

Rainow Parish Council

Response to proposed diversions of footpaths 73 and 72

Summary

The Parish Council accepts that the proposed diversions of footpaths 73 and 72 (part) would not materially reduce the convenience or enjoyment of the public using these paths and that in the case of footpath 72 the proposals would provide an improvement to the current defined route. We presume that the costs associated with these diversions will be met by the landowners. Our detailed comments are given in the following two sections for each path, these can be summarised as follows:

- In both cases clear waymarking will be required where the new routes cross open fields;
- The description of footpath 73 only refers to the definitive route and does not make reference to the route currently used by walkers and which has been signed and used for many years. This current route does not pass through the farmyard and requires the use of 1 gate and 1 stile and thus in terms of convenience is similar to the proposed diversion;
- With regard to footpath 72 we are concerned that the manege appears to have been constructed in a location that obstructs the definitive line for the path. As the manege is not within Rainow Parish we are not familiar with the planning process adopted for its construction but we do not understand how permission could have been granted without the matter of the obstruction of the footpath being addressed.

The Parish Council have recently (2012) published an updated footpath map based upon that previously produced by Cheshire County Council in conjunction with the Parish Council. This has been distributed free to all households in Rainow and is sold in local outlets for a nominal sum of £1. Given the level of use of the footpaths in Rainow, footpath 73 in particular, we suggest that, if the diversions are approved, an addendum sheet be produced. This should be circulated to all Rainow households and included with future map sales to help ensure that walkers adhere to the new routes. The Parish Council would be pleased to liaise with CEC regarding the production of such an addendum and to organise its distribution.

Footpath 73

With regard to the proposed diversion of footpath 73 we have the following detailed comments:

- Whilst the definitive line is described there is no description given of the route that has been signed (informally) and used by walkers for many years. This route (from north to south) enters the field to the east of the definitive line at point C (on the CEC plan) through a gate then runs southwards across the field to a stile provided in the wall forming the southern boundary of that field (the wall running west from point G towards the farmyard), thus bypassing the farmyard. The path then re-joins the track to/from the farmyard in the region of point D. This route provides a similar level of convenience to the proposed diversion, avoiding the farmyard and requiring use of 1 gate and 1 stile. The current route is more gently graded than the proposed diversion although the stile is relatively difficult to use for those who are less mobile or walking with a pet. We acknowledge that this route passes the edge of the farmyard and does not address the privacy and security points noted in the CEC letter;
- The proposed diversion will climb significantly higher than either the definitive route or that currently used by walkers. Whilst this may provide improved views there will be an ascent/descent in the region of 25m to 30m between points E and G with a steep gradient of around 1 in 7. This may affect some walkers who may choose the current path as it is relatively gently graded compared with many of the paths in Rainow; and

- The diversion will require clear signing at points A and E where the new line of route will not be clear and the proposed gates at F and G are unlikely to be visible from these points. This will be particularly important at point A where the existing route towards point B follows a clear track.

Footpath 72

With regard to the proposed diversion of footpath 72 we have the following detailed comments:

- We are concerned that the manège appears to have been constructed in a location that obstructs the definitive line for the footpath. As this location is not in Rainow Parish we are not familiar with the planning history of the manège. However, we would expect the planning application to take account of the presence of any public rights of way and that appropriate diversions should have formed part of the planning approval process for the manège;
- We agree that the proposed diversion for footpath 73 more closely follows the route that some walkers have been using and would provide an easier and more convenient route. There are particular difficulties for walkers attempting to follow the definitive line as marked on the OS and Rainow Parish Path maps. These indicate crossing the stream that forms the Parish boundary in the vicinity of point C, where there is no clear crossing point and very steep slopes either side. We note there is a relatively new kissing gate installed at the field boundary on the definitive route to the west of point C which will tend to attract walkers to this line of route; We presume this kissing gate would be removed, or relocated to point J, as part of the footpath diversion; and
- The diversion will require clear signing, particularly at point I, where the route turns away from the field boundary, and between points L and G where it passes the edge of Wickinford Farm.