

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Public Rights of Way Committee

Date of Meeting: 24th September 2012
Report of: Greenspaces Manager
Subject/Title: Highways Act 1980 Section 119:
Application for the Diversion of Public Footpath No.19 (part),
Parish of Bunbury

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The report outlines the investigation to divert part of Public Footpath No.19 (part) in the Parish of Bunbury. This includes a discussion of consultations carried out in respect of the proposal and the legal tests to be considered for a diversion order to be made. The proposal has been put forward by the Public Rights of Way Unit as an application has been made by the landowner concerned. The report makes a recommendation based on that information, for quasi-judicial decision by Members as to whether or not an Order should be made to divert the section of footpath concerned.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 An Order be made under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980, as amended by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to divert part of Public Footpath No.19 Bunbury by creating a new section of public footpath and extinguishing the current path as illustrated on Plan No. HA/073 on the grounds that it is expedient in the interests of the owner of the land crossed by the path.
- 2.2 Public Notice of the making of the Order be given and in the event of there being no objections within the period specified, the Order be confirmed in the exercise of the powers conferred on the Council by the said Acts.
- 2.3 In the event of objections to the Order being received, Cheshire East Borough Council be responsible for the conduct of any hearing or public inquiry.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 In accordance with Section 119(1) of the Highways Act 1980 it is within the Council's discretion to make the Order if it appears to the Council to be expedient to do so in the interests of the public or of the owner, lessee or occupier of the land crossed by the path. It is considered that the proposed diversion is in the interests of the landowner for the reasons set out in paragraph 10.4 & 10.5 below.

3.2 Where objections to the making of an Order are made and not withdrawn, the Order will fall to be confirmed by the Secretary of State. In considering whether to confirm an Order the Secretary will, in addition to the matters discussed at paragraph 3.1 above, have regard to:

- Whether the path is substantially less convenient to the public as a consequence of the diversion.

And whether it is expedient to confirm the Order considering:

- The effect that the diversion would have on the enjoyment of the path or way as a whole.
- The effect that the coming into operation of the Order would have as respects other land served by the existing public right of way.
- The effect that any new public right of way created by the Order would have as respects the land over which the rights are so created and any land held with it.

3.3 Where there are no outstanding objections, it is for the Council to determine whether to confirm the Order in accordance with the matters referred to in paragraph 3.2 above.

3.4 The proposed route will not be 'substantially less convenient' than the existing route and diverting the footpath will offer improved privacy and security to the applicants' property whilst resolving an outstanding obstruction issue. It is considered that the proposed route will be a satisfactory alternative to the current one and that the legal tests for the making and confirming of a diversion order are satisfied.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 Bunbury

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 Councillor Michael Jones

6.0 Policy Implications

6.1 Not applicable

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Not applicable

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 Once an Order is made it may be the subject of objections. If objections are not withdrawn, this removes the power of the local highway authority to confirm the order itself, and may lead to a hearing/inquiry. It follows that the Committee decision may be confirmed or not confirmed. This process may involve additional legal support and resources

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 Not applicable

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 An application has been received from Mr & Mrs Stubbs of Greenacres, Wyche Lane, Bunbury, CW6 9PS requesting that the Council make an Order under section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 to divert part of Public Footpath no. 19 in the Parish of Bunbury.
- 10.2 Public Footpath No. 19, Bunbury commences at its junction with Wyche Lane at O.S. grid reference SJ 7588 6141 and runs in a generally southerly direction through the grounds of 'Greenacres' and then across pasture land to its junction with Public Footpath No. 17 Bunbury. From there, it continues across pasture land in a south, south westerly direction to terminate at the parish boundary where it meets Public Footpath No. 36 Spurstow at O.S. grid reference SJ 5673 5720. The section of path to be diverted is shown by a solid black line on Plan No. HA/073. The proposed diversion is illustrated on the same plan with a black dashed line between points D-C.
- 10.3 The land over which the current path and the proposed diversion run belongs to Mr & Mrs Stubbs. Under section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 the Council may accede to an applicant's request, if it considers it expedient in the interests of the landowner to make an order to divert the footpath.
- 10.4 The section of Public Footpath No. 19, Bunbury to be diverted runs through the property of the applicants giving rise to concerns relating to privacy and security. Furthermore, current path alignment through the property is obstructed by a building. Diverting the footpath out of the property would offer improved privacy and security whilst resolving the alignment issue.
- 10.5 The proposed new route (D-C on Plan No. HA/073) would follow a current permissive path that runs between 'Greenacres' and 'Lynton'. Starting at point D along Wyche Road to the east of 'Greenacres', the new route would follow a generally south, south westerly direction along a path enclosed by the hedged boundaries of 'Greenacres' and neighbouring property, 'Lynton'. Once past the grounds of 'Lynton', the path would pass through a kissing gate to continue in the same direction between the hedged boundary of 'Greenacres' and a fenced field boundary. It would terminate immediately before a second kissing gate at point C.

The new route would have a width of 1.7 metres and would be enclosed.

Of benefit to the public, the new route would be more enjoyable for users by reducing the need to pass through a private garden and more convenient since it would not be obstructed.

- 10.6 Ward Councillor was consulted about the proposal. No comments were received.
- 10.7 Bunbury Parish Council has been consulted and members did not register any objection to the proposal.
- 10.8 The statutory undertakers have also been consulted and have raised no objections to the proposed diversion. If a diversion order is made, existing rights of access for the statutory undertakers to their apparatus and equipment are protected.
- 10.9 The user groups have been consulted. The Peak and Northern Footpath Society registered no objection to the proposal. No other comments were received.
- 10.10 The Council's Nature Conservation Officer and Natural England have been consulted and have raised no objection to the proposals.
- 10.11 An assessment in relation to Disability Discrimination Legislation has been carried out by the PROW Maintenance and Enforcement Officer for the area and it is considered that the proposed diversion is an improvement on the old route because it has kissing gates instead of a stile and is not obstructed.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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