RBWM Local Access Forum Fast Response Team

Cabinet Agenda 29th May 2014 Response:
Thames Path Missing Link

The Local Access Forum (LAF) Fast Response Team has examined the proposals for the Thames Path Missing Link and wish to make the following comments:

The continuation of the Thames Path has been an objective for the Local Access Forum for many years. In submitting these comments to the Cabinet, the forum trusts that the views of the forum will be taken on board as a positive contribution to the deliberations.

The Local Access Forum considers that Option 1, the riverside route, is the preferred option for the Thames Path and is the best solution in the longer term, given its status as a National Trail of great benefit to the community. However the forum understands the current difficulties and supports the need to improve safety.

With regard to the options laid before Cabinet the forum has a mixed opinion. The majority consider that Option 2, the roadside route, is an expedient solution to the immediate problem in the short to medium term, however there is a alternative and strong view that option 1 is the only option.

If the Council chooses to implement option 2, the forum strongly recommends to the Council that should the properties be developed in the future, an agreement is made with any developer to secure a riverside path, similar to that at Chandlers Quay, linking directly through to Bridge Gardens.

With regard to the proposed car park, the forum is concerned that the loss of important open space in a conservation area is disproportionate to the benefit that a roadside path would bring, and would de-value the gardens. In addition, there are concerns that there is no need to compensate landowners for the loss of parking where they were illegally obstructing the footpath.

Having said this, should the car park area be built the forum strongly recommends that the land is kept within Council ownership, and considers that any such construction should not disadvantage public access. The car park should be constructed to be sympathetic to the area and recommends that the views across Bridge Gardens from the road be maintained, with no imposing fencing erected that would disrupt this view.

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.