

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - SECTION 247

PROPOSED STOPPING UP AND DIVERSION OF FOOTPATH 60 HOLMFIRTH

(Public Inquiry scheduled 24th August 2021)

Proof of Evidence

JOANNA CRONIE

July 2021

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING 1990 - SECTION 247

PROPOSED STOPPING UP AND DIVERSION OF FOOTPATH 60 HOLMFIRTH

1. I am **Joanna Cronie**. I am 35 years old. My address is:
My contact details are supplied.
2. For transparency, I am the landowner's daughter. I lived for a long time at Wolfstone Heights Farm growing up and naturally regularly visit with my own children. I had to move back to the annex for several months last year due to being affected by Covid-19.
3. My main reason for supplying this Proof, is that I wish to convey the usefulness and functionality of this diversion route as a far superior leisure route, compared with the existing part of the footpath 60 route for which the stopping up is applied for.
4. I am a very keen runner. I run in all weathers, until recently almost every day. I have in the past been invited to Holmfirth Harriers, but for several reasons could not take this up at the time. It appears that I made the right choice given some of the narrow-minded comments that I have seen from the Harriers in relation to this application, though I do suspect these will not actually reflect all the runners associated with it.
5. I regularly run up from Thongsbridge to Netherthong and join Footpath 60 before it meets my dad's land. Before the diversion was in place, I would run all the way up to the top where the gates are.
6. Around 95% of the time I turn right (northwards), down Wolfstones Road towards Wilshaw, before turning right again to go back to Thongsbridge. That was the case before the diversion path and is still the case after the diversion path was put in, so basically the diversion route is more convenient to me. This is a route that I have done for many years. It is a myth that everybody using the diversion route going from Netherthong towards Wolfstones Road turns left and walks back south up Wolfstones Road. As many if not more turn right towards Wilshaw and Honley.
7. On rare occasions, I have turned left towards Upperthong, but that is not a route that I tend to use. I know that some do, but I personally don't like the roads further into Upperthong as they tend to be too narrow and unsafe taking me too far away from where I need to get back to. Also, speaking frankly, going left beyond the entrance/exit to the footpath where the gates are (opposite the entrance to the Trig Point land – point 'B' on the Plan with the diversion order), is a blind bend, but running down that hill towards Carr Farm and eventually Upperthong Village Hall is dangerous, because it gets too narrow and there are no verges, whereas obviously there are from the diversion path entrance/exit (which is not listed as such on the order plan but I am calling: Point 'C') to the current termination point (Point 'B' on the order plan).
8. Whilst both the current footpath 60 and the diversion route have been open, I have personally on occasion been coming up footpath 60 and turning right onto the diversion route (at Point 'A' on the order plan), then turning left back up Wolfstones Road and dropping again down footpath 60, in a form of circuit lap. Like others I have observed unconnected with me, I would try and sprint back (south) up Wolfstones Road as a form of interval-type training and then drop back down the legal footpath, then back onto the diversion path. Obviously that opportunity will not be there after the Inspector's decision, because where this diversion application is successful (as hopefully it will be

and it certainly should be) then part of the current footpath will be closed, but where it is declined, then this fantastic diversion route will sadly be lost.

9. I take my two young children on the diversion route. They enjoy walking the route, taking some time to sit on the benches to view the pond and beyond, we then walk back up or down the verge on Wolfstones Road. We tend to do that several times. There are never any problems walking on Wolfstones Road, up or down from a safety perspective or otherwise. I certainly would not take my young children on it if that were the case, we just must be a bit more careful at the top at the blind bend where Point 'B' is.
10. The current legal footpath 60, where the old driveway is dark and dingy, especially in bad weather, is also steep and can get slippery underfoot. The diversion path is far better from an aesthetic perspective and gradual gradient, allowing far-reaching views, but also being a far more pleasant walking or running experience compared to the current old driveway, largely because of the width of maneuverability, but mainly the gradient and the much greater experience of light, openness and freedom.
11. Whilst I don't understand the full implications, I am aware that there has been a separate application to widen the current footpath 60, based on evidence that it has always been three or four metres wide. I can say with certainty that this is false. Apart from the fact that there used to be a locked farm gate but with an open pedestrian gate part way up before the fields were reconfigured, there were always things like trailers, horse troughs, hay bales and general farming paraphernalia on that left hand side going up, as well as building materials, machinery, and other items further up. That right hand side has always been open, right from Mr. Roebuck's stile through the pedestrian gate that used to be part of the locked farm gate part-way down, following right up to the old driveway gates. That right hand side (looking up – westwards) is the footpath, four feet wide. My mother and father were always adamant that this had to be left passable, even after a large house fire quite a few years ago necessitating a significant rebuild.
12. I cannot see anybody else has commented on this, but a new phenomenon during the Pandemic has been the use of mountain bikes on the existing footpath 60, which has not occurred before. From my own observations, this has increased manyfold over this period. This is not and never has been a 'bridleway'. The use of cycles recently tends to be downhill (eastwards) towards Netherthong, with many using the apparent tunnelling of the path where it is between the buildings and where it was narrowed recently to travel down at speed. I have video evidence and I have had to chase and point out to cyclists that this is a 'footpath', with responses received to varying degrees of politeness. I would ask the Inspector to make this very clear and encourage the use of signage on the new diversion path where this diversion is granted, because although it is much wider, the use by cyclists would spoil the experience.
13. The diversion route is a far more pleasant experience, better in terms of openness, better underfoot and more user-friendly for all running and walking abilities. Any user of it would tell you this (and they invariably do point this out in my everyday experience, saying how wonderful it is). It is a vastly improved user experience all ways up compared with the section to be stopped up.
14. I do take the point that those going towards Upperthong will walk back up the hill about 120m from Point 'C' (as I am calling it) to point 'B' on the plan. However, for most walkers, this is never going to be a problem. On the contrary, it could be welcomed. As I have said above I do it with my own young children with absolutely no problems

whatsoever. Also, whilst I shall stress that I have no real scientific evidence, I have not personally observed every user of the current legal footpath crossing onto the Wolfstones Heights Trig Point land across the road. In my experience people tend to turn left or right out of the footpath on to Wolfstones Road or tend to arrive from either direction on the road. My observation of crossing into or coming out of the Trig Point land is low by comparison and nowhere near the level that objectors state.

15. As a leisure route the diversion is brilliant, but as one of the many who use it mainly going towards Wilshaw and Honley, it saves time and makes the experience much more pleasant. I cannot understand why anybody would object to this diversion compared to and at the expense of the current route, which at the top end completely cuts off the countryside view, is slippery underfoot and dark, especially in bad weather. Nobody in their right mind, especially a runner, would in my view want this diversion route to be lost.

16. I am prepared to answer any questions at the impending Public Inquiry.