



Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum held on Wednesday 23 September 2020 in MS Teams Virtual Meeting, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.00 pm.

Members present

Mr D Briggs, Mr G Casperz, Mr A Clark, Mr N Harris, Ms A Heath, Mr R Jennings, Cllr A Turner and Mr B Worrell

Others in attendance

Ms C Beevers, Mr J Clark, Mr P Fox, Ms C Hudson, Ms N MacHaye and Ms J Taylor

Agenda Item

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from:

Mr J Elfes - Ramblers Association, Mr G Thomas - Independent, Cllr L Clarke OBE - Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr N Naylor - Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr A Lambourne – Parish Councils.

Changes in Membership-

Mr J Clark confirmed Cllr N Naylor and Cllr A Turner were made new members on the Local Access Forum following the new Buckinghamshire Council coming into being on 1st April 2020. As an independent body, the Local Access Forum remains otherwise unchanged.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3 Matters Arising

There were none.

4 Aylesbury Garden Town and Garden Way

Ms Ulrika Diallo, Aylesbury Garden Town Project Lead, Buckinghamshire Council gave an overview of the presentation appended to the minutes.

The masterplan link: <https://www.aylesburygardentown.co.uk/masterplan>

It was outlined the Garden Town Project in general:

1) Aylesbury had been awarded Garden Town status in Jan 2017 and the Garden Town team had now developed a Masterplan to 2050 (to be circulated after the meeting) and a governance structure was also in place;

2) Garden Town status aimed to develop Aylesbury as a more sustainable and 'green' town;

3) The Garden Town Strategic Board oversaw the project, with representation from Councillors, NHS, Homes England, Parish Councils, Town Council, and Local Enterprise Partnership;

4) Ms U Diallo sat within a Project Delivery Team, which included officers from transport, property and planning, while 'working groups' sat under that group;

5) Homes England funded the project via central government, which included 50 similar Garden Town projects across England;

6) The Garden Town Masterplan sought high level targets including (i) 50% of land as public green space in new communities, (ii) an increase biodiversity net gain of 20%, and (iii) at least 50% of trips originating by sustainable modes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. All high ambitions, but achievable;

7) Headline projects included: (i) Garden Way, which had been drafted on a plan by urban design specialists and landscape designers, aimed to connect existing and planned blue and green infrastructure, walking and cycling routes (bridleways, footpaths and Gemstone cycling routes); (ii) Town Centre Action Plan (includes a socio-economic study looked at why Aylesbury fell short of similar market towns to attract visitors and shoppers); (iii) an Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document sat under the new Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) that focused on a design guide for Aylesbury; (iv) a link road network that removed traffic from the town centre, with the Garden Way sitting inside the link roads; and (v) community projects would include a food growing network, Friends of Aylesbury Station to improve the arrival experience (installing hydraulic bike stands and revamping the station, such as hanging basket).

Communication and engagement would take place, to emphasise feedback, collaboration and ownership by the public. The existing Market Square and Kingsbury Square development projects would work in parallel with the Garden Town teams. A 'Design Charette' would take place (an extended workshop) to

include Aylesbury residents. Initial 'capacity funding was through Homes England to develop strategies and design principles, but future funding bids would be needed thereafter. Visual design examples were noted in the presentation slides.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Mr D Briggs asked how much would the Garden Way cost? At this point there was no set budget for the Garden Way project, but having looked at other commissions locally, such as the Waddesdon Greenway, it was likely to cost approximately £15 million, taking into account the cost per kilometre.
- It was confirmed that stakeholder mapping was currently underway, and this would be extensive. It was confirmed that schools, hand cycle users and local cyclists to Aylesbury would be included in the process.
- Mr R Jennings suggested a loose surface wouldn't be appropriate for activities such as shopping, and he would like early input on surface design; Mrs Heath suggested Flexi-pave was preferred by horses.
- Mr R Jennings requested a further offline conversation with Ms Diallo on stakeholder input from cyclists.

ACTION: Mr R Jennings/ Ms U Diallo

- Mr A Clark raised questions on long-term maintenance and protection of greenspaces. Maintenance was uncertain, but it was likely a stewardship model would be set-up to engage local communities to manage each green space. The land would be protected, but the mechanism by which this would be secured was uncertain.

5 Public Spaces Protection Order

Mr J Clark gave an overview of the report provided:

Cllr Lesley Clarke OBE, local member for Desborough Road, was due to speak in support of renewing the 3-year closure order but was unable to attend the meeting. Cllr L Clarke's recommendation was to renew the closure order. The existing order was due to expire in October 2020 and covered a public footpath in Desborough Road, which was closed by gates at either end. Objections to renewing the order had already been registered by the Ramblers, Open Spaces Society and Chiltern Society.

Mr J Clark was happy to formulate a response on behalf of the Bucks Local Access Forum following discussion of their recommendations.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Cllr A Turner felt that this would not be a great loss to the local area if a closure went ahead as there was an easy detour around the block. Anti-social behaviour was concerning for local residents and had been an ongoing issue for a number of years. There were currently rejuvenation work in the area and it was hoped once these had been completed the access route could potentially reopen.
- Mr C Hurworth supported Cllr Turner's comments due to the anti-social

behaviour.

- Mr N Harris outlined the route was ideal for encouraging anti-social behaviour, being hidden away at the back of houses; it wasn't a great loss and supported the closure, perhaps looking to re-open in 3-years' time.
- Mr A Clark confirmed the route was continuous with surrounding pedestrian networks and the diversion along busy streets was less attractive; it would also displace the same anti-social behaviour elsewhere. Mr A Clark also asked if the process remained the same in light of Unitary.
- Mr J Clark confirmed that, although Buckinghamshire now had a unitary council, the process and consultees remained unchanged.
- A vote was taken for and against the proposed closure. Of the voting members, six were in favour of the closure and one was against.

RESOLVED: The forum **AGREED** in favour of the access closure.

6 Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020 - 2030: Action Plan

Mr P Fox gave an overview of the Action Plan appended to the agenda. An updated document was appended to the minutes.

Buckinghamshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) was adopted in April 2020 and the next stage is to produce an Action or Delivery Plan, a draft of which had been circulated in advance. The action plan translated the aims and objectives of the main ROWIP into actions with a timetable, in the context of resources and priorities, and which partners could help deliver the actions?

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Mr D Briggs confirmed it was an impressive and wonderful piece of work. The ROWIP item had been on the Agenda for some time and would continue to be into the future.
- Cllr A Turner noted this was a very thorough and impressive piece of work and commended and appreciated the Team's work.
- Mr B Worrell agreed it was an excellent piece of work. Mr B Worrell, Mr A Clark and Mr R Jennings all wanted to feedback comments offline.
- Mr P Fox reminded the LAF of their statutory role in the process and the need to comment annually throughout the 10-year Action Plan. The deadline for comments was 12th October 2020.

ACTION: All Members

7 Rights of Way Group Report

Ms C Hudson, Mr J Clark and Ms J Taylor gave an overview of the report provided.

The following points and questions were raised in discussion:

- Section A, point 4 (Great & Little Kimble) it was clarified the only prohibition was Motorcycles.

Mr J Clark confirmed HS2 construction had formally started and included a number of footpath closures. An additional footpath link to South Heath from Great Missenden had recently been reopened having been previously been closed by HS2's contractors. This was a particular problem for visitors unfamiliar with the area. New diversion signs had been agreed. Significant closures would be in place around Calvert and Steeple Claydon. The website would update both HS2 and East West Rail closures in detail. The Dorney Rowing Lake closure would reopen once fencing had been constructed. The two donate-a-Gate projects (Ramblers and Chiltern Society) had been on hold in the last 6-months as work parties were cancelled. All were now back up and running, but with limited capacity in some areas due to social distancing restrictions and vulnerable volunteers remaining shielded.

Ms J Taylor provided BVPI figures for 2019 and confirmed the 'paths easy to use' measure should have been 66%. Capital Project delays were experienced during lockdown as contractor's stayed at home. Denham Bridleway 52 had been closed due to a bridge failure. A temporary structure was in place at Fawley alongside the Thames. Two additional clearance teams were employed over the summer of 2020 and most jobs were now complete. Officer inspections were suspended during lockdown, so some catch-up works were still being undertaken. Covid-19 resulted in a big increase in users reflected by an increase in landowner concerns reported. Around 50 complaints were received due to signs erected stating footpaths were closed (or similar). The volunteer crews from the Chiltern Society and Ramblers were also suspended due to Covid-19 which had reduced gate installations significantly.

- Mr Briggs noted he had seen a significant increase in walkers using his land during the lockdown period.
- Mr B Worrell asked about the impact of delegated powers? There was a discussion regarding the implications of officers now having delegated powers to determine applications which were once determined by the Rights of Way (ROW) Committee. It was confirmed that the officers who provided the reports and research to the previous ROW Committee were the same officers who will be working towards determining the applications now, and therefore the forum could be assured that the same level of expertise and knowledge would be applied. Whilst this now created extra responsibility for the officers, it was hoped it would help to determine applications quicker due to no longer being restricted by Committee timetables. There was the option to refer some cases to the Strategic Sites Committee if the Service Director deemed it necessary, e.g. if the case was very controversial or the evidence was very finely balanced. Buckinghamshire Council was now in line with many other authorities whose officers had delegated powers and no ROW Committee.
- Mr A Clark asked if a series of accessible bridges were planned from Marlow to the main road in Fawley. Ms J Taylor confirmed that, as part of the rights of way improvement plan, there was a strategy to make bridges more accessible as each is replaced. With regard to Fawley, the aim was to increase the number of sleepers on each bridge, so they were wider.

- Mr A Clark requested a progress report on 'CAMS web' software (the system by which the public registered network issues online and by which the council then managed those reports). An update would be shared at the next meeting, but to note with the introduction of 'CAMS web' 18 months ago there had been a significant increase in the number of reports as the system made it easier for the public to report issues.

ACTION: Ms J Taylor

- An offline conversation would take place with Mr R Jennings regarding HS2 temporary closures for construction detailed on the Buckinghamshire Council website and whether users could be provided with automatic updates wherever there were changes.

ACTION: Mr J Clark

8 LAF Members' Report

The forum **NOTED** the report.

9 Any Other Business

- Mr A Clark advised Chilterns Walking Festival was due to take place in October 2020.

10 Dates of Next & Future Meetings

03 March 2021 - venue to be confirmed.