

Notes of a meeting of the Dedham Parish Council Footpath Advisory Group on Tuesday, 22nd October 2013 at Rye Farm.

Present: Cllr. Sheila Beeton (Chair)
Cllr. Nicola Baker
Mr. Steve White

Invited: Mr. John Osborn

Apologies: None

1. To consider proposals from Essex County Council regarding proposed diversion/deletion/creation of footpaths situated in Dedham Parish. A map showing the specific details had previously been circulated.

Note: The Group wishes to record that the residential property principally affected by some of the following proposals (East House) is owned by a Dedham Parish Councillor (Tony Regan). Mr. Regan has properly declared an interest in this matter, is not a member of the Advisory Group looking at this issue and has not been involved in any consultations or discussions relating to these proposals.

The Group spent some time trying to establish the accuracy of the circulated map and a couple of observations were made as follows: (a) the proposed status of the path F to FG was unclear; (b) it was presumed that path M to L was proposed for deletion as it was a solid line but this was not listed in the key box.

In terms of a response to the proposals the Group agreed as follows:

The proposed changes to path 29

In terms of principles the Group appreciated the convenience of rerouting paths which cross field boundaries. However, many such footpaths have been in situ for generations and have historic significance. As such they are often precious to walkers notwithstanding their inconvenience. We would not therefore wish to support plans which generally seek to remove such paths or which might seek to act as a precedent for the deletion or diversion of other paths in the parish.

However, we are willing to consider such applications on their individual merit and in this context we have no objection to deletion of path 29 from point F to the boundary of East House where it meets the proposed new path 30. Our rationale for this is that there is within almost immediate proximity an alternative route (F to J) which is proposed for renumbering to path 29. In respect of path M to L we understand that the precise route of the original path has not been used for a number of years. However, walkers do still use a route through East House via the drive, past the cottage and out through the gate at the back. There are close alternative routes from

F to H and further down East Lane from Knights Manor to point N were this path to be rerouted.

There are clear benefits to East House if this element of path is removed but if this agreed, we would wish to be satisfied that this decision in conjunction with the other changes to path 29 are not causing other residents of East Lane (and particularly Barkers Terrace which has tight back gardens) any undue distress or inconvenience which may arise from legitimising new path 30 as a prime route.

In respect of the remainder of path 29, we have no objection to the diversion of point A to D to the field boundaries AC and CB but do object to the deletion of the remainder of path 29 specifically from point H through E to D. This is a historic diagonal path with good views of Dedham Church and is part of our local heritage. We also note that the amendments as proposed would appear to leave two elements of path 29 disjointed and confusing to walkers (the first part of this path from opposite the Flemish Cottages to D and the second part from J to F).

The proposed changes to Path 18

We do not support the proposed deletion of the existing path 18. It is suggested that P to R is established as a new alternative route. This is not correct. This route is already a permissive path on the definitive footpath map of the area which was given to walkers by the National Trust in 1995. The combination of these two paths R to P and Q to P give the option of a circular walk which would be removed with the deletion of Q to P. It is also noted that there is an electrical sub-station on the first part of the path from Q which would require the retention of access.

In respect of the diversion of S to T via SVT, we are advised that this is in support of an elevation of this path to a bridleway and further possibly for part of a cycle route to Manningtree Station. We have difficulty in comprehending how the three functions of this path would operate (walkers, horseriders and cyclists) and are reluctant to support such a proposal without more specific plans as to how this would operate. We have no objections to the newly established routes of P to Z and W to X.

2. Rubbish dumped alongside path 34 (not 29 as indicated on the agenda and referred to as 29 by Sarah Potter in her email.

The report from Essex was that the path had been inspected and the footpath itself to be satisfactory (we should now check whether it was path 34 that was inspected). It was however agreed by the group that the difficulty in getting Essex or the appropriate landowner (assuming we can identify) to deal with this issue is significant. It was therefore suggested that DPC consider whether it could mount a once-off initiative to clear the land in question and combine this with a leafleting project to residents and a tougher stance towards dumping rubbish in future. The Chair agreed to try to establish estimates for relevant clearance and submit a proposal to DPC for consideration and possible funding.

3. To consider the overall condition of footpaths in the Parish.

All paths had been walked reasonably frequently and in general paths were considered to be in good condition. Cllr. Baker reported that a new landowner in the area of

footpath 3 had done some helpful and positive clearance work along this path which was much appreciated. There was still some clearance work required along footpath 2 (2 gates need replacement/repair), which Cllr. Baker would report. Steve White reported the removal of the stile on footpath 15 near Milsoms. He also questioned any progress on the inadequate winter condition of footpath 17 near the river at the kissing gate. It was acknowledged that this was a perennial problem but was in the East Bergholt Parish. It was agreed that we should seek to establish a joint initiative with EBP on this issue with a view to pursuing suitable works on the path to shore up the substructure.

4. Other issues: none raised.