

18th December 2025

Refs: ROW/3350303 & ROW/3350304

To the Planning Inspectorate,

I am writing in support of the proposal to reroute a current footpath and bridleway between Buckham Down Farm and Chantry Farm, north of Beaminster in Dorset, DT8.

I am a local resident and I have been walking the footpaths and bridleways of the area for fifty years.

The marked bridleway is completely overgrown and has been impassable for as long as I can remember. Walkers and riders have been using the proposed path ('permissive') without difficulty – in fact with relief – for at least two years. The proposed change is not only logical but sensible: it is much safer to keep horses and riders (a) away from farmyards and (b) out of deep, narrow tracks with low overhead branches and rough going underfoot (or hoof).

Any rider will tell you that riding in close proximity to a farmyard can be a challenge. Machinery, animals, sudden noises, strange smells and reversing vehicles can alarm even the steadiest of horses. It also seems obvious that a narrow bridleway with a thick hedge on either side and deep leaf litter on the ground will make the perfect home for wildlife but may be treacherous for a horse. Leaf mould hides rabbit holes, badger setts and fox earths, all of which a horse may step into and stumble. Often the path is also a watercourse, and therefore either boggy or slippery underneath (iron shod) hooves. Other riders, walkers and their dogs may appear around a corner without warning, on a path too narrow to pass one another without negotiation. Walkers are not able to put their dog on a lead if they can't see a horse coming, whereas in a field there is plenty of visibility and lots of space for people and animals to pass one another without difficulty.

Safety is one concern, but another is wildlife. It is vanishingly rare to find an undisturbed wildlife habitat, and this 'green lane', unused for years, is exactly that. If the bridleway is cleared and made safe, then all the wildlife will be cleared out too. If the bridleway were moved, the lane could continue to shelter birds, dormice, rabbits, hedgehogs, foxes, badgers, stoats and weasels. To take one example: hedgehogs like to hibernate in exactly the kind of deep litter (of fallen leaves, broken branches and rotten logs) that has collected for years along this overgrown and unused path. Riders and walkers can easily (and more happily) use the field; hedgehogs will not. Dogs can disturb wildlife without their owners even being aware, and one puncture wound from a dog's tooth is fatal to a hedgehog.

I would be dismayed if the planning inspectorate were to vote against this sensible and reasonable proposal. The Beaminster area has already been earmarked for extensive housing development, and it seems to me that any portion of our beloved landscape which can be left alone, however small, should be preserved. The alternative – chainsawing, clearing, hedge-flaying, digging out and draining a route which is not only disused but redundant – would be expensive, illogical and destructive.

Yours Faithfully,

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