

WYCOMBE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Decision taken by Cllr Graham Peart Cabinet Member for Community

The Member has taken the following decision.

The decision will take effect on 31 October 2017.

Title

Public Spaces Protection Order footpath closure HWU/80/1

Decision Taken

To agree to implement the PSPO (Public Spaces Protection Order) and install lockable gates at each end of footpath HWU/80/1.

Date of Publication

23 October 2017

Reasons for Decision

There have been ongoing reports to the police, Wycombe District Council and the local Councillor about anti-social behaviour occurring along the footpath running behind the houses on West End Road.

Consultation Undertaken

Consultation

Consultation letters were sent to the following:

- The residents and businesses whose premises back onto the footpath
- Residents and businesses in the wider local area
- Police and Crime Commissioner
- High Wycombe Local Police Area Superintendent
- Bucks County Council Rights of Way Team and Strategic Access Officer
- Via Bucks County Council, letters were sent to Chiltern Society, the Open Spaces Society and the Ramblers Association.
- Following a recommendation from the Open Spaces Society, further letters were sent to the Auto-Cycle Union, the British Horse Society, and the Byways and Bridleways Trust (as specified within the Public Path Orders Regulations 1993 (schedule 3)).

During the consultation period letters/emails of support were received from 8 local residents and 1 local business. The anti-social behaviour problems that have been occurring along this footpath continue to cause a great deal of distress to those

residents who responded. Points that have been raised by the residents include:

- Ongoing use of the footpath by people drinking alcohol
- Noise at all times of the day and night
- Fear for personal safety due to drug taking, racist graffiti, fire setting and damage to rear garden fences
- Fly tipping
- Windows being smashed and items being thrown into rear gardens

An email of support for closing the footpath was also received from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Letter/emails of objection to closing the footpath were received from the following:

- Ramblers Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area – who felt the footpath was used regularly by members of the public and that by closing the footpath the anti-social behaviour problems would be moved onto other sections of the footpath. They felt that CCTV should be considered. They raised concern over using lockable gates as they felt it was likely the keys would ‘get into the wrong hands’, and that closing the footpath would have an adverse effect on the people that use it as it provides a short cut away from traffic.
- Open Spaces Society – who explained that the footpath proposed to be closed was part of a continuous route from Rutland Street to Leigh Street and connecting to Kitchener Road. They again believed the footpath was regularly used by the public, and that it provides a short cut away from traffic. Concern was also raised regarding the alternative route, which although a short distance from the footpath, was next to traffic and was ‘partly obstructed by rubbish bins’.
- Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum – the proposed PSPO was discussed at a meeting in July where eleven out of the fourteen members present were in opposition to the closure of the footpath. They felt the closure would penalise the majority of legitimate users, and that the alternative route is not the most convenient or direct route, and is not away from traffic noise and fumes. They also felt the PSPO would set a precedent for similar footpaths within the town that provide ‘valuable pedestrian connectivity’. The forum members also raised concerns over the lockable gate and also the potential for displacement.
- Chiltern Society – who felt the closure of the footpath would be inconvenient and unacceptable to legitimate users. They also felt that closing the footpath would simply displace those causing the nuisance.
- A resident in Marlow – who explained that the footpath is an essential part of High Wycombe’s historic layout and felt that it would be more appropriate to use surveillance and applying the ‘full force of the law’ to stop the behaviour continuing.
- A resident of Desborough Road – whose family use the footpath to visit Wycombe hospital regularly and feel the alternate is via a steeper hill.
- Resident from unknown location – who felt that CCTV should be used instead, and that the license to sell alcohol be taken from the shop owner whose shop is located at one end of the footpath.

Officer Contact

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