

## **Stapleford & Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan – Comments on behalf of the Cambridge Group of the Ramblers, January 2025**

### **Introduction**

The Cambridge Group of the Ramblers welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Stapleford & Great Shelford Neighbourhood Plan. We have focused on Chapter 10, concerning ‘Active Travel’ and particularly Chapter 11 ‘Countryside Access and Countryside Enhancements’.

### **Chapter 10 ‘Active Travel’**

The Ramblers support the stated priorities for improvements to the active travel network, especially the installation of a bridge across the River Cam at Great Shelford Recreation Ground and improvements to the Chae path alongside Haverhill Road between the A1307 and Stapleford Village.

We would like to see priority also given to secure the future availability of ‘Jenny’s Path’ as an offroad bridleway linking Great Shelford to the A11 at Hauxton Mill. This route has the potential for much greater use, providing access not only to Trumpington Country Park, but also to the planned South West Cambridge travel hub/Park & Ride site. However, it is a permissive path and in recent years has been unusable by walkers and cyclists for several weeks each year due to flooding of the railway underpass. Whilst we would ideally see the route adopted as a Public Bridleway, we appreciate that this may not be immediately possible. Consequently we recommend the negotiation of a ‘permissive path agreement’ between the landowner and Cambridgeshire County Council for a specified period of time. It is also important that works are undertaken to keep the railway underpass open all year for walkers, cyclists and equestrians.

### **Chapter 11 ‘Countryside access and countryside enhancements’**

The Ramblers fully concur with Planning policy S&GS 20: ‘Protecting and improving routes into our countryside’. As the Plan says, there is a paucity of public access to the countryside in both Parishes. Even the permissive path network is poor and fragmented. Some of the permissive paths were initiated as ‘Stewardship Scheme’ routes, with EU funding. These agreements were time-limited and the continued availability of the paths to the public is uncertain.

Consequently, the Ramblers would like to see a reference in the Plan to securing agreements for long-term public access to both existing and new ‘permissive’ paths. Whilst it may be difficult to upgrade the routes to Public Rights of Way it is important to consider establishing ‘permissive path agreements’ between the landowners and Cambridgeshire County Council for specified periods.

One further issue relating to permissive paths concerns signage. When established as Stewardship scheme paths there were signs installed at road ends and along the route, because there was no requirement to depict the paths on Ordnance Survey Maps. However, much of that signage has now disappeared – for example along the permissive footpath at White Hill Farm. This makes it very difficult to follow them or include such paths in published walking routes.

Paragraph 11.13 is particularly important in providing a suitable vehicle for creating new paths through the planning process. The ‘goal’ could be creating routes with ‘Public Right of Way’ status.

With respect to the Plan’s aspirations for new routes, the Ramblers are fully supportive. As already stated, we would like to see Jenny’s Path, as it runs through to the A11 at Hauxton Mill, given a more certain future and attention given to sorting out the frequent flooding issue at the railway underpass. We support the proposals for two offshoots – which are already in informal use.

We have already indicated our support for improvements listed in Chapter 10 on Active Travel: (i) the path alongside Haverhill Road, leading from Stapleford to Magog Down and on to Wandlebury, and (ii) a bridge over the River Cam.

The Ramblers support the aspiration for an off-road footpath along Granhams Road between the permissive path at White Hill Farm and the houses in Great Shelford village. This would greatly improve safety for visitors to the Pocket Path and the public footpath which links with the DNA path and the overbridge of the railway.

The Plan includes a further six aspirational routes which have community support, but have yet to be agreed with landowners. The Ramblers are fully in support of these proposals. In all cases, we recommend aiming to establish 'permissive path agreements' between the landowner and Cambridgeshire County Council for a specified period, together with en-route signage.

Finally, we would like to raise a specific issue which is not discussed in detail in this Chapter. It concerns public access to/from Nine Wells, currently served by a dead-end Public Footpath in Great Shelford. At present there is an informal permissive path linking to the well-used DNA cycle/footpath and another permissive path across to both the Addenbrookes site and adjacent new housing development. These paths are extremely well used, especially by people working on the huge Addenbrookes/bio-park campus. The Ramblers consider that it is imperative that these 'permissive' paths are upgraded to Public Right of Way status. At present, the plans proposed by the Cambridge South East Transport (CSET) busway and the emerging plans for the East West Rail (EWR) line appear to cut the link to the DNA path. The area involves paths in both South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City, but a statement of principle in the S&GS NP would be very welcome.

We support the recommendation in 11.32 (8) to develop new open space close to Nine Wells.

Jill Tuffnell

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