

7th January 2021

Application for Diversion of Public Footpath 26 at Knowls Lane, Oldham- Section 257 Town and Country Planning 1990

1. THE EXISTING ROUTE

The existing Public Footpath has a number of obstacles, making it impossible for wheelchair users to navigate the full lengths of the path. These obstacles are evidenced at the appended photographs¹ and locations shown on the appended plan². Obstacles include narrow paths, stepped access, very narrow bridges – as well as there being poor saturated ground conditions that prevent the use of wheelchairs.

Within the wider networks of paths that connect to this footpath, there are styals, further stepped accesses and very steep hillside paths. As such, the wider network of paths, including Public Rights of Way and informal non-designated footpaths that branch from Public Footpath 26, have a number of barriers to movement for wheelchair users.

2. REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE PROPOSED ROUTE

Two options of PROW diversion were discussed with one route being the route before the TRO Panel and the other being a longer more winding and meandering route through the woodland at lesser gradient (see Appendix 3).

The stepped route and gradient was considered to be the most appropriate method of diversion over a ramped route because it would result in the loss of less woodland and would have a lesser ecological impact. Discussions were held during the consultation processes of the planning application with the Environment Agency, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, the Council and following concerns from local residents regarding the loss of woodland. During the informal consultation process for this S.257 Application the PROW Officer undertook an initial consultation with other statutory consultees such as the Ramblers and the Peak and Northern Footpath Society whom have requested a more structured step be introduced which Russell Homes have accommodated at their request. This results in steps with a tread length of 1m and a riser of 178mm thus providing wider steps up a slope of 1 in 5 and an opportunity to rest.

Accordingly, Russell Homes did consider alternatives, and selected the most favoured option, informed by consultation feedback. This proposes a more direct stepped route with a steeper gradient as shown on the approved plan P5 as part of Permissions PA/34369/19 and MMA/344723/20. A ramped access at the gradient proposed – i.e. the stepped gradient – is not possible. The ramp would be too steep to accommodate and not safe for other pedestrian users. The only way to accommodate a ramp, is as noted above using a longer more meandering system, which as the functionality of the existing PROW beyond the Diversion proposed is limited and already restricts the PROW from being used by a wheelchair user and also results in a greater ecological impact and loss of woodland.

¹ See Appendix 1: Site Photographs taken on the 14th December 2021

² See Appendix 2: Shows Location of the photographs on a Plan

In addition, the longer route to allow for the ramp would be a path length of circa 160m allowing for ramps and landings (for rest) and a subsequent area of circa 240m² each side of the Link Road. This would be set against 60m² for the proposed route.

Appendix 1: Photographs of the condition of Public Footpath 26 taken on 14th December 2021



Photograph 21: Shows the track leading to the junction with Footpath 25 and sign stating "Caution Keep Clear of unstable bank side ahead"



Photograph 20: Shows the bridge crossing and the continuation of Footpath 25 going north



Photograph 15: Shows the route of footpath 26 going east from path routes from Ashbrook Road and sign which states “Caution Keep Clear of unstable bank side ahead”



Photograph 8: Shows route along Footpath 26 going east from Rhode Hill



Photograph 5: Shows footpath 25 going west toward Rhodes Hill



Photograph 3: Shows Footpath 26 going west toward Rhodes Hill approximately 30m from photograph 1.



Photograph 1: Shows the access onto Footpath 26 from the informal footpath from Ashbrook Road



Photograph 25: Shows a Styal access on Footpath 25 going south from Footpath 26.



Photograph 23: Shows the stepped junction from Footpath 26 to Footpath 25



Photograph 22: Shows the continuation of the stepped Footpath 25 over Knowls Brook



Photograph 26: Shows the embanked footpath of Footpath 25 after crossing the Styal shown on Photograph 25

Appendix 2: Plan showing locations of the photographs in Appendix 1

Appendix 3: Plan showing the meandering ramp route