

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - SECTION 247

PROPOSED STOPPING UP AND DIVERSION OF FOOTPATH 60 HOLMFIRTH

(Public Inquiry scheduled 24th August 2021)

SUMMARY of PROOF of EVIDENCE

JOHN GREGORY CROPPER

August 2021

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ('TCPA') 1990 - SECTION 247
PROPOSED STOPPING UP AND DIVERSION OF PART OF FOOTPATH 60
HOLMFIRTH**

1. I am **John Gregory Cropper (known as 'Greg Cropper')**. I am local. I have lived in Upperthong for over 30 years. I used to sit on the Holme Valley Parish Council ('HVPC') and was Chair of the Holme Valley Land Charity ('HVLC') until around mid-2019. The HVLC owns the land on which the Wolfstone Heights Trig Point sits.
2. I am myself a passionate supporter of walkers and footpaths in the area. I have worked with Kirklees Council and its officers in the past to maintain footpaths and promote walking in the Holme Valley. I even have direct and personal experience of footpath diversions myself, placing me in what I hope is a relatively unique position to comment on this application.
3. In my Proof of Evidence I cover my own experience as a user, a local person, an ex-Member of the Parish Council and the Holme Valley Land Charity. I also provide information into my own knowledge of this overall matter. Until the diversion route was put in, I have used that existing footpath regularly for over 30 years and have in more recent times utilised this superior diversion route, which I do not want to see lost.
4. I introduce various pieces of evidence, but mainly my Proof conveys that the objections to the diversion appear to be baseless and without foundation. I do cover the fact that I am staggered that the Holme Valley Parish Council has not put itself up to examination at the Inquiry. That in my view is very poor form. I also comment that the Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) which I know is for another time, is in my view an attempt to muddy the proverbial waters and will be found to be plainly incorrect. It does concern me that clear untruths are being allowed to be peddled there.
5. I comment briefly on the positions of the Council and the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society in relation to their (and other) respective objections to the diversion. I comment on the position before the diversion route was put into place, as well as afterwards and now, as well as my own theories about usage from my own observations and experience, as well as the information submitted in support of the diversion route.
6. What is apparent when working on the site and using the diversion, is that the uptake of pedestrian users on the diversion route is very significant, in both directions. What is further apparent though is that this is a recreational route, not a functional route.
7. I use the diversion route myself regularly. Far more than I do the existing Footpath 60, which I personally have all but dispensed with. This is even though I live further towards Upperthong. This is because there is no question that the diversion route in recreation and in functional terms is the far better and more user-friendly route. Many locals and other users feel the same. Is it worth the 120m further walk up Wolfstones Road from the access/exit to the diversion route on Wolfstones Road to Point B on the order plan, for the sake of a better more user-friendly experience with far better views? The answer to any reasonable recreational or even serious walker or runner of any ability must be: 'yes'.

8. I have heard and read references, including from Members of the Kirklees Council Planning Committees and have read others that suggest that the only person to benefit from this diversion is Mr. Butterfield. I could not disagree more.
9. Although there is an advantage obviously to Mr. and Mrs. Butterfield, in that they may finally finish their development, there is no question that the balance of any advantage is very significantly to recreational footpath users compared with the existing route, which is an inferior walking experience.
10. The advantages completely outweigh any perceived disadvantages (which in my view are very misconceived, possibly even deliberately in small parts). The winners are the footpath users. Please do not let this wonderful asset be lost. I plead with the Inspector to please make this diversion route official. There is not in my view a good reason for the Secretary of State not to make this final order.