

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum

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RBWM Local Access Forum Fast Response Team

Consultation Response

Planning Application No. 11/02183 – Maidenhead Waterways

The Local Access Forum (LAF) Fast Response Team have examined the above planning application and make the following comments on behalf of the Forum:

General Response

The Local Access Forum welcomes and supports the bold and ambitious baseline plan submitted as part of the application, but would like to raise some issues with regard to public access (as detailed below).

Extent and status of the proposed new paths

The design and access statement states that the proposal will create a “continuous 2 km circular walking route alongside the enlarged and extended waterway” in combination with the existing promoted ‘Green Way’. However at some points in the plans submitted to the planning authority there are gaps, most particularly at Town Moor, where the new towpath appears to be severed by mooring points. Further examination of the plan shows an existing path running from the junction of Maidenhead Footpaths 3A and 5A alongside the Moor Cut to Bridge Road. This path is not recorded as a public right of way on the Council’s Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way and as a result it is not protected. In addition to this the LAF noted that the existing public rights of way across town moor are incorrectly recorded; omitting some existing public rights of way and showing other paths which are not recorded as existing public rights of way. The continuation of Maidenhead Footpath 84 (part of the ‘Green Way’) has also been omitted from plan GA 9.1

The LAF strongly recommend that the panel satisfy itself that a continuous path will be provided along the entirety of the route, either by utilising existing public rights of way or creating new ones, and that these paths be dedicated as public rights of way to provide legal protection and avoid any threats to the paths in the future.

The LAF also recommend that the paths should be as close to the bank of the new waterways as possible to maintain an attractive route for all users.

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Extinguishment of existing footpaths

Maidenhead Footpath 5A

It is noted that the GA 9.1 plan submitted with the application show a 'winding hole' severing the route of Maidenhead Footpath 5A. This is shown in greater detail in drawing number CTX1. It is not entirely clear from these plans whether the path is to be re-routed around the winding hole or severed completely.

This footpath is a very popular path, forming part of the promoted Green Way route. It is recommended that the route of the path be diverted to follow around the winding hole rather than the path be extinguished. As this is a recognised public right of way this will need to be done using an appropriate legal order.

Maidenhead Footpath 3C

The plans as submitted detail a plan to extinguish the route of Maidenhead Footpath 3C, re-routing users of the Green Way along Maidenhead 3B, exiting at Crown Lane. It is noted that the steps at this position would be replaced with a ramp. Any extinguishment of this path would like need to be done using a legal order.

The establishment of Maidenhead Footpath 3C was something that has been achieved over decades and it is considered a far more attractive route than using Crown Lane. The proposed new route has narrow walkways and is heavily used by vehicular traffic, particularly in the mornings and late afternoon. It is considered that that this would not be a suitable alternative and a retrograde step undoing the past work securing the virtually traffic free route currently used.

It is suggested that a path through any new development on the 'la roche' site might be a suitable alternative.

The LAF would also like to point out to the panel that when the Green Way was being established a ramp at Maidenhead Footpath 3B was ruled out on the grounds that it was not technically feasible because it would undermine the adjacent land.

Disabled Access

The LAF Fast Response Team endorses the advice provided to the Maidenhead Waterway Restoration Group by Dr Mike Bruton of the RBWM Access Advisory Forum, in particular:

"Path surfaces should everywhere be firm and level. In places where tarmac is not used, the surface must be firmly rolled and topped with small stones: grass paths are not considered satisfactory because of rapid wear, and a tendency to turn to mud and develop ruts. Where path widths fall below 2m, normal height railed edging should be considered, particularly in exposed places e.g. by sharp drops down to the waterway, with an

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additional firm strip 20cms high at ground level, to prevent wheels dropping over the side. These protective railings will be essential in places where paths may be restricted to 1.4m e.g. under bridges.”

The LAF agree with Dr Bruton that should the footbridge behind the library in St. Ives Road be raised the opportunity should be taken to replace the existing steps at Maudsley Gardens with a suitable ramp, enabling access to this area by mobility restricted users.

The LAF finds the existing solution of diverting mobility restricted users along Bridge Avenue and York Road unacceptable and recommends that the current design for stepped access down from Bridge Street to connect with the existing Green Way footpath (as shown in drawing number Y6) should be changed for a more accessible solution to enable use by mobility restricted users. If this is not possible, additional access should be secured for disabled users through the cinema site.

Maintenance

The LAF support the comments made by the Maidenhead Civic Society that the success of the project is fundamentally dependent on the availability of an adequate water flow, and that the water needs to be free flowing to prevent algae bloom. It is considered that to allow free standing water to develop would raise health as well as aesthetic concerns.

The maintenance of the paths and the waterways would be a large burden and it is critical that this is established and agreed between the parties concerned in order for the plan to succeed.

Landscaping

The LAF recommends that the planting scheme be designed such that it is not too close to the path that it would grow over the path and cause problems for users. In addition to this the planting should not be ‘anti-social’ and should maintain sight lines and not hinder users’ perception of security. The species planted should not contain spikes or thorns.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.