

Report Title:	Footpath 17 Cookham (part) and Footpath 59 Cookham (part) Diversion Orders 2022
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No - Part I
Officer reporting	Anthony Hurst, Parks & Countryside Manager
Meeting and Date:	Rights of Way and Highway Licensing Panel 14 th March 2022
Responsible Officer(s):	Andrew Durrant, Executive Director of Place Alysse Strachan, Head of Neighbourhood Services
Wards affected:	Bisham and Cookham

REPORT SUMMARY

On 18th October 2021 this Panel authorised the making of Diversion Orders for parts of Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham, in response to applications received from the owners of the land crossed by these footpaths. The Diversion Orders were duly published on 20th January 2022 (see maps at Appendix A), and this report considers the comments received in response to the statutory consultations into the Diversion Orders. A total of 78 objections, 5 ‘neutral’ comments, and 2 expressions of support were received. These responses are set out in full in Appendix B. The report concludes that considering all comments received in response to the consultations the proposed diversions do not meet the criteria for confirmation of Diversion Orders, as set out in the Highways Act 1980, and therefore recommends that the Council does not proceed with the Orders.

1. DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That the Panel notes the report and:

- i) Does not proceed with the Cookham 17 (part) and Cookham 59 (part) Diversion Orders published on 20th January 2022**

2. REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) AND OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Options

Table 1: Options arising from this report

Option	Comments
Do not proceed with the Diversion Orders for Footpath 17 Cookham (part) and Footpath 59 Cookham (part)	It is considered that taking into account all of the objections and expressions of support received in response to the consultations the diversions fail to meet the criteria for confirmation of Diversion Orders set out in the Highways Act 1980 and detailed in paragraphs 2.3 and 5.1 below.
This is the recommended option	

Option	Comments
<p>Refer the Diversion Orders, together with the objections and representations received in response to the statutory consultations, to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), requesting that he confirm the Orders.</p> <p>This option is not recommended.</p>	<p>Under this option, the Council would need to support the Orders through the referral process and at Public Inquiry.</p> <p>The Council would need to be satisfied that the Orders meet the criteria for confirmation of Diversion Orders set out in the Highways Act 1980 and detailed in paragraphs 2.3 and 5.1 below.</p>
<p>Seek the withdrawal of the objections received in response to the statutory consultations.</p> <p>This option is not recommended.</p>	<p>If all objections to the Diversion Orders were withdrawn, the Council would itself be able to confirm the Orders as unopposed Orders.</p> <p>However, given the very large number of objections received, and the views expressed in these objections, this is not considered to be a realistic option.</p>

- 2.1 **The diversion proposals:** the diversion proposals submitted by the landowner are shown on the Order maps attached at Appendix A. The proposal is to divert those parts of Footpath 17 Cookham which are currently ‘cross-field’ footpaths to follow field-edge paths and a section of path through an adjacent area of woodland. The proposal would also entail the diversion of a section of Footpath 59 Cookham, which connects with this part of Footpath 17.
- 2.2 The reasons for the diversion proposals, and details of the proposed new routes, as stated by the applicant, are as follows:

“To move paths from existing routes crossing the centre of the field to the field edge to allow more economic farming practices and create a longer circular route for public use around Mount Farm. This will also allow Beeching Grove Wood to be treated as a nature reserve with reduced public access.

The new route will follow the path of the existing Permitted Path which was established in 2013. This route runs along the northern boundary of the field, before running south along the western boundary, where it links with land owned by the National Trust, before connecting with the north-south leg of Cookham Footpath 59 which leads to Malders Lane. This creates a two mile circular route around the farm. There will be an additional section of footpath through the wood to the west which is known as Little Beeching Gove Wood. This links with National Trust open access land and the existing footpath network in the area. An additional permitted cycle path is also being proposed along the hard surfaced portion of the proposed path to create a safe, off-road circular cycling route.

The existing permitted path within the field is 3m wide and is made up of a hardcore surface with scalplings. There are no proposed changes to this surface for the diversion. The section of the proposed new footpath which passes through the woodland at Little Beeching Grove Wood will be an unmade surface between the trees. This section of the path will measure 2m wide. Trees will be cleared along the section of the footpath which runs through Little Beeching Grove Wood to create a 2m wide footpath. The surface of this section of the footpath will be unmade”

- 2.3 **Assessment of proposal and consultation responses:** the proposed diversions must be considered under the criteria set out in Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980. This requires that before confirming an Order, the Council (or the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the case of opposed Orders) must be satisfied that the proposed new route will not be substantially less convenient to the public than the existing route, and must have regard to the effect that the diversion would have on public enjoyment of the path as a whole, and the effect that the coming into operation of the diversion would have on land served by the existing right of way. The Council must also have regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry, flora and fauna, and any relevant provisions within the current “*Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Public Rights of Way improvement Plan 2016-2026*” (ROWIP 2016-2026)
- 2.4 There are no specific provisions or proposals within the ‘*ROWIP 2016-2026*’ of relevance to these diversion proposals. In relation to the needs of agriculture, it is noted that one of the reasons for the diversions as set out in the application is to allow more economic farming practices, and in relation to forestry, flora and fauna it is noted that if the diversions were to be implemented there is reference in the application to the clearance of trees to accommodate the proposed footpath through Little Beeching Grove Wood.
- 2.5 **Analysis of consultation responses:** a total of 78 objections, 5 ‘neutral’ comments and 2 expressions of support were received during the statutory 28 day consultation period which ran from 20th January to 18th February 2022. These consultation responses are as set out in full in Appendix B. Responses to pre-Order consultations undertaken previously, and considered by the Panel on 18th October 2021 are included in Appendix C.
- 2.6 Objections have been received from Cookham Parish Council, the Cookham Society, the RBWM Local Access Forum and the East Berks Ramblers, and there have been 74 individual objections received during the statutory consultation period. There are a number of common themes evident in the objections that have been received; these include concerns that the views from the proposed new public rights of way around the perimeter of the fields are inferior to those available from the existing public rights of way across the fields; the proposed new rights of way would be longer than the existing cross-field routes; there would be a loss of ‘openness’ associated with the existing cross-field routes; there would be a loss of a currently-available short circular walk from Malders Lane using the existing rights of way; there would be less ‘connectivity with the surrounding path network; walkers would be required to use routes that are shared with farm vehicles and cyclists; there would be a loss of heritage/historic values associated with the existing public rights of way.

- 2.7 The officers' view is that taking into account the consultation responses discussed above, the diversions specified in the Diversion Orders do not meet the criteria for confirmation of such Orders, as set out in the Highways Act 1980. In particular, it is considered that the diversion of the cross-field sections of Footpath 17 to follow field-edge paths would result in the loss of the sense of 'openness', and the loss of wide-ranging views, that can currently be enjoyed from these sections of footpath. Several objectors have referred to this point in their objections.
- 2.8 The diversion of the southern leg of Footpath 17 and the east-west section of Footpath 59 would result in the loss of a short circular walk accessed from Malders Lane. Several objectors have referred to this point in their objections. Although longer routes would be available using the proposed diversions, and a shorter route would be available along the proposed woodland path, these alternative routes would be substantially less convenient for those who wish to follow the short circular walk that is currently available, without having to walk through areas of woodland, which some walkers have stated they would prefer to avoid.
- 2.9 The proposed new route of Footpath 17 would result in a 'detour' of approximately 380 metres, in comparison to the current route of Footpath 17; for those walkers wishing to access Footpath 33 (to the south of Malders Lane), or other connecting footpaths, this would represent a significant length of detour. Several objectors have referred to this point in their objections.
- 2.10 If the Panel decides to proceed with referral of the opposed Orders to the Secretary of State, the matter would be determined by means of a Public Inquiry. The timescale for the Secretary of State (through the Planning Inspectorate) to convene the Public Inquiry is uncertain, but based on current information it is estimated that this would most likely be in mid-late 2023.

3.

Table 2: Key Implications

Outcome	Unmet	Met	Exceeded	Significantly Exceeded	Date of delivery
Diversion Orders not to proceed	n/a	Decision taken at Panel	n/a	n/a	14th March 2022
If Orders are referred to Secretary of State	n/a	Decision following public inquiry	n/a	n/a	Estimated 2023/2024 (subject to timing of public inquiry)

4. FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

- 4.1 If the Diversion Orders do not proceed there will be no cost to the Council. The administrative costs of processing the diversion application to date are being met by the applicant. However, if the Orders are referred to the Secretary of State, the Council will incur legal and Public Inquiry costs; it is estimated that

these costs, including the cost of external Counsel, would be in the region of £6000.00, based on a two-day public inquiry (these costs would need to be considered as part of the budget setting process).

Table 3: Financial impact of report's recommendations

REVENUE COSTS (if the Diversion Orders do not proceed)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Net Impact	£0	£0	£0

REVENUE COSTS (if the Diversion Orders are referred to the Secretary of State)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 (assuming the Public Inquiry is held in 2023/24)
Legal and Public Inquiry costs	£0	£0	£6,000

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 119(6) of the Highways Act 1980 provides that before a Diversion Order is confirmed as an unopposed order by the Council, or as an opposed Order by the Secretary of State, the Council or the Secretary of State must be satisfied that new paths will not be substantially less convenient to the public as a result of the diversion and that confirmation is expedient having regard to the effect of the diversion on public enjoyment of the path as a whole and on land crossed by the existing path or to be crossed by the new one.
- 5.2 As objections have been received to the Orders during the statutory consultation period, the Council now has three options: (a) the Council can decide not to proceed with the Orders; (b) the Council can refer the Orders together with the objections and representations to the Secretary of State, and support the Orders through the referral process and at Public Inquiry (as the Parish Council has lodged an objection, the Secretary of State, through the Planning Inspectorate, would be obliged to determine the matter by means of Public Inquiry, rather than the written representations procedure); (c) the Council could attempt to seek the withdrawal of the objections.
- 5.3 Under Section B8 of Part 6 of the Council's Constitution ('Terms of Reference of all other Committees, Panels and other bodies of the Council'), this Panel is empowered to exercise the Council's functions to determine public rights of way diversion applications.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

Table 4: Impact of risk and mitigation

Risk	Level of uncontrolled risk	Controls	Level of controlled risk
None			

7. POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 7.1 Equalities. An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Form has been completed (see Appendix D). If the Diversion Orders do not proceed, there will be no positive or negative impacts, as the footpath routes will remain unchanged. If the Diversion Orders were to be implemented (subject to confirmation of the Orders by the Secretary of State), there may be low level impacts (some positive and negative) on some users, as set out in the EQIA screening form.
- 7.2 Climate change/sustainability. If the Diversion Orders do not proceed, there will be no impact on climate change/sustainability, as the footpath routes would remain unchanged. If the Diversion Orders were to be implemented (subject to confirmation of the Orders by the Secretary of State) there would some tree removal associated with creation of the new section of footpath through the woodland.
- 7.3 Data Protection/GDPR. All personal data has been removed from consultation respondents' comments set out in Appendices B and C.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Diversion Orders were subject to a statutory 28 day public consultation in accordance with the requirements of the Highways Act 1980 and associated regulations. Notices were displayed at each end of the sections of footpath proposed for diversion, sent to prescribed organisations, and published in the Maidenhead Advertiser. The results of these consultations are discussed in this report, and the redacted consultation responses are listed in full in Appendix B. The results of pre-Order consultations considered by this Panel at its meeting held on 18th October 2021 are included in Appendix C.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Table 5: Implementation timetable

Date	Details
14 th March 2022	If the Panel decides not to proceed with the Orders, the applicants will be advised accordingly.
Estimated 2023/2024	If the Panel decides to refer the Orders to the Secretary of State, a Public Inquiry would be convened, and subject to the outcome of this Inquiry the diversions could be implemented in 2023/2024.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 This report is supported by 4 appendices:
 - Appendix A: Diversion Order Maps.
 - Appendix B: Responses to statutory consultation January-February 2022
 - Appendix C: Responses to informal pre-Order consultations.
 - Appendix D: Equality Impact Assessment screening report

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

12. CONSULTATION

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Mandatory:</i>		<i>Statutory Officers (or deputies)</i>	
Adele Taylor	Executive Director of Resources/S151 Officer	22.02.22	02.03.22
Emma Duncan	Deputy Director of Law and Strategy / Monitoring Officer	22.02.22	
<i>Deputies:</i>			
Andrew Vallance	Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer)	22.02.22	
Elaine Browne	Head of Law (Deputy Monitoring Officer)	22.02.22	24.02.22
Karen Shepherd	Head of Governance (Deputy Monitoring Officer)	22.02.22	23.02.22
<i>Other consultees:</i>			
<i>Directors (where relevant)</i>			
Andrew Durrant	Executive Director of Place	22.02.22	
<i>Heads of Service (where relevant)</i>			
Alysse Strachan	Head of Neighbourhood Services	22.02.22	
<i>External (where relevant)</i>			
As set out in report and Appendix B	Statutory public consultation		

Confirmation relevant Cabinet Member(s) consulted	Cllr Donna Stimson; Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside.	Yes
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REPORT HISTORY

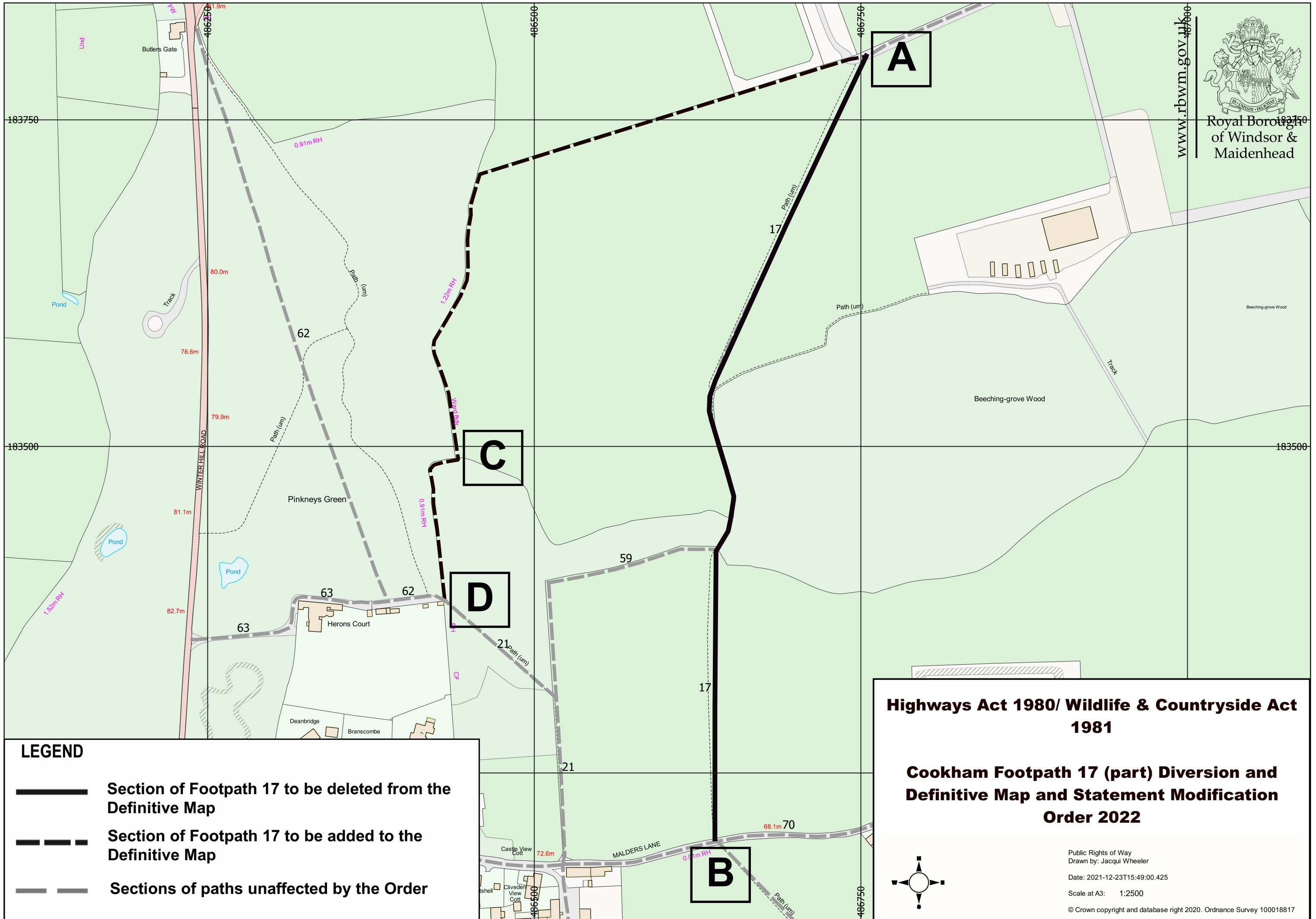
Decision type:	Urgency item?	To follow item?
Panel decision	No	No

Report Author: Anthony Hurst, Parks and Countryside Manager, 07775-818622
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Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

www.rbwm.gov.uk

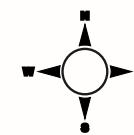


LEGEND

-  Section of Footpath 17 to be deleted from the Definitive Map
-  Section of Footpath 17 to be added to the Definitive Map
-  Sections of paths unaffected by the Order

Highways Act 1980/ Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

Cookham Footpath 17 (part) Diversion and Definitive Map and Statement Modification Order 2022

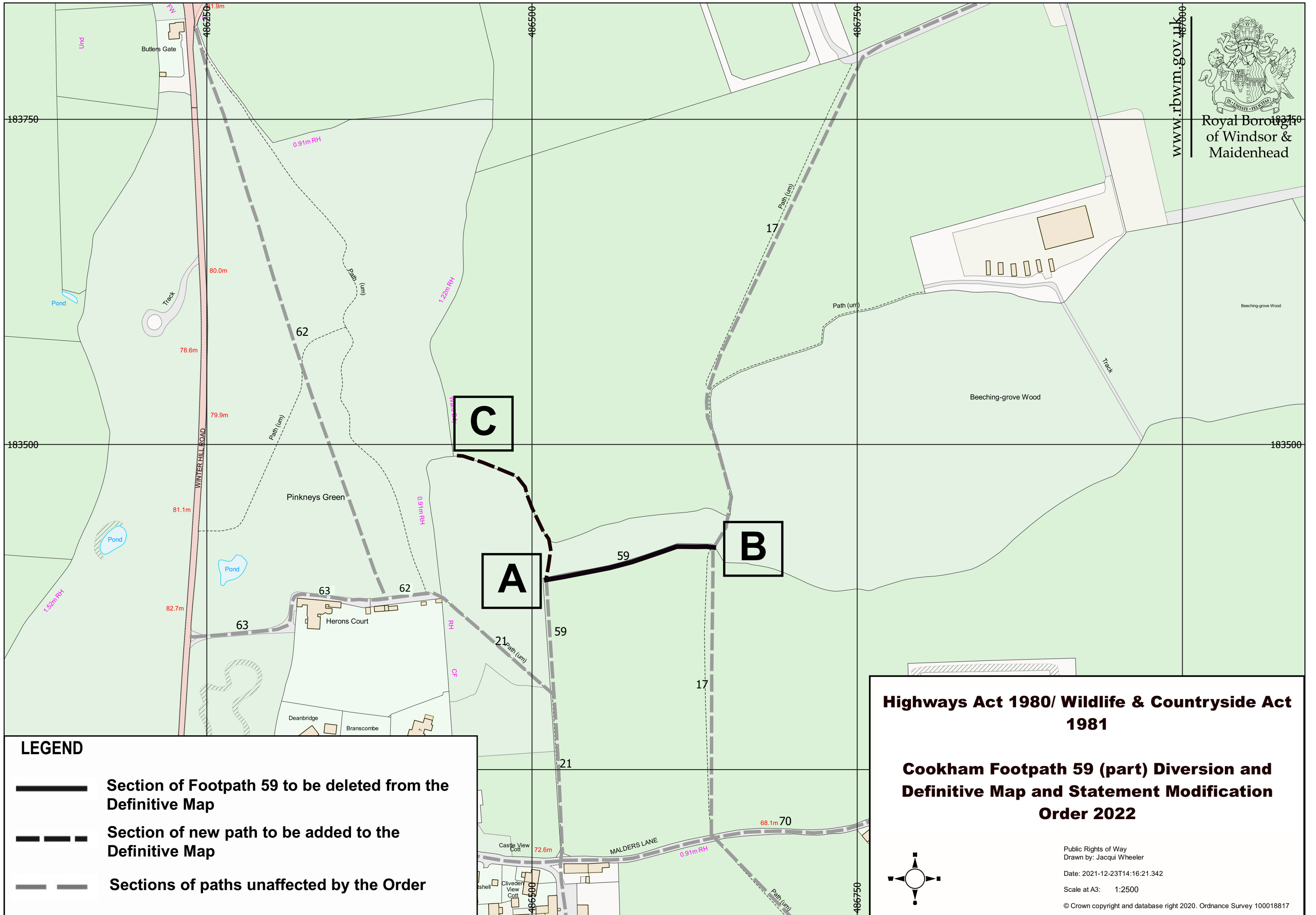


Public Rights of Way
Drawn by: Jacqui Wheeler




Date: 2021-12-23T15:49:00.425

Scale at A3: 1:2500

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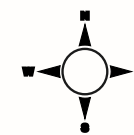


LEGEND

-  Section of Footpath 59 to be deleted from the Definitive Map
-  Section of new path to be added to the Definitive Map
-  Sections of paths unaffected by the Order

Highways Act 1980/ Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

Cookham Footpath 59 (part) Diversion and Definitive Map and Statement Modification Order 2022



Public Rights of Way
Drawn by: Jacqui Wheeler

Date: 2021-12-23T14:16:21.342

Scale at A3: 1:2500

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Appendix B: responses to statutory consultation January-February 2022

Cookham Parish Council

The Cookham Society

Local Access Forum

East Berks Ramblers

Community Comments



COOKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

COUNCIL OFFICES, HIGH ROAD, COOKHAM RISE, BERKS SL6 9JF
Tel: (01628) 522003 Email: office@cookhamparishcouncil.org.uk
Clerk to the Council: Mrs Jill Gavin

Sharon Wootten
Public Rights of Way Officer
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall, St Ives Road,
Maidenhead SL6 1RF

7th February 2022

Dear Sharon,

Formal Consultation response from Cookham Parish Council regarding a proposed diversion of Cookham Footpath 17 and part of Cookham Footpath 59.

At the Full Council meeting on 4th January 2022, Cookham Parish Council took the opportunity to discuss the planned formal consultation that is now underway.

Councillors decided to reiterate their objection to this proposal, which swops a pleasant rural path across open fields, for a much longer, hard surfaced farm track, shared with farm machinery and cyclists.

The current path is already the result of a diversion several years ago by a previous landowner which was to have made managing the field easier. This new path route was chosen with the input of stakeholders and gave good views especially eastward, to Cliveden and Hanging Wood.

This footpath section can become muddy, especially after cultivation, and users may stray on to the crop. The proposed cycle track could already be used as an alternative, or given modern tractors with GPS, the existing path could be left unploughed.

The proposed diversion is the present Permitted Path which is a hard surfaced track, which sadly loses the pleasant open views of the existing route.

The hard surface of the track, whilst being solid is not viewed positively by dog walkers nor cyclists due to the loose, sharp chippings which can find their way into the paws of animals and the bicycle tyres.

In conclusion, the proposed diversion does not offer an alternative that is at least as convenient and enjoyable as the path to be diverted, and hence we object to the diversion.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Jill Gavin
Clerk to Cookham Parish Council,

CC: Cllrs for Cookham Parish Council



THE COOKHAM SOCIETY

Web: www.cookhamsociety.org.uk

Email: messages@cookhamsociety.org.uk

Diversion of Footpaths 17 and 59

Cookham Society Submission to Panel

We strongly oppose the proposed diversion. The existing route is long established and popular with walkers. It offers a direct route and much superior views to the alternative edge-hugging path proposed. We also understand from some of our female members that when they are alone, they feel much safer walking across the open path and they consider that walking around the edge of the field close to woodland, does not provide the same sense of security.

The footpath between Mount Farm and Hindhay Farm is shown on the 1875 OS map. The section north of Beeching Grove Wood appears to be exactly the route of the present RoW. The cross-field section south of Beeching Grove Wood has been somewhat realigned in more recent times. Ancient routes and RoWs are part of our heritage and should be protected.

In consultations for the Cookham Neighbourhood Plan, we note that the landowner is suggesting that the field edge path should be a cycleway. Whilst we could support a new multi-user route as an additional resource, we believe it is totally unsuitable as a replacement for an established footpath.

This is not a new proposal from the applicant. Three members of our committee visited the farm in 2015 and discussed with Tom Copas his wish to divert FP17 from being a cross-field path to a field edge path. From that meeting we understood that the cross-field path is no hindrance to ploughing, preparation or planting because these operations are carried out right across the field with the route of the footpath being remarked once planting is complete. Similarly, we understood that fertilising and spraying are tracked straight across the footpath. Therefore, the footpath on its present route did not form an obstruction or a cost to any of these processes. We have no reason to believe conditions have changed since 2015.

When the alternative route offered is inferior to the present one, compelling reasons need to be provided even to consider diversion. Such reasons have not been provided.

However, we do understand that there is a problem, particularly in wet weather, with some walkers straying off the official footpath whilst looking for firmer ground and in so doing damaging the crops. We sympathise with this and note that since our visit in 2015 a surfaced track has been created on the field edge route. If this field edge route is clearly made available as a RoW to walkers and appears on maps, apps, etc, we believe that, when conditions are muddy, most walkers would use it in preference to the cross-field path. Information boards at either end of the cross-field route explaining why the alternative had been made available would no doubt encourage more walkers to use the field edge route. Posts at either end of the cross-field path could be put up to define the official width (2.0m) of the footpath. If the applicant would make the new field edge route available as a RoW **in addition to** the present cross-field route we would encourage RBWM to contribute to the cost of all necessary gates and signage.

Cookham has a rural character which we are anxious to preserve. Walking on an ancient, meaningful path with fine views and without impact from cyclists or farm machinery can be a sheer joy. The present path should not be lost.

The Cookham Society

February 2022

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum
Secretariat: Jacqui Wheeler, Parks and Countryside Access Officer Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Town Hall, St. Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1RF
Email: prow@rbwm.gov.uk
Local access forums Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (rbwm.gov.uk)

RBWM Local Access Forum

Consultation response:

Diversion Orders for Cookham Footpath 17 and Cookham Footpath 59 (part)

The Local Access Forum (LAF) has received and reviewed the proposals for the above diversion orders to divert Cookham FP17 and FP59 (part) and wishes to make the following comments:

NB: All members of the LAF have been consulted via email concerning this consultation and these comments reflect those from members who have responded to the consultation.

The consensus reached by those members who responded means that the Forum formally objects to the proposed diversion of Cookham Footpath 17 and Footpath 59 (part).

The Forum recognises that the proposed diversions do not satisfy the legal criteria under S119 Highways Act 1980. The diverted route is longer and therefore not equally as convenient and the loss of the views and feeling of openness from the cross-field path means it is also less enjoyable.

No comments supporting the proposals were received from any Forum members therefore consensus is reached as per the above.

*Comments were received from the following Forum members:
T Mentzel, A Woodward, S Gillions, M Howard and G Priest*

In addition to objecting to the diversion of FP17 and FP59 (part) Forum members also feel that the surfaced route around the field edge should be retained and that it would be beneficial to more borough users if horse-riding access either dedicated or permissive could be given along it as well as cycling to make it a fully multi-user route.

This letter constitutes formal response from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Access Forum. Local Authorities are 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.

Footpath Diversion Orders Cookham Footpaths 17 and 59

After further consideration of the landowner's proposals and a site visit East Berks Ramblers still have strong objections to the diversions proposed by the Royal Borough. The footpaths have historic interest and are shown on the 1875 Ordnance Survey map. They are part of the Royal Borough's footpath heritage and should not be lost.

The paths between Mount Farm and Hindhay Farm are part of a longer through route between Cookham Dean and Furze Platt by way of Spring Lane, FP 17 and FP 33. The Diversion Order would mean the loss of the southern section of FP 17 and consequently the loss of the through route. The revised termination point of the diverted FP 17 is unacceptable as it is a considerable distance away from the existing termination point and significantly less convenient.

Both paths give fine open views of the surrounding countryside. The view from the northern part of FP 17 towards Cliveden would be lost, as would the panoramic views from the southern section on the way to its junction with FP 33. FP 59 similarly gives fine southern views and is also part of a short circular walk from Hindhay Farm that would be lost under the proposals. Cross field paths can be muddy after periods of prolonged rain but in this respect are no different to many other countryside public rights of way and this factor cannot be considered a viable reason for closure. The views from the alternative route suggested are far inferior to those from the existing public rights of way.

The field edge surfaced permitted path that is proposed as the replacement public right of way was opened in 2013. At present it provides an alternative but longer route in wet conditions. We hope its present status is retained were the Diversion Orders not to proceed.

The plans provided by the landowner describes the diverted FP 17 path as a cycleway. It would be multi user and used by farm traffic. We support multi user paths in appropriate circumstances but the exchange of two walker's footpaths for an existing permitted surfaced path that will also be used by cyclists and farm machinery is completely unacceptable. The current local path network would be reduced and public enjoyment of the paths as a whole would be considerably less. The Royal Borough states that the Diversion Orders are made in the interests of the landowner and the public: we fail to see any way in which the Orders are in the interests of the public.

The landowner states that the diversions will allow more economic farming practices but does not give any detail to substantiate this broad assertion. The statement regarding Beeching Grove Wood is spurious. At present FP 17 passes through a narrow neck of the Wood. The proposed diversion would pass through another narrow neck of the Wood. There is no reason at all why the Wood cannot be treated as a nature reserve under the present arrangements were the landowner so minded.

In summary, we do not believe the proposed diversions meet any of the criteria set out in Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980. They are not in the interests of the public; the longer walk is less convenient and subject to multi use; public enjoyment of the paths as a whole would be significantly reduced and the proposed new termination points are not substantially as convenient as the existing ones. We concur with the views of the professional officers and maintain our objection to the proposed diversion. We urge the Royal Borough to rescind the Orders.

Steve Gillions

Chair, East Berks Ramblers Group

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD
FOOTPATH 17 COOKHAM (PART) and FOOTPATH 59 COOKHAM (PART)
PUBLIC PATH DIVERSION AND DEFINITIVE MAP AND STATEMENT
MODIFICATION ORDERS 2022

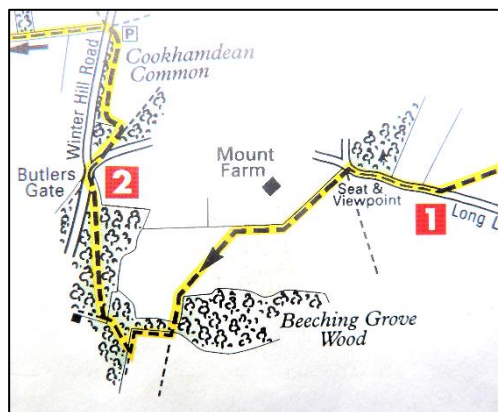
Dear Sir/ Madam,

I wish to object to the above orders. I consider they are less convenient and considerably less enjoyable than the existing paths.

For clarity I have shown the current footpath network on Appendix 1 and the net effect of these proposals on Appendix 2. I found the large plans displayed on site by the applicant to be rather disingenuous with the existing PRoW being shown in a pale yellow colour.

This order has been made at the request by Mr Copas on the basis that it is in his interest that an order be made. This primarily appears to concern the effect on farming, especially with regard to walkers straying further from the path during winter months when the path is muddy. I found this to be predominately at the southern end (just beyond the nice grass headland) in the shade of the trees.

To mitigate this I would advise that the mid-field section of Footpath 17 is not cultivated but remains undisturbed. We do not consider this especially onerous; farmers do this regularly across the country without it being considered a problem. This is especially so now, with the advent of computer controls.



Extract from Ramble No. 1

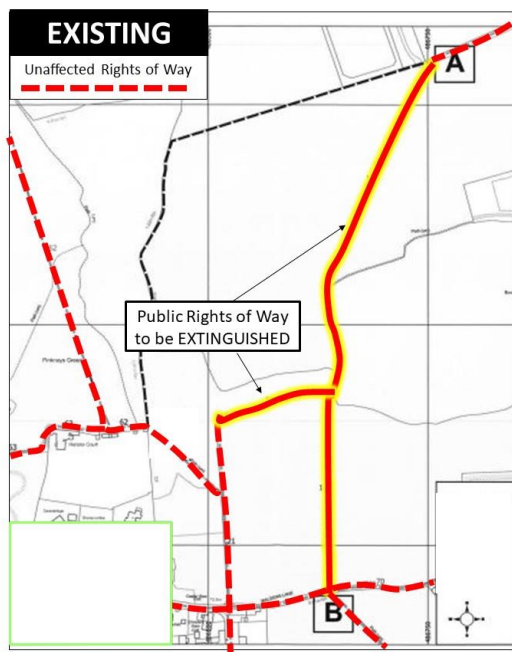
This area is especially popular with walkers and has been promoted by the **East Berkshire Ramblers** since the mid-1970s primarily through the sale of guidebooks in the 'Rambling for Pleasure Series'. As their **Publications Officer** I have been largely responsible for devising and producing these over forty years - together with a series of footpath maps. See Appendix 3 & 4

Currently parts of Footpaths 17 and 59 feature in **Ramble No. 1** in the latest 'Rambling for Pleasure in East Berkshire' guidebook, which is currently on sale to the public, (shown here) – with approx. 10,000 already in circulation.

Appendix 5 highlights a section of a longer continuous route that walkers, devising the own routes might well choose - that would no longer be available.

The illustration on Appendix 6 shows in green how the opportunity for a short circular walk, accessible from six different paths, would be lost if parts of FPs 17 and 59 are extinguished. I also question why, if the applicant's primarily concern is walkers straying from the diagonal northern section of FP 17 during winter months - 'does the southern end of FP 17 - also have to be lost'?

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2



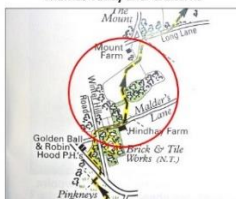
APPENDIX 3

Rambling for Pleasure Around Maidenhead



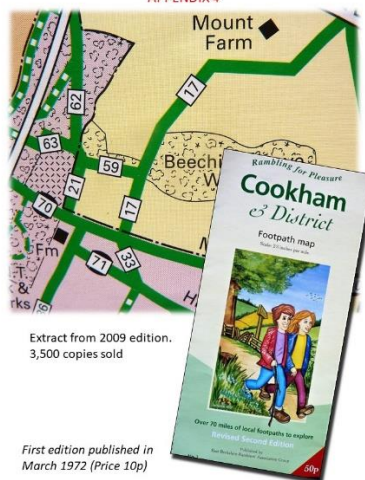
Five Editions published between 1975 and 1989. Totalling over 22,000 copies

Rambling for Pleasure Thames Valley and Chilterns



Over 6,000 copies in circulation

APPENDIX 4



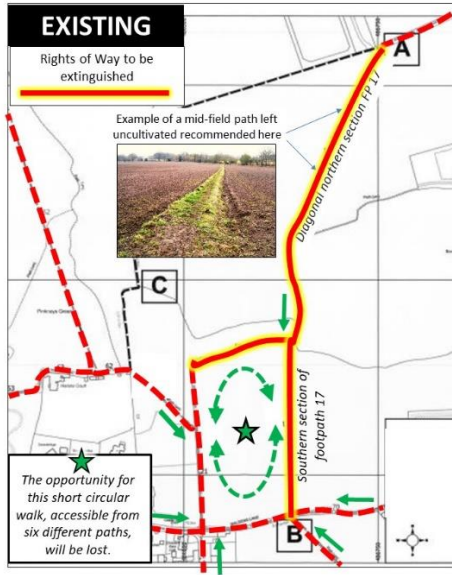
Extract from 2009 edition. 3,500 copies sold

First edition published in March 1972 (Price 10p)

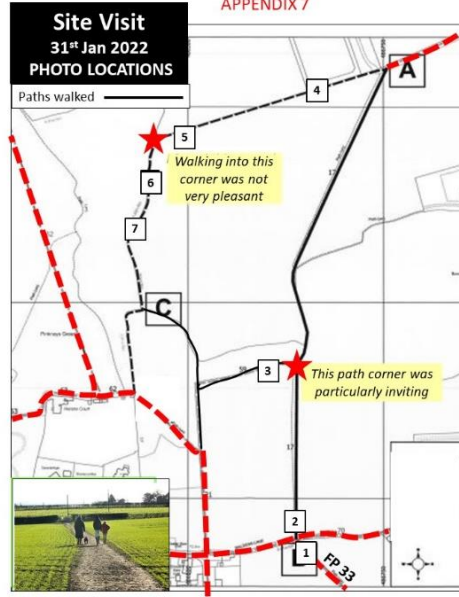
APPENDIX 5



APPENDIX 6



APPENDIX 7



At the junction of FP 33 with Moulders Lane, walkers would be unable to continue onto a path (FP 17) opposite.



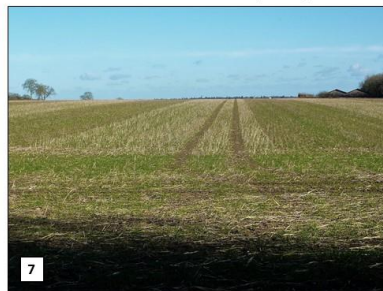
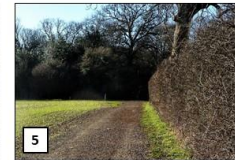
This is the southern end of FP 17. Currently firm, well used and almost 2 m wide - that would be extinguished.



This is looking west along a most attractive headland path. It is part of FP 59 that would be extinguished.



The diverted footpath is in effect a metalled roadway with evidence of vehicle use. It weaves its way around the very edge of the field with trees and a thick, high hedge to one side. The route along the western side is low and the view is completely lost. – see below.



Footpath diversion – Objection

Date: 1st February 2022

The proposed footpath diversion is open for consultation between 18th January 2022 and 18th February 2022. The footpaths concerned are shown on this extract from the Definitive Map No. 6.

Footpaths 17 and 59 (red) are proposed to be extinguished and replaced by the permissive footpath marked blue.



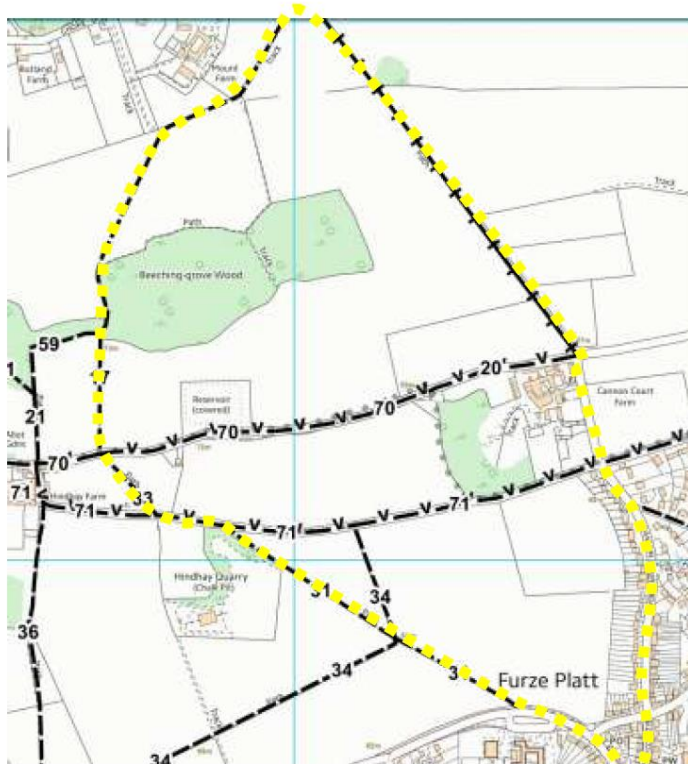
Map credit · © Ordnance Survey. Extract < 10%.

The objections

1. Amenity value

The footpaths are close to large population centres, at Furze Platt and the Cranbrook Road estate. They are part of a network of footpaths that connect well and have historically been heavily utilised (though see Objection 4). It is argued that the amenity value is sufficiently high to large numbers of people as to outweigh the benefits from simplifying the farming operations of the land.

The permissive path (blue above) is a valuable addition, for which I am grateful, and I do use it. It utilises land that was covered by field margin set-aside policies. The new path adds choice but extinguishing the original path would reduce options and connectivity. For instance, one of my regular circular walks follows the yellow line in the map.



2. Connectivity

This one small-scale alteration causes knock-on effects that could lead to other footpaths coming under threat.

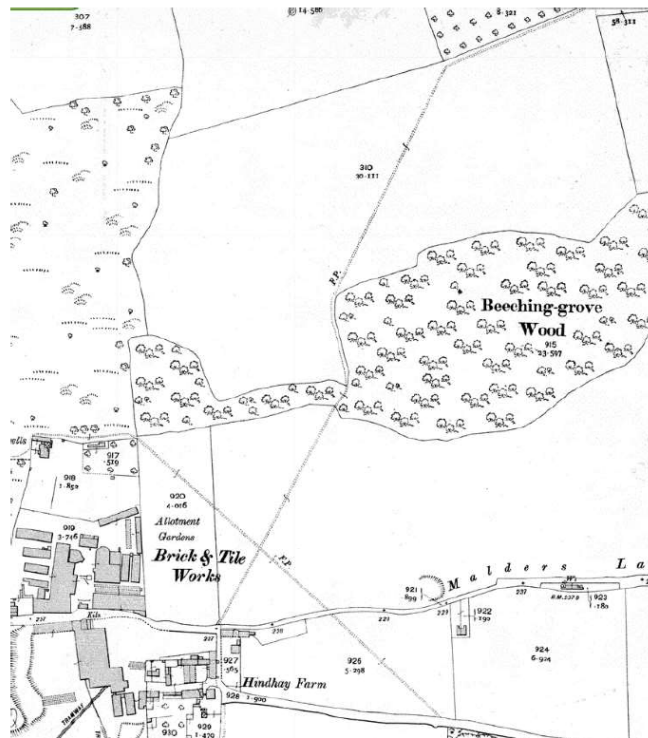
- Loss of footpath 17 would remove the logic for footpath 33 being retained
- Footpath 31 also crosses fields and creates complexity for farming the land. It has been noted that a permissive path has been added parallel to the quarry access road as a possible precursor to extinguishing footpath 31 in due course.

The landowners seem to have a propensity for making changes to public rights of way. The bridleway north from Cannon Court Farm was moved slightly to the west a few years ago and upgraded. A temporary car park at the north end was an amenity that was subsequently withdrawn.

3. History

Public rights of way are redolent of a history of people going about their daily lives. This path would have been used by workers from Cookham attending Cooper's brickworks, or visiting the pubs, or (in reverse) those living there attending church in Cookham. The evidence in the landscape should be respected. For instance, I admire the planners of Cranbrook Road estate for fitting a pre-existing footpath into their overall plan and doing it so well.

The current landowners are believed to have acquired the land at auction on 26th September 1938. The paths existed long before then and the landowners have had over 80 years to plan their farming practices to fit around the rights of way. The southern section was rerouted during their ownership (see OS map below), and it is not appropriate to alter historical public rights lightly or repeatedly.



Ordnance Survey 1911

4. Disruptive management practices

The landowner has engaged in farming practices and neglect that have made the footpath difficult to use. The result has been to push walkers towards using the permissive path, which has a hard surface. It gives a misleading impression of the choices walkers would make if the original path were maintained equally.

Specific issues are:

- The fields are ploughed annually. No effort is made to reinstate the path, so walkers end up cutting their own line. The footpath becomes muddy for long periods
- A tree fell from Beeching-grove wood in spring 2021, crossing (though not blocking) the path. For such a well-managed farm it is inconceivable that the tree would have been left there unless the aim was to skew the evidence of usage in connection with this application.

The photographs (taken 31st January 2022) illustrate that the path is well established and trafficked, nonetheless.



Looking south (top) and north (middle) on footpath 17 from Beeching-grove wood.

The fallen tree (bottom) crossing the path, showing a summer of diversionary walking around it.



<p>Community comments (Opposed to diversion)</p>	
<p>1. Cllrs Catherine del Campo and Joshua Reynolds (Furze Platt ward councillors)</p>	<p>Re: proposed diversions of footpaths 17 Cookham (part) and 59 Cookham (part): we have received a number of concerns from residents about the decision that was taken on 18th October which can be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety of lone walkers. Safety, particularly of women and girls, has come under the spotlight this year after a number of high-profile incidents, although the dangers are, of course, nothing new. In the same way that some women prefer to walk down the middle of a road, some prefer to walk along open footpaths rather than through or next to woodland. A person’s sex is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, which prevents bodies such as local authorities from behaving in a discriminatory manner. As the 18 October decision has the potential to reduce women’s safety and/or their perception of safety (and therefore their enjoyment of the route), we would almost certainly be in breach of the act. • Historical significance of the route. This is a path that has been trodden for many years and forms part of a network of interconnected pathways. Residents are concerned that not only will this important route be lost, but there will also be impact on other footpaths in the network. • Possible precursor to development. Now that the Borough Local Plan has been adopted, subject to challenge, it is hard to envisage a scenario where this site could be developed. However, residents are entitled to seek — and receive — assurances that this decision (if confirmed) will not benefit any future application. • Decision contradicts officers’ advice. At the time the decision was made, the voices in favour of the proposal were perhaps louder than those against. However, the purpose of this consultation is to give residents the chance to make their objections heard, and we urge the panel to reconsider the decision in the light of those objections and officers’ original recommendations. <p>The new path which is already in operation has been warmly received by some residents, and we suggest that old and new paths should remain open, giving residents the choice to take the less muddy route if they wish to and, therefore, minimising the impact of walkers’ boots on the field.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>I wish to strongly object to the proposed diversion of parts of Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham which wants to replace a well-established, pleasant rural path across open fields, for a much longer, hard surfaced farm track, shared with farm vehicles and cyclists.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Older and less physically able walkers will be particularly affected by the lengthening of the route. 2) The hard surface of the track is unpleasant underfoot due to the loose, sharp chippings which can find their way into the paws of dogs

	<p>3) Public Rights of Way are part of our heritage should be preserved and protected. They should not be subject to the unnecessary whim of whoever happens to be the current landowner.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>I am writing to oppose the proposed order on the following grounds.</p> <p>The section of footpath from Beeching Grove Woods to Mount Farm was a diversion made by Copas Farms some years ago at their request. The footpath previously followed Beeching Grove wood edge to the headland which now has two large Barns built on the corner where the original path then turned towards Mount Farm. It does not seem reasonable to change what was moved at their request.</p> <p>The current footpath connects to the rest of the footpath which runs across Hindhay Farm property and then across the field to Furze Platt. Apart from crossing directly over Malders Lane and Hindhay Lane this is a continuous path from Furze Platt to Cookham Dean. It is wrong to lose what is left of this direct footpath. The final stretch has already been moved at the request of Copas Farms. It originally crossed what has now become a small paddock in front of the Office Barns and ended by the large oak tree with a stile into Choke Lane.</p> <p>I hope you will be able to take these points into account when making a decision.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><u>Objection to:</u></p> <p>a) Footpath 59 Cookham (part) public path Diversion and Definitive map & statement modification order 2022</p> <p>b) Footpath 17 Cookham (part) public path Diversion and Definitive map & statement modification order 2022</p> <p>The permitted paths created by Copas Farm have been in place for some years. It is always a pleasure to have more footpath options. However, I feel it is disingenuous of The Copas organisation to say that in order to keep the permitted paths they have created the public must lose the rights of way indicated in a) and b) above. The permitted paths width and surface are also very convenient for farm vehicles, and I do not anticipate that the owners of the field will remove this facility even if the footpaths 17 and 59 are retained for their full length.</p> <p>At the Rights of Way meeting in 2021 when the proposed diversion of the Footpaths above was discussed much was made of the number of people who appear to be using the permitted paths suggesting they were an improvement for the walker's experience.</p> <p>Also, great play was made by the Copas representative, Mr Tom Copas about how muddy footpaths 17 and 59 become in less clement weather. It is therefore interesting and informative that the 2 public rights of way under threat are still heavily used even in muddy weather. Most walkers really don't mind that sort of going under foot. If people do any walking in the countryside, they wear appropriate footwear.</p>

	<p>In conclusion I object in the strongest terms to the unnecessary and unjustified closure of part of the well-used footpaths 17 and 59.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>I want to strongly object to the diversion of paths in the Mount Farm area because the suggested replacement makes the route to Cookham longer and diverts to a hard surface mainly in the shade. The choice of routes in the area is also restricted by removing 17/2 and 59/1</p> <p>The present open cross field path is a joy to walk with its expanding views across to Cliveden. The replacement field edge path keeps close to the wood, is on noisy, uncomfortable, urbanised scalplings and for much of the day is in the shade with restricted views so it becomes a much less enjoyable walk.</p> <p>The present path is the established direct route to Cookham linking up with footpath 32 on the other side of Long Lane. The suggested diversion makes the route to/from Cookham much longer and therefore is a disadvantage.</p> <p>If paths 59/1 and 17/2 disappear the footpath network will be much reduced. It would leave path 21/2 as the only north-south connection in the area. In a well walked area this is a great disadvantage. The choice of short circular routes will be severely cut, reducing the interest and variety of local walks.</p> <p>I have not seen any reason given why the cross field path is detrimental to farming practices. Apart from the care needed to avoid walkers when cultivating the fields I do not see any effect on farming or any expenses incurred.</p> <p>The applicant has stated that “this will also allow Beeching Grove Wood to be treated as a nature reserve with reduced public access”. This is irrelevant because Beeching Grove Wood is already treated as a nature reserve and there is no access for the public. Footpath17 passing one edge for about 50 metres has minimal impact on the wood.</p> <p>The creation of a new permitted route around the edge of the field has been popular during the wet weather when normal footpaths are muddy. However I don't think this justifies removing the right of way across the field.</p> <p>The longer route is being advertised as cycle path at Mount Farm. Again this could be popular and become a family off road cycle route. But this would be a drawback for dog walkers and family walkers as they would always have to expect bikes appearing suddenly. Keeping the option of the cross field path would reduce the potential clash of interests. Please keep the rights of way as they are, there is no valid reason to change them and I would be very disappointed to lose the established enjoyable routes.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>I would like to object to the plan as a principle to protect the rights of individuals to retain the use public footpaths and to close these would set a precedent to close other rights of way.</p> <p>In particular these paths are across open fields and afford peace and quiet and lovely views whereas the alternative is around the edge in shade with no views.</p>

	<p>I cannot find the place on the RBWM planning portal to object to this latest order so please add my continued objections to ensure that the Diversion Order is withdrawn.</p>
7.	<p>We moved to Maidenhead last year and have been enjoying our walks. It's unfortunate that this footpath is currently being reviewed and is being diverted. I object to this change. In order to get to the other side, now I need to go up hill and also go via residential properties which is not fair for those residents. Also, my dog and I enjoy these walks and rerouting this path, our walks are subject to cars, lorries and other vehicles which are no longer safer for the animals. Hence I object to this order.</p>
8.	<p>Objection to Footpath diversion. Yesterday we walked up Footpath 31 from Furze Platt to Hindhay Lane then west to FP33 and north along FP 33 to Malders Lane. We saw a notice on the gate to FP33 of a proposed diversion order. I have searched the RBWM website but cannot find the detail so am unable to quote any full reference from the notice. How do I find the detail online please? Could you look at making this easier for people to find details, e.g. add such applications to the planning map showing applications?</p> <p>In any event I am writing to object to this proposal if it is simply convenience for the landowner. This footpath has been in existence for as long as I can remember and is in frequent use. It provides a means to a circular walk back down Malders Lane and Cannon Court Road back to Furze Platt, or access to a longer walk to the north via FP17. If every such diversion application is to be approved, we will soon lose ever more of our traditional footpaths.</p>
9.	<p>I wish to strongly object to the proposed diversion of parts of Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham which wants to replace a well-established, pleasant rural path across open fields, for a much longer, hard surfaced farm track, shared with farm vehicles and cyclists.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Older and less physically able walkers will be particularly affected by the lengthening of the route. 2) The hard surface of the track is unpleasant underfoot due to the loose, sharp chippings which can find their way into the paws of dogs 3) Public Rights of Way are part of our ancient heritage should be preserved and protected. They should not be changed to suit the whim of whoever happens to be the current landowner.
10.	<p>I am emailing in regard to the proposed plan to close the public footpaths from Malders Lane over Copas farmland. I live in Furze Platt and am fortunate enough to use these paths on a daily basis – sometimes twice a day – and have done so for the last 7.5 years.</p> <p>I walk from my house to the entrance of the fields opposite Furze Platt Senior School and use a public footpath to cross the first field. I then use another public footpath to cross over the next field which takes me onto Hindhay Lane. Off Hindhay Lane I generally take the public footpath at the end of the quarry, across the next field, which crosses over Malders Lane and onto the beginning of the footpath which the council has now voted to abolish as the public right of way. Then back the other way until I am home and generally takes about an hour. I meet lots of people doing the same walks every day.</p> <p>I believe this is quite a damaging precedent to set - if the landowner of those first few fields which lead up to the Copas farmland makes the same request</p>

to abolish the public right of way over his fields I cannot see how the council could refuse. There would be no access other than either walking along the main roads or driving. Or walking along the single track roads which surround the fields, most are without footpaths and with limited to zero areas to move into when cars and cyclists need to pass. The traffic has increased on these roads since the barn conversions were completed at the end of Cannon Lane and Malders Lane (especially since lockdown and the increase in home deliveries). I cannot really understand why there is a need to remove the public right of way – when the fields are harvested those pathways don't get in the way, all that land is treated the same, with those footpaths retrodden by the public. I had assumed the council members who voted in favour of this actually visited the area so can see how it would reduce the access to public who use it from the Furze Platt side, but if that's the case I can't see how they would have reached this decision.

When Copas 'improved' the pathways to the outer edges of part of the farmland, the notices asked users to scan a barcode to comment on how much they enjoy the new paths, it didn't ask for opinions on the enjoyment of the other pathways. I personally do not consider these pathways to be 'improved'. The original pathways were created by footfall but are now covered in tar and gravel whereas the ones planned for closure are still as they should be.

It is a shame these pathways are being opened up as proposed cycle paths when there is already plenty of areas to cycle while the areas for walkers is being reduced. This cycle path is no more than a cut through taking cyclists off the main Winter Hill Road to the top of Long Lane.

I would like to appeal the decision and would appreciate the decision to be forwarded to Central Government for review.

I would also like to point out when entering path B at Malders Lane a tree that has blown over and from the entrance of path B it looks as though the pathway is blocked at the point it meets the woods onto path A. The tree came down sometime in November (I started taking photos 7th December before any official signs were placed behind the tree. It is only if you walk down the path you can see there is access around the tree and have visibility of the most recent signs which have been pinned to the fence behind the tree (I have attached a photo which I took this week showing the tree with the public signs pinned behind it. The signs were not in place at the time the tree came down in November)

I would also like to add, in my experience, very few cyclists slow down when approaching and if I have asked anyone to stop allowing me to put my dog on a lead out of harm's way, I have been met with abuse most of the time. As cyclists are now using the area shown on your map as a dotted line from the other point of entry at Malders Lane, footpath 21, onto paths D and C I have even come across some using the paths in the woods as a cut through (I assume the councillors who made the decision must have visited so would know what area I am talking about) – the woods run from next to path 21, D and C are have a few pathways that cut through to Winter Hill Road.

11.	<p>Re: Notice of Making an Order dated 17th January 2022: Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham Public Path & Definitive Map & Statement Modification Order 2022</p> <p>With regard to the above Order, we would like to make representation in relation to this. Whilst we appreciate the landowners concerns regarding access across their land and any issues relating to this where members of the public stray from the designated footpaths involved. We are disappointed that these two public footpaths will be closed.</p> <p>Our concerns relate to the alternative paths which are hardcore and used by cyclists and runners as well as walkers with/without dogs/children etc. When we use these new paths regrettably the behaviour of cyclists and some runners is very poor and often dangerous where cyclists are speeding along, no warning bell or shouting that they are coming through from behind, we then have to jump aside into either the hedge or the field itself. Runners are often two or three abreast and will not split into single file. If we or others do say anything in a friendly way is usually returned with unpleasant comment. This is not one-offs but on a regular occurrence and very unpleasant especially during the ongoing Covid situation. At least when using footpaths 17 and 59 as walkers we get some relief from this. Like the majority of the public walking dogs we keep them under control especially around other people as we all want to benefit and get peaceful enjoyment from our local countryside which we are lucky to have on our doorstep.</p> <p>The above outlines our concerns and we would respectfully ask that you take these into consideration, thank you for your attention.</p>
12.	<p>The plans provided by the landowner describes the diverted FP 17 path as a cycleway. It would be multiuser and used by farm traffic. The exchange of two walker's footpaths for an existing permitted surfaced path that will also be used by cyclists and farm machinery is not acceptable to me. The permitted paths do not offer the views across the local countryside that Footpaths 17 and 59 do. The Royal Borough states that the Diversion Orders are made in the interests of the landowner and the public. I fail to see any way in which the Orders are in the interests of the public who enjoy a walk on our local footpaths.</p> <p>I agree with the views of the professional officers and object to the proposed diversion. I hope that the Royal Borough will on reflection overturn the Orders.</p>
13.	<p>Your email address was given to me by my neighbour as I wanted to add my objection to the proposed division of the footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham.</p> <p>I understand that there is a plan to divert Footpaths 17 and 59, to replace a well-established and pleasant rural path across open fields, for a much longer, hard surfaced farm track, one that will be shared with farm vehicles and cyclists.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Older and less physically able walkers will be particularly affected by the lengthening of the route. 2) The hard surface of the track is unpleasant underfoot due to the loose, sharp chippings which can find their way into the paws of dogs and cause injury.

	<p>3) Public Rights of Way are part of our heritage and as such they should be preserved and protected. They should not be subject to the unnecessary whim of whoever happens to be the current landowner.</p>
14.	<p>I am writing to object to this diversion - in line with the council officer's recommendation not to divert. Please can you ensure my view is reflected in the final decision.</p>
15.	<p>Re: Cookham copas footpath 17 and 59: I don't usually complain to changes in planning but this one I feel I must put in an objection. Hope this is the right place? I understand the plan to remove the footpath is going ahead. I would like to put in my objection having walked the paths often for the past 23 years, it will be a sad loss to the area. Despite the farmer ploughing the path up every year, it provides a welcome route around the Fields between Cookham and Furze Platt. Additionally the signage to object was very difficult as the cleverly placed QR code only gave the option to support the change. Look forward to your comments.</p>
16.	<p>I have walked these fields for over 40 years and enjoy them immensely. Copas purchased these field a few years back knowing that the footpaths were in existence. My objections still remain:</p> <p>Although the Copas' have provided all weather paths around some of the perimeter of the proposed diverted fields, it is a much longer walk and the access across the field provides a quicker alternative. Not everyone has the luxury in the morning to undertake a longer walk or is able to physically. I wouldn't object so much if they permitted access to all the perimeter of the fields, i.e. near the wooded areas.</p> <p>I appreciate during the winter months the path across the fields does become impassable at times, this has been exasperated over the last couple of year with the sheer volume of people out walking due to Covid, but it is also hampered at times with the farm machinery ploughing the field also plough up the paths [if they were left the soil would become compacted], which then makes it difficult to walk over. Other paths in the vicinity are not ploughed and walking in all weathers is easier.</p> <p>If this application was permitted, I feel it would set a precedent for other applications in the area for example MAID/33/1 and possible application to build on, should greenbelt restrictions be relaxed.</p> <p>There are rumours that anyone logging onto the QR code, unknowingly automatically gave their approval for the diversion. I do not know how true it is but needs to be investigated.</p>
17.	<p>Thank you for sending these through. In response to these consultation Notices and Orders for the proposed diversion of Footpaths 17 and 59 I have the following comments that support my strong objection to the proposal to divert these paths. I also have a question for you which is noted at the end of this communication.</p> <p>The new paths will be substantially less convenient to the public and will affect the public enjoyment of the paths and routes that they link up for the following reasons;</p>

	<p>The current paths are pleasant rural paths, for pedestrians only, affording good views and linking up with other long established footpaths. The existing paths are unmade and used only by walkers. The proposed diversions around the edge of the fields are already made up with hardcore and scalping and it is proposed that they will be used by cyclists as well as pedestrians. Providing field edge hardcore paths wide enough for farm traffic does not provide an acceptable or justified alternative to diverting the existing paths with loss of views and opportunity to walk on unmade footpaths without cyclists, horses or farm machinery.</p> <p>The applicant cites one reason for diversion of the footpaths is to allow for more economic farming practices. This should not be taken as a justification for removing footpaths and would set a dangerous precedent for any future applications where footpaths cross the centre of fields.</p> <p>The small section of footpath 17 that passes through Beeching Grove Wood makes up a part of the overall pleasant to use unmade footpath. The wood itself has already been fenced off with wire fences, barbed wire and padlocked gates, along with signs that the land is private. This approach is more than enough to protect a nature reserve and the very short section of path that would be lost with the diversion proposal allows walkers to observe nature up close, listen to the birds and other wildlife. The area would be very unwelcoming if the landowner was able to encircle the whole area with barbed wire, locked gates and privacy notices following the diversion as proposed coming into effect. To approve this diversion would effectively remove remaining public rights of way around Beeching Grove Wood.</p> <p>The permitted path runs around the field edge and lengthens the route between Malders Lane and Long Lane. Although this extension to the route is not particularly great, it completely alters the nature of the walk, views and enjoyment afforded by the existing paths.</p> <p>I trust that the above comments will be taken into account by the panel when considering these proposals. Will members of the public be allowed to speak at the Panel meeting on March 14th?</p> <p>Finally, I noted in the Modification of Definitive Statement a recorded width of 4.0M for section A-D in Modification Order 259. Could you give me some further clarification on this as I can only see widths of 3.0m referred to in other sections of the documents. Many thanks, I look forward to hearing from you on the above points.</p>
18.	<p>I would like to object to removing the existing footpaths Cook/17/1 and Cook/17/2 and Cook/59/1. It is used by me and others daily, it is safe as it doesn't allow cycles and other vehicles on it. The proposed route will be less safe for walkers as it allows motor vehicles, electric bicycles and cycles endangering pedestrians and dogs.</p>
19.	<p>I would like to register my extreme objection to the proposed rerouting of footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham due to my right to roam on these existing and adequate paths. I have reported the intention to the Ramblers Association.</p>
20.	<p>I am writing to oppose the amendments to the above mentioned footpaths. These have given public access for almost 200 years and are a favoured route</p>

	<p>for local residents. Corralling walkers around the edge of the fields gives an entirely different experience. Also, the landowner only provided notice if how to support the footpath amendments and not how to object - a low strategy in my opinion.</p>
<p>21.</p>	<p>I don't disagree that in some cases it is necessary or beneficial to divert a public footpath. However I strongly oppose the proposal to divert Cookham footpaths 17/1 and 17/2 for a number of reasons.</p> <p>Having walked these two paths regularly over many years, I can confidently say that they are walked and enjoyed by walkers, dog walkers, and families with children of all ages. People often choose these paths over the surfaced, sometimes drier, certainly longer, and definitely duller alternative route created by the late Mr Copas some years ago. If muddy, we simply put on our boots or wellies because that's what you do if you're walking in the countryside. If there is a concern about losing crops due to the muddy footpaths and walkers spreading out onto the crop, I would suggest the farmer leaves the path unploughed as some other farmers do, not difficult with modern tractors with GPS. If Mr Copas prefers, he could keep the permitted paths in place as well as 17/1 and 17/2, and if muddy, he could sign walkers to the permitted path when he thinks it necessary as he did last year, and some may choose to use the permitted paths.</p> <p>These open paths undoubtedly offer a substantially better and more convenient walking experience than the newer permitted path. As you walk, a panorama slowly emerges across the fields and woods in all directions, walking north to south, with views over the woods towards Maidenhead, and south to north, across to Cliveden. In the early morning and late afternoon the light is exceptional. The permitted path in contrast, creeps around the edge of the field and much of it, even in summer, is in shade for much of the day. It is also considerably longer and so less convenient. I'm not the only woman who feels safer crossing the middle of a field rather than the permitted path next to the woods.</p> <p>It is unclear to me how removing these paths would, and I quote, <i>"allow Beeching Grove wood to be treated as a nature reserve with reduced public access"</i>. The section of path that goes past the wood is very short. It's already clearly out of bounds with signs stating "Private Woods. No Public Access". There is an iron padlocked gate with barbed wire at the top of the gate to deter. In 30 years I have never seen anyone in the woods. Additionally I was very surprised at the proposal to create a new footpath, 2 metres wide, in Little Beeching Wood which Mr Copas admits would involve cutting down trees. Surely anybody with a passing concern for the environment would agree that we need to protect the mature trees that we already have.</p> <p>Mr Copas stated that a reason for his application is the creation of a longer circular route. I do <u>not</u> believe this is needed. The footpath and bridle path network is already good, quite possibly the best in the borough, and it's already easy, by using existing paths 17/1 and 17/2, to create walks of different lengths literally north, south, east, and west, i.e. to Cookham, to Furze Platt, to Cannon Court Road, and to Pinkney's Green. By removing 17/1 and 17/2, a beautiful</p>

	<p>link path with open views would be replaced by a longer, dull and certainly inferior walk.</p> <p>The deletion of these pleasant rural paths (17/1 and 17/2) and replacing them with the newer permitted hedge hugging hard surfaced tracks would mean that walkers, many with children or more usually dogs, would need to share proposed the paths with cyclists and probably with farm vehicles. This is far from ideal from a safety point of view for obvious reasons. The permitted hard surfaced tracks already allow cyclists to travel at speed (I've witnessed this). Why not simply keep these permitted tracks for those that want to use them, but do not delete 17/1 and 17/2. Some years ago when I met the late Tom Copas, he said he could not maintain all the paths for walkers. It's unclear why as the permitted hard tracks around the field edges appear to be used by farm machinery anyway and so would be maintained even if not used by walkers. Many landowners and farmers across the country have long standing public footpaths crossing their land, often by the most direct route and the landowners have respected these. If this application is accepted, it gives the green light to landowners and farmers that a public footpath can be diverted simply because it is less convenient for them.</p>
22.	<p>As a local resident, I'd like to register my objection to the proposed cessation of Right of Way for the above paths. This has been a RoW for two centuries and I am concerned both on account of the loss of a historic path but also the precedent which this sets. This is an important path from the town to some ancient woodlands and enjoyed by many people and walkers. I feel this is surely a precursor to selling off the land ahead of a planning application to build houses on an area of greenbelt land.</p>
23.	<p>I would like it noted I strongly object to the proposed closure or redirection of the footpaths across the fields opposite Furze Platt senior school. As a resident of Maidenhead for all of my 57 years I have walked across these fields many times. It's a place of peace and tranquillity and outstanding beauty the footpaths all join up to make a large or small circular walk. They were there long before I was born. We are losing Green Belt land which our government has vowed to protect and I feel the closure or redirection of these ancient footpaths would only lead to more being eroded. For the sake of Residents mental and physical wellbeing these footpaths should remain as they are as they have always been.</p>
24.	<p>I am writing to register my objection to the proposed closure of some of the footpaths in the fields across from Furze Platt school. My family home is in Cranbrook Drive and my parents have lived there for nearly 30 years: we continue to enjoy many walks through those fields. Having been a right of way for 200 years, why change now and deter families from visiting.</p>
25.	<p>This is the beginning of the end to the right to walk across open ground? Move by landowner to close footpaths across open fields. Is awful and shouldn't be allowed to happen. Despite the report recommendation of the council's officer, the council's Rights of Way Panel has moved to close footpaths across some of the fields opposite Furze Platt Senior school. This removes the right (held for nearly 200 years) to walk across open fields, but forces walkers to be corralled around the periphery. A very different experience and sets a precedent to re-route many similar paths. I am really against this as we need our green spaces especially near schools to improve air pollution levels. It's a lovely walk to do and such a shame if we lose it.</p>

26.	I am writing to object to the proposed diversion of parts of Footpaths 17 & 59 Cookham. As a local resident I have used these footpaths for over 20 years, and regularly use them for family walks with my 3 children. I am also concerned that this paves the way for the area to be built on, which would have negative impact on the area, and set a worrying precedent.
27.	I am writing to express my concern and objection regarding the proposed closure and diversion of parts of the footpaths opposite Furze Platt school where I am a regular dog walker. I do not wish to see closure and diversion on these footpaths. I believe this will set a precedence in the Borough as well as leading to more building on green belt land where residents enjoy the land for exercise and socialising.
28.	I hope you are well. I would like to object against the proposed diversion of footpaths in the Royal Borough.
29.	I would like to oppose the closure of some of the footpaths and using the footpaths are a huge help to ensuring people are able to explore the countryside and also this can help with mindfulness and mental help.
30.	I am writing to contest the proposed removal of the right of way along these footpaths which have been prescribed for over 200 years.
31.	I use these footpaths frequently and I feel the public consultation has not been well publicised- many people walk these routes. Thank you for noting my objections.
32.	<p>I would like to object to the proposed closure of the current right of way on Mount Farm and the introduction of a new path layout. While the introduction of the edge-hugging permitted path has some benefits it should not be at the detriment of the existing footpath, which offers superior views and is of historical significance.</p> <p>At a time when RBWM look to encourage residents to explore and enjoy the area's countryside, they should not dissuade them in partaking in physical activity by removing such beautiful walks. As such, I believe the application must be refused, in accordance with the officer's recommendations.</p>
33.	Please register my objection to close off the paths across the fields around Cookham.
34.	<p>Proposed diversion of public footpaths 17 and 59: I wish to state my objection to the diversion (removal) of footpaths numbers 17 and 59 across farmland which I understand to be owned by Tom Copas. I frequently use both these footpaths while taking exercise in the locality and fully enjoy the additional 'openness' offered by these footpaths across this area of land. The loss, and I do believe it to be a loss, not just a diversion onto the perimeter track to this area of farmland would in my mind be an unnecessary act with only minimal increase in the output of the land.</p> <p>I am 75 years old and the loss of these footpaths would limit me to either using the full perimeter track which I would not wish to do in its entirety at my age and I would not wish to have to walk so far on this track before turning round and retracing my footsteps.</p> <p>I am also concerned that this may only be the beginning of the subtle closing of the footpaths directly across the farmland in the area. I speak particularly about the footpath that starts opposite the Furze Platt senior school and</p>

	<p>travels in a North Westerly direction across farmland towards the quarry, before joining Hindhay Lane. Is this the next footpath to be diverted?</p> <p>I trust that the above statement of objection will be taken into account when making a final decision regarding these footpaths and that the Secretary of State will fully take regard of similar objections of which I am sure there will be many, before making a decision.</p>
35.	<p>It has come to my attention that there's plans in place to divert parts of Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham. I would like to OBJECT this as it removes the right (held for nearly 200 years) to walk across open fields, forcing walkers to be corralled around the periphery. My family and I use that path every week and during lockdown we used it every day.</p> <p>There's already far too many new houses in Maidenhead. This increases the burden on public services and as far as I've seen, there's never any improvement to infrastructure, additional schools or doctor's surgeries. What I want to understand what the council is doing to ensure developers also put in those measures and actually give back to our town? How many new schools and amenities have been built as a result of all the additional Shanley homes for instance?</p>
36.	<p>I would like to raise an objection to the proposed diversion of these footpaths given that these are historic rights of way. I agree with the officers in relation to this application that the diversion of these footpaths "would result in the loss of the sense of 'openness' and wide-ranging views that can be enjoyed from these sections of footpath". It has been apparent during the last 2 years that out open spaces are needed more than ever and that we need to increase access to open space and wide ranging views withing this area of the borough.</p>
37.	<p>I am writing to place my sincere objections to the closure of part of these footpaths beside Hindhay Farm. I have been lucky enough to live nearby for the past 12 years and my son has grown up here. We walk this route I walked as a child pretty much daily, as many others do and have done for the past 200 years.</p> <p>The field nearest the farm is my biggest objection as I see many elderly or very young able to enjoy this shorter circuit. The freedom you feel in the fields cannot be replaced by a wandering wood, which they have tried to implement. Many people are more afraid of walking in the woods and keep away, but being in a field such as these 2 gives people the great physical and mental wellbeing everyone deserves. I can see how awful the past 2 years have been with the field further away from the farm with people not sticking to the path, but this has been the same all over, again the cut through the field allows less abled people to still enjoy part of the countryside and do a circular walk.</p> <p>The paths that have been made around these fields have been labelled as bike paths now as well. They now have so many bikes at weekends ploughing through walkers with no regard of young, old or loose dogs enjoying the space and quite frankly has made it dangerous to walkers. Without the cut through the fields we have no escape from the cyclists.</p> <p>I do hope you will forward my objections and help keep our footpaths open.</p>

38.	I am writing to protest the changing of footpaths 17 to 59, this crosses a wonderful set of fields with stunning views and is so uplifting to see the skyline and views. These footpath changes are most likely ahead of housing on green belt land, which is appalling. This council must stop building on open spaces and continue to focus on re generation within the town centre on brown belt. Please lodge my objection to the path changes.
39.	I would like to object to the proposal to divert the current footpaths. I also object to any proposals to cut down trees in the nearby wood.
40.	I would like to advise you of my objection to the proposed closure of footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham, these paths are used frequently and should remain open to the public as they have done so for over 200 years.
41.	<p>I am writing to object to plans to divert parts of footpaths 17 and 59 and have the following points to make. I understand, from what has been shared online, that the change is part of plans to eventually build houses on the land. I had a quick look on the council's site but haven't found any more information. The council has already pushed through plans to sell off Maidenhead Golf Course and build far more houses than we actually need in Maidenhead, persisting in using out of date figures because they the real reason is that they need the money. RBWM has refused to acknowledge this despite the overwhelming evidence of RBWM's debt. But all this means it makes no sense to pave the way for further housing.</p> <p>I strongly object to the landowner's methods to gain support. Only giving walkers on the current routes the opportunity to support the plans, not object to them, leads to results that are of questionable use, at the least. They are too biased in favour of the proposals to be used as part of any fair planning consultation. Why would walkers using the current paths want to discourage their use? Unfortunately, I have been unable to see this for myself as I'm currently self-isolating with confirmed Covid-19. But I only found out about this today and wanted to have my say. Thank you for reading, and I trust that the right decision can be made.</p>
42.	I strongly object to the council removing the right (held for nearly 200 years) to walk across these open fields, and forcing walkers around the periphery.
43.	<p>One of the criteria when considering a proposed new route for a footpath is the effect the division will have on public enjoyment of the path as a whole. I recently walked the cross field section of Footpath17/1 from Beeching-grove wood towards Mount farm. The effect as you come into the open is like film camera panning the valley. First you see Hedsor Priory and then, as you pass over the field your view pans backwards down the valley taking in Cliveden, the house and finally the park toward Taplow. The vista of the entire Thames Valley can be taken in as you cross the field. If you take the alternate path following the new route along the western boundary of the field all you can see is a few tree tops and then the northern boundary has a large hedge blocking all views north. There is no comparison.</p> <p>During the Rights of Way meeting held on Monday, 18th October to discuss the footpath diversion, one of the panel I commented that footpath 17/1: "didn't go anywhere". Not true. I have been walking this path and adjacent paths for over thirty years. The walk across the field via footpath 17/1 to the walnut trees in Mount Farm on the northern boundary of the field from my house near St Mark's hospital, takes around an hour and a half there and back</p>

	<p>and makes a fine afternoon walk. You can also continue the walk crossing Long Lane, taking Spring Lane up to Cookham Dean or through the turkey farm and then back through the woods to Pinkneys Green. It was clear that many members of the panel were not regular walkers of this path and indeed some of them admitted they had made a flying visit and canvassed the views of a few of the walkers there at the time.</p> <p>What I am trying to convey is that footpath 17/1 across the field to Mount Farm is an integral part of the walk and contains the finest views in the whole walk, in fact it is the very reason I take that route in the first place. Trudging around the edge of the field is no substitute and spoils the whole experience.</p>
44.	<p>I am writing to strongly object to the proposed diversion of these footpaths across open scenic and safe countryside. These footpaths are safe and have existed and been used by walkers for many years, and there is no reason to now remove them, or even divert them to the edge of dark woods where visibility is very much reduced.</p> <p>I would also request that, as the Copas family now have permission for a new livery yard at the bottom of Long Lane, very near these footpaths, that they consider opening it up as a bridlepath to link in with the Cookham Bridleway circuit and safe passage from Hindhay Farm on Malders Lane Farm and the Switchback Road. This would provide safe and traffic free access for riders from Pinkneys Green, Maidenhead Thicket and Cookham. The current route up a narrow and unsafe route of Long Lane, or Switchback Road both have to negotiate fast traffic with very limited visibility up Long Lane.</p>
45.	<p>I understand that there is a proposal to close some footpaths opposite Furze Platt school and wish to register my objections to the plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These paths are regularly used by walkers, who enjoy the right to walk across open space; 2. The ability to lodge objections as easily as comments to support the application have been thwarted by using a QR code on a prominent notice that only registers support - an underhand tactic; 3. I understand that the report from the Council's officer did not support the closures and the Right of Way panel overturned the recommendation; and 4. That if this goes ahead, it sets an alarming precedent for maintaining access to open country. <p>I would appreciate these objections listed in this email being taken into account as there seems to be no other formal method to lodge them.</p>
46.	<p>I am writing to object to the proposed diversion of parts of Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham. The freedom of walking on existing paths at the edge of Maidenhead is really valuable to people's well-being.</p>
47.	<p>I strongly oppose the closure of any footpaths which are currently open in the Royal Borough.</p>
48.	<p>I am very much against the diversion of Footpaths 17/1 and 17/2 (Point A to Point B) to be replaced with the new paths (currently permitted.) Paths 17/1 and 17/2 are popular with walkers of all ages, particularly dog walkers, throughout the year. Both public footpaths offer fantastic, and I believe unique, open views across the Thames to Cliveden and Taplow as well as to Maidenhead. The proposed diversion, currently a permitted path, (Point A to Point B) is a wider hard surface, less rural and with no significant views at all as it hugs the field edge and is often in shade. The proposal is to share it with</p>

	<p>cyclists and presumably farm machinery (as now). Sharing a path with cyclists is rarely an improvement for walkers (and dogs) as there is a constant need to watch out for them as they often pass at speed from behind.</p> <p>These existing public footpaths (17/1 and 17/2) are also more direct than the proposed route.</p> <p>The hard surface track A to C to D already exists as a farm track. To continue to allow the public to use it as it is would therefore result in no additional cost to the landowner. Footpaths 17/1 and 17/2 are clearly popular and pleasanter paths for many walkers, as evidenced by their use.</p> <p>The argument that the path should be diverted to improve farming practices is dangerous, and not just for residents of the RBWM. Hundreds of footpaths nationally cross landowners' fields. Approving this particular diversion could indicate that any landowner has a good chance of deleting or diverting a footpath and substituting it with an inferior path for no other reason than convenience.</p>
49.	<p>I would like to object to these diversions on the following grounds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. These paths have been in regular use by local residents for many, many years. They have not fallen into disuse. They are popular and an important source of recreation for many. Their diversion will tear up another piece of local heritage and history. 2. The alternatives proposed are longer and do not provide the feeling of space, the amenity or the views of the current paths. 3. There has been extremely poor publicity about these proposed changes, and this has not allowed adequate public debate. In the interests of local democracy this must be rectified as a matter of urgency. 4. It is hard to see how the presence of these established paths is in any way seriously detrimental to the agricultural use of the fields around them.
50.	<p>I wish to object to the suggested alterations to the above footpath for these reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Replacing the circular walk with a much longer one would affect the elderly and people with limited physical abilities. 2. Removing the alternative path will force people into close proximity when they all have to use the same route, which will inevitably cause frictions, especially with the existing Covid danger and people wishing to maintain some distance from others. 3. People with nervous dogs will have a limited ability to avoid other dog walkers if everyone is shepherded into one circular route. 4. The field only changed hands a couple of years ago. The buyer purchased it with the existing rights of way. Their wish to alter the route demonstrates extreme lack of consideration to tradition and public rights. 5. I'd like to mention that the map you use to illustrate the plan is incorrect as the section of Malders Lane which borders the field is not a public footpath.
51.	<p>I would like to formally object to the proposed diversion of Footpaths 17 & 59 Cookham and plans for diversions to pathways opposite Furze Platt Senior School. These are critical paths used by the community to access the school and surrounding communities. Not to mention their outstanding value for exercise and general well-being of the community - especially important over</p>

	<p>the last two years. With so much construction and change to our landscapes planned for other areas in the borough, it is so important to preserve these paths for the community who rely on them. The community has happily used the paths for over 200 years, without disruption to farming and it is important to uphold this right we have to enjoy our countryside.</p>
52.	<p>Please add my name to those objecting to the diversion of Footpaths 17 & 59 Cookham and all plans for path diversions in the Furze Platt area. These are frequently used, and important paths used by our community. Diversions will lengthen the route and impact many users of these paths. Access to these paths is a long held right of this community and we should not be so hasty to give up the rights of the community to our countryside - especially at a time where so much of it is threatened by development in the borough. Thank you for your consideration and support to preventing these diversions.</p>
53.	<p>I object to rerouting the path through these fields. I can't explain how important this walking route is to many, many people and myself. It has helped me personally during times of being really unwell, a walk I couldn't live without and to hear that it could be taken away is just devastating. It is just like an amazing back garden for me as it is so close to my home. We need it in our lives! I truly hope you will consider all of our objections.</p>
54.	<p>I was very concerned to read about the diversion of footpaths across the fields by Hindhay Farm and Furze Platt School. Maidenhead is fast becoming the town no one wants to visit. The continued restrictions of passage over the countryside is destroying the town and making it a pass-through town rather than a destination.</p> <p>People in Maidenhead have enjoyed passage across the fields for more than 200 years and the restricting and corralling of people in the proposed manner clearly has only one objective - to ultimately sell off the land to allow development - more houses in an already very busy part of town, driving more dangerous traffic towards a school area. This type of approach by the landowner will set a dangerous precedent - restricting the general public from enjoying land which has had rights of passage over for many years.</p> <p>There has also been an extremely unfair play by the landowner, placing a QR code for scanning which only allowed a positive and supportive response to the proposal.</p>
55.	<p>I am writing to object to the Proposed Diversion of parts of Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham. As a resident for more than 20 years I have often used these paths for recreational walks. To change the route from across the field to the periphery will greatly reduce the amenity of this area and sets a precedent to reroute many similar paths in the Borough.</p>
56.	<p>I strongly object to the diversion of footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham and would like to register that. It is clear from the council meetings that this is not clear cut, and I would like to add my voice to those who object.</p>
57.	<p>I'd like to object to the proposed diversion of parts of Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham. The main reason is the change from a public right of way to a private footpath which can be removed at any time by the landowner. This also sets a dangerous precedent for other landowners to apply to change public rights of way.</p>
58.	<p>I wanted to take this opportunity to express my concern at the diversion of footpaths 17 and 59 in Cookham. I really do feel that the rights of local</p>

	residents to enjoy our countryside are being disregarded to allow an easy life for developers. I really hope this move can be prevented.
59.	Hello, I would like to register my opposition to the proposed footpath diversion. We are regular users of the paths in question and believe strongly that they are a vital community resource and essential to our community wellbeing.
60.	<p>I should like to object to the proposed diversions of footpaths 17 and 59. Any alteration to the footpath network should provide benefits to both the landowner and users of the footpath network. Clearly this proposal is to the benefit of the landowner, but benefit to footpath users is disputed, with opinions both for and against. My view is that the diversion would result in a reduction in the variety of paths available, with the removal of a route through woodland and crossing open fields, and therefore have a negative effect on public enjoyment of the footpath network.</p> <p>The diversion has been promoted by the landowner as providing a "new" path around the field perimeters. However, there has been a permissive path around the field perimeters for at least a decade. Whilst this permissive path currently has no legal standing, the current proposal would de facto result in a reduction in footpaths available for public use.</p> <p>It's my understanding that the landowner has concerns, quite reasonably, about walkers trespassing onto crops because the current path can get extremely muddy after spells of wet weather, and passage then becomes difficult. However, a seemingly simple solution to this would be for the landowner to improve the surface of the muddy section, using material such as that used on the permissive path around the field perimeter. I do not feel that sufficient effort has been made to remedy the problem to justify diversion of the current right of way.</p>
61.	Please can I register my opposition to the removal of paths 17 and 59 in Cookham. I live in Pinkneys Green and these footpaths through wonderful countryside are my route into Furze Platt, and Cookham. Thus avoiding a busy and polluting road with my small dog. I also think that closure of these paths sets a dangerous precedent for future inappropriate building on Green Belt countryside. I would be very grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this, and confirm that it will be counted as an 'against' vote.
62.	<p>Thank you for the consultation notices and orders to divert paths COOK/17/1, COOK/17/2 and 59 Cookham. I have the following comments I would like taken into account:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Whilst the hard-surfaced portion of the permitted path is much used during the very wet months, I observed (last winter) many people also use the routes which are proposed to be moved as soon as the drier weather arrived in February. This indicates there are people which value the route across 'open fields' in spite of the new perimeter route. During a 5-minute run across the field route in drier weather, I passed 3 people walking the cross-field route and 2 walking the perimeter route. This supports my view that when conditions permit, it is preferable to maintain the right of way across the fields since this is a significantly nicer walk across an open field compared to being re-directed around the periphery.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. If this application is allowed to proceed I believe it will set a precedent for further similar applications, for example, to re-route other open-country/cross-field routes such as MAID/33/1 opposite Furze Platt Senior School which is used by many residents. 3. If this application is allowed to proceed there is also a future threat that applications to build on the land will be easier should greenbelt restrictions be eased 4. If this application is allowed to proceed, there is a risk that the owner may eventually fence in the footpaths and the paths will become more like lanes corralling walkers along hedged or fenced corridors- this is already evident on some routes. 5. If the current permitted route around the field remains, then the pressure on the cross-field route will be reduced and there will be less economic loss to the owner since during the wettest months walkers may choose the perimeter route - I would therefore suggest that both routes should remain. In any case, the width of the damage to the crops will be generally less in non-Covid restriction times as there is abnormally high traffic during Covid-restrictions 6. It was suggested in the October panel meeting that there had been more comments in support than objections. I suggest this results from the fact that the applicant erected prominent notices displaying a QR code, making it very easy for comments in support of his application whereas, there was only a small reference to the general RBWM website for those that wished to object. Even now despite there being an email address it is still easier to use the QR code. <p>In summary, I strongly object to the order to re-route the paths and believe the Panel should withdraw the order.</p>
63.	<p>Dear Sharon, please register my objection to the proposed diversion of parts of footpath 17 and 59 in Cookham. The proposal will diminish the enjoyment and utility of the paths and I totally agree with the criticisms voiced by various objectors during the meeting of the rights of way and highway licencing panel on the 18th of October 2021.</p>
64.	<p>I am writing to list my objection to the application "Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham: diversion application".</p> <p>Primarily, my objection falls in the line with the appointed expert's recommendation. The Parks and Countryside officers view is to refuse the proposal on the grounds that the proposed diversion did not meet the essential criteria needed to justify footpaths change of route, both in terms of the 'convenience' test and the 'enjoyment' test, and therefore a recommendation had been put forward in the report to refuse the application. A permitted footpath may work in conjunction with the established footpaths and appropriate signage, but must not be in replacement of.</p> <p>I would also argue that the replacement of an established 200-year-old footpath with a permitted footpath is not a like-for-like and comes with an access risk, as well as other risks listed below. Most significantly, a permitted footpath can be closed at any time at the discretion of the landowner. While the current landowner may state they have local interest in mind, this may change with opinion or new ownership and it poses a great risk to place control of access to the Cookham and surrounding countryside walking network in a private individual's hands.</p>

The interest of the local were reflected in not only the officers' recommendations, but also local bodies set up to protect Cookham and its environs interests as well as wider organisations: the Parish Council, the Cookham society, The Open Spaces Society, and five out of the six speakers (not including the landowner) recorded in the minutes of having actually attended and spoken at the meeting all spoke out in refusal of the proposal. I think the Parish Council puts it best with their statement from the full Council meeting on 2nd March, stating they object to this proposal, which swaps a pleasant rural path across open fields, for a much longer, hard surfaced farm track, shared with farm machinery and cyclists". Reference:

The office makes reference to critical criteria set out under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 that must be met to justify a diversion as proposed: These have not been and so the council is acting outside of this established criteria:

- Firstly, the 'Convenience' test: At the most basic level a footpath around the perimeter is longer, therefore not convenient to the public but to the landowner.

- Secondly, the 'Enjoyment test': The current route allows for enjoyable uninterrupted views and the enjoyment of the countryside, especially eastward, to Cliveden and Hanging Wood. These will be lost with a route around the edge of the field. The current "permitted" path that was put in place as an earlier re-route skirts the periphery and the surface is made up of hardcore with scalplings., an unpleasant material to walk or cycle. The track is of huge benefit to the agricultural vehicles that it can be argued benefit more from its location and material, and sharing a path with these agricultural vehicles is not enjoyable or convenient for walkers.

In reference to further critical criteria that must be met to change a footpath route: the diversion must benefit the public. The replacement of a public footpath with an established footpath, controlled at the whim of a private landowner, is not a beneficial situation for the public and poses a risk for the linked walking network running across Cookham and the surrounding areas.

Footpath 17 is also a cycleway, with riding bicycles permitted, and as no conditions have been placed on the landowner by the council then there is a risk at losing this usage and improper/unsafe materials may be employed in its construction and size considerations. The current permitted path that replaced an earlier route is also made up of a material not suited to cycling.

Dog walkers: the stone chips and chunks of rock that make up the current permitted path are not convenient for walkers, dogs or bicycles, more suited to the agricultural vehicles they were designed for. These uncomfortable rocks can shift and lodge in paws, boots and bicycle tires alike, causing harm and damage. This is not a convenient nor beneficial track material for walkers, cyclists and dogs alike.

This also sets a dangerous precedent, with many networks of ancient and established footpaths crossing much land owned by this landowner and a small group of individuals. We must protect our countryside, especially in light of the local plan that is reducing and removing crucial green space that has historically been protected.

In reference to the minutes stating the needs of agriculture and forestry, flora and fauna must be considered: A longer footpath around the periphery means that members of the public and their dogs are in the field for a longer period of time and therefore can interact with the crops or livestock for a longer period of time. Hedgerows are also the established habitat for a lot of wildlife and new footpaths interacting with these environments would be disruptive to these biodiverse habitats.

In reference to the concern raised by “muddy footpaths” and “straying off-route”: It is of the opinion of the Parish Council that these footpaths become muddy as they are ploughed during cultivation, which is against the main issue around the paths becoming muddy through public foot traffic (which is their intended usage). I would also comment that the proposed complaint of foot traffic causing destruction to crop bordering the path, that this could also happen with a permitted footpath that is still within the perimeter of the field. The only way around this would be a network of permitted footpaths alongside the established footpath to offer a re-route away from the currently muddy one. This is in line with the opinion of the Ramblers Association, represented by Steve Gillions, who state that while a permitted footpath is useful it should not be employed at the expense of the current cross-field footpath.

Safety: we must also consider the safety of the public, not only will they be mingling with farm vehicles on a stony and hard track, but female walkers will need to skirt the edge of a woodland and hedgerows for many miles. The safety they feel using the exposed track crossing the wide-open space of the field is lost. This acts as a deterrent to solo walkers.

RBWMs own strategy to encourage use of the network of footpaths is also not employed here. This re-route overall must be considered a negative – to solo walkers, dog walkers and cyclists who do not find: the current rock and shale permitted path to be inconvenient for foot and pedal traffic, a re-route skirting woodland posing increased hazards, and a route that is overseen and controlled by the landowner will potentially disrupt and/or close the walking network that this area is fortunate to have access to.

Finally, in reference to the minutes referring to the data on the “for” comments and “against” objections ahead of the meeting: I have looked into this report, and many of the “for” comments appear to come from a QR code – I would request information onto how this data was gathered, who controlled it, and if an option to make “for” and “against” comments was easily available through this QR code method of gathering information.

This is an extremely popular route, on any given day you will see hundreds of walkers, dogs, children and cyclist enjoying the varied route. It is surprising there are not more comments for or against. This information could sway opinion at a meeting and data gathering must be consistent. I have looked into the report itself “Title: Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham: diversion application” and many of the comments listed as “in support” mention that the permitted footpath should be allowed *in conjunction* with the current footpaths, not replacing them. Concern is also raised in these “for” comments that the private landowner changing his mind or closing the footpaths at their own whim is a

	<p>huge risk. The comments also frequently draw attention to the established footpath being a “mud bath” as the reason to change the route – but it is noted earlier in the report to the fact this path is ploughed/cultivated along with the field and then “remarked” by the landowner – the same landowner who wants it gone – is the reason of its state, and that there exists a footpath created by the landowner at current that can divert foot traffic to when conditions are poor (or ploughing is taking place). One of the comments listed as “for” is neither for nor against “Many thanks for forwarding this to me. I am afraid I have too much going on at the moment to be able to give this my proper attention, so I will have to pass on this occasion. (Support via QR code)”.</p> <p>As such, I would say this motion does not have enough evidence to establish a replacement, and privately controlled, footpath is needed, but that a permitted footpath used <i>in conjunction</i> with the established footpath – which already exists – is adequate.</p>
65.	Dear Sharon Wootten, please include my name amongst those objecting to the proposed closure of footpath 17 and 59 in Cookham.
66.	I object to these changes. I often enjoy the view from these paths. I do not enjoy walking on the alternative paths with hard surface. I also feel much safer going across the middle of a field. I do not know why landowners think they can buy land with a path, and then divert it. This path is 200 years old, before they were born.
67.	I write to officially object to the proposed redirection of parts of footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham. I have walked these paths regularly as a resident of the area. The importance of such rights of way remaining as they are across open fields and not being rerouted is crucial to the ongoing pleasure of walkers as has been the case for generations past, present and future. Why the need for change?
68.	I do object to relocating these 2 footpaths, this will seriously change the feel of the open space and lead room for development of the land. Please add my objections to such a matter and I trust that enough people know about this to object too. I would like to object to the moving of Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham, they have been there for over 200 years. Please can you tell me why they are being moved? There is nothing better than walking in a wide open space, we walk to roads all the time, and walking around the edge is not the same. I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.
69.	<p>I am writing to list my objection to the application "Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham: diversion application". I am objecting on the grounds that the proposed does not meet a varied set of criteria, including those set out in Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 as well as a number of factors that pose a great risk to access and enjoyment of our countryside and local walking network. These I list below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Parks and Countryside officers recommends to refuse the proposal on the grounds that the proposed diversion did not meet the criteria needed to justify a footpaths change of route, both in terms of the ‘convenience’ test and the ‘enjoyment’ test. 2. In reference to the ‘Convenience test’ criteria: The convenience of the public is not considered: At the most basic level a footpath around the perimeter is longer, therefore not convenient to the public but to the landowner. 3. In reference to the ‘Enjoyment test’ criteria: The current route allows for enjoyable uninterrupted views and the enjoyment of the countryside,

	<p>especially eastward, to Cliveden and Hanging Wood which will be lost with a route around the edge of the field.</p> <p>4. A permitted footpath is a risk as can be closed at any time at the discretion of the landowner who will not always have the local interest in mind</p> <p>5. The replacement of an established 200-year-old footpath with a permitted footpath set a dangerous precedent and risks other footpaths crossing land owned by this landowner and others.</p> <p>6. The proposal swaps a pleasant rural path across open fields, for a much longer, hard surfaced farm track, shared with farm machinery and cyclists</p> <p>7. The current “permitted” path that was put in place as an earlier re-route skirts the periphery and the surface is made up of hardcore with scalping’s, an unpleasant material to walk or cycle on.</p> <p>8. The current “permitted” path is of huge benefit to the agricultural vehicles but is not enjoyable or convenient for walkers.</p> <p>9. Other criteria that must be met to change a footpath route is also not met: the diversion must benefit the public and replacement with one controlled at by a private landowner is not beneficial for the public at all times.</p> <p>10. Footpath 17 is a cycleway, with riding bicycles permitted, and as no conditions have been placed on the landowner by the council then there is a risk at losing this usage and improper/unsafe materials may be employed in its construction.</p> <p>11. Dog walkers: the stone chips and chunks of rock that make up the current permitted path are not convenient for walkers, dogs or bicycles, more suited to the agricultural vehicles they were designed for. These uncomfortable rocks can shift and lodge in paws, boots and bicycle tires alike, causing harm and damage. This is not a convenient nor beneficial track material for walkers, cyclists and dogs alike.</p> <p>12. The needs of agriculture and forestry, flora and fauna must be considered: A longer footpath around the periphery means that members of the public and their dogs are in the field for a longer period of time and therefore can interact with the crops or livestock for a longer period of time. Hedgerows are also the established habitat for a lot of wildlife and new footpaths interacting with these environments would be disruptive to these biodiverse habitats.</p> <p>13. Safety: we must also consider the safety of the public, not only will they be mingling with farm vehicles on a stony and hard track, but female walkers will need to skirt the edge of a woodland and hedgerows for many miles. The safety they feel using the exposed track crossing the wide-open space of the field is lost. This acts as a deterrent to solo walkers.</p> <p>14. RBWM strategy to encourage walking and exercise in our walking network is not considered as the removal of a public footpath with a privately controlled replacement risks access and places walkers in unfavourable conditions.</p> <p>15. References to “muddy” and unusable footpaths can be argued that the cultivating of the field, and footpath, causes this and that there exists already a path skirting the outside of the field that can be used when conditions are poor. As such, I would say this motion does not have enough evidence to establish a replacement, and privately controlled, footpath is needed, but that a permitted footpath used <i>in conjunction</i> with the established footpath – which already exists – is adequate.</p>
70.	<p>Rerouting footpaths 17 and 59 will create a longer walk between Cookham and Furze Platt RBWM is trying to encourage active travel, and whilst the</p>

	<p>alternative route may have a better surface, lengthening walking routes seem to be at odds with the council policy.</p> <p>This could also lead to farmers in the future trying to move or close footpaths.</p>
71.	<p>As frequent users both walking and cycling across the fields adjacent to Malders Lane, Long Lane, Winter Hill Road, Cannon Court Road and the Switchback Road we are concerned about news of plans to divert the footpaths and reduce the status of the public rights of way in these fields. Many people use this amenity and have done so for decades. Rights of Way exist for the purpose of benefiting the public and this is something the landowner needs to respect. If there is a concern about crops being trampled then it is for the landowners to engage with walkers, explain and educate and put in place measures which encourage people to stick to the paths, not just remove or divert the paths completely.</p> <p>We would also point out that the consultation on these plans has been poorly handled and are lacking in transparency i.e. a QR code which did not allow open access or full disclosure.</p> <p>We object to the diversion and ask that the Panel sets an expectation that public rights of way are not negotiable for the convenience of the private landowners.</p>
72.	<p>I'd like to object to this diversion on the basis of it not being as convenient or enjoyable.</p>
73.	<p>We write to object to the proposed re-routing of footpaths 17 and 59 from Furze Platt towards Cookham. These footpaths through open fields are extremely popular and provide a much needed amenity for the residents of Furze Platt. When I passed yesterday, there were three families using the footpath. The open nature of the footpath creates a strong visual amenity and a safer experience than walking along the edge of the field. It is a right of way that has been in place for several centuries and we object to the plan to re-route it.</p> <p>We would be grateful if our objection can be taken into account when considering the proposal.</p>
'Neutral' comments	
1.	<p>I am responding on behalf of WildCookham to your request for submissions relating to the proposed diversions at Mount Farm, Cookham.</p> <p>We largely reiterate the points made a year ago when this proposal was first put forward. At that time I noted our discussions with the Copas Partnership about this and about their plans for Beeching Grove Wood. Our position remains that we have no objection to rerouting the path but, as then, our support has been based partly on the Partnership's statement in their application that "This will also allow Beeching Grove Wood to be treated as a nature reserve with reduced public access." Our discussions with them were positive in general terms, indicating a keenness on their part to encourage biodiversity on their land and, we believe, a desire to maintain Beeching Grove Wood as a secure place for nature, with no public access.</p>

	<p>Whilst accepting the diversions in principle we would want any permission given to be based on a clear understanding of the Partnership's intentions for the wood. The term 'nature reserve' has little legal relevance and our fear is that it could simply be a means of ensuring that they can still manage it with little or no external oversight. We note that the wood is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (a status which has limited legal weight) and we suggest that, since they have referenced the wood as one of the justifications for the diversion, you should seek clarification as to what they intend for it as a 'nature reserve' and specifically stress the LWS designation and the expectations that this brings. We have indicated our willingness to help with the surveying of the site to help maintain the LWS status, as well as the possibility of managed school visits to the site (under their control, of course) as a valuable public benefit.</p> <p>We should also note that the wood is one of three in close proximity which are designated as LWS - the others being Cannon Court Wood (also owned by the Partnership) and Pigeonhouse Wood. Together these have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the Borough's Environment and Climate Strategy, as well as to the Cookham Neighbourhood Plan, currently in preparation, by contributing significantly to the local Nature Recovery Networks plans.</p> <p>We accept that this is private land and we make no assumptions about WildCookham's possible role, if any. The key for us is that the intention for land to be a nature reserve must mean something. We are not suggesting that the owners have any specific intention at present to undermine the biodiversity of the wood but, given their use of the phrase as a justification for the path diversion, it should be given some extra protection.</p> <p>We are ready to discuss this further if helpful - with you as well as with the Copas Partnership.</p>
2.	<p>I would request that the panel considers the information below when making their decision and recommends that the proposed path is accessible for walkers, cyclist and horse riders creating a safe off road environment to enjoy.</p> <p>The proposals to permanently instate a footpath/ cycle way from the top of the 'Pig Track' (COOK/19/1) round to Malders Lane (MAID/70/3) would be very well suited to being truly multi use and also allowing horse rider access. This would open up the area to a wider range of the community. It would also link infrastructure in the area creating a new circuit linking existing bridleways.</p> <p>The track that has been put in is already 3m wide which would be considered wide enough for a multi-use path and is made up of a hardcore surface with scalplings which would not result in the ground being churned up by the addition of hooves. The only amendment that would need to be made would be changing the gate onto Malders Lane to one similar to that on the entrance of the pig track from Cannon Court Road. I think that multi-use paths would benefit the whole community and also reduce some of the conflict of cyclists using footpaths. Covid has led to an increase in the numbers of people wishing to access the countryside but there is a lack of shared infrastructure to support everyone.</p>

	<p>By opening up this route it would provide an off road circular route for walkers, cyclists and equestrians linking up with Hindhay Farm which is already on the Cookham Bridleway Circuit and also providing better off road access to Pinkneys Green and Cookham Dean Common.</p> <p>The Cookham Bridleway Circuit map published in 2005 is now out of date as paths have been removed and the roads described as quiet lanes are not as quiet 15 years on and with further development in the area proposed it is likely that there will be further conflict with traffic in the future. There is a current application for 16 stables on land Lower Mount Farm which is recommended for approval. If approved this will increase the number of riders in this immediate area further justifying the need for better off road access for riders.</p> <p>A survey carried out in 2020 identified the current lack of bridleway routes in Cookham with just 8% of the 34.14km of public rights of way being bridleways – this equates to just 2.85km of official bridleway. With increasing traffic on the roads there are increasing conflicts between drivers and riders.</p> <p>The Cookham Bridleway circuit is also currently incomplete due to the loss of BISH/12/4 from Bisham Woods through Park Farm meaning that the remaining bridle path through the woods is currently a dead end.</p>
3.	<p>Concerning Footpath 17 Cookham, I am given to understand that this footpath is to be closed across two fields to enable the farmer to better manage the fields. If this is the case, I have no objection as long as we can still walk around that field as we can today. I would have an objection if this is a precursor to selling off this land for houses. Please take this into consideration.</p>
4.	<p>I am responding to your notices posted at either end of a footpath with Public Right of Way from Malders Lane to Lower Mount Farm on farmland between Furze Platt and Cookham (Footpath 17 Cookham).</p> <p>Having discussed this matter with neighbours and the land-owners, I am aware that there are strong and valid opinions on both sides of this decision. While Copas Farms have invested in an alternative route around the perimeter of the field which will accommodate cyclists as well as walkers, I understand that this footpath has been a public right of way for perhaps 200 years or more, and affords better views towards Windsor, as well as a more pleasant walking experience to those who have used it for years, if not decades.</p> <p>I am also sympathetic to the land-owner's desire to gain a greater yield from this tract of land which, particularly since lockdown and the greater leisure use of the local footpaths, has seen this path widened into a muddy highway, with subsequent loss of crop.</p> <p>The primary concern of local residents is that this may be a precursor to greater development of the surrounding area, whether that be commercial or residential. If this fear can be publicly allayed, I believe most objections will be diminished. The erection of 'turkey tunnels' on nearby land and the proposed construction of a new stable block at Lower Mount Farm is adding to the volume of built forms in what was a rural setting, and anything which adds to the development of this land, and removes the access and amenity of RBWM residents, will be seen as adversely affecting this area of Greenbelt.</p>

	<p>This is not to devalue the genuine concerns and objections of those residents who have enjoyed this amenity for a considerable time, and I hope that the deciding officer will take these heartfelt apprehensions into account when making the final ruling.</p>
5.	<p>I have not been able to find this consultation on the RBWM website. There have been notices on the fields for years and I did not realise there was a current consultation. I can walk to these fields and walk on them often.</p> <p>I love walking across the middle of the field as the views are wonderful. I prefer walking on open land (fields) to walking in woodland as I feel safer that way. However, in winter (when it's muddy) I use the all-weather track.</p> <p>I would like reassurance that the changes will not lead to more vehicles on the tracks, or to houses being developed there. Those fields were the breathing space for the community during lockdown – I have never seen so many people there at one time before. Also there are lots of skylarks on the fields. I am neutral about the diversion proposal for the paths. A few years ago I was against it, but I have got used to it now.</p>
Community comments (in support of the diversion)	
1.	<p>I wanted to write to say I support the new paths at Lower Mount Farm and the surrounding fields. I walk my dog there at least 3 times a week. I think they have really opened the area up to be a nice walk for the general public, with lovely views of the surrounding areas. The only thing I would say, is will the new paths become a public right of way. We wouldn't want to lose the public footpath and then in 10 - 20 years Copas close the new paths and then the public lose their chance to walk across the land.</p>
2.	<p>Thanks Sharon, yes I'm in support of the footpath change.</p>

Consultee comments (Opposed to diversion)	
Cookham Parish Council	<p>At the full Council meeting on 2nd March, Cookham Parish Council decided to object to this proposal, which swaps a pleasant rural path across open fields, for a much longer, hard surfaced farm track, shared with farm machinery and cyclists.</p> <p>The current path is already the result of a diversion several years ago by a previous landowner which was to have made managing the field easier. This new path route was chosen with the input of stakeholders and gave good views especially eastward, to Cliveden and Hanging Wood.</p> <p>This footpath section can become muddy, especially after cultivation, and users may stray on to the crop. The proposed cycle track could already be used as an alternative, or given modern tractors with GPS, the existing path could be left unploughed.</p> <p>The proposed diversion is the present Permitted Path which is a hard surfaced track, which sadly loses the pleasant open views of the existing route.</p> <p>The hard surface of the track, whilst being solid is not viewed positively by dog walkers nor cyclists due to the loose, sharp chippings which can find their way into the paws of animals and the bicycle tyres.</p> <p>In conclusion, the proposed diversion does not offer an alternative that is at least as convenient and enjoyable as the path to be diverted, and hence we object to the diversion.</p>
Cookham Society	<p>We strongly oppose the proposed diversion. The existing route is long established and popular with walkers. It offers a direct route and much superior views to the alternative edge-hugging path proposed. We also understand from some of our female members that they feel much safer walking across the open path when they are alone and they consider that walking around the edge of the field close to woodland, does not provide the same sense of security. The footpath between Mount Farm and Hindhay Farm is shown on the 1875 OS map. The section north of Beeching Grove Wood appears to be exactly the route of the present RoW. The cross-field section south of Beeching Grove Wood has been somewhat realigned in more recent times. Ancient routes and RoWs are part of our heritage and should be protected. This is not a new proposal from the applicant. Three members of our committee visited the farm in 2015 and discussed with the applicant his wish to divert FP17 from being a cross-field path to a field edge path. From that meeting we understood that the cross-field path is no hindrance to ploughing, preparation or planting because these operations are carried out right across the field with the route of the footpath being remarked once planting is complete. Similarly, we understood that fertilising and spraying are tracked straight across the footpath. Therefore, the footpath on its present route did not form an obstruction or a cost to any of these processes. We have no reason to believe conditions have changed since 2015. When the alternative route offered is inferior to the present one, compelling reasons need to be provided even to consider diversion. Such reasons have not been provided. However, we do understand</p>

	<p>that there is a problem, particularly in wet weather, with some walkers straying off the official footpath whilst looking for firmer ground and in so doing damaging the crops. We sympathise with this and note that since our visit in 2015 a surfaced track has been created on the field edge route. If this field edge route is clearly made available as a RoW to walkers and appears on maps, apps, etc, we believe most walkers would use it in preference to the cross-field path when conditions were muddy. Information boards at either end of the cross-field route explaining why the alternative had been made available would no doubt encourage more walkers to use the field edge route. Posts at either end of the cross-field path could be put up to define the official width (2.0m) of the footpath. If the applicant would make the new field edge route available as a RoW in addition to the present cross-field route we would encourage RBWM to contribute to the cost of all necessary gates and signage.</p>
<p>East Berks Ramblers</p>	<p>I attach our thoughts on the changes proposed for Mount farm. We are not prepared to lose an open cross field path, for shared use of a farm track, with cyclists and probably horses. It would set a dangerous precedent encouraging the loss of similar cross field paths. A possible compromise could be straightening the section of 17/1 to form a direct line from the corner of the wood to the track. This would reduce the length to be reinstated after cultivation, or preferably left unploughed. This is as far as we could go. (word doc attached to email)</p> <p>Application to divert Cookham FP17 and part extinguish FP 59</p> <p>Consultation response from EBR</p> <p>East Berks Ramblers reject the above proposal, which would entail exchanging a pleasant rural path across open fields, for a much longer, hard surfaced farm track, shared with farm machinery and cyclists.</p> <p><u>The current path description.</u></p> <p>Footpath 17 starts at the RB Malders lane and goes straight across an open field to pass through a gate at the edge of Beeching Grove wood.</p> <p>This section of the path was diverted several years ago by a previous landowner with our agreement. It originally formed a diagonal cross shaped (X) junction with FP 21; after the diversion 21 was moved to the left hand field edge and 17 straight ahead to the wood. This made managing the field easier, and in return (by a gentleman`s agreement) the landowner refrained from ploughing up the line of the path.</p> <p>The next section of FP 17 is a pleasant, grassed path at the western edge of Beeching Grove wood.</p> <p>After leaving the wood the path goes diagonally (half right) across a large field (Catsey field), to reach the boundary hedge of Mount farm, where it becomes a surfaced track to Long lane. The path across the</p>

	<p>field has open views, especially eastward, to Cliveden and Hanging Wood.</p> <p>This section can become muddy at times, especially after cultivation, and users may stray on to the crop. The proposed cycle track could be used as an alternative, to reduce encroachment, or given modern tractors with GPS, the path could be left unploughed.</p> <p>Footpath 17 is well used by walkers and dog walkers as part of a longer walk, or a shorter circuit, since it links to Cookham RB's 70 & 71 and hence to the wider network.</p> <p><u>Proposed diversion.</u></p> <p>The Permitted Path, a surfaced track, circumnavigates the field and considerably lengthens the route between Malders lane and Long lane. The pleasant open views are lost, as is the use of the much used loop formed by the paths south of Beeching Grove wood.</p> <p>Dog walkers have reported that the track surface contains small sharp stones, which can cause damage to the paws of some animals.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>Any proposal to divert or exchange a public footpath should offer an alternative that is at least as convenient and enjoyable as the path to be diverted.</p> <p>This proposal does not meet this criterion and if an application is made we will lodge an objection.</p> <p>We support the Permitted paths remaining in place, these provide a useful addition to the rights of way network, especially during wet weather.</p>
The Open Spaces Society	<p>The Open Spaces Society would object most strongly to these proposed changes. As we are unclear under which section(s) of the Highways Act 1980 it is proposed to make the changes, we cannot comment in detail and with reference to legal criteria. However, the overall effect is to remove the direct route between Malders Lane and Long Lane and to replace it with a circuitous route. It is also proposed to make part of the route (although I am unclear exactly which part) into a cycle route, which is disadvantageous to walkers unless the use is segregated—which will then have an urbanising effect. The reference to allowing Beeching Grove Wood to be treated as a nature reserve with reduced public access would appear to be specious, since FP17/1 runs along the western edge, not through the wood. We trust that you will proceed no further with these plans and will abandon them forthwith, it would be a poor use of your limited resources to spend time, effort and money on these dismal proposals.</p>
Community comments (Opposed to diversion)	
1	<p>I have been a resident in Malders Lane for a great many years and have used these foot paths regularly and still do multiple times per week. I might add that I see quite a number of people using these paths, I just hope that they have emailed in also. I personally can see no reason why these paths should be done away with as farmers have to work around paths as a norm. The path to the north of the</p>

	<p>woods has always been prone to becoming very muddy and unpleasant to walk on in the winter months or after persistent rain but the fact that it is ploughed up every year does not help its cause. I know Mr Copas has seen fit to create a solid path round the edge of his field but I am sure that is as much for his benefit as anyone else. The new, widened path through the woods was certainly not put in for pedestrian traffic but most likely for farm machinery. The upgraded path is most welcome, particularly in the winter months, but not to the degree of losing the long standing original ones that he is trying to do away with. I know also he is proposing that this new path be used by cyclists as well as walkers, which if all cyclists showed consideration in attitude and speed would not necessarily present a problem, but sadly as we all know this is not always the case. This is not the first time he has tried to close at least one of the paths but I seem to remember the ramblers association jumped on it previously. I look forward with optimism that our right of passage via these paths be maintained.</p>
2	<p>I am responding to this consultation as the ex-committee member for the East Berkshire Ramblers largely responsible for the Group's publications over many years. These particular paths have been included in the 'Rambling for Pleasure' guidebooks since 1975 and 10,000 copies showing them, are in circulation. Public rights-of-way around Beeching Grove Wood were I recall, a constant topic of discussion for many years. This proposal now, is to effectively wipe them off the map and substitute a stony field-edge roadway that walkers would no doubt at times, have to share with farm vehicles. I would object strongly if an order were made; this route is clearly unpleasant to walk on, less convenient and of course, none of these FP.s could possibly be considered not necessary for public use - and thereby extinguished.</p>
3	<p>As a recreational user of the public rights of way through open fields for many years, not just since the outbreak of the pandemic, I would be disappointed to see Copas redraw the rights of passage that are in existence for no other reason than self-interest. It's not acceptable for the public rights of way to be eroded in favour of a local landowner's desire.</p>
4	<p>I have discovered the plans for restricting rights of way on Mount farm and would be grateful if you could advise me how/when I can voice my objections My daughter lives in Scotland where there's the right to roam - and you're amazed at the selfish behaviour of landowners who want to restrict access to the Earth we all must share!</p>
5	<p>I understand that you are involved in the consultation on the request to close a Public Right of way across land owned by Copas Brothers between Furze Platt and Cookham. Can you please advise how I can voice an objection to this closure please? I do not agree with the closure of a Public right of way that has been such for a very long time even if it is more convenient to the landowner – this seems a very poor precedence to set and I would wish to object in the strongest terms. I understand that there has been an effort to provide a 'convenient' pathway as an alternative, but I did not wish,</p>

	<p>nor request, to have a tarmacked pathway there. I would be grateful if you could advise the consultation process that you refer to on signs posted there and how I may register with it.</p>
6	<p>I am writing about the 'proposed new layout' for walkers around Mount Farm and the suggestion to close the existing public rights of way across a couple of fields. Please do not allow these public footpaths to be closed. They are a public right of way and how do we know that in future the farmer will not close the permitted footpaths? I would also like to express my disappointment at how this proposal has been handled: It is not a new layout – the existing permitted footpath has been open for a number of years The signs with this so-called new layout went up a few months ago indicating information about it would be on the RBWM planning website but I have checked several times and there is nothing Until your email address was posted the only way to express a view was to scan a QR code but this is only to support the 'new' layout There are many signs posted around the permissive path but only ONE (in a not very visible location and not by the actual path) where the public footpaths are that the farmer would like to close There have been no notices from the Council about this action . Please do not allow these paths to be closed.</p>
7	<p>In response to the notices placed on land close by Hindhay Farm, I wish to add my voice to object to any change or removal of the public right of way over footpaths COOK/17/1 and COOK/17/2. I have lived in Furze Platt for over 25 years and walk almost daily on footpaths around that area. Removal of those two footpaths would materially affect my regular walks.</p>
8	<p>On my early morning walk I saw a sign saying that there is a consultation about the right of way across the fields near Malders lane. I would definitely be opposed to the rerouting of this path as it would be less enjoyable for walkers.</p>
9	<p>I have the following comments and objections regarding the proposals to divert the above paths: I can see no appropriate reason why the footpaths need re-routing when they have been in place for very many years and enjoyed by walkers such as myself without any problems or apparent issues for the landowner. The relevant paths are used only by walkers and form part of an existing circular walk which links to other footpaths. The proposed re-routing would fundamentally change this. To re-route the footpath to wide hardcore field boundary will see a mix of uses along the footpath which could pose hazards for walkers. To legitimize the re-routing of the existing footpaths to allow for more economic farming practices would set a precedent for the re-routing of all footpaths which go cross any part of any field. Moreover, the landowner has already reduced the area for planting crops by laying down a wide hardcore area along the field perimeter. The short path section through Beeching Grove Wood would not threaten wildlife as the section is so short and, apart from the narrow gated path section, the wood has been fenced off with barbed wire for many years. Rather, this short path allows walkers and wildlife enthusiasts to observe nature close up without being able to disturb it. Based on the above, I believe it is in the interests of</p>

	the community to maintain the status quo and the proposal to close the existing paths and to re-route them should be rejected.
10	I have used these paths for many years and considerably more this past year and appreciate the efforts of the owner to develop the network. I note that he would like to divert the paths across the fields and has promoted this plan with signage and a QR code to support the plan. I would like to object to the plan as a principle to protect the rights of individuals to retain the use public footpaths and to close these would set a precedent to close other rights of way.
11	My comments on the application: Although the Copas' have provided all weather paths around the perimeter of the proposed diverted fields, it is a much longer walk and the access across the field provides a quicker alternative. Not everyone has the luxury in the morning to undertake a longer walk. I appreciate during the winter months the path across the fields does become impassable at times, this has been exasperated this year with the sheer volume of people out walking due to Covid but it is also hampered at times with the farm machinery ploughing up the paths which then makes it difficult to walk over. Other paths in the vicinity are not ploughed and walking in all weathers is easier. If this application was permitted, I feel it would set a precedent for other applications in the area for example MAID/33/1 and possible application to build on, should greenbelt restrictions be relaxed. My comments on the process Although notices were placed along the footpaths, the maps were difficult to pin-point which paths were being referred to, unless you knew the area well. It would have been beneficial to have had "you are here" on the maps too. Using the "QR" supplied I followed the links hoping to be given information on how to register my objections, if they were there it was not obvious as I couldn't locate them. I feel there was no true transparency. In essence I strongly object to the proposal to rerouting the paths as feel it will be detrimental to walkers. I have lived in Maidenhead for over 50 years and this is the first time I have ever objected to anything like this, but feel so passionately about it, my liberty to choose where I want to walk without someone dictating where I can go. Copas knew when he purchased the land that these fields had paths across them, paths that have been in place for hundreds of years. I hope we will be kept in the loop and any further developments will be relayed to us more openly
12	My comments on the application: Whilst the hard-surfaced portion of the permitted path has been much used during the very wet months of December and January I have observed many people also using the routes which are proposed to be moved as soon as the drier weather arrived in February which indicates there are people which value the route across 'open fields' in spite of there being an alternative route around the fields via the perimeter route. During a 5-minute run across the field route today I passed 3 people walking the cross-field route and 2 walking the perimeter route. This supports my personal feeling that when conditions permit it is preferable to maintain the right of way across the fields since this is a significantly nicer walk across an open field than being re-directed around the periphery. If

	<p>this application is allowed to proceed I believe it will set a precedent to for further similar applications, for example, to re-route other open-country/cross-field routes such as MAID/33/1. If this application is allowed to proceed there is also a future threat that applications to build on the land will be easier should greenbelt restrictions be eased If this application is allowed to proceed, there is a risk that the owner may eventually fence in the footpaths and the paths will become more like lanes corralling walkers along hedged or fenced corridors- this is already evident on some routes. If the current permitted route around the field remains, then the pressure on the cross-field route will be reduced and there will be a less economic loss to the owner since during the wettest months walkers may choose the perimeter route - I would therefore suggest that both routes should remain. In any case, the width of the damage to the crops will be generally less in non-lockdown times as there is abnormally high traffic during the current Covid-restrictions My comments on the process I am not certain of the process regarding the informal consultation you mention and whether a more public consultation must take place if the application is allowed to proceed further.</p> <p>However, I raise the following concerns: As is its right, the owner set up notices along the route encouraging the public to scan a 'QR' code 'if supportive of the application' the QR code links to a form to support the proposal but there is no equivalent for those that object to register their comments. Further, it is very hard to find the proposal or comment on the RBWM website, in fact, I could not find it at all. Please confirm that should the application be allowed to proceed further that the proposal is fully publicised allowing those that object, as well as those that support, have their comments taken into account. In summary, I strongly object to the proposal to re-route the paths and believe that if the proposal is in any way allowed to proceed further the public should be widely and properly consulted.</p>
13	<p>I would like to comment on the application for the diversion of Cookham Footpath 17 and part of Cookham Footpath 59. I oppose the diversion particularly Footpath 17. I understand that the proposal is at the preliminary consultation stage. These paths are clearly heavily used by walkers and families all year round despite the fact that an alternative route (permitted path) was created by Copas several years ago. Having walked 17/1 and 17/2 frequently and over many years, without doubt they offer a much better walking experience than the permitted path. The views across the woods and fields, especially from north to south are fantastic, the light at all times, but especially early morning and late afternoon from March to October, is exceptional. In contrast the permitted path creeps around the edge of the field and even in summer, much of it is in shadow. Certainly an inferior route for the public. I can provide further details of my objections. Do you need this detail now?</p>
14	<p>I am not in support of the proposed changes to the Cookham 17 and Cookham 59 “to allow more economic farming practices and create a</p>

	<p>longer circular route for public use” 1. The southern part of 17 would be completely lost and hence all users young and old and less able would be prevented from taking a short trip out north on 17, west on 59 then south on 21 back to Malders Lane. This short route is very much valued by many including the residents of Malders Lane². It says Beeching Grove Wood would be treated as a Nature reserve but the Applicant wants to cut down trees in Little Beeching Grove to create a new path. Not a great move³. The arable farmland in question is no longer ploughed so no difficulty should be encountered in reinstating the paths within the statutory period. Dangers to walkers due to livestock does not appear to be a factor in this case⁴. Redirecting 17 round the edge of the field on a hard core and scalping surface is not an option. There are enough of unwanted surfaces in this rural area eg Cookham 19 plus all the roads and pavements.⁵ These ancient paths evolved through people taking the shortest route from A to B and this is still the case as many users walk or run to work or school and take the shortest route so lengthening 17 in the north around the field and changing the surface and removing it in the south is not the right thing to do. The southern end of 17 joins directly to Maidenhead 33 and 31 and this is very much a direct route from Furze Platt which must be preserved.⁶ It is safer for lone walkers to go through the middle of a field where they can see around rather than around the edge where wildlife are more likely to be disturbed by loose dogs.⁷ Exercise is very important and with events such as “Tough Mudder” being organised nationally it is very important to be able to train on natural ground .⁸ I have walked, ridden or cycled on most paths in this rural area and have no support to turning them into hard surfaces These are not paths in the town parks. I attach a cutting from the Telegraph by Helen Chandler-Wilde and research shows the many benefits of exercising on natural ground. Should this proposal be allowed It would be the beginning of all paths across fields to be redirected for no good reasons. These paths should remain in the position they have been in since they were introduced. Maidenhead 31 is a much used path in the middle of a field and it could be next on the diversion list. On 21st February I walked all the paths mentioned. Between Maidenhead 31 and Long Lane. I have never seen so many people in the countryside. I was saddened to read notices by the applicant how 17 was impassable. This was not the case. The conditions at the southern end were very good and I saw no less than 6 runners using it. The northern end was not a problem but was a little muddy where the farm machinery had crossed over it from the evenly spaced tram lines in the crop. Should the paths be upgraded to cycle paths the scalping would only be suitable for mountain bikes All ancient rights of way must be kept here. It is so close to Maidenhead with very few people arriving by car as they are able to make use of and enjoy the rural areas on their doorsteps.</p>
15	<p>I object to the planned diversion of Cookham Footpath 17 and part of Cookham Footpath 59 for the following reasons: 1) The existing route Cookham 17 is an old and established footpath which is well used and popular with local walkers. Although the section crossing the field is</p>

	<p>difficult to pass in the winter months due to ploughing work, we have endeavoured to ensure the route is continually used and that the path is clearly visible, and wish to continue to do so. 2) The new footpath created in 2016 which runs around the edge of the field is rough paved and is uncomfortable for walkers and dogs alike with sharp stone underfoot. 3) Encouraging cyclist and dog walkers to share the same routes is not relaxing or safe for either group. Cyclists do not slow to allow dogs and walkers to pass safely, and dog walkers do not like having a speeding cyclist suddenly wizz by. Dogs are not always aware of the approaching cyclist and cannot be expected to know the rules of the road. I point this out because this is a particularly new problem which has arisen due to Covid lockdown and has resulted in a huge increase of people wanting to enjoy the walks around Cannon Court Farm. As wonderful as this is, I don't expect the numbers of new walkers and cyclists to continue indefinitely as the Covid restrictions allow people to return to work and school. 4) The new paving has also allowed vehicles to traverse the footpath between Mount Farm and Beeching Grove Farm which has on more than one occasion been observed to be dangerous. Despite there being signs warning the drivers to go slowly, I have witnessed vans driving too fast around the blind bend from Mount Farm to Beeching Grove Farm. 5) Regarding the removal of trees in the wood to widen the path, this flies in the face of Government and environmental groups endeavours to plant more trees. The landowner has persistently removed trees, established hedges and scrubland from the whole of the Cannon Court Farm site resulting a drastic loss of habitat for birds and insects. I particularly draw attention to the rapid removal of nearly all the established hedgerows along Malders Lane. Where are the birds and insects are supposed to live, breed, feed and overwinter in the years until the new hedge plantings are of a size to provide shelter and habitat. We will have no birds and insects left if they are effectively exterminated in order to 'tidy' the countryside. 6) If every farmer and landowner decided they wanted to relocate a public footpath for no reason other than to make life easier for the farmer, our ancient network of paths would be mismatched and become untraversable, unless you don't mind going from A to B via X, Y and Z. I appreciate you taking the time to note the thoughts and wishes of the local people who live and work in the area, and who take an active interest in the environment.</p>
16	<p>I would like to object to the diversion of paths in the Mount Farm area because the new route makes the route to Cookham longer and diverts to a hard surface mainly in the shade. The choice of routes is also restricted by removing 17/2 and 59/1. The creation of a new permitted route around the edge of the field is to be welcomed as an additional choice for the public and it has been very popular during the wet weather when normal footpaths are muddy. However I don't think this justifies removing the right of way across the field. The cross field path is part of a wider network of paths and links with footpath 32 leading towards Cookham, in this instance the longer diversion is a disadvantage. I would be interested to know how the</p>

	<p>removal of the rights of way would help the economy of farming practices in these arable fields. The paths are minimal compared to the area of the fields and, apart from the care needed to avoid walkers when cultivating the fields, I don't know how else the paths affect farming or cost money. The longer route is being advertised as cycle path at Mount Farm. Again this could be popular and welcome as a family off road cycle route. But this would be a drawback for dog walkers and family walkers as they would always have to expect bikes appearing suddenly. Keeping the option of the cross field path would reduce the potential clash of interests. If paths 59/1 and 17/2 disappear the footpath network will be much reduced. It would leave path 21/2 as the only north-south connection in the area. In a well walked area this seems a disadvantage, forcing people to come together more than necessary. Beeching Grove Wood is already treated as a nature reserve and there is no access for the public. Footpath 17 passing one edge for about 100 metres has minimal impact on the wood. So far notices around Mount Farm have clearly shown what the planned changes involve but they only have an option to encourage approval of the plan and there is no indication of how to comment or possibly object so I feel the balance of views received will be skewed in favour of the plans. Please consider keeping the right of way open, the increased number of walkers and runners each year merit a greater choice of routes rather than less.</p>
17	<p>Reference proposed diversion of Cookham footpath 17 and part of Cookham Footpath 59; application by Mr T A Copas & Mrs B Copas. I am opposed to the proposed diversion of the above named footpaths for the following reasons. The footpaths in question are well used and it is always helpful to have the choice of several routes. If the footpaths are diverted it would increase the number of people walking in other areas such as the Little Beech Grove Wood and National Trust owned land which also has wildlife while not being closed off to the public (see my third point). The footpath merely skirts the edge of the privately owned Beeching Grove Wood and in my opinion does not in any way impede into the area of the wood which can remain a "nature reserve". I am against any unnecessary cutting down of trees, which is suggested by the diversion of footpath application to "make a 2 metre wide path through Little Beeching Grove Wood". Please let me know if you require a more detail explanation for my opposition to the above named application.</p>
18	<p>Thank you for sending me the details of Mr Copas' recent application. I wish to object to the proposal to close Cookham footpaths 17/1 and 17/2 for the reasons stated below. These paths are clearly heavily used by walkers and families all year round despite the fact that an alternative route (permitted path) was created by Copas several years ago. Having walked 17/1 and 17/2 frequently and over many years, without doubt they offer a much better walking experience than the permitted path. The views across the woods and fields, especially from north to south are fantastic, the light at all times, but especially early morning and late afternoon from March to October, is exceptional. In contrast the permitted path creeps around</p>

	<p>the edge of the field and even in summer, much of it is in shadow. Certainly an inferior route for the public. Beeching Grove Wood is already clearly signed as private and there appears to be no access to the public. It is not clear to me what difference diverting the footpath will make. I have never seen anyone in the woods during the thirty plus years I've walked the paths. The attached photos show the clear signs that it is private. The gate is padlocked with barbed wire on the top bar. However the wooden fence itself is surprisingly flimsy! Mr Copas states as a reason for his application that it will create a longer circular route for public use around Mount Farm. This is not needed as there are numerous round routes of varying lengths in that area, in the adjacent NT woods, several footpaths from Hindhay Farm (Malders Lane, Hindhay Lane) towards Cannon Court Road, the NT Brick and Tile works behind Hindhay Farm, several footpaths south from the farm towards Furze Platt, and to Pinkneys Green which can be linked to form several round walks of various lengths. I would say that this area is already one of the richest in the area for linked footpaths!</p>
<p>Consultee comments (in support of diversion)</p>	
<p>Local Access Forum (fast response team)</p>	<p>The LAF fast response team having reviewed the application, arguments for and associated maps would be happy to support the application as it stands. We would however ask that consideration be given to the opportunity to upgrade for Multi Users.</p>
<p>Wild Cookham</p>	<p>I'm coming back to you about this application on behalf of WildCookham. As I believe I mentioned earlier we have had some discussion with the Copas Partnership about this and about their plans for Beeching Grove Wood. We have no objection to rerouting the path but our support has been based partly on the Partnership's statement in their application that "This will also allow Beeching Grove Wood to be treated as a nature reserve with reduced public access." Our discussion with them is aiming to clarify what they mean by 'nature reserve' and at present the ball is in their court to come back to us based on some suggestions we have put forward. The term 'nature reserve' has little legal relevance and our fear is that it will simply be a means of ensuring that they can still manage it in whatever way they see fit. We note that the wood is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (a status which has limited legal weight) and we suggest that, since they have referenced the wood as one of the justifications for the diversion, you should seek clarification as to what they intend for it as a 'nature reserve' and specifically stress the LWS designation and the expectations that this brings. We have indicated our willingness to help with the surveying of the site to help maintain the LWS status, as well as the possibility of managed school visits to the site (under their control, of course) as a valuable public benefit. We should also note that the wood is one of three in close proximity which are designated as LWS - Cannon Court Wood (also owned by the Partnership) and Pigeonhouse Wood. Together these have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the Borough's Environment and Climate Strategy. We accept that this is private land and we make no assumptions about WildCookham's possible role, if</p>

	<p>any. The key for us is that the intention for land to be a nature reserve must mean something. We are not suggesting that the owners have any specific intention at present to undermine the biodiversity of the wood but, again given their use of it as a justification for the path diversion, it should be given some extra protection. We stand ready to discuss this further - with you as well as with the Copas Partnership. Let me know if we can add anything to the above comments.</p>
Cookham Running Club	<p>I am fully in favour of the proposals. As founder of Cookham Running Club (which has 150 members) we are supportive of the efforts made by Mr Copas and family to accommodate runners, walkers and cyclists and see the new routes as a positive step to improved access.</p>
Community comments (in support of diversion)	
1	<p>I have read the plans for the diversion of the footpath and am strongly supportive of the proposal. I live very locally and my family and I use the paths daily to walk our dog. I believe the diversion and expansion of the walking loop is beneficial for the local community.</p>
2	<p>I think the proposal looks great. The new paths the Copas team have put in offer much better accessibility to the area for push chairs and wheelchair users. The fact that this will also allow for a nature reserve in the woodland is an added bonus. The existing path through the field seems unnecessary and is often difficult to navigate after even the smallest amount of rain. I hope the plans will be passed.</p>
3	<p>I walk my dog at the fields almost daily - the perimeter footpath is far less muddy than the old path. It is more accessible too so I can walk with friends. It also protects the farmers' fields because as the old path hit muddy people were walking over plants. It is such a fantastic place to walk and I would like to continue to do so respecting the farmers crops too.</p>
4	<p>I have used the proposed new footpath regularly over the last few weeks. It is a great improvement on the old one especially in muddy conditions.</p>
5	<p>I hope I am not too late with my comments on the proposed footpath changes. I fully support the closure of the path across the centre of the field and to make the permitted way a footpath with comments below. - I would have preferred to see a separate proposal for also making it a cycle path as would not support it.- I would suggest more signs about keeping to the footpath and not lettings dogs onto the fields growing crops next to the paths (the owners would not let them run about on their gardens at home growing vegetables/flowers). It is sad to see the effort done by the farmer to provide the paths is abused by dog owners. Most of the recent signs put up about keeping dogs under control have been vandalised.</p>
6	<p>I am in full support of the application to divert this footpath. I have been enjoying the path to the edge of these fields since moving to the area in 2018 and am very grateful for the recent dressing to the permitted path, especially in the wet winter months. Path erosion is something that affects most PRowS across the country and has only been exacerbated during the pandemic from heavier use. I have noticed the path COOK/17/1 has more than trebled in width during</p>

	<p>the autumn/winter months. This is also evident on the path that spurs off south-easterly from the junction between MAID/71/3 and MAID/71/4 (not part of this application) has also increased greatly in width. This path erosion is clearly detrimental to the landowner/farmer's crop yield and only adds to the increasing problem of food waste in the UK. The diversion of the footpath to the permitted path is beneficial to the local community, landowner and the environment.</p>
7	<p>Thank you for your communication regarding the diversion of public footpaths over farmland at Mount Farm, Cookham. My wife and I regularly walk along the permitted paths around the fields, especially during the pandemic lockdown periods over the past 12 months. The existing public footpaths cook 17/1 and 17/2 were all but impassable during the wet winter weather, and are so every winter. Mount Farm have provided an excellent wide and firm, dry path along the west and north boundaries of the field (crossed by cook 17/1) and linking with footpaths cook 59/1 and 21/2 to the south and cook 17/1 to the north, all paths also well maintained and always passable. The result is an excellent round walk, pleasant to use all year and in all weather via the permitted path links, cook 19/1 and Malders Lane or Hindhay Lane linking back up to Hindhay Farm. This walk has been very popular and well used during the pandemic and provides a very attractive rural walk close to Maidenhead. The route is also well used by cyclists and the paths are wide enough for both uses. Although the existing public footpaths cook 17/1 and 17/2 run across the middle of 2 fields we consider that the alternative paths provided by Mount Farm are excellent substitutes. Efficient farming is very important and I can understand how footpaths running across the middle of fields waste usable land and complicate the farming process. My wife and I fully support this application.</p>
8	<p>Thank you for your email. This proposal has my full support. I have very much enjoyed using the new foot path. It appears a very popular route given the amount of people I have observed using it. It seems very logical for the foot path to follow the perimeter of the farmers fields. I hope this is what you need, please let me know if I can offer any further support to this proposal.</p>
9	<p>Thank you for your email. I have reviewed the maps and application that you sent. I support this application, having made use of this new route at least twice per week since the summer, often more. I can assure you that it has proved very popular with dog walkers, runners, cyclists, and walkers alike. I seldom see anybody make use of the existing route across the field, and the path made of scalplings makes this route ideal in all weathers.</p>
10	<p>This is a sensible proposal that benefits both the landowner and the public. The new footpath around the field is a good one whilst the old path it replaces is often muddy and difficult. Since the path has been made available as a permitted path, we have seen a big increase in walkers in the area taking advantage of it. We walk our dog in this area almost daily. Anyone who objects to this proposal is only being contrary.</p>

11	I have been walking these routes around Mount farm for around 15 years. I was very happy to use the permitted path around the edge of the field when it was first proposed a few years ago. This is a much more suitable all-weather track. The footpath across the field gets very muddy which means people walk at the edges further encroaching on the crops. Until a year ago when the pandemic began I would encounter at the most a dozen people on an hour circuit. At the peak of the good weather in the first lockdown there were up to 100 people in that same hour. Although this has eased it is still around 10 times previous numbers during the week. I don't go there at weekends as it is too busy. I am happy to see so many others enjoying this lovely area of countryside but it has to be compatible with the farmers livelihood. I see no reason why anyone should object to the redirection of this footpath. I am a keen walker interested in nature conservation & a habitat monitor volunteer with the national trust at Runnymede.
12	Thanks for sending me the details of the application. I have no comments to add to this proposal. (support via QR code)
13	I have reviewed the proposal. As a regular dog walker in the area, I support the proposed changes. In the recent muddy ground conditions the surfaced path at the perimeter of the field has been most welcome. I also understand that it is not optimal to have a footpath straight through the middle of a cultivated field. I support the application.
14	The footpaths have been well maintained and I agree with the proposals, causing less damage to crops and a clear route through the land
15	I don't have any comments on the application, other than to say that as a regular user of the new footpath, I think it an excellent footpath and is greatly appreciated and enjoyed.
16	I have read and understood your documents and fully agree with the suggested changes as they benefit the community and the farm.
17	Not sure what else I can say to support this. The farmer has built a proper path around the field which is safe, level and drains well. It is a vast improvement on the muddy, boggy path which went diagonally across the field. It seems to be very well used by walkers of all ages. I can't see any negative aspects to this, and there are lots of positives.
18	Please accept this email as support for the proposal that has been made by Mr and Mrs Copas. one point that has not been noted in the proposal is the access this hard-surfaced, ungated route will give to wheelchair users and parents with children in strollers or buggies. The proposed changes are a useful addition to the accessible areas of green space in the area.
19	I am very much in favour of the proposed diversion and the work that has been done to the surface of the path. The circular route around Mount Farm following the path around the perimeter of the fields has been one of our favourite walks as a family throughout the many lockdowns.
20	Thank you for your email below. I have reviewed the planned changes and have no objection

21	<p>In essence, I would whole heartedly support this diversion application. I enjoy walking, the open countryside, and the fresh air. I am in no hurry in my outdoor walking pursuit to take a 'short cut' across the middle of a field, especially where crops are grown, and I am quite used to walking around the edges of a field where there is a footpath. In this particular case, the farmer has provided an excellent walking path, free from ruts, mud or any other obstacles, so I congratulate, and thank him for providing it. I recall that in the past, the footpath between Spring Lane and Cannon Court Road was deeply rutted, and muddy, and the path was not used much. In its present excellent form, the route is heavily used by walkers and some cyclists, and in these 'Covid days' a most welcome opportunity to get some exercise out in the fresh air. I note too, the routes around the new diverted paths around the edges of the farmland are also well used. I would hope that if the Application is successful, the farmer maintains the excellent standard of the paths.</p>
22	<p>I think the proposed change makes perfect sense. The path around the edge of the field is well maintained and a sensible route rather than cutting through the middle of a field. Farmland walks such as the Copas Farm are essential to the community. I walk there often as do many hundreds of people, I can see the edges of the crops are trampled by walkers. To avoid walking through a large field is a fair and sensible change of footpath. I am fully supportive of this change - strange to consider the current/original path is actually where it was!</p>
23	<p>Many thanks for forwarding this to me. I am afraid I have too much going on at the moment to be able to give this my proper attention, so I will have to pass on this occasion. (Support via QR code)</p>
24	<p>Have studied the enclosed footpath rerouting and am in full agreement with the proposed layout. The landowners have done a splendid job of resurfacing most of the route, and my wife can now join me using her mobility scooter.</p>
25	<p>No comments, other than that the current temporary path is fantastic and I would like it to be made permanent. I think it makes total sense to close the path across the middle of the field, as it is frequently a mud bath.</p>
26	<p>We regularly walk our dog around the Malders lane farmers field and we stick to the existing perimeter and do not cut across the field. I can fully understand why the farmers would like to do away with that path and see no reason to object. We are very grateful to be able to walk this land. It is an excellent footpath in all weathers which is a rarity in the area particularly in wet weather where other paths become flooded or treacherous from mud. We have reviewed everything attached and have no questions.</p>
27	<p>Hope you are all well? Looking at the consultation on the above footpaths in a way it makes sense, but my only one thing I would like to see these footpaths remain as public footpaths. Because knowing Mr Copas he might change his mind and then residents are not allowed use these footpath. That is one the condition I would like to see as part of the consultation that these 2 footpaths remain public footpaths?</p>

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EqlA: Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham diversion application

Essential information

Items to be assessed: (please mark 'x')

Strategy		Plan		Project		Service procedure	x
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Responsible officer	Anthony Hurst	Service area	Neighbourhood Services	Directorate	Place
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Stage 1: EqlA Screening (mandatory)	Date created: 22/02/2022	Stage 2 : Full assessment (if applicable)	Date created: (n/a)
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Approved by Head of Service / Overseeing group/body / Project Sponsor:

"I am satisfied that an equality impact has been undertaken adequately."

Signed by (print): Alysse Strachan, Head of Neighbourhood Services

Dated:

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EqlA: Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham diversion application

Guidance notes

What is an EqlA and why do we need to do it?

The Equality Act 2010 places a 'General Duty' on all public bodies to have 'due regard' to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them.
- Fostering good relations between those with 'protected characteristics' and those without them.

EqlAs are a systematic way of taking equal opportunities into consideration when making a decision, and should be conducted when there is a new or reviewed strategy, policy, plan, project, service or procedure in order to determine whether there will likely be a detrimental and/or disproportionate impact on particular groups, including those within the workforce and customer/public groups. All completed EqlA Screenings are required to be publicly available on the council's website once they have been signed off by the relevant Head of Service or Strategic/Policy/Operational Group or Project Sponsor.

What are the "protected characteristics" under the law?

The following are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: age; disability (including physical, learning and mental health conditions); gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

What's the process for conducting an EqlA?

The process for conducting an EqlA is set out at the end of this document. In brief, a Screening Assessment should be conducted for every new or reviewed strategy, policy, plan, project, service or procedure and the outcome of the Screening Assessment will indicate whether a Full Assessment should be undertaken.

Openness and transparency

RBWM has a 'Specific Duty' to publish information about people affected by our policies and practices. Your completed assessment should be sent to the Strategy & Performance Team for publication to the RBWM website once it has been signed off by the relevant manager, and/or Strategic, Policy, or Operational Group. If your proposals are being made to Cabinet or any other Committee, please append a copy of your completed Screening or Full Assessment to your report.

Enforcement

Judicial review of an authority can be taken by any person, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) or a group of people, with an interest, in respect of alleged failure to comply with the general equality duty. Only the EHRC can enforce the specific duties. A failure to comply with the specific duties may however be used as evidence of a failure to comply with the general duty.

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EqlA: Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham diversion application

Stage 1: Screening (Mandatory)

1.1 What is the overall aim of your proposed strategy/policy/project etc and what are its key objectives?

To determine an application to divert parts of Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham.

The application is being recommended for refusal, which would mean the footpath routes would remain unchanged and therefore there would be no impact on any of the protected characteristics.

However, in the event that the Panel determines to proceed with referral of the opposed Diversion Orders to the Secretary of State, and the Orders are in due course confirmed, there may be some low level impacts on some protected characteristics as detailed below.

1.2 What evidence is available to suggest that your proposal could have an impact on people (including staff and customers) with protected characteristics? Consider each of the protected characteristics in turn and identify whether your proposal is Relevant or Not Relevant to that characteristic. If Relevant, please assess the level of impact as either High / Medium / Low and whether the impact is Positive (i.e. contributes to promoting equality or improving relations within an equality group) or Negative (i.e. could disadvantage them). Please document your evidence for each assessment you make, including a justification of why you may have identified the proposal as “Not Relevant”.

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EqlA: Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham diversion application

Protected characteristics	Relevance	Level	Positive/negative	Evidence
Age	Relevant	Low	Negative	<p>The recommendation is not to proceed with the footpath diversions, which would mean the footpath routes would remain un-changed; there would be no impact on this characteristic if the application does not proceed.</p> <p>If the Panel were to proceed with referral of the opposed Diversion Orders to the Secretary of State, and the Orders are in due course confirmed, there could be low level negative impact on this characteristic, as a short circular walk would be lost, and this may disadvantage more elderly walkers.</p>
Disability	Relevant	Low	Some positive and some negative	<p>The recommendation is not to proceed with the footpath diversions, which would mean the footpath routes would remain un-changed; there would be no impact on this characteristic if the application does not proceed.</p> <p>If the Panel were to proceed with referral of the opposed Diversion Orders to the Secretary of State, and the Orders are in due course confirmed, there could be low level negative impact on this characteristic, as a short circular walk would be lost, and this may disadvantage less mobile walkers.</p> <p>However, there may also be a positive impact on some users, as some consultees refer to increased accessibility of the hard-surfaced field-edge footpath, for example for wheel-chair users.</p>

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EqlA: Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham diversion application

Gender re-assignment	Not relevant			The recommendation is not to proceed with the footpath diversions, which would mean the footpath routes would remain un-changed; there would be no impact on this characteristic if the application does not proceed. If the diversion were to proceed, it is not considered that there would be a specific impact on this characteristic.
Marriage/civil partnership	Not relevant			The recommendation is not to proceed with the footpath diversions, which would mean the footpath routes would remain un-changed; there would be no impact on this characteristic if the application does not proceed. If the diversion were to proceed, it is not considered that there would be a specific impact on this characteristic.
Pregnancy and maternity	Relevant	Low	Negative	<p>The recommendation is not to proceed with the footpath diversions, which would mean the footpath routes would remain un-changed; there would be no impact on this characteristic if the application does not proceed.</p> <p>If the Panel were to proceed with referral of the opposed Diversion Orders to the Secretary of State, and the Orders are in due course confirmed, there could be low level negative impact on this characteristic, as some consultees have stated that female walkers may feel less sense of security whilst using the woodland routes as an alternative to the cross-field footpaths. Additionally, the loss of the short circular route could potentially disadvantage pregnant walkers.</p>

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EqlA: Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham diversion application

Race	Not relevant			The recommendation is not to proceed with the footpath diversions, which would mean the footpath routes would remain un-changed; there would be no impact on this characteristic if the application does not proceed. If the diversion were to proceed, it is not considered that there would be a specific impact on this characteristic.
Religion and belief	Not relevant			The recommendation is not to proceed with the footpath diversions, which would mean the footpath routes would remain un-changed; there would be no impact on this characteristic if the application does not proceed. If the diversion were to proceed, it is not considered that there would be a specific impact on this characteristic.
Sex	Relevant	Low	Negative	<p>The recommendation is not to proceed with the footpath diversions, which would mean the footpath routes would remain un-changed; there would be no impact on this characteristic if the application does not proceed.</p> <p>If the Panel were to proceed with referral of the opposed Diversion Orders to the Secretary of State, and the Orders are in due course confirmed, there could be low level negative impact on this characteristic, as some consultees have stated that female walkers may feel less sense of security whilst using the woodland routes as an alternative to the cross-field footpaths.</p>
Sexual orientation	Not relevant			The recommendation is to refuse the diversion application, which would mean the footpath routes would remain un-changed; there would be no impact on this characteristic if the application is refused. If the diversion were to proceed, it is not considered that there would be an impact on this characteristic.

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EqlA: Footpaths 17 and 59 Cookham diversion application

Outcome, action and public reporting

Screening Assessment Outcome	Yes / No / Not at this stage	Further Action Required / Action to be taken	Responsible Officer and / or Lead Strategic Group	Timescale for Resolution of negative impact / Delivery of positive impact
Was a significant level of negative impact identified?	no			
Does the strategy, policy, plan etc require amendment to have a positive impact?	no			

If you answered **yes** to either / both of the questions above a Full Assessment is advisable and so please proceed to Stage 2. If you answered “No” or “Not at this Stage” to either / both of the questions above please consider any next steps that may be taken (e.g. monitor future impacts as part of implementation, re-screen the project at its next delivery milestone etc).