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| **Direction Decision** |
| **by Claire Tregembo BA (Hons) MIPROW** |
| **an Inspector on direction of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** |
| **Decision date: 19 June 2025** |

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| **Ref: ROW/3364149**  **Representation by Vince Farrar, Chair, Fen Ditton Parish Council**  **Cambridgeshire County Council**  **Application to add a bridleway from High Ditch Road to National Cycle Route 51 along the former railway line (Council Ref: M215 LH)** |
| * The representation is made under paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 seeking a direction to be given to Cambridgeshire County Council to determine an application for an Order, under section 53(5) of that Act. |
| * The representation made by Vince Farrar, is dated 15 April 2025. * The certificate under paragraph 2(3) of Schedule 14 is dated 10 January 2023. |
| * The Cambridgeshire County Council was consulted about the representation on 16 April 2025 and their response is dated 24 April 2025. |
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Decision

1. The Cambridgeshire County Council (the Council) is directed to determine the above-mentioned application.

Reasons

1. Authorities are required to investigate applications as soon as reasonably practicable and, after consulting the relevant district and parish councils, decide whether to make an order on the basis of the evidence discovered. Applicants have the right to ask the Secretary of State to direct a surveying authority to reach a decision on an application if no decision has been reached within 12 months of the authority’s receipt of certification that the applicant has served notice of the application on affected landowners and occupiers.
2. As required by Rights of Way Circular 1/09 (Version 2, October 2009, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) the Secretary of State in considering whether, in response to such a request, to direct an authority to determine an application for an order within a specified period, will take into account any statement made by the authority setting out its priorities for bringing and keeping the definitive map up to date, the reasonableness of such priorities, any actions already taken by the authority or expressed intentions of further action on the application in question, the circumstances of the case and any views expressed by the applicant.
3. The applicant has made the direction request because it has been over two years since they made their application, and it is only at number 5 on the list of applications awaiting determination. The application route provides a key link between a new development of 1,400 homes and two primary schools with shared facilities. They consider that, as the homes become occupied, use will increase significantly which could cause the landowner to act to reduced footfall.
4. In accordance with the Council’s Statement of Priorities, applications are allocated a score on receipt which determines its priority for determination. This is designed to ensure the routes which are perceived to have the greatest benefit to the public or are threatened by development are dealt with first. Points are awarded for a variety of factors including its availability, amount of use, public safety, impact on the network, the impact of development, status, equality and wellbeing, biodiversity, evidence, liability, and age of the application.
5. The application originally received a score of 56 points but was re-prioritised in March 2025 to a higher score of 74. The Council estimates the application will be determined within the next 24 months, but this could be subject to change if new higher scoring applications are received or the circumstances of this application changes. The Definitive Map Service also has competing demands and must prioritise time sensitive work such as public path orders, landowner deposits, and large infrastructure projects such as the A428 Improvement Scheme, East-West Rail, and the Fens Reservoir. This can impact on their ability to determine applications.
6. An applicant’s right to seek a direction from the Secretary of State gives rise to the expectation of a determination of that application within 12 months under normal circumstances. In this case, more than two years have passed since the application was submitted and no exceptional circumstances have been indicated.
7. In the circumstances I have decided there is a case for setting a date by which time the application should be determined. It is appreciated that the Council will require some time to carry out its investigation and make a decision on the application. A further period of six months has been allowed.

**Direction**

On behalf of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and pursuant to paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, **I HEREBY** **DIRECT** the Cambridgeshire County Council to determine the above-mentioned application not later than six months from the date of this decision.

Claire Tregembo

INSPECTOR