

FAR WESTRIP FARM, FAR WESTRIP, STROUD, GLOS GL6 6HE

Asset Data (Highway Records & DMMO) Team Leader
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester GL1 2TH

26/1/25

Dear Asset Data Team Leader

Ref:

Notice of Definitive Map and statement Modification Order
Section 53 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
Gloucestershire County Council,
Additional Public Footpaths across land known as Verney Fields & Surrounding Area,
Stonehouse Parish
Modification Order 2025

We wish to object to the Modification Order above on the grounds stated in our original statement and the additional points below:

Route B-C**Acquiescence**

After we purchased the field coloured blue in 2013, there was little activity around the point B where there was an old wooden gate and a stile. This is reinforced by the evidence given to the committee at point 6.4, that there is no evidence on Google Earth of its use as a route. At no point did we allow walkers to use that route and if we saw anyone off the footpath we asked them to keep to the public footpaths. Therefore there was no acquiescence. When Western Power put a route through there in 2018 we had to replace the old gate and removed the stile. However, it started to be used as a route so we closed it off by fencing the gateway with sheep netting and barbed wire. This is contrary to the evidence stated in point 9.28 which suggests barbed wire was only installed in 2023. The barbed wire and sheep netting was continually cut and I persistently replaced it until we finally gave in as it was a risk for stock escaping. So we replaced it with a metal gate and welded this shut. People then cut through the hedge at the side of the gate, which had been stock proof, so they could get through there. Point 9.28 suggests there had been a gap at the side of the gate. This was not the case – it was a stock proof hedge. We then

fenced that area as well with sheep netting and barbed wire. This too was cut until we put a professional fence under tension around the whole field edge. As far as we are aware, there was never a footpath waymarker at this point as claimed on page 17 of the report. To suggest we as landowners tolerated walkers bypassing the gate (point 9.28) is quite ridiculous when there was evidence of the fence being cut many times a week and the hedge being cut back by people to allow access.

Route Closed

As mentioned above, Western Power Distribution put in a new underground 33kVA electricity cable; this work started in May 2018. The cables went through point B. There was a large hole where the gateway had been, at point B, for joining six x 50mm cables. There was no access possible at this time as the area was fenced off for safety reasons, for about 3 weeks. Therefore the route has not been continuously accessible until 2019 as claimed.

Sustainability

The Report suggests that there are no sustainability issues. The path B-C runs through an area we have designated now for 3 years as a bird seed area for wild birds. It acts as a corridor between the Devereux Woods and woodland in the field we purchased in 2019 (containing footpaths MST64 and MST42). To create a footpath in this field would disturb the birds and negate a lot of the advantages of the bird feeding area.

Route E-F-K-O

Acquiescence

When we purchased the field containing footpaths MST64 and MST42 in 2019, we were aware of walkers straying from the paths so decided to improve the correct routes for the rights of way before cutting off any existing routes used by walkers. We spent a lot of time and expense improving the paths and installing kissing gates to make access easy then tried to block the other routes. Point F was occasionally used to get to the Verney field but only at certain times of year as the field from F to K and K to O was full of brambles in the summer and very wet in the winter. There was never to our knowledge a gateway here at Point F but just a wooden barrier and step which was climbed. We let the step rot and tried to block the exit. There again was certainly no acquiescence. We received very negative responses from walkers when making requests to keep to footpaths in that field and a wildlife camera showed very aggressive behaviour from an individual cutting down a fence in another area of the field. This is not the behaviour one would expect if walkers feel they have been allowed to use a particular route. However, it is the reason why we

decided to minimise our action against the walkers straying off public paths and replace two of the torn down fences with welded shut gates: We have a dairy farm and straw barns nearby and were very concerned for the safety of our livestock with such angry people who could do a lot of damage. With a gate, rather than fences, the militant walkers could climb it if they were really insistent but it would be difficult to destroy and might keep the peace. This policy seemed to work for us although we accept that with Ms Malik buying the field next door, a lot of the anger of the walkers became focused on their attempts to keep walkers to public footpaths.

Route A-B

We wish to object on the same grounds as for route B-C above, ie that it was blocked by fencing in 2018 and then a new gate welded shut, after the fencing was continuously destroyed; also, that the route was closed during 2018.

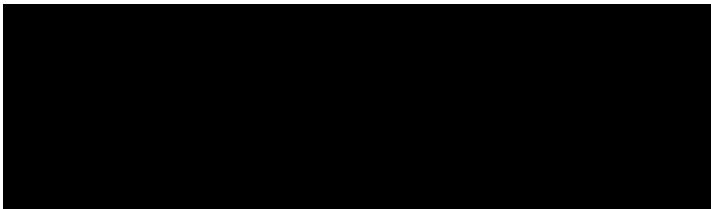
Route B-D

This was used as a track by the previous tenant farmer, Martin Fletcher and was not used as a public path.

Routes M-O, J-O, L-O, P-Q, O-Q-T,

Having visited these fields on foot over the last 40 years as neighbours, we can confirm that the footpaths in the field were very ill defined and it was difficult to maintain the correct route. Therefore, when members of the public were persuaded by Stonehouse Town Council to claim new paths, their suggested routes would not be able to be clearly marked on a map. This has resulted in an Order for multiple new routes over very similar trajectories and it would not be possible to distinguish between these paths for walkers. We believe that the introduction of multiple paths in the same area of the field is not helpful for walkers and would not make sense for multiple footpath creation order.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Jane Godsell and Mr Uriah Godsell

