National Trust site with a Tudor barn and dovecot (a substantial building) and 'possibly the finest Perpendicular church in Bedfordshire'. Station Road has a pub. On the A603 there is a general shop and bus stops. The main bus service is the half hourly Bedford – Sandy. So you can either return to Bedford, or go on to Sandy. The road is busy and if you need the Bedford bus stop or the shop, you should walk to the crossing. Even if you plan to walk the full route, a quick diversion around Willington village is worthwhile. And if you are cycling you can use the village roads to by-pass a no-cycling stretch of the NCR (!)

There are several places for refreshments:

Willington, approx. 2 miles from start – Danes Camp is on the main path is next to the river; it is a pleasant if rather busy café and has facilities including a small cycle shop.

Willington – pub. Also village shop on short route.

Blunham – approx. 4.5 miles from the start. The village centre is a short walk from the main path. You will know Blunham because after a few miles of countryside you find yourself in a quiet village street. Look out for the old station, complete with red phone box on your right. Then you turn right at a t-junction, walk along a road, and cross it to re-join the path. Just after the road, and before crossing a river, turn left off the main path and follow a footpath up to the village centre – look for the church tower. There you will find a pub and a village shop.

Sandy – Follow 'Town Centre' signs to the Market Square. Here you will find a supermarket, restaurant, café, pub, various shops and the bus stops. There are more

cafes, pubs, and restaurants in the High Street to the left. This is also the route to the station. There are public toilets in the main car park; to get there turn left off the Market Square into the High Street and then left per signs.