

Proposed Moving of Existing Public Footpath between High Ditch to Park and Ride

Internal discussion document Fen Ditton Parish Council 31st October 2013. Discussed at PC meeting 6/11/2013.

Intro

Marshall's is proposing to move an existing public footpath between High Ditch Road and the Park and Ride on Newmarket road (P&R).

The proposed route is longer than the existing route.

The existing route is across a field that is used for crops and therefore often muddy and unmarked.

Building on the north site (The Crescent) estimated to start in 10 years.

While the proposal currently on the table only refers to diverting a footpath, it is difficult to consider this in isolation. This document therefore looks at both this proposal (scenic route), and the most efficient way of linking Wing to the old Village.

Ref: PTEa Draft drawing DAS – 05 dated 10.10.2013

Observations/Background Notes

The Proposed new route would primarily be a scenic/leisure route with the possibility (with suitable surfaces) to be a safer alternative for cyclists wishing to cycle down High Ditch Road.

High Ditch Road can be hazardous for cyclists due to its width. It can be especially approaching the old railway bridge where most approaching traffic is blind to oncoming traffic.

The existing footpath route is potentially quicker (mud permitting) being a more direct to the P&R. However, due to the terrain and numerous gates it is not ideal for commuter foot traffic.

Footpath access is proposed from High Ditch to the footpath on the north east corner. By Orchard House where there is also a gate to the farm vehicle access road.

The High Ditch Road extension (past Shepherds close) leads to a rough footpath and an old gate with a Marshall's property sign. Implying that there is a right of access at this location.

As far as we are aware at this time, the retail space, school, playing field/pavilion moving the petrol station are to be undertaken at the start.

Woodland East

Unconfirmed information suggests that Marshall's have been advised by the District Council that the existing woodlands running North South on the west side of the site should be thinned considerable to allow a direct view between the (new) houses and The Plains (playing field). The reason (2nd hand source) is not to isolate the playing field from the rest of the community.

There are a few arguments against this idea. Loss of wildlife habitat, trees, maintenance, disturbance of homes backing onto playing field which may encourage homeowners to build

fencing or trees on their land, etc. The woodlands at this point is quite wide. (see photos)

Proposal - Adopted PC Meeting 6/11/2013

- The FDPC requests more information as to the logic for the thinning woodlands and without a strong case does not support this action.

Timing

Current information suggests it could 10 years before construction commences on the north side of the Wing site. A more logical proposal would be to establish access onto the cycle way between the Fisons Road Estate and the P&R as a priority. Allowing FD residences access to both the P&R and the retail units which, we understand to be in the first phase of the Wing development.

Construction Traffic Access Road (East P&R)

Marshall's is wisely proposing a separate access road for constructions traffic down the east side of the P&R. However, the proposed diverted footpath and access to the playing fields shares the same route.

There are two potential problems with construction traffic and cars (to playing field) sharing this route. Parking and the safety/congestion problems with cars trying to make a right turn out of the site onto Newmarket Road. Or we (potentially) end up with yet another set of traffic lights at this access.

Proposals - Adopted PC Meeting 6/11/2013

- The PC only supports this route for the diverted footpath if it is well segregated from the construction traffic road.
- The PC suggest using the P&R for car/SUV access (and parking) to the playing field with footpath access in the NE corner.
- Propose we ask for a footpath access in the NE corner of the P&R as an alternative route to the retail area avoiding the walk down Newmarket Road.

Key Policy Decision - Main Access Route Old Village-Wing

The key decision to the future integration of the Fen Ditton communities will be the ease of access between the Wing estate and the old village via High Ditch road. This is the most direct path between existing services (pubs, church, church hall, existing recreation ground, primary school) and future services (future recreation ground, primary school, retail and P&R)

The potential foot/cycle traffic between these areas could be considerable and therefore good access will be required.

The most obvious route for this potential traffic would be down the High Ditch Road extension, through the old Marshall's gate onto the old railway track, and onto the existing east/west cycle path (Gregory Park on the plan) leading directly to the P&R. It appears from tracks that this route is already in use and that if not formally adopted it would naturally develop by increased foot traffic.

The ownership and access right across a short strip of farmers land between the two area is unknown at the time of writing. (Emma at Marshall's did say she was trying to identify the status of this route). It may be owned by Fisons.

Proposals - Adopted PC Meeting 6/11/2013

- The FDPC adopts this as our preferred main route.
- Further proposal that if the access right are not available that the FDPC looks into the use of any available legislation (e.g. Section.s 25, 26, or 30 of the Highways Act 1980) to ensure obtain public access rights.

Diverted Footpath (Proposed)

The existing footpath will have to be moved before construction starts. As discussed its current use is more direct than the proposed diverted path.

From the photos' and our walk the (proposed) route through Kingsley Woods is twisty unless cleared and possibly some trees removed. More suitable for a leisurely walk than as a transport route. It obviously would require some sort of paving to make it usable all year round.

As mentioned cycling along High Ditch road can be hazardous. There is an opportunity here to extend the cycle way from the Drovers way, along the back of the houses to Orchard House and join the proposed footpath. With suitable mixed use paving (Dutch style) the proposed footpath could be utilized to get cyclists off High Ditch and give better access, along the old railway onto the Fisons estate cycle-route into town. The downside would be the route would need to be straighter than foot traffic only, and may involve moving some trees.

Proposals – Adopted PC Meeting 6/11/2013

- That the PC supports the route of the proposed diverted path as long as the proposed, more direct route is implemented.
- The PC would like to see suitable paving along the entire path, to allow year round use.
- The PC ask Marshall's to explore the feasibility of using the northern section of the proposed path for mixed use traffic. (foot/cycle)

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Disclaimer

This contents of this report are the opinions of the author and not Fen Ditton Parish Council.