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Dear Naoual Margoum,

Weybridge Heath Common Land Application –Surrey County Council responses on the representations made during the advertisement period.

On 27 October Surrey County Council (SCC) submitted an application for consent to construct a pedestrian / cycle path on Weybridge Heath Common Land. The proposal was advertised and consultees had until 27 November 2017 to provide responses.

13 responses during the advertisement period were sent through to the Planning Inspectorate and have since been forwarded on to SCC for comment. In addition to these responses the Surrey County Council Archaeological Officer for the area confirmed that he has no archaeological concerns regarding the proposals; Historic England recommended that the application is determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of SCC/local expert conservation advice; and letters of support for the proposal were received from Brooklands College and Elmbridge Borough Council. Project consultation with Elmbridge Borough Council included representations to local Weybridge Councillors, the Elmbridge Countryside Consultative Group and Elmbridge Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The purpose of this statement is to address the comments from individuals objecting to the proposal as well as summarise the support for our proposal.

Objections/other views and SCC responses

Listed in this section are the representations made that we have provided comments on:

- 1. The junction of the pedestrian/cycle path with the access track to Rogue's Roost needs to be designed in such a way to maintain quality.**

The access track where it meets the footpath at present is shown in the photographs 1 & 2 below:



Photograph 1:

Our application stated that access at this location will be maintained and the supporting feasibility notes highlighted the need for profiling work on the land here. SCC officers have met with the owners of Rogue's Roost and can accommodate the owners' requirements including maintaining the gradient, reinstating a section of hard surface that is needed on the slope where vehicles will start/stop, drainage provision and sight lines. Tree/vegetation removal has already been proposed in order to facilitate the construction of the 3.8m wide pedestrian/cycle path and this should improve sight lines.



Photograph 2:

SCC agrees to work with the owners of Rogue Roost to agree on a design here that maintains the quality of and safety of access, and concurs with their Deed of Grant of access.

2. Four representations from residents of Heath Road have objected to the removal of the area used for parking and data provided in one of the responses suggests 7 cars owned by residents consistently park here (where there is space for 10 cars). These representations stated:

- **The area used for parking is not only used by commuters (avoiding charges at Weybridge Railway Station), rather is well used by residents who would otherwise not have this area to park close to their house, which can also be used by visitors to the area including tradesmen.**
- **Removing the parking will impact on neighbouring roads where there is limited parking and the traffic flow on Heath Road where increased off-peak parking could obstruct and slow traffic.**
- **The scheme could be designed to accommodate both the parking and pedestrian/cycle scheme as there is sufficient space and a residents parking scheme could be implemented to prevent commuters parking here.**

Photograph 3 below show some of this area where cars are currently parking on Common Land:



Photograph 3:

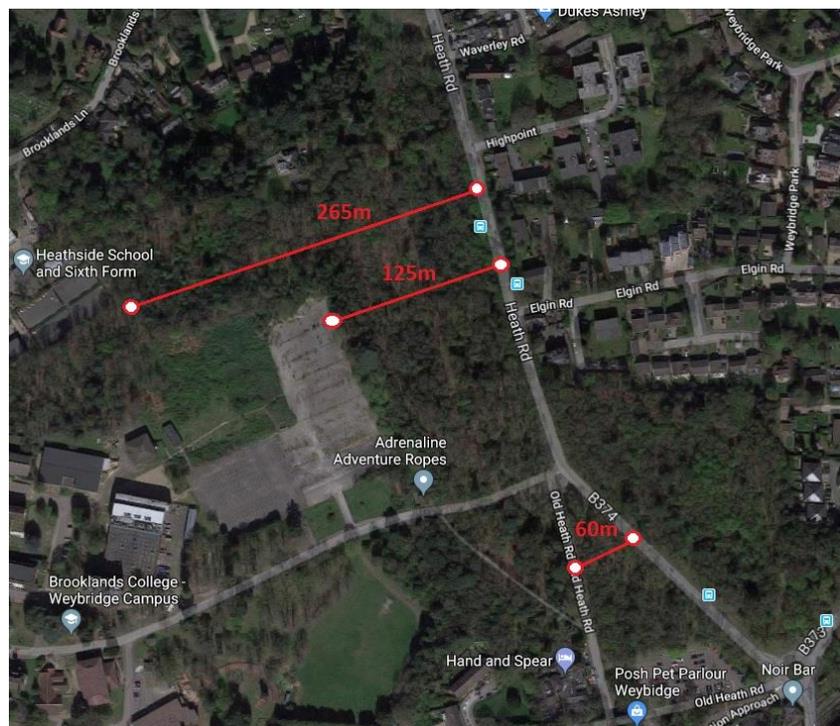
In the original submission it was stated that the area used for parking is mainly used by commuters avoiding car park charges. Although the area is well used by commuters, it is also regularly used by a small number of residents who live on the other side of Heath Road, north of the parking area.

The pedestrian/cycle project has provided the opportunity to remove the informal parking that has evolved and blights the common land. Reclaiming this land which benefits a small number of individuals will help redress the balance for the land necessary to provide the footway and cycleway which will have wider community and safety benefits. Residents and commuters have been parking on this land without agreement and this should not be confused as any common right: this provides opportunity that action be taken before any such rights might be established that would prejudice the Common Land.

3. The proposal will have a negative environmental impact including impact on wildlife such as the wood ant colonies. The removal of trees will impact on habitats.

In our application we stated that trees and vegetation will need to be removed on both the proposed path width (where we would widen existing paths by on average around 2m to create a 3.8m path) as well as beyond the path width to provide enough of a verge area to properly facilitate the path and avoid significant root disturbance. Where appropriate the path may be brought in locally around any significant trees where it is not essential to remove them. This should especially be the case for mature specimen trees which provide high value in the area.

Although the proposal will result in the cutting back of a line of trees/vegetation and uptake of Common Land, this uptake will be proportionally very small in the context of the total area of heathland. Given that the majority of the pedestrian/cycle facility proposal involves the widening of existing paths and tracks and is adjacent to the road, the impact will be limited to these areas already disturbed by users of the road and path. Where the proposed pedestrian/cycle path is away from the road for the short section through the grass covered area, the route is away from trees and involves the widening of an existing path. To put the size of Weybridge Heath including the tree coverage into context, the image below shows a satellite view taken from Google Maps with some distances annotated:



Aerial Photograph 4:

Having visited the area, it is expected that the majority of trees to be removed are self-seeded trees of limited value. Elmbridge CCG has provided support for the proposal which took into account nature conservation, recreation and the use of green spaces. As the project is developed, the Project Team will work with the SCC Arboricultural Team to ensure the impact on mature trees and disruption to habitats is minimised. Localised narrowing of the path will be considered where there are significant trees. The timing of works would avoid sensitive times of the year, including the nesting season, although no evidence of nests has yet been discovered along the line of heathland adjacent to Heath Road.

4. The proposed pedestrian/cycle path is too wide and will be visually unappealing. The section that runs through the green area will spoil the green and is unjustified.

Our justification for the cyclepath widths and our view on visual impact is provided below:

Section	Justification for width	Visual impact
3.8m wide, tarmac surface	<p>Where the 3.8m width is proposed this is necessary given the proximity to Weybridge Railway Station and Brooklands College where the path has high footfall and level of usage, especially during peak times. Weybridge Railway Station is the 8th busiest railway station in Surrey with over 2.5 million annual passenger journeys (entries and exits via the station) according to the Office of Rail and Road Statistics. The Weybridge campus of Brooklands College is attended by approximately 3,000 students.</p> <p>A 3.8m width will provide sufficient space for pedestrians and cyclists using the facility and is the minimum width required for segregating pedestrians and cyclists. Segregating the path would further reduce any potential for conflict. We have decided to limit the width to 3.8m in the proposal in order to minimise surfacing on Common Land but still provide a facility of sufficient quality that people will want to use safely.</p>	<p>Pedestrian/cycle facility runs on the edge of the Common Land, adjacent to Heath Road. This option in our view lessens the potential visual impact of introducing a sealed pedestrian/cycle path as it builds upon an area already affected by the road and also builds upon paths that already exist (partly sealed, partly unbound). Pedestrians using the facility will continue to have the heathland on one side and sealed surface road/path on the other. The path will be surfaced and widened rather than creating a completely new path, minimising tree and vegetation removal, uptake of Common Land and installation of lighting which would be necessary if the path was constructed through the middle of the heathland.</p>
3.0m wide, surface dressing finish	<p>In this open area, 3.0m provides sufficient width providing a good facility for all users, especially as the path would not be confined on both sides by the road and trees. This section is needed in order to continue the facility through to Brooklands Lane, the road on which Heathside School is located (the pedestrian/cycle scheme is then planned to continue to Weybridge town centre as part of a wider pedestrian/cycle scheme – see point 9).</p>	<p>The path will have a surface dressing to improve the visual finish.</p>

5. There is already a sealed tarmac path on the east side of Heath Road and therefore the facility proposed on the west side of Heath Road is not necessary.

The proposal is for a pedestrian/cycle facility. In order to provide a pedestrian/cycle facility along the east side of Heath Road the existing sealed path would need to be widened as it is currently not wide enough to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. For a section closest to Weybridge Railway Station this would require widening on Common Land, similar to as proposed only on the other side of Heath Road. For sections beyond the Brooklands College access road, widening would not be possible due to the presence of a number of properties. Given that there are also more side/access roads on the

east side to disrupt the continuity of a pedestrian/cycle facility it is both more suitable and only feasible to have the facility on the west side of Heath Road.

As well as a need for cyclists, there is also a need for improvements for pedestrians and wheelchair users on the west side of Heath Road as this is on a desire line for pedestrians leaving Weybridge Railway Station and heading north. A facility for pedestrians on only the east side would require some users from the station to cross Heath Road twice in order to reach a destination on the west side (e.g. Brooklands College).

6. The proposed pedestrian/cycle facility is not needed as cyclists can use the unsealed routes through the Heath, e.g. students cycling from the station to Brooklands College.

The pedestrian/cycle scheme here is aimed at providing an all-year-round safe (including personal security) and attractive route for pedestrians and cyclists to provide wider travel choice and encourage travel by sustainable modes. Our view is that the routes through the tree-covered Heath do not provide this and would not significantly encourage new cyclists. The routes can be unusable in wet weather and after dark. In order to provide a safe and satisfactory route through the Heath, it would be necessary to cut down significantly more trees, take up a greater area of Common Land, and it would also be necessary to install lighting. Having previously discussed the proposals with the Principal of Brooklands College, we were informed that their staff have encouraged their students not to complete their journeys via the informal routes through the heathland and Brooklands College support the proposed scheme.

It should be shown that there is demand for cycling here. The path should be a narrower path for pedestrians only which would result in lower scheme costs and would not impinge on Common Land.

This proposal has long been considered as a priority cycling route in Elmbridge that needs developing to both provide for existing cyclists and encourage new cyclists. Consequently the scheme features on the Elmbridge Local Transport Strategy Forward Programme 2014¹ and is one of the main priorities of the Elmbridge Cycling Plan² which sets out the practical local implementation of the Surrey Cycling Strategy³.

The Surrey Cycling Strategy is a key strategy document that forms part of the Surrey Local Transport Plan, the statutory plan for the county that sets out a plan for meeting transport needs in Surrey in an effective, reliable, safe and sustainable manner. The proposed pedestrian/cycle facility follows best practice principles for cycle routes within the Surrey Cycling Strategy including: segregating cyclists from motorists on busy routes; prioritising key destinations; and making routes inclusive.

As part of the Surrey Cycling Strategy, research conducted with 1,670 people in 2015 found that the single most influential factor which would encourage non-cyclists to cycle is more '*cycle paths separated from traffic*'. '*Cycling is too dangerous*' was also cited as being the reason non-cyclists would be unlikely to take up cycling. This supports the case for the scheme proposal. Providing a direct linkage with a railway station as well as an education centre also adds weight to the need for

¹ Elmbridge Local Strategy and Forward Programme 2014. Available from: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-and-transport-policies-plans-and-consultations/surrey-transport-plan/surrey-transport-plan-consultations-on-the-plan/local-transport-strategies-and-forward-programmes>. The Elmbridge Local Transport Strategy 2014 has been developed to take account of and provide a plan for addressing transport problems and opportunities in the borough of Elmbridge. Accompanying the Elmbridge Local Transport Strategy is the Forward Programme which sets out schemes to address the transport problems in the area.

² Elmbridge Cycling Plan. Available from: <https://www.travelsmartsurrey.info/cycling/district-and-borough-cycling-plans/elmbridge-cycling-plan>

³ Surrey Cycling Strategy: Available from: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-and-transport-policies-plans-and-consultations/surrey-transport-plan/surrey-transport-plan-strategies/surrey-cycling-strategy>

the facility as this increases the propensity for more people to take up cycling to make journeys. Currently there are no adequate cycling facilities in the location of the scheme proposal – there are no cycle lanes on road or purpose built off road facilities. There is a safety risk for cyclists evidenced by the recent collision involving a cyclist in 2016.

As stated in the original application, this pedestrian/cycle path proposal is part of a larger pedestrian/cycle scheme between Weybridge Town Centre, Weybridge Railway Station and the Brooklands Business Park. As part of developing the Business Case for the scheme some initial work on the assessment of the benefits has been carried out which suggests the scheme would result in an increase in the number of cyclists in the area and would justify the costs of the scheme.

As part of developing the Business Case it has also been identified that transport improvements are needed to support additional development in Weybridge, both in terms of office floor space development providing additional jobs in Weybridge as well as new housing developments. This proposal is therefore important for providing alternative travel options that can improve accessibility in Weybridge where new jobs and housing are targeted.

7. Cyclists travelling on off road paths at high speed are dangerous to pedestrians and increase the risk of pedestrian casualties. The gradient means cyclists travelling downhill will more easily be able to pick up high speeds heightening the risk of collisions. Additionally off road cycle paths are not used by serious ('lycra') cyclists in the area.

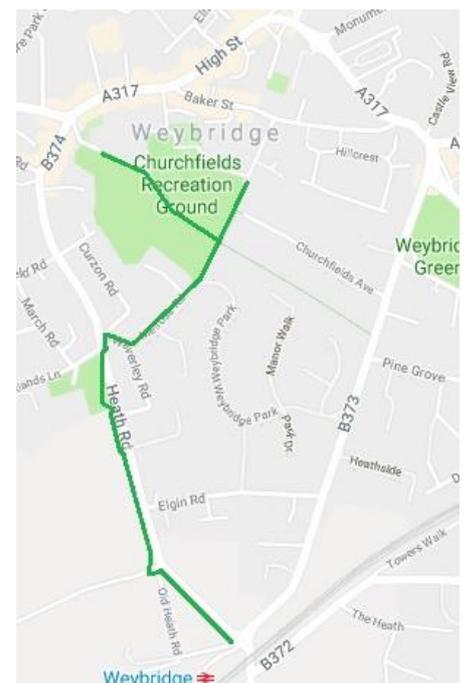
We plan to introduce a high quality facility that cyclists will want to use. The width proposed is considered sufficient to provide a large enough space for pedestrians and cyclists to both use. The 3.8m section would also be wide enough to potentially segregate the route.

As well as providing a safer facility for existing cyclists, this proposal is aimed at encouraging more people to cycle. As stated, according to research previously carried out, the single most influential factor which would encourage non-cyclists to cycle is more cycle paths separated from traffic. It may not be used by every cyclist but will serve those that the scheme is targeting.

The average gradient for the length of the proposal is 2.3% (with a constant downhill/uphill gradient depending on the direction of travel) which shows that the gradient is not particularly high. The maximum gradient is 7.0% but this is only for a short distance. In order to mitigate excessive speeds, signing will be incorporated into the designs to manage speeds where needed. Road Safety Audits will be conducted as the project develops. Safety is paramount in the design and development of the scheme.

8. The cycle path/route cannot continue into Weybridge town centre and cyclists will eventually have to join the Heath Road carriageway anyway.

This pedestrian/cycle path proposal is part of a larger pedestrian/cycle scheme between Weybridge town centre, Weybridge Railway Station and the Brooklands Business Park. It is planned that this proposal for a facility along Heath Road will connect to Weybridge town centre as shown by the route in the map included. The route will utilise quieter residential roads (Waverley Road and Melrose Road) and then paths through the Churchfields Recreation Ground.



Support for our proposal

As well as positive feedback and support from individuals amongst the 13 responses received, it is important to highlight that support has also been received from organisations representing views and support on a larger scale. This includes Brooklands College, the Weybridge Town Business Group, the Open Spaces Society and Elmbridge Borough Council. In the case of Elmbridge Borough Council, the proposal has been supported by a group of local Weybridge Councillors and elected representatives in the community. Given that the proposed pedestrian/cycle path is on Elmbridge Borough Council owned land, the proposal was also presented to the Elmbridge Countryside Consultative Group (CCG), a partnership forum for countryside stakeholders in the borough. The Elmbridge CCG also supports the proposal.

The following points were made from consultees supporting the proposals:

1. The pedestrian/cycle path will enable greater year-round use of the common in this busy area.
2. The pedestrian/cycle path will increase access and non-motorised use of the common.
3. The pedestrian/cycle path will unlock the benefits associated with increased use of sustainable and environmentally friendly forms of transport.
4. Currently there is no provision for cyclists on this route. One of the responses highlighted the substantial safety benefits of this proposal and referenced that a family member was knocked off his bike on Heath Road. Collision data held by SCC also shows that a collision was documented involving a cyclist on Heath Road in 2016.
5. The proposal will provide provision for wheelchair users on the west side of Heath Road.
6. The link provided by the pedestrian/cycle path between the Railway Station and Town Centre is viewed as supportive for business success in Weybridge.
7. The proposal will create a favourable impression to visitors of Weybridge.
8. Contrary to some of the objections, views put forward highlighted that the proposal would not detract from the common's landscape or have a significantly negative impact in terms of nature conservation due to the relatively small proportion of Common Land uptake and the fact that the land is already affected by the road.

The wider pedestrian/cycle scheme

As mentioned earlier in this statement, this proposal for a pedestrian/cycle facility on Weybridge Heath, is part of a wider pedestrian/cycle scheme between Weybridge town centre, Weybridge Railway Station and the Brooklands Business Park.

This proposal is one element of a pedestrian/cycle scheme of over 4km in length and is crucial in order to provide a full and continuous route from Weybridge town centre to Brooklands. Delivering the full continuous route, which is planned to go ahead subject to securing the necessary approvals and funding, presents a unique opportunity to provide a major difference in achieving growth in sustainable travel in the area, and will fill in gaps in cycling provision on the transport network. Through offering widened travel choice and reducing motor vehicle journeys the scheme can contribute towards mitigating congestion and can improve accessibility in the local area. This is important in order to support future jobs both in Brooklands Business Park and Weybridge town centre as well as future housing developments in Weybridge.

Whilst we recognise the objections, the proposal and the wider pedestrian/cycle scheme that it is part of is well supported. This includes the support of Elmbridge Borough Council, Brooklands College, and businesses that have been consulted.

Yours Sincerely,

Steve Howard

Transport Strategy Project Manager