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# New Year 2026 SIGNPOSTS

News and views from Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group  
Issue 19

## MPS UNITED FOR GREENWAY



On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, the petition in support of the Haddenham-Thame Greenway with over 3,600 signatures was officially presented to 10 Downing Street by local MPs, Freddie van Mierlo and Greg Smith, alongside campaign representatives.

The occasion provided great publicity, but realistically, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire councils will be responsible for progressing this project, rather than central government. And there is good news on this front too, as the councils aim to hold a public consultation on the most promising route(s) in the

second half of this year. This ties in with the goal in Oxfordshire's Strategic Plan to submit a planning application in 2027.

By March 2026, our local Bucks *councillors*, Maru Mormina and Greg Smith (sic), expect "to see a ... clear roadmap leading to the public consultation". We shall be following progress avidly.

Meanwhile, our local MPs standing side by side keeps the campaign where it needs to be, about satisfying massive local demand. If you support this show of unity, you might "like" 👍 these posts: [Greg Smith MP](#) and [Freddie van Mierlo MP](#).

**Alan Thawley**, chair

Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group

*HaddSWAC is very grateful for financial support from Haddenham Village Fête (13<sup>th</sup> June 2026), and past support from The Haddenham Beer Festivals Trust and Thame Cycles.*

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## RESPONSE TO AIRFIELD APPLICATION: ACTIVE TRAVEL ENGLAND



Image: following Aspen Park, LIH "Phase 2" – photo: Google Maps  
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Anybody checking the planning application for up to 700 houses on the airfield site will probably have noticed the substantial comment from [Active Travel England \(ATE\) on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2025](#).

What they say is pretty tough and they declare themselves unable to support the proposal without further assessment, evidence and dialogue.

ATE is an executive agency of the Department of Transport, formed in 2022 to promote walking and cycling by the general public. This includes monitoring the provision of walking and cycling facilities by housing developers, and they have a statutory duty to comment on large projects. The agency is led by the Olympic medallist Chris Boardman, known in cycling circles as "the Professor".

In ATE's view, the developers of the airfield site need to do a great deal more work on the travel plan, giving the same detailed assessment of expected daily walking and cycling movements that they give to motor traffic. These are needed to reveal anomalies, like unnecessarily long walks to station or village centre, and to provide evidence of the need for



They lament the isolation resulting from the piecemeal development of estates and urge provision of links for walkers and cyclists to encourage social connection between neighbours ...

peripheral off-site works and who should pay for them.

Interestingly, they regard the maximum one-way walkable distance of 2 kilometres (25 minutes), traditionally accepted by planners, as much too long for modern times.

They lament the isolation resulting from the piecemeal development of estates and urge provision of links for walkers and cyclists to encourage social connection between neighbours. And cycling uptake must be encouraged by the provision of front-of-property cycle storage rather than back garden sheds. These measures, they say, should be included in initial design and enforceable, rather than vague intentions that are later forgotten.

ATE approves the developer's offer to support various off-site improvements, including the raised table junctions and continuous footways across the side roads joining Thame Road, as recommended by [Streetscape](#), and the double roundabout improvement, and even the Greenway to Thame, but note that there are no specific proposals for contribution.

There is much more, and the ATE comment is highly professional though not exactly layman's reading (ever heard of isochrones?). And they politely censure the developers' travel plan for not being up-to-date with the latest analytical methods. But ATE is a young outfit and it remains to be seen how much weight they will carry, among all the other comments.

On the positive side, [on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026, Bucks Highways](#) picked up on several of ATE's suggestions.

AG



## TALKING TO ...

## FREDDIE VAN MIERLO, THAME'S MP



“

... following the fact-finding bike ride he organised between Thame and Haddenham on December 5<sup>th</sup> ... with buses overtaking and frustrated motorists waiting to get past ...

We caught up with Freddie following the fact-finding bike ride he organised between Thame and Haddenham on December 5<sup>th</sup>.

His experience on the fast, dangerous roads that many of his constituents are currently forced to cycle on was “quite scary”, with buses overtaking and frustrated motorists waiting to get past. All of which reinforced the need for “a safe, off-road, segregated greenway for cyclists, pedestrians and others”.

Expressing his satisfaction that concrete progress now appears to be being made after so long, he said the inclusion of the greenway in Oxfordshire’s latest strategic plan is “a huge political signal to say that this is a top priority for Oxfordshire”, adding that he knows it is also a priority for Buckinghamshire. He promised to continue holding both councils to account to ensure that steady progress continues to be made.

In terms of funding, he stressed that there is already enough money earmarked “to get us to a route that is viable and that is supported by the community and is ready to go in terms of planning applications, if they’re required, or getting spades in the ground”. Construction will require significant further funding, beyond what can be obtained from developers, but he is confident that money will be found if tangible progress is made “because of the level of community support”.

We are extremely grateful to Freddie for his consistent and vocal support for the project since being elected – he organised the 10 Downing Street presentation of our petition – and appreciate his pragmatic cross-party approach.

AT





## HADDENHAM'S POSSIBLE FUTURES



*The areas coloured salmon are currently subject to, or expected in the short term to be affected by planning applications<sup>1</sup>*

What sort of Haddenham will our grandchildren be able to enjoy? Probably not a village of 7,000 people as we are now (after recent expansion). Perhaps, with infilling and a bulge here and there, a Thame-sized “village” of 14,000. Or possibly, with major expansion across the railway line to the west or towards Dinton to the east, some 25,000, like Rickmansworth. Or, with growth in both directions, up to 40,000, a town like Bicester, strategically sited in the famous Oxford-Cambridge corridor.

The Parish Council, with the help of consultants, has been studying the implications of these various “scenarios”, especially with regard to the needed infrastructure: schools, medical facilities, playing fields, community hubs, commercial centres, green spaces, perhaps even a solar farm. They have invited comment from current residents, with some success, but many will have found the propositions bewildering or requiring more study time than they can commit.

The way Haddenham grows at present is not good for the provision of infrastructure. Land is developed



The way Haddenham grows at present is not good for the provision of infrastructure. Land is developed field by field by different developers who each separately negotiate their contribution to infrastructure ...

field by field by different developers who each separately negotiate their contribution to infrastructure within the narrow confines of national legislation. The result tends to be plenty of playgrounds but not enough school places or sewage capacity. With scenario planning, our parish council aims to develop a clear professional view as to what the village would need in the way of infrastructure and common services under each growth hypothesis. In this way it expects greatly to strengthen its position in dialogue with our county council in the face of major new development proposals.

SIGNPOSTS takes no position on the future scale of Haddenham. But we will continue to urge whatever it takes to make a *social* village, where people meet casually face-to-face in safe and agreeable surroundings. We will promote cycle and walking paths, as far as possible separated from motor traffic. We like alleys and cut-throughs, especially between estates, to prevent isolation and encourage social mixing. We urge restrained traffic speeds, especially by means of road layout and street widths. And we encourage any measure that reduces the need for cars, such as frequent bus services, nearby shops and car-sharing schemes.

Our wishes for Haddenham. And for our grandchildren.

AG

<sup>1</sup> Image from the “Future Haddenham” presentation, prepared for Haddenham Parish Council by [ONH](#), a planning consultancy. The full presentation has been the basis of a consultation – now closed – of residents, local employers and infrastructure providers. For full details see: [https://www.haddenham-bucks-pc.gov.uk/Future\\_Haddenham\\_50019.aspx](https://www.haddenham-bucks-pc.gov.uk/Future_Haddenham_50019.aspx).





## “TAXI!” ... OR HOW TO HAIL A MINIBUS



**D**emand-Responsive Transport (DRT) is on the up in the UK. In Hertfordshire, East and West Sussex, Lincolnshire, Cheshire, Kent, Liverpool, Watford, Norfolk, Reading ... schemes improve access to transport in rural areas, reduce social isolation, are cheaper than empty buses on fixed routes, offer an easier service for the older and disabled and are generally far more flexible.

So how does it work? Usually, a scheme involves minibuses. They operate within a defined area, running during a pre-set window (say, 7am to 10pm) on routes, based on *actual* demand. Passengers book ahead via apps, a website – or the phone. Then with a bit of dynamic routing technology a minibus should arrive close to where you want to leave from and within a time-window of your choice.

In Bucks there are two schemes currently in operation. Around High Wycombe “Pick Me Up” was launched in 2022. It uses six vehicles. It’s in a higher density area of 5,978 people per square mile and has proved popular enough that the service has been extended into a fourth year. Bucks Council tell us that 400 unique users are making 1,400 trips every week. In Aylesbury there’s another DRT scheme (“Village

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Passengers book ahead via apps, a website – or the phone. Then ... a minibus should arrive close to where you want to leave from and within a time-window of your choice.

Connect”) launched August 2024. It’s early days for that scheme. Typically for DRT schemes it’ll take a while for support to build. But it’s happening.

DRT schemes are supported by pilot funding for a two- or three-year trial period. In the case of Bucks these two schemes were funded by the Department for Transport via the Rural Mobility Fund with the idea that once established and proved viable the Council would take over.

Will Haddenham ever be able to benefit? In fact, High Wycombe’s Pick-Me-Up is the only scheme for which we have population-density figures. Maybe an upside of the extended building plans for the village is that we reach the density of population to make a DRT scheme feasible.

Co-operating with Thame could be a clincher or is that beyond the wit of bureaucracy?

Fame awaits any council, body or individual who designs such a scheme.

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## KEEPING THE DOCTOR AWAY: BY WALKING



the latest research suggests, simply, if you walk more – by however much – you stand to benefit!

How about an update on how *walking* could keep the doctor away?

Firstly, the benefits of walking remain unquestioned. Very recently, the National Health and Medical Research Council declared that regular walking “is associated with clinically meaningful improvements in health outcomes”.

The suggested benefits are wide-ranging, with headlines such as “lowering the risk of dementia by 50 per cent”. Beyond reduction in disease, walking promises to improve mental clarity and the creative flow of ideas, which could be useful for this writer.

How much walking? Well, the latest research suggests, simply, if you walk more – by however much – you stand to benefit! A much-cited target of 60-year’s vintage was ten thousand steps daily, but it seems this rested in part on the Japanese character for that number resembling a man walking (万). Hardly an evidence-based target.

Now health authorities are emphasising achievable targets, set according to individual circumstances. After all, healthy teenagers can easily achieve 16,000

steps a day, I’m told. On the other hand, for those aged sixty-plus, most health benefits seem to be gained by increasing daily steps up to around seven thousand (roughly three miles).

Based on this research, one private-health and life insurance company is betting that reduced pay outs to policyholders will justify the company giving discounts on Apple watches if their members achieve weekly “steps” targets.

So, we’re convinced. What comes next is to build more walking into our routines. For example, we might switch sources for a select few of our grocery staples, from the supermarket delivery to personal shopping at Blooming Fruity (other shops available).

Finally, to top up our daily walking there are some beautiful local walking routes. If you like company, free 60-90 minute outings are organised by [Simply Walk](#), setting out at 10:30am each third Wednesday from Bradmoor Farm (Dinton and Stone, in other weeks). Another free, more energetic option is [Chiltern Hill Walks](#) with Alan Cooper. Alternatively, you could join The Ramblers ([Oxfordshire](#) or [Bucks, West Middlesex and Milton Keynes area](#) or [Chilterns Weekend Walkers](#) or [Chiltern Young Walkers](#)) for £37 per year; or if you are retired or semi-retired, you could join [Haddenham u3a](#) for £16 per year. Ramblers and u3a offer a range of regular guided walks (from strolls, for example [here](#) and [here](#), to multi-day marathons).

The u3a offers [walking cricket](#) and Haddenham Youth Football Club offers [walking football for over 50s](#).

You might even enjoy getting fit!

DS



## HADDENHAM'S HIDDEN GEMS: FAVOURITE TREES



*Skittles Green*

In the early 1960s Alice Carleton celebrated her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday by planting an American Black Walnut tree (*Juglans nigra* L.) as a focus for Skittles Green, just outside her front door.

Alice was no ordinary woman. Working at the Radcliffe Infirmary Oxford, she helped make dermatology a recognised practice, from 1917 onwards. It may be that her choice of tree in the early 1960s was influenced by that background. The tree species in question is distinguished as a source of Juglone, that – although a skin irritant – has been suggested as a treatment for various dermatological conditions, from athletes' foot to itchy scalp (don't try this at home). And one of Alice's key academic papers, on the treatment of syphilis, corresponds with another suggested use of the tree!

Since then, Skittles Green – probably established in medieval times – has become identified by the tree



The tree, now maintained by the Parish Council, is likely to mature in the 2060s. How will Skittles Green develop around it?

with the scattered light through its distinct pinnate leaves.

The tree, now maintained by the Parish Council, is likely to mature in the 2060s. How will Skittles Green develop around it? The 1841 Census recorded 15 premises here housing 72 villagers, including five "paupers". In the early 1900s coal was stored here for charitable distribution to Haddenham's poor over winter months.

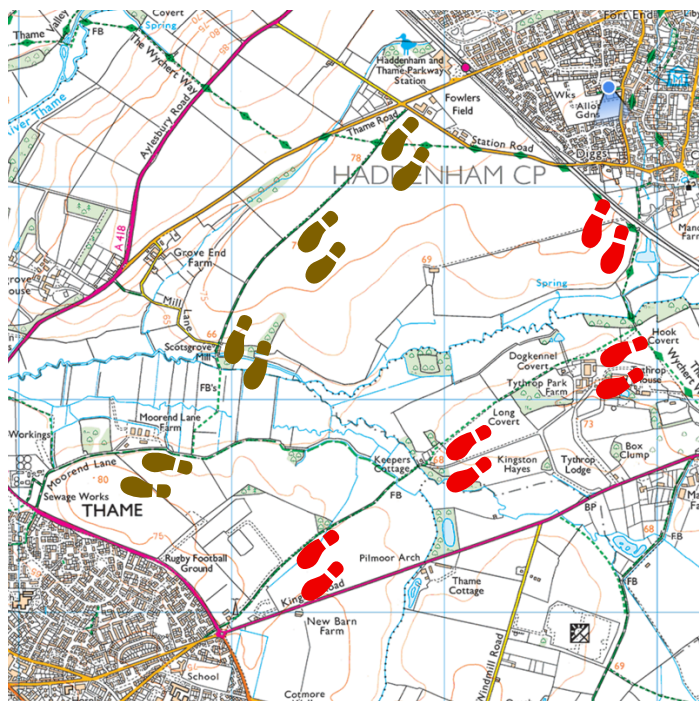
The coal is now gone, and Skittles Green has a fraction of the population living in substantial homes. The tree, in its prime, now defines the area and is no doubt honoured and loved as much as it ever was. Tucked away in the narrow twists of Gibson Lane it is beyond doubt one of Haddenham's hidden gems.

DS

<sup>2</sup> Image ©Oswald Bertram on [Geograph](#) (the original photo has been cropped) licensed for reuse under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)



## KEEP WALKING: HADDENHAM TO THAME



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In 1066 we know that William the Conqueror made his way past Thame and Haddenham on the “fyrd way” (the army road) – now better known as the A418. This would have involved his troops in quite a bit of splashing around at the bottom of Scotsgrove Hill. Well, it was November. The boundary here between Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire had been determined more than half a century before – seemingly dictated by the watery topography. And you’ll still need a good pair of boots in winter if walking to Thame from Haddenham, while avoiding the monstrous A418.

There are two routes:

1. [Brown footsteps] Get to the signposted bridleway “Miller’s Way”, off Station Road near the X-roads with Thame Road and Baghill Lane. Keep going straight to Scotsgrove Mill. Here the bridleway becomes a footpath. This leads you over Scotsgrove Brook and its tributaries. It’s all pretty wet here at certain times of the year. Keep straight-ish until you reach a T-junction with a stony track. Turn right and eventually reach Moorend Lane then pass the sewage works and, with caution, cross over the Thame by-pass down Cromwell Avenue. Pass Roundhead Drive (here there

On Facebook, we’ve noticed new walkers asking, how can we walk from Haddenham to Thame? One Facebook answer: walk along the main roads joining the two. We strongly recommend not. The guide below refers to a walk from the SIGNPOSTS’ archive. For more detail and a map – combining option 2 below, with option 1 for the return trip – see [here](#)!

Follow the [Countryside Code](#)! THIS WALK IS NOT SUITABLE FOR WHEELCHAIRS, PRAMS OR BUGGIES. Cycling is not permitted on footpaths.

are several roads reminding us that Thame was very much on the 17th-century front line between Royalist Oxford and Parliamentary London). Very soon take a blue sign pointing left, saying “Town Centre 8 mins”. Unfortunately, this sign is on the other side of a post from the direction you are approaching! Be alert. Follow other blue signs to Town Centre.

2. [Red footsteps] The other route from Haddenham starts at St Mary’s and takes you down Flint Street (west of the church). At the end of that street bear left along footpath between wychert walls. This soon takes you under the railway (can be muddy!). Keeping the large pond (“Ponny”) on your left, go on until you reach a bridge over Scotsgrove Brook. Once crossed turn right. With Tythrop House on your far left, keep going to Keeper’s Cottage, join bridleway and eventually with allotments on your left and the Rugby Football Ground on your right, you emerge very near the roundabout where Kingsey Road meets the Thame by-pass. Go over the by-pass and you are on Kingsey Road which becomes East Street (past the Community Hospital) and ends up at the excellent Cross Keys Pub, at the south end of Upper High Street.

Either way you can get a bus back to Haddenham OR complete the circuit on foot by going on 1 or 2 (whichever one you haven’t been on so far). About 6 miles in total.

Of course, we look forward to reporting on a third option, the Haddenham-Thame greenway!

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## LET'S NOT PARK THE PARKING PROBLEM



Sheerstock, Haddenham

There's no question Haddenham has a parking problem (see past issues of SIGNPOSTS, for example [here](#)).

We're not alone. The whole country does.

The Local Government Association commissioned a paper in 2020 called "[Decarbonising Transport – Climate Smart Parking Policies](#)". It predicted that car numbers, if left unchecked, would increase by 40-50% over the next three decades.

Equally alarming facts are listed in other research, which probably applies particularly in our prosperous neck of the woods. Do we know, for example, that the average car is parked immobile for [96% of its life](#)? That Car Clubs can lead to [a single club-car replacing 27 privately owned ones](#)?

We need to face facts that a lump of metal can't be the villain; it's parking the bl\*\*\*y thing that causes the problems! Consider our life-style choices; practically every adult living in Haddenham seems to expect to own a car. And new flats and residences for single occupancy are on the up.

Parking affects us all. Even non-drivers. Developers are required to include parking within plots. That pushes up house prices: a three-bedroom house has

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... the average car is parked immobile for 96% of its life. Car Clubs can lead to a single club-car replacing 27 privately owned ones.

... Owning a car, even a modest one, costs at least £3,500 annually.

to have space for two cars. Non-driving house-owners pay like everyone else. How about car-free developments where you agree not to own a car? (Fancy a free e-bike with every non-car house, which should be cheaper anyway?)

Owning a car, even a modest one, [costs at least £3,500 annually](#). [Haddenham's Zimbl](#) is free to book and costs a *max* of £8 per hour ...! Yes, yes, public transport *must* always be improving. And Demand-Responsive Transport presents an interesting addition into the travel mix (see [page 5](#)). How about some individual input too? Neighbourhood WhatsApp groups with rotas(?) might offer non-driving residents lifts, maybe. Why, some already do... our very own [Fish Scheme](#) is a case in point.

What if – added to such ideas – there were inducements NOT to buy an expensive albatross? Subsidised public travel for non-car households perhaps? Higher Council Tax for households with two or three cars, or a reduction for car-free dwellings?

And then there's always street-parking charges, but of course poor old Haddenham would then become even more (sub)urbanised...

Maybe the smart money (ours!) is on a decrease in private car-ownership. After all, the sheer nuisance of parking can be quite a drag on the buzz of car ownership, though it takes a bold driver to say so ...

Wanna give non-parking a go?

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### CONDITION OF ROADS

With trepidation we venture once more into the vexed subject of potholes. This winter, the Government withheld £125m of highways funding until all local highways authorities in England had published “transparency reports” (see Bucks Council self-report [here](#) and OCC [here](#)) on their processes and funding of highway maintenance.

Following these reports, the Government rated local highway authorities red, amber or green. Our local councils have both been rated amber (see why [here](#): Bucks was let down by condition of roads, and OCC let down by condition of roads and the lower extent it follows best practice). The top ten per cent of authorities were awarded green.

Remember to report issues you find with roads and footways via [FixMyStreet](#).

### PAVEMENT PARKING

Following [national news](#) that enforcement powers are to be created and devolved to county councils to stop “unnecessary obstruction of the pavement”, we in Haddenham keenly await announcement of the Bucks Council strategy. Watch this space!

We note that [Bucks has separately promised](#) more effective control of all parking from June 2026, when enforcement will be taken over by a contractor.

### FAKE E-BIKES

Further to [SIGNPOSTS’ article](#) on fake e-bikes, please let the police know of any such bikes – given away by the rider not pedalling while traveling over 15.5mph – you spot in Haddenham (Crimestoppers 0800 555 111).

We do not believe this is a problem in our village and want to keep it this way, considering the potential danger on shared-use paths or pavements.

As Laura Laker of the podcast [Streets Ahead](#), says: the e-bike industry is well-regulated and safe, but this problem threatens the reputation of safe e-bikes and with it the growth in e-mobility and all the health, decongestion, carbon-cutting benefits it could reap.

### GLOW RIDE IN THAME

On 20<sup>th</sup> March there will be a “Glow Ride for the Greenway” in Thame.

This is planned as a continuation of the broader glow ride initiative. Last October thousands of people took part in glow rides across the UK as part of Cycling UK’s “My ride. Our right” campaign.

People of all ages and abilities cycled through unlit parks and off-road paths which we often have to use to get home from work, the shops and school – leading many women to stop cycling when it gets dark. It highlighted the need for cycle routes – not shared with motor traffic on fast, busy roads – that feel safe for women to use in the evenings.

The Thame ride seeks to influence the design and implementation of the Haddenham-Thame Greenway. For further information including possible transport to Thame, contact [HaddSWAC@gmail.com](mailto:HaddSWAC@gmail.com).

### BUCKS COUNCIL CYCLING TARGET

SIGNPOSTS highlighted the [growth trend in cycling](#) in Bucks. So how was this reflected in the council’s latest targets to improve active travel in the county? The council has adopted exactly the same targets as were easily beaten last year.

### MURDERS IN HADDENHAM

Are you a *Midsomer Murders* fan? Take a walk round The Green at Haddenham. Twelve episodes have featured three locations to date: the Church and duckpond; a former butcher’s shop on the corner of Gibson Lane; and a private garage which served as a florist’s, on the east side of the Green. Details of the episodes concerned appear in [A Midsomer Day Out](#) recently updated by Tony Long.

### OPENING TIMES?

[The Crown](#) public house in Cuddington (a registered “[asset of community value](#)”) closed on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026, when its tenant manager moved on after less than two years. Meanwhile, the Haddenham team wanting to reopen the [Rose and Thistle](#) as a community-owned hostelry met their initial funding target, with a hundred donors, so that they can run an [effective campaign](#) leading to reopening.