

Proposed Diversion of Part of Rougham Public Footpath No 7 – Highways Act 1980 Section 119

Statement of reasons for requesting the diversion of part of Rougham Public Footpath No 7

Current situation

We were unaware until we moved into Water Cottage that the present footpath does not follow the 'definitive route' and that the situation cannot remain as it presently stands. Having taken advice from 'The Area Rights of way Officer' the proposed route would resolve the issue.

The present footpath runs across the lawn directly in front of our house with nothing to stop users looking straight into the front windows and glass door. The route has finger posts showing the direction of the path but it is not actually demarcated on the ground by any kind of edging or boundaries because this would totally spoil the lawn and make grass cutting nigh on impossible. People using the footpath range in personalities from those who are obviously embarrassed at being so close to the house and crossing someone's private garden and therefore scurry through (walkers have told us this themselves) to those in large groups who feel they can wander ten or more abreast using as much of the garden as they want to as though it is a public park -this includes allowing their dogs to run around and defecate wherever. Some will stop and stare at the house and us if we are sitting or working in the garden with no care whatsoever for our privacy.

Current Privacy Issues

The front patio is the main outside seating area as it gets the afternoon and evening sun. It is where we sit and eat and entertain family and friends during the summer months. This is spoiled at the moment by the proximity of the footpath users.

Privacy advantages of proposed route for us and walkers

Moving the path would allow us and our family to be able to relax and enjoy ourselves without interruptions and without being gawked at.

If the footpath followed the proposed route around the edge of the garden it would be possible to have clearly defined edges and be surfaced with shredded bark without spoiling the aesthetics of the garden whilst allowing easy cutting of the the lawn. This demarcation would encourage walkers to remain on the actual path. The path would be further from our home frontage and have some trees and shrubs between it and the house giving us much more privacy. It would also allow those embarrassed walkers to enjoy the footpath much more. They will feel more confident to pass through the garden and feel they are not intruding into our private space. Public enjoyment will be enhanced by them having an even more rural experience.

Current Security Issues

Where the footpath is presently situated enables walkers to clearly see if the front door or windows are left open and if valuables are left on the the table on the front patio. Therefore, leaving the front of the house, even just to make a cup of tea in the kitchen at the back of the house, gives someone the opportunity to gain access to our possessions and this causes us to worry. At the moment it is unsafe for children to roam freely in the garden where the public pass through. Walkers can presently come into contact with children playing in our front garden so they have to be watched whilst out or corralled into an area where they can be closely supervised.

When my wife and I are away for regular periods to support aged parents in the north of England one of our daughters is here alone. When she is by herself, in what is a fairly isolated location, seeing walkers close by who can easily see her, makes her feel vulnerable, especially if the walker is a lone male, passing by when it is dusk or dark. My wife experiences the same anxiety when she is alone in the house.

Security advantages of proposed route.

If the path were moved to the proposed position it would be further from the house and there would be very restricted views of the house with virtually no views of the lower ground floor windows and door and patio which would make us feel much more secure and safer, especially when one person is in the house alone.

Additional information

According to the Valuation & Estates Manager dealing with this matter at St Edmundsbury Borough Council the change we are applying for is a diminutive one for walkers but significant for our security and privacy. The proposed change has the support of the Parish Council who have discussed it at their recent meeting and the Parish's Footpath Warden. The Ramblers Association have raised no objections either.

We purchased Water Cottage with the intent of it being our retirement home where we would remain in peace until old age or health made it no longer feasible. During our first week here we were informed about the whole issue of the footpath not following the 'definitive route' and the legalities involved and that the situation cannot remain as it presently exists but must be addressed. This along with the lack of privacy and security has caused us considerable stress and worry. If the change to the proposed route is agreed it would relieve us of the stress and worry which has been hanging over us for some considerable time and would allow us and our family to enjoy the house and gardens as we hoped when we moved here.