

FAVERSHAM FOOTPATHS GROUP

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Dear Graham

INFORMAL CONSULTATION – PUBLIC FOOTPATH ZF5 FAVERSHAM, DIVERSION PROPOSAL

Thank you for sending the Group a copy of your informal consultation document dated 2 June 2015. I am writing to express our wholehearted support for Option 1.

The Group starts from the position that, following the report of the public inquiry last year, KCC has a legal duty to take action to resolve the problem of the obstruction of public footpath ZF5 at Faversham Reach, both in the interests of the residents whose houses are affected and of those who wish to use the ZF5 route and to enjoy the views of the Creek which an unobstructed route there would provide. The inspector was in no doubt that an unobstructed route was feasible and that it would be well used, commenting that she was “satisfied that a solution could be found to divert the definitive line [of the footpath] so as to avoid the houses but retain the views of the Creek and that future use of such a route would be extensive” (paragraph 55). The question, therefore, is not whether action should be taken to unblock the footpath but how it should be done.

Similarly, in the case of Waterside Close, the Group’s view is that action is long overdue to give effect to the s.106 planning agreement to provide a public footpath there. The Group notes that as long ago as November 2006 the Local

Government Ombudsman issued a report criticising Swale Borough Council for its failure to make progress with creating a suitable link with the Saxon Shore Way. The Group welcomes the fact that planning consent was recently given for the construction of a ramp and believes that this should be followed as speedily as possible by the creation of the public footpath along the Waterside Close promenade.

We consider that, for the following main reasons, Option 1 is undoubtedly the most satisfactory solution to these longstanding problems:

- It would deal once and for all with the vexed issue of public access to the Creek-side at both Faversham Reach and Waterside Close, with no need for subsequent footpath creation or diversion orders within either development. Options 2 and 3, on the other hand, would not deal with the outstanding matter of the unimplemented s 106 agreement for a public footpath at Waterside Close
- The route proposed is contained in the Faversham Creek Streetscape Strategy, which has been endorsed by Faversham Town Council, Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council. It is also that proposed in the draft Neighbourhood Plan for Faversham Creek. Consultations in connection with the latter indicated widespread support for a continuous Creek-side path
- There is every reason to think that the proposed route would be that which will be proposed by Natural England as part of the England coast path, on which consultations have just begun. No other route for the coast path would make sense along this part of the Creek. Indeed, any route inland from that proposed in Option 1 would be likely to raise potentially difficult issues for the residents in terms of public access to the 'coastal margin'. It would be absurd to opt for a route for the diversion which is different from the one which Natural England seem highly likely to propose for the coast path in the near future
- The route proposed would maximise public access to the Creek-side, avoiding the present lengthy, and partly unsightly, diversion round the back of Faversham Reach and the Brents Industrial Estate for those who wish to walk along the Creek out towards Hollowshore. Options 2 and 3 would provide a lesser degree of access to the Creek
- The route proposed would have little impact on the privacy of Faversham Reach and Waterside Close residents. It would be distant from most of the houses in Faversham Reach and, even in the case of numbers 1-3 and 13-15, the path would be separated from the houses

by gardens and walls: very much like many people's experience of pavements in front of their houses. Similarly, in the case of Waterside Close, the footpath would run behind the gardens and fences of houses there, with minimal impact on the residents. Options 2 and 3 would appear to be less satisfactory in terms of the privacy of Faversham Reach residents

- Option 1 (unlike Options 2 and 3) would result in the extinguishment of that part of the present footpath that runs through Faversham Reach towards the main entrance, thus increasing security within the estate and enabling the residents to secure the main entrance if they wished to do so
- The route would also provide an attractive and convenient route on foot for the residents of both estates to and from Faversham town centre
- The cost of the work involved in creating two ramps and a cantilever walkway at the slipway would be small in relation to the public benefit from resolving a long-standing problem and providing hugely improved public access to this part of the Creek. Moreover, as the consultation document notes, charitable donations would meet a significant part of the cost.

The Group also wishes to see action taken simultaneously to designate as a public footpath the path which runs round the outside of the wall of the Faversham Reach development. The inspector's report confirmed that this is already a public right of way but it is important, in the Group's view, that it is added to the designated map.

The Group hopes that, following this informal consultation, a decision can be taken quickly to proceed with Option 1 and that the necessary Orders will be made without delay.

Trevor Payne
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