

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

SUSAN THOMSON WIMPENNY

August 2021

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ('TCPA') 1990 - SECTION 247
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HOLMFIRTH**

1. I am **SUSAN THOMSON WIMPENNY**. I am over 18 years of age. My address is . My contact details are supplied.
2. The Wimpenny family lived at Wolfstones and surrounding areas since the 1860s. My husband lived at Upperthong and Netherthong in the 1980's. In 1985 we moved to a rural farmhouse and barn at Blackmoorfoot by the reservoir (great bird-watching). We then moved to Shepley where we had land and a walled garden with fantastic bird and wildlife. We downsized to Shelley two years ago, again looking onto fields.
3. I spend a lot of time walking and enjoying wildlife in the Highlands of Scotland where my extended family live. I spent a lot of my childhood there. I went on to buy a cottage to share my love of the wildlife and mountains -including the sea eagles on Deeside, capercaillie at Glen Tanar and the successful re-introduction of ospreys to Deeside, plus many other wildlife success stories. Enjoying the outdoors is a pastime that I cannot do without.
4. I am a member of the RSPB. I was also a member of the NT. I am a collector of ornithological artist work, including Archibald Thornburn and Stanley Todd, etc. I am a wildlife and animal lover and outdoor pursuits enthusiast.
5. I am a passionate walker and spend a great deal of time walking in the Holme Valley. This diversion route is undoubtedly one of the most enjoyable footpaths in the area.
6. I don't know the Butterfields overly well, but I know the Holme Valley and this footpath extremely well. I spend a great deal of time walking, bird watching and taking in wildlife and nature in this fabulous area, walking between hedgerows on a cinder path where you can see the long-distance views, compared to a hard surface driveway between two walls with no view. It's a no-brainer.
7. This diversion route must stay. It is beyond comprehension how any reasonable person could consider that the diversion route is not a far superior route. I even refer to the existing route as the "old footpath" now, as I only tend to use the diversion route since it was put in.
8. The diversion route is too important and now too great an asset to be lost. This cannot be allowed to happen for several reasons, but in my view particularly in relation to its contribution to the landscape and its wider amenity value, which is priceless.
9. I have not met one person on the diversion route who does not say how wonderful it is compared with the old footpath. The old footpath by comparison is steep, poor underfoot and frankly is dark and dingy at times. Aside from anything else, it is never comfortable walking so close to someone's private residence; it is in fact rather

embarrassing and awkward at times, even if I may know these people. When I used to walk up or down the relevant part of the current legal route, that bit of the old footpath is a dark tunnel and not conducive to a country walking route.

10. I understand that there is some consternation from some, because apparently people will have to walk 100m up the verge on Wolfstones Road if they want to go back to the entrance of the old footpath, drop into Upperthong or go across the road to Wolfstone Heights (the access for which needs considerable improvement I would add). I cannot believe that any serious recreational walker would quibble at this. It is hardly like this is a route to the pub or the shops, etc. This is compounded when considering the diversion route is so full of life and represents what country walks are all about. One can stop on the benches of the diversion route and really 'drink in' the landscape and appreciate the wildlife, like in the photos at **Exhibit STW1**, below.
11. The diversion route is packed with hawthorn and the landscaping works beyond contain several species which are already blending into the wider landscape and local flora, which in turn will allow the fauna to thrive. These fabulous works are already taking hold and it is like this diversion route has always been there. I am also pleased to see the large group of trees retained.
12. It can also be said that so far, the building development taking place is befitting of the landscape. Whilst I cannot profess to know the full legal 'ins and outs', I understand that works cannot be finished until this diversion route becomes official and the 'old footpath' stopped up. Please let these people finish their development that they have permission for. This will finish the landscape and the loss of the old footpath is inconsequential in my view, as the diversion route is far superior as a leisure route and much more conducive to walking in this area. Moving between two buildings up or down a steep hill that is sometimes slippery underfoot, impeding on good people's privacy, is hardly a comparison with the openness of the countryside and all-round opportunity brought by the diversion route.
13. The eventual loss of the old footpath has been envisaged for several years. We have had the benefit of the Butterfields putting in the diversion route at their own risk. Thank goodness they did, because for the last three years or four years we have been enjoying this route and we would never have known the joy that it could bring, as well as its clear contribution to the landscape and best promotion of our natural environment.
14. The diversion route is far safer than the old footpath. Where one is walking northwards on the diversion route and exiting on to Wolfstones Road, there is a far clearer visibility splay in both directions. I have to say that I have walked from that termination point both up and down Wolfstones Road, on my own and with others, and can say that I have never felt unsafe. This was the same when using the old footpath and walking down the hill towards Moor Lane, usually making use of the verges on the right going down the hill (northwards).

15. The current termination/access point on the old footpath, which is on the brow of the hill, is less safe. Going past the brow of the hill south towards Upperthong or up that hill north towards the brow can be more precarious, possibly due to the lack of verges on that side of the road as I think about it. Moreover, the same certainly cannot be said of the entrance/exit to the Wolfstone Heights land, which when coming out of it onto Wolfstones Road, the visibility southwards (going towards Carr Farm and Upperthong) is almost non-existent. It is not ideal when relying on ears instead of eyes when crossing that road on that blind bend, with cars coming from the right.
16. People seem to accentuate the negatives where change occurs. However, I am going to say that I cannot see any advantage in keeping the old footpath over this diversion route. Anyone can see that the diversion route presents the most enormous of advantages all ways up. Were the diversion route to be lost, it would be an act of social and environmental vandalism in my view, as well as a departure from common sense. For some narrow-minded people to state that the only advantage here is to the landowner, so they can finish their development (that they have permission for) is tainted with naivety and possibly even enviousness in my view. The winner here is the landscape and all the pedestrian users of that diversion route. From my own viewpoint and interests, I cannot see any disadvantages to this proposed stopping up and diversion, but certainly the balance of any advantage weighs enormously in favour of walkers and other pedestrian users.
17. Quite simply, I cannot understand how there could be any reasonable objection to this stopping up and diversion. The retention of the diversion route and the stopping up of the old footpath should be (and is) welcomed with open arms. Some people really do need to realise that this diversion route could be lost, for the sake of keeping part of the 'old footpath' which is far inferior.
18. The diversion route has become hugely important recreationally, aesthetically and functionally as far as safety and as far as flora and fauna is concerned, but also from the point of view that it sweeps so beautifully and integrates into the landscape; as if it has always been there. When the old footpath is stopped up, the development is allowed to complete and when the new planting has taken its gentle grip on the landscape, I am struggling to think of a footpath in the area that will be more desirable.
19. I am happy to answer any questions in relation to this Proof at the Inquiry.

EXHIBIT STW1

Photograph examples of views from the proposed diversion route



