Quality Hay Growers

Ms Claire Waters
Castle Hedingham Parish Council
Castle Hedingham
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Dear Ms Waters

RE: Rushley Green Footpath Upgrade

Having moved to Rushley Green Farm, Castle Hedingham last year it has become increasingly apparent that our footpath, or the part of it on our property, appears to be unfit for purpose and is becoming increasingly dangerous.

The footpath on the farm @ Rushley Green which requires some attention is circled blue on map below

This is one of the main footpaths leading away from the village of Castle Hedingham. When it was created, many hundreds of years ago, there would have been a few people using the footpath to access the church, shops or work.

Today, there are upwards of a hundred people per day using the short stretch across the meadow. The footpath in question is quite steep and runs up a narrow valley to the tarmac road at the top as I am sure the council is aware. During the winter the path becomes impassable due to mud but this does not deter walkers who just make a wider path trampling the grass to either side. The slope, however, is steep and slippery.

Last year one walker was knocked over by a dog and broke his leg due to the slippery surface. The rescue was slow and difficult due to the surface and required the assistance of a number of neighbours to get the stretcher back to the road and the waiting ambulance. With the continual increase in number of walkers this health and safety issue is only going to get worse.
In addition, many older residents, who have previously walked the path, are now not able to do so due to the slippery nature of the field.

The path created hundreds of years ago is thus not fit for purpose, is dangerous, and needs upgrading for use in the 21st Century.

Upgrade
We have thus had preliminary discussions with our neighbours, Mr T Doe and Mr J Lindsey, both of whom are in agreement with both the need and the proposal. Preliminary informal, discussions have also been entered into with village residents, walkers and the council, and so far the idea has met with approval.

We thus propose the idea of upgrading the path to a disabled access joining the village to Rosemary Lane.

This would require the introduction of a more robust surface. The robust surface would be unsuitable in the middle of the field and would thus require the straightening of the footpath to run along the south side of the field. (blue line in circle). In addition moving the line of the path to the south side of the field would allow the sheep fencing to be on the north side and thus remove the requirement for a style or kissing gate and either end, thus allowing disabled access.

It is proposed to lay a new surface of bark, or Geogrid and 10mm stone, or any other suitable surface and advice is currently being sort as to current best practice in these situations. A new continuous fence would be erected on the boundary with the Castle grounds to prevent accidental ingress by dogs and walkers as the woods are potentially unsafe due to historic earthworks and falling trees. The proposed scheme would straighten the top end of the path and move the entrance some 20m to the south as the slope at this point is less steep.

The movement of the path to the proposed line would allow the sheep fencing to be on the field side of the new and widened path which would remove the requirement for a kissing gate or style at either end, thus making disabled access possible.

There will be a certain amount of earthworks required to level and lay the new path including bridging the ditch at the top end and grading the slope to one that is manageable for off road chairs.

Improved Access
Preliminary, informal discussions have also taken placed regarding the lower half of the footpath, over castle property. It may be possible for this part of the footpath to be partially cleared and widened to facilitate the off road chair access to the new path. Discussions are ongoing and will be guided by the response of the Parish Council to the proposal.

Naturally, a full set of drawings will be required, showing the existing line of the path, proposed new line of the path, a longitudinal section showing the gradients and a cross section of the new path surface. These are all in production and will be submitted to the Parish Council for discussion once they are available.

It is hoped that the Parish Council and local residents will appreciate the inadequacy of the existing situation and the increasing Health and Safety risk issued by the nature of the footpath during at least 6 months of the year, There has already been one serious injury and it is hoped further incidents can be avoided with prompt support of the proposed scheme.

Yours sincerely

David Collins

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