



Ramblers Association Cambridge Group

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Response to Consultation on Supplementary Planning Guidance

October 2025

On behalf of the Ramblers Association Cambridge Group this is a response to the consultation on Greater Cambridge Supplementary Planning Guidance. As Ramblers our primary area of interest is in the maintenance and enhancement of Public Rights of Way (PRoW). There are a large number of people that use PRoW that are impacted by the number of developments within Cambridgeshire.

1. Missing Guidance

We are pleased to see that there is now a specific section relating to Public Rights of Way Chapter 21. However the list of documents under further guidance does not reference Cambridgeshire County Council's own document of July 2020 'Development and Public Rights of Way: Guidance for Planners and Developers v4':

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/EN010106/EN010106-005016-Cambridgeshire%20County%20Council%20-%20Comments%20on%20any%20Additional%20Submissions%20accepted%20at%20D5%201.pdf>

This reference needs to be added.

2. Leisure Walking vs Active Travel

In an Active Lives Survey completed by Sport England in 2024 and published on the GOV.UK website shows that 69% of adults walk at least once a week, 55% for leisure purposes and 38% for travel purposes. Currently there is an emphasis on promoting active travel for commuting to school, college or work and developing the greenways as a network of cycleways and wheeled walking surfaces. This is part of a climate strategy to reduce our reliance on cars generating carbon emissions. However the statistics show the importance of having Public Rights of Way accessible for walkers for leisure purposes too. With an estimated 33% of all households owning dogs (Defra, 2024), there is a huge demand for local walks, especially in green spaces. People walking for leisure and dog walkers typically prefer not to walk on tarmac paths and prefer grassy paths alongside natural planting.

[Walking and cycling statistics, England: Local area walking and cycling rates \(Active Lives Survey\) - GOV.UK](#)

Therefore the scale, design and surfacing of the public rights of way needs to accommodate both soft green surfaces for recreational and leisure walking and hard surfaces for active travel/cycling. Please see the table below that demonstrates the scale of recreational walking.

3. Participation in recreational walking

The participation in walking for recreational purposes through formal organised groups in Cambridgeshire is enormous. Organised walks typically attract between 8 and 30 people with some organisations offering different levels of walks:

Organisation	Walk Frequency
Cambridge Rambling Club <i>Membership circa 480</i>	Wednesdays – 4 groups Sundays – 3 groups Thursdays - summertime
U3A Cambridge Group	9 groups
U3A Sawston Group	2 groups
U3A Royston Group	2 groups
U3A Huntingdon Group	2 groups
U3A Ely Group	8 groups
U3A Wisbech Group	2 groups
U3A March Group	2 groups
U3A St Neots Group	2 groups
Cambridge Hiking Club <i>Membership circa 1460</i>	Weekends
Cambridge University Rambling Club	Weekends
Cambridge University Hillwalking Club	Weekends
Ramblers Association has the following local eight groups	
Cambridge Group <i>Membership circa 480</i>	Saturdays Mondays fortnightly
Walk Cambridge	Weekends
Huntingdon Group	Saturdays Sundays
Fenland Group	Sundays
Peterborough Group	Thursdays Sundays
Walk Peterborough	Weekends
Newmarket and District (includes some of East Cambs)	Wednesdays Sundays
Royston Group	Tuesdays Thursdays
Lots of village walking groups. For example the Comberton Ramblers, Stilton Stumblers, Wandlebury Walks etc	

In addition to the above Wellbeing Walks are run by the Ramblers Association, each District Council and by Everyone Health. These walks are led by trained specialists and are tailored for people with specific health needs and are a follow on to maintain the gain from rehabilitation programmes as well as for prevention and maintenance of long term health conditions. And the National Trust leads weekly walks from Wimpole Hall, Anglesey Abbey and Wicken Fen. This list is by no means a comprehensive list.

4. Change of Surface

With the importance of acknowledging that Public Rights of Way are used for both leisure walking as well as for active travel it is important to recognise that the type of surface of the footpaths is fundamental to the type of experience of walking. We would not want to see soft grassy footpaths being resurfaced without due consideration of the impact of a change. We

would want Developers to be aware of the application process for a change of surface. The following reference should be added to the guidance.

Cambridgeshire County Council Change of Surface of PROW Authorisation (March 2023). [Rights of way | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

5. Chapter 21 Introduction

The introduction has the very modest requirement for Developers to connect to the existing PROW network. Whilst this may be acceptable for very small developments it is not acceptable to the high number of large scale developments in Cambridgeshire. **There is no ambition to address the existing gaps in the PROW network.** For example the CSET busway would not consider linking Gog Magog to Babraham Bridleway 2 because it is outside the development area, so walkers have to use Haverhill Road that has no pavement. Another example is there is no safe footpath between the Beechwood and the Roman Road which is part of the E2 East European Long Distance Route, walkers have to use the busy Worts Causeway road.

6. Access to Countryside

The Ramblers Association supports the Access to Nature Bill. Access to countryside should be only 20 minutes from anyone's front door. People living in deprived areas have to travel 48% further to enjoy the freedom to roam. **Improving access to the footpath network should prioritise accessibility for the most urban deprived areas.**

In Cambridgeshire there are some 200 parks and open spaces and there are several long distance walking routes: Clopton Way, Wimpole Way, Fen Rivers Way, Ouse Valley Way, Harcamlow Way, Icknield Way, Pathfinder Long Distance Walk, Nene Valley Way, Hereward Way, Rothschild Way, and Fen Edge Way. The footpath network should not only aim to connect urban areas with green spaces but to make connection corridors between green spaces. Wildlife needs these connection corridors too in order to try to reduce depleting populations and loss of biodiversity. Footpaths should be designed to be more than the minimum specification for ease of travel but to have space on either side for planting and for havens for wildlife to provide that sense of connection to nature for walkers and to be able to journey to wider countryside. The planning guidance should encourage meeting more than the minimum technical specification but add to the aesthetic experience of walking.

Greater value needs to be placed on creating Public Rights of Way as there could be an estimated 379,240 people using them on a weekly basis in Cambridgeshire.

7. Funding for PROWs

Given the usage of PROWs and the numbers of people benefitting from using them consideration should be given to funding for PROWs similar to that proposed for Open Spaces Chapter 14 for both onsite and offsite provisions.

8. Permitted paths

It is acknowledged that it will not always be possible to create new Public Rights of Way and in some circumstances landowners may be willing to provide permitted/permissive paths and/or open access land. The SPG should reference the opportunities available under the Government's 'Environmental Land Management Schemes' (ELMs) for new footpaths and bridleways which are provided for a minimum period of 5 years. Landowners are rewarded for delivering environmental benefits. The scheme includes both capital and revenue grants. The

capital payments can be used for items such as information boards and increasing accessibility, such as replacing stiles with gates. Providing footpath access requires paths to be available for at least 5 years; the landowner receives £77 per 100m per year. A new bridleway/cycle path open for at least 5 years will receive £158 per 100m each year. And new open access land available for at least 5 years will earn £92 per hectare each year. All categories of permissive access must be open to the public free of charge. [Technical annex: The combined environmental land management offer - GOV.UK](#)

Key References

1. Cambridgeshire County Council, Development and Public Rights of Way Guidance for Planners and Developers v4 (July 2020)
<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/EN010106/EN010106-005016-Cambridgeshire%20County%20Council%20-%20Comments%20on%20any%20Additional%20Submissions%20accepted%20at%20D5%201.pdf>
2. Walking and Cycling statistics, England 2023 [Walking and cycling statistics, England: Local area walking and cycling rates \(Active Lives Survey\) - GOV.UK](#)
3. Cambridgeshire County Council Change of Surface of PROW Authorisation (March 2023). [Rights of way | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)
4. [Technical annex: The combined environmental land management offer - GOV.UK](#)