

Information note: Public Rights of Way and planning applications

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is the highway authority for most public rights of way (PRoW), comprising footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways. OCC has the statutory duty to assert and protect public rights and keep PRoW reasonably convenient for public users.

OCC's priorities for working with developments are to protect existing countryside access and where possible and reasonable to mitigate the impacts of development to enhance the network for all users. These are set out in the adopted statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan, available at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/rowip

Standard measures normally promoted for applications affecting public rights of way

- 1. Correct route of public rights of way:** Note that it is the responsibility of the developer to ensure that their application takes account of the legally recorded route and width of any PRoW as recorded in the definitive map and statement. This may differ from the line walked on the ground. Definitive Map and Statement is at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/definitivemap.
- 2. Temporary obstructions.** No materials, plant, temporary structures or excavations of any kind should be deposited / undertaken on or adjacent to the PRoW that obstructs it whilst development takes place.
- 3. Route alterations.** The development should be designed and implemented to fit in with the existing PRoW network. No changes to the legal direction or width must be made without first securing appropriate temporary or permanent diversion through separate legal process. Alterations to surface, signing or structures shall not be made without prior written permission by OCC. Note that there are legal mechanisms to change PRoW if it is essential to enable a development to take place or in the landowner's interest, but these mechanisms have their own process and timescales and should be initiated as early as possible – usually through the local planning authority.
- 4. Vehicle access (construction):** No new construction / demolition vehicle access may be taken along or across a PRoW without prior authority by OCC.
- 5. Vehicle access (Occupation):** No new vehicle access may be taken along or across a public right of way to residential or commercial sites without prior authority by OCC.
- 6. Gates / right of way:** Any gates provided in association with the development shall be set back from the PRoW or shall not open outwards from the site across it.
- 7. Improvements to routes:** PRoW through the site should be integrated with the development's roads, greenspace and informal paths. They should be upgraded to meet the pressures caused by the development, whilst retaining their character where possible. Upgrades may include enabling cycling or horse riding and providing better surfaces and furniture to enable access for commuters or people with lower agility. Proposed improvements should be discussed and agreed with OCC.