

Reference: ABS/03834

**Countryside Access Legal
Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall
Oxford
OX1 1ND**

**Director of Environment and
Highways**

13 February 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Second Informal Consultation

**Proposed Diversion - Parts of Sibford Ferris Footpaths No 4 and 7,
Proposed Extinguishment - Parts of Sibford Ferris Footpaths No 4 and 5,
Proposed Creation of new path between Sibford School and Cotswold Close,
Highways Act 1980 s119, s118 and s26 respectively.
At Sibford Ferris School and Cotswold Close.**

The Council carried out a consultation in June 2025 following application by Sibford School to divert the above footpaths from crossing the school site to routes around the perimeter of the grounds.

The footpaths (as recorded on the current Definitive Map for Oxfordshire 2006 (DM)) run directly through the school site passing across football pitches and close to classrooms and buildings. The paths also run through areas where pupils congregate and move between buildings. The buildings are the Junior School, Fielding Boarding House, Science Block, Dining Hall, Staffroom, Art Block, Sports Hall, Horticulture Block, over Penn playing field and across a football training pitch. The paths' routes in front of the boarding house gives uninterrupted views into these private areas for students.

Sibford Ferris School are bound by government guidance set out in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024' (KCSIE) which details responsibilities as a School regarding the safeguarding of the children that attend, both as day pupils and boarders. Rerouting the footpaths to the school's perimeter, therefore avoiding areas where children are attending to their school day, the school can better safeguard them, particularly as the paths run directly through and close to the buildings. The length of FP7 S – U – V - W is a particular case in point as the path runs through a quadrangle between the dining room and other school buildings close by.

Responses to the June consultation included concern that the alignments of FP4 and FP5 on the DM were incorrect and that those in Cotswold Close would lose access through to the school grounds. Now, following investigation, the Council has found evidence that the two paths are indeed incorrectly recorded on the DM, and a report and summary are enclosed explaining why we believe this. In light of these findings, the Council intends to make a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) to correct the footpaths whilst at the same time separately divert those corrected paths to the routes the school applied for last year. Additionally, in recognition

of the concerns of the residents in Cotswold Close, the school have agreed to a new legal path linking between the Close and the school grounds. The DMMO would unfortunately result in three gardens with a public path recorded through them (see separate DMMO consultation), but the concurrent diversion explained in this letter would immediately divert these paths out of those curtilages into the school grounds.

In terms of the alterations, the Council would use its powers to make Orders to divert, extinguish and create public rights of way under s119, s118 and s26 of the Highways Act 1980 respectively. A diversion Order would be made in the interests of the owner of the land crossed by the footpaths, an extinguishment Order would be made on the grounds that the paths are not needed for public use, and a creation of the new path (FP20) would be on the grounds that there is a need for a footpath and that the Council is satisfied that its creation would add to the convenience of those resident in the area. The changes and widths to be provided are shown on Plan HA1980/715b/03834, also enclosed.

FP7 would be diverted along the edge of the field pitches with countryside views (Points B1 - B2 - B3) and between a woodland strip and a hedge line (Points B3 - X), whilst FP4 would run around the football pitches (Points D - Z - Y). One pedestrian gate would be installed at Point B2. The widths of the diverted paths would be 3m, except between B2 - B3 - X which would be 5m, and all surfaces would be grass, crushed stone and gravel (Points M - N) or compacted earth in part (north of Point X). The created route (FP20) leading from Cotswold Close would be 2m wide. The Council will waymark the paths following the diversion. The diverted length G - H - Y would be widened to 2m by removing the post and rail fence (G - H) and relocating the fence further back between H - Y to provide improved width for the public.

In conclusion, in light of government guidance set out in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024' (KCSIE) the school have concerns that public footpaths running straight through the site bring the public and pupils into contact. Re-routing the footpaths to the school boundaries would reduce this concern and enable improved security and safeguarding to take place. Whilst FP7 is recorded correctly on the DM, FP4 and FP5 need to be put on their correct routes by DMMO to enable changes to be made to the correct routes. The concurrent diversion Order would divert the corrected routes onto the routes the school have applied for.

Any comments received will be considered when OCC decides whether to make public path Orders. I would be grateful for any comments by **16th March 2026**. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate in contacting me on the below number.

Yours faithfully,

Andy Sylvester
Technical Lead – Public Path Orders and Agreements

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GDPR and Data Protection Act: Oxfordshire County Council will collate correspondence and comments received in response to this communication, for further consideration. They may be disseminated widely for these purposes and made available to the public.