

PARK HILL - LEICESTER CITY MARCH 2018

Several members have now looked at your exhibitions and seen the indicative plans. We still have far too little information to comment in detail on the project as a whole but as far as the right of way is concerned the suggested possibility around the east of the plot achieves very little but may be the only practical solution.

We can make some observations and suggestions and also provide some historical background to what is a fairly messy situation

We will go into some detail having done the research but will conclude with some direct suggestions.



This bridleway provides a very useful off road link from Park Hill Lane if going south.

Horse riders coming up it would like to go right to cross the major road but that is unsafe to do. As far as walkers are concerned moving the right of way nearer the village would be not only helpful but could offer a more attractive route. This route could also serve horse riders going in the other direction.

It looks as though it could be diverted to create a bridleway running down the Sibley Brook from Park Hill Lane to then go round the western and southern edges of the land you own to rejoin the original route. This would though require you to acquire an access from Park Hill Lane which if not possible could mean it being a little further from the village and skirting the complex just inside your land on the west and south sides to rejoin the route. If following the brook there might be a problem with muddy conditions but only a ground survey could check this. It would however be an expensive exercise if produced to Bridleway standards.

There are a number of possible solutions but unfortunately most involve some land outside your control, although it is possible you could buy some access points.

There is a footpath alongside the brook on the other side. The I 43 Seagrave to Sibley path could be used to then cross the brook by the Sunrise Farm track towards Hanover Lodge if a link could be created across to the present bridleway. Again not directly in your control.

Most horse riders would like to come north up this bridleway and then across the busy road but assuming something can be done about that junction then they would be best served by using your loop but rather than returning to the present exit onto Park Lane the bridleway could go into the corner of the two roads as you own all that land.

That would not serve the needs of walkers though.

It may well be the simplest and best solution would in fact be separating the footpath from the bridleway. It would be a lot simpler creating a footpath around the west side of the boundary if it did not need to be to bridleway standards and that short diversion of the bridleway would not be a major cost.

When a formal planning application is made we will have to consider buildings of what size, light and noise pollution, how much additional traffic etc. in some detail but at this point we will concentrate on the rights of way issues.

The matter is complicated somewhat by the fact that it straddles several parishes, who have not always interpreted things the same way. Park Hill golf course is mainly built on the former Coronation Farm plus Cossington Gorse (a small wood). Cossington Gorse and the land immediately N of it and to the W of these two blocks lies in Cossington parish. The frontage along Park Hill Lane is in Seagrave parish. The largest part lies in Sibley parish.

This is the background to put the matter in a historical perspective as regards the bridle way and footpaths in the area.

An old road runs north up the full length of the Cossington Parish from the back of the village, with a slight diversion where it crosses the railway. Part of it is known as the Humbles and it crosses the Sibley-Ratcliffe road into what has become labelled as College Lane. This road is clearly shown on old maps extending right into the northernmost field or, more recently, turning sharp east along a track just outside the golf club boundary, which leads out to the Fosse through an always-unlocked and decaying field gate.

A late 19th cent. estate map had the printed words 'Bridle Road' beside this track. C.1930, in order to create his own airfield, Sir Lyndsey Everard of Ratcliffe Hall had the northern two-thirds of the route diverted in the magistrate's court as a bridleway on to the current line of I 54, the northern part of this running alongside the parish boundary brook.

However, in 1951, Cossington Parish Council put the route on their Parish Return (which created the Definitive Map), as a footpath, incorrectly. The 1963 sale particulars for Coronation Farm and Cossington Gorse "by order of PAWB Everard Esq." described the land as having a bridle path and two footpaths on it "but they are little used". They are not shown on the sale map. The old bridleway/road seems to have come back into use but it begs the question, if the diverted bridleway was only thought of as a footpath, there seems to be a missing footpath?

Ratcliffe College (a Roman Catholic fee-paying school) had bought land in Cossington Parish off the Ratcliffe Hall estate in the mid 19th cent and more recently has acquired additional parcels. Until recently the southern (un-diverted) part of "College Lane" was used as a back entrance and main exit for the College as the A46 grew too busy for right turns.

In 2010, in order to separate College traffic from the operations of Elms Farm, the College and farmer agreed to provide an alternative route and applied in Loughborough Magistrates Court for extinguishment of public vehicular etc rights with retention of footpath rights on the previously un-diverted section. On receiving this, the County Council (LCC) found in the Quarter Sessions records the 1930s diversion as a bridleway. Loughborough magistrates agreed to amend the order so that it retained bridleway rights.

The two magistrates court decisions provided the Legal Events which enabled the LCC to alter the status of I 54 without further process.

It is therefore a bridleway but the landowners are unwilling to allow the footpath section to be opened as a bridleway so, in spite of appropriate signposts at each end, most of the route is effectively not open to horse-riders. Unsuccessful negotiations – involving the College, the golf club, and the farmer in Sileby parish – have gone on ever since.

This seems to be an opportunity to sort out the matter but it is not entirely within your control.

There is a further anomaly in that early maps show two rights of way through what would be the northern part of your land.

Looking at options, if the route round the boundary of the golf course going anti clockwise is not possible either because of access or ground conditions, returning the route to approximately its pre-1930s route using the hardened track beside the tree-planting on what is now Ratcliffe College land and utilising an existing culvert bridge into the golf course might be possible.

It could then join your proposed loop round the outer edge to the current exit or to the original exit through a field gate, slightly nearer to the cross-roads if further from the village. This would provide a multi-user, all-weather track, easier to use than the current route and possibly marginally shorter. It would however require the consent of Ratcliffe College.

There is also an issue if the golf course is to be retained in part. Some holes will need realigning so that no balls are being fired towards the bridleway if to be retained on or close to the present route.

There is yet another issue causing concern, although again not within your site, and that is the accident black spot at Thrussington crossroads which additional traffic will not help. Ideally we would wish to see some lights here but as there is no speed restriction in force this is not possible. If as part of your development you offered to install lights perhaps the authorities could be persuaded to introduce a short stretch of speed restriction. It is now, generally speaking, too dangerous to cross unless in a vehicle and that is no guarantee of safety. Valuable assets in fast cars would need some protection at this junction

It is only going to get worse due to reasons including the traffic you will generate. The new housing estates in Sileby are creeping up the Seagrave road with the space between the two villages halving over the recent past. The whole road network round this side of Leicester is being developed which will make this road even busier. Hinckley & Bosworth Council has just given permission for a major interchange facility at the bottom of the M69 and the Strategic Growth Plan talks of a "Southern Gateway" in the same area. There is likely to be a new motorway interchange on the M1 and a major relief road running right round the east side of the city (the A46 Expressway).

If indeed a solution is found for the bridleway some distance from the village of Seagrave, you could fund the restoration programme for the wide verges past your property and indeed the length of Park Hill Lane and might also, as good neighbours, provide occasional wide mowing of the verges to keep them open, and usable for off road walking and riding to access I 54 from wherever you end up siting it. You will of course have the necessary equipment on site.

In conclusion the best bridleway solution as far as it is directly within your control seems to be as planned other than going nearer to the corner with the main road. The suggested line could actually remain just as a footpath for walkers wishing to access the village, but it is far from ideal.

If in addition a footpath could also be created around the western perimeter of your land to link to I 54 to the south, that would be ideal for walkers as the village is their most likely destination.

These are our present thoughts on the access issues but we reserve comment on other matters until they are tabled.

This response is sent on behalf of The Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF). The observations given have been agreed following discussions between members of the Forum's planning group with the other members given an opportunity to comment.

LLAF is of course an independent statutory body, set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000, and exists to represent the interests of everyone concerned with access to the countryside and the public rights of way network including footpaths, bridleways and byways, cycleways and areas of open access.

Section 94 of the CROW act makes it a statutory function of the forum to give advice to a range of bodies, including local authorities and government departments, on access issues and we will be making advices to the planning authority when the planning application is tabled.

We trust you find these observations constructive and helpful and would be grateful if you would keep us informed as matters progress.

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