



WESTCOTT VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

SENT AS AN EMAIL ATTACHMENT

Views, observations, ideas and comments submitted on behalf of the Westcott Village Association to be considered in the Public Consultation for developing the SCC Rights of Way Improvement Plan

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31st March 2024

To: Sharon Bayne, Blackwood Bayne Ltd & Claire Saunders, SCC Countryside Access Team CC: Marisa Heath, SCC

Sharon, Claire:

I write on behalf of the Westcott Village Association with our representation in relation to the above consultation. Thank you for the opportunity to participate following your respective letters dated 23rd February 2024.

Unfortunately, the WVA were not aware of this consultation until we read your letters and were unable to circulate details to Westcott Residents to notify them of the survey and the 10th March deadline date - so it is unlikely that many Residents participated.

However, the WVA have been able to discuss the matter at the WVA Open Meeting on 21st March – when many relevant comments were made by the 60 or so attendees - and to subsequently write to our 450 email subscribers to ask and encourage interested parties to send in their written comments by return.

These various views, observations, ideas and comments are listed on subsequent pages in bullet point form. Ideally we would have much more time to discuss and collate comments and if there is any opportunity for further consultation prior to the ROWIP being completed or indeed to seek clarification of comments we have made, please contact me. We would welcome the engagement.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Goddard. Honorary Secretary
On behalf of the Westcott Village Association

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Summary Comments:

In this Consultation response we have concentrated almost wholly on specific problems and areas of concern that the WVA and Westcott Residents see as needing to be addressed – most being urgent and some as other developments take place – but nonetheless all within the ten year timeline of the Improvement Plan.

Our SCC maintained public rights of way (ROW) are a valuable and extensive amenity which contributes significantly to making it special to live in Westcott and the Surrey Hills. They provide a significant opportunity for exercise and healthy living, for walking and dog walking, for cycling and horse riding often with a handy bench or seat from which to enjoy the views, the wildlife and our living environment. All this in relative safety and away from busy, often very noisy and sometimes dangerous SCC and MVDC maintained highways and pavements. So, it is acknowledged generally by the WVA that this ROW Improvement Planning process starts from a sound base.

SCC's ROWs have an important role to play in allowing and persuading people to change to more sustainable travel - that is walking and cycling - between Westcott and Dorking. Over-reliance on cars contributes to congestion on the A25 into Dorking and particularly around the Vincent Road traffic lights

Before considering specifics please note that the WVA recognises that with over two thousand one hundred miles of ROWs in Surrey, not all of them can or need to be in a great condition. However, we do ask that Key Rights of Way are identified as a priority within and around Westcott which are to be maintained to a high standard such that there are no weak points to act as a barrier for users. Key Rights of Way need to be safe and fully accessible to everyone at all times.

Problems & concerns are set out below:

Key ROW: our connectivity with Dorking:

- There is an infrequent bus service.
- The A25 is the most direct route between Westcott and Dorking
- The MVDC maintained pavement alongside the A25 is in relatively poor condition and in places often too narrow to be used safely by young people, parents with prams or wheelchairs and by mobility scooter users. In particular the section on the north side between the Westcott House entrance and Faurefold continues to a safety risk and is constantly cited by Residents as a hazard they are not prepared to tackle. Remedial works to widen the pavement have been attempted over the last couple of years but have not succeeded. A radical improvement is needed urgently. There are several other sections of pavement in, and leading into, Westcott which are too narrow and would benefit from vegetation, ground cover & soil being cut back to widen the path and improve safety and stimulate villagers to use it.

- Cutting vehicle speeds through the Village would also be welcomed.
- The slightly less direct but safer and more pleasant alternative to the A25 pavement is bridleway 111/110, also listed as Cycle Route 22 to the north of the A25. This is a Key ROW between Westcott and Dorking via Unum at Milton Court and as such its entire length must always be maintained, kept clear of vegetation and better drained. In particular the following problems need addressing:
 - The section between the Milton Court entrance and up over the rise leading towards Dorking needs clearing. Overhanging trees need cutting back and mud and debris need to be cleared from the path.
 - The surface towards Westcott is breaking up and needs repairs
 - The areas immediately around the footpath gates linking N22 to Pippbrook Place and links south into the village – Watson Road - are badly worn and prone to flooding any time it rains so need to be repaired / relaid to prevent this hazard
 - Consideration could be given to laying a stone / grit based path linking the N22 and Pippbrook Place to improve access to the Leith Hill Expressway and links to for instance Abinger Roughts
- The WVA notes that the report by Atkins as part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Planning work recognises the importance of this mixed use Right of Way and recommends it is upgraded, though not perhaps at the cost of £16.5m estimated by Atkins
- The significant housing developments that seem likely to be built at Sondes Place Farm and at Milton Court Farm will lead to even more congestion leading into Dorking which will have a significant detrimental impact on Westcott Residents trying to drive to and through Dorking. This means it is even more important that a walking / cycling / mobility scooter alternative is always available which provides a viable alternative at least for some Westcott Residents. A Milton Court Farm housing development must consider extending N22 such that instead of just leading onto the A25 as it does now, a robust link is provided onto Curtis Road and then onto the footpaths through Meadowbank Park to the railway station and Ashcombe school
- On mobility scooters and Ebikes: our population is getting older on average as life expectancy continues to improve. The use of mobility scooters and Ebikes is only going to increase. Rights of Way between key destinations need to accommodate this trend. .
- To the south of the A25, footpaths 119/106, also the Greensand Way, have very steep and uneven sections which are clearly unsuitable for the elderly, prams, wheelchairs or after dark and are not a reasonable alternative for many. However, if the section between Milton Street then leading to School Lane is improved, it could be an alternative pedestrian access to Surrey All Saints School for the 50% of their school roll who come from Dorking if they are dropped off / collected from designated parking at the Westcott Cricket Club.

Key ROW 2: our connectivity with the area around Leith Hill via Wolvens Lane:

- The substantial investment in resurfacing Wolvens Lane (BOAT526) in 2020/21 was run in tandem with a consultation as to whether to re-classify this as a byway and to remove two and four wheeled motorised vehicles. WVA and Westcott residents generally are disappointed that, despite the removal of four wheeled motorised vehicles, motorbikes – very much a minority group of users - can continue to use this route. Motor bikes appear to be damaging and rutting the surface to the detriment of other users. Since it has been classified as the Leith Hill Greenway and advertised as being suitable for walkers, cyclists, horse riding and even wheelchairs, the route has deteriorated at a rate that will soon render unsafe for these other users. We believe a consultation should be re-run to reconsider whether it is appropriate for motorbikes to continue to use this route.

Cyclists: problems they cause to walkers...

- Too many footpaths are being used and damaged by cyclists. There is an extensive network of bridleways and cycle paths available to cyclists but many continue to use footpaths and when challenged often claim not to know they are on a footpath or claim they can use a footpath anyway.
- Cyclists using footpaths is a common problem with:
 - Many cyclists believing they have the right to routinely use them
 - When they use them the ride too fast, without leaving time or space to slow or stop when meeting a walker – who might have a dog – often exacerbated by them often riding in numbers
 - It leads to accidents and confrontation
 - It could lead to a major incident or accident
 - An education programme to provide guidance and clarity via for instance British Cycling, Cycling Clubs, Cycle Shops, advertising plus local signage is needed to reinforce the message
 - Signage must be improved – that is more of it, with more robust messages and instructions
- Clashes of walkers and cyclists appears to happen regularly on the steep footpath leading back into Westcott off Wolvens Lane to Icehouse Wood then onto Rookery Drive
- Multi user Cycleways and Bridle paths where walkers, cyclists and horse riders have equal rights must be wide enough to enable safe passage and maintained to ensure this remains the case
- Westcott is a popular start point for cyclists – particularly off road cyclists to start their ride. This often means they park in Westcott where roadside parking is already in short supply for residents. It would be preferable if they were encouraged to use the numerous car parks around Leith Hill, Newlands Corner and the Hurtwood instead.

Specific Problem Footpaths in / around Westcott:

- There are several problems that Residents have identified relating to specific footpaths within and just outside Westcott or parts of a footpath as noted below:

1) A very long standing problem footpath is that which starts to the east of Masters House on the A25 and goes north with houses / walls either side then past Cradhurst on the left, Dairy Close on the right and ending at Springfield Road. It has several access / exit points including to Cradhurst and is an important cross Westcott footpath for many residents to get to and from Westcott services & shops & bus stops and to access Cradhurst open space.

The middle section is bordered by high trees and thick bushes and is poorly drained so the net result is often a deep quagmire of leaves, mud and water which is slippery and dangerous. It deters pedestrians from using it with potentially a knock on to car use and / or Westcott services losing custom. Previous attempts to persuade SCC and MVDC between them to cut back the trees and clear the path regularly have failed. Last year the WVA voluntarily cleared it as a one off but a long term solution / maintenance is needed to make sure this important Right of Way is always clear, safe and available to all to use.

2) The two footpaths between Logmore Green and Westcott - one via Bury Hills Lakes and the other through Applegarth are routes to take to avoid Logmore Lane when travelling to and from Westcott. We have been told of a mother who walks her three children down to Westcott via Logmore Lane – single track and blind bends - rather than the footpaths because they are so deep in mud and pools of water that they are a slip hazard. The path needs leveling and a drain installed

3) Significant damage is being caused by cyclists to the footpath going southwards from the top of Parsonage Lane up to The Hildens and beyond to Logmore Green. Deep ruts are being formed which fill with water and are unsafe. It's a footpath so cyclists should not be riding on it which is why there is a kind of metal kissing gate/chicane in place to deter them.

4) The footpath from the west end of Westcott Heath to the end of Rookery Drive at the junction with the A25 has been used unofficially we are told as a bridleway for many years as a much safer option to ride between Logmore Lane and Rookery Drive than taking horses onto the busy A25 where the speed limit is 40 mph. Could the status of this route be considered – probably after local consultation?

5) The footpath reached at the end of Furlong Rd that runs north from the A25 down to N22 is very steep at the Guildford Road end. Ideally it requires a hand rail to help those using the footpath to access the bus stops either side of the A25.

6)The link from Cycle route N22 and Pippbrook Place and then onto the Leith Hill Expressway is often difficult to negotiate because of mud and standing water – particularly recently. Extending N22 onto Pippbrook Place with a solid path would transform this footpath and open it up for many more users including mobility scooters who are currently unable travel between the two Rights of Way.

END