

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Dear Parish or Town Clerk

May 2016

Protecting your local public rights of way and planning applications – please pass to your councillors and/or footpaths rep

As you know every planning application in your District is referred for consultation to the relevant Town or Parish Council – for your Council's comments, feedback etc. This is a vital part of the planning process and your Council's response is seen by the District Council as very much the grass roots response to all planning issues.

The Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum (OCAF) is a statutory advisory body and is made up from volunteer members representing all interests involved in countryside access. It exists to encourage access to the countryside in Oxfordshire, to ensure the existing public rights of way system is preserved and enhanced where possible.

So could we please encourage your Council that when you are consulted on any planning proposal that affects a right of way in your Parish (not that often in practice) that the response your Council makes to the District Council takes into account any impact on the public rights of way system.

The types of issues your council may wish to consider are:

- Making sure the development doesn't alter or obstruct the legal line of the right of way (you can check the definitive map on line at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/countryside-access-maps>)
- Could the surface of the route be improved by the developer to make access easier all year round for new residents, visitors and the local community?
- Could the path 'furniture' like stiles, gates and bridges be improved to make them more accessible to more people? E.g. parents with buggies, wheelchair users or those with reduced mobility.
- Are there any new links between paths needed through the site? This might include existing 'desire' lines where people walk a preferred route.
- Do any footpaths need making available for cyclists or equestrians? The developer may be open to a request to upgrade them.

These are just a few suggestions that would help meet the aims of the county Rights of way Improvement Plan 2015-2025. More information can be found here www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip
If you are preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, having a section on Public Rights of Way is equally important.

Yours faithfully,

Stuart McGinness Chair Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum

Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum is a statutory Local Access Forum - an independent advisory body, established and administered by Oxfordshire County Council to assist with improving access to Oxfordshire's countryside under s94 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Contact any member via the OCAF Secretariat: Oxfordshire County Council, email: countryside@oxfordshire.gov.uk or visit www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ocaf