

Witherley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan

Footpaths, bridleways and other walking routes

USRN*	Reference number, LCC	Route taken through Witherley Parish
17402547	T7	From Footpath T6, south of Sibson to Sibson Road, Ratcliffe Culey
17402553	T12	Main Road, Ratcliffe Culey north to Mill Lane, Sheepy Parva, Sheepy Parish
17402564	T21	Mythe Cottage, Ratcliffe Culey north east all the way to south of Sibson, A444
17402575	T27	Kennel Lane, Witherley east to Church Lane, Fenny Drayton
17402576	T28	Chapel Lane, Witherley south/south east to footpath T27
17402577	T29	Mythe Lane, Witherley north east to Atterton Lane, Witherley
17402578	T30	Mythe Lane, near Witherley Pumping Station west to Mill Lane, and from Mill Lane west to the Leicestershire & Warwickshire Boundary
17402579	T31	Mythe Lane, Witherley north to Ratcliffe Culey Church, Ratcliffe Culey
17402580	T32	Off T31 north east to Bingham Cottage, Witherley
	T33	Atherstone Road north east to Ormes Lane, Ratcliffe Culey
17402582	T34	Atherstone Road /Pinwall Lane/Main Road junction, Ratcliffe Culey north east to T12
17402583	T35	Ormes Lane, Ratcliffe Culey, south east to a field
17402584	T36	Off T35 east to Ratcliffe House Lane, Ratcliffe Culey
17402585	T37	Ratcliffe House Lane, Ratcliffe Culey south east through Atterton then south to Rookery Farm, Fenny Drayton
17402586	T38	Atterton Road eastwards passing south of Hill Farm and re-joining Atterton Road in Atterton
17402587	T39	Atterton Lane, Atterton east to Atherstone Road, (A444) opposite Upton Lane
17402588	T40	Off T39 north of Atterton to Atherstone Road, (A444)
17402589	T41	Off T37 south east, across A444 to Hill Farm, Fenny Drayton
17402590	T41A	Off T41, north of Hill Farm, Fenny Drayton east to Stoke Road
17402592	T42	Bridleway A5 to Glebe Farm, Fenny Drayton
17402593	T43	Fenny Drayton Road south to the northern spur of Fox's Covert, Fenny Drayton
17402594	T44	'Roman Steps', Drayton Lane, Fenny Drayton south west to Fox's Covert then south to 'Watling Street' (A5)
17402595	T45	Fox's Monument, Drayton Lane, Fenny Drayton to Fox's Covert and from Fox's Covert to Drayton Lane, Fenny Drayton
17402602	T49B	Stoke Road /Fenn Lane junction south into Higham on the Hill Parish
17402605	T49D	Off T49B south of Fenn Lane Cottage, south east into Higham on the Hill Parish
17403636	T104	North of Sketchley Lane Ratcliffe Culey to T34
17403154	Green Lane East	Track from Stoke Road north westerly to Upton Lane
17403155	Green Lane West	Track from A444 Atherstone Road north westerly to Ratcliffe House

* Unique Street Reference Number

There are 26 footpaths/bridleways, although two T49B & T49D are in an area currently undergoing development at MIRA, so 24 remain and a Green Lane which on the West runs from Ratcliffe House Lane to the A444 and continues on the East from Upton Lane to Stoke Road.

There is a 5 mile (8km) circular footpath which would pass through all 4 settlements. The route is:- Ratcliffe Culey, Ormes Lane T35 - T36 – Ratcliffe House Lane - T37, through Atterton south to Rookery Farm, Fenny Drayton. West on T27 from Church Lane, Fenny Drayton west to Kennel Lane, Witherley, walk north up Kennel Lane, left onto Atterton Lane, right on to Mythe Lane past first footpath T29, walk on T31 northwards towards Ratcliffe Culey Church, Ratcliffe Culey.

Using Atterton Lane and footpath T38, two shorter walks connecting 3 settlements i.e. Ratcliffe Culey/Witherley/Atterton and Fenny Drayton/Witherley/Atterton (each approximately 4 miles) have been identified.

Footpaths in Witherley Parish

1 Context

Set in a rural location in south-west Leicestershire with easy access from Leicester, North Warwickshire and Tamworth, Witherley Parish offers rich potential for walking. Witherley is an area of great historical interest with Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre within easy walking distance from our Parish.

Apart from visitor interest, Witherley footpaths have a high amenity value for local residents (survey findings). There are currently 24 footpaths across the Parish with a 5 mile circular walk passing through all 4 settlements of Atterton, Fenny Drayton, Ratcliffe Culey and Witherley, although this walk is not publicised.

Of the 24 footpaths, 4 link with footpaths outside our Parish:-

T7 links with Sheepy Parish near Sibson

T12 links with Sheepy Parish leading to Sheepy Parva

T21 starts on Atherstone Road and cuts NE across the Parish and into Sheepy Parish at Sibson

T30 starts Mill Lane, Witherley and leads westwards into North Warwickshire Borough Council

Overall the remaining 20 footpaths stay within the Parish boundary:- T27; T28; T29; T31; T32; T33; T34; T35; T36; T37; T38; T39; T40; T41; T41A; T43; T44; T45.

Sadly the full potential for walking around Witherley is not being realised even though the majority of footpaths within the Parish are well maintained and signposted. The Neighbourhood Plan offers the opportunity to reverse this trend.

In summary, the following recommendations are suggested to improve the use of Parish footpaths:-

- Producing a leaflet detailing the circular walk with points of interest, both ecological & historical, along the route.
- Restoring (where possible) lost footpaths – permissive and unofficial
- Removing (where possible) barriers to access on existing footpaths

2. Circular Walk



Witherley offers rich potential for walking in an area of great historical interest. As part of developing our Plan a Community Action would be to set up a small group to identify possible routes, discuss these routes with relevant parties aiming to produce a Parish leaflet on each walk. The leaflet would include maps, points of interest both architectural and industrial interest and importance, local knowledge & legends and possible wildlife to spot along the way. There are 2 pubs within the Parish The Gate, Ratcliffe Culey and The Blue Inn, Witherley if these public houses could be included for refreshment it would support local businesses.

3. Restoring Footpaths

Permissive Footpaths –

Green lane – problem with dirt bikes using the track. Reclassification from byway open to all traffic to bridleway to prevent bike access. Change access at either end from gateways to stiles & locked gateways?? Green Lane is a wildlife-rich old drover's road which on old maps (1725) is marked as the road to Hinckley. Restoring permissive paths, should be explored with local landowners, particularly where this facilitates circular walks or walks around sites of historic interest.

Unofficial paths

Land owners have traditionally been permissive about public use of field edges as 'unofficial' paths, particularly where these enable ease of access from a village.

Right to Roam

On certain pasture fields adjacent to villages, local residents have enjoyed the 'right to roam' beyond the confines of the official footpaths, particularly where livestock are not present. These routes should be recognised and classified as footpaths, if possible after discussion with land owners, particularly where this facilitates access between footpaths.

Grants to improve access ??

3. Barriers to Footpaths

Stiles are the common form of access between fields. This presents a significant access problem, which needs to be addressed.

A stile or gate, although on a public right of way, is not part of it. Such structures are for the advantage of the landowner (to permit enclosure of the land and to control the movement of livestock), rather than for the benefit of the public.

Government guidance states that the selection of a gate or stile, shall result in as little restriction as possible for 'potential users', which include the mildly or seriously disabled, the elderly, children, mobility vehicles (push chairs, wheelchairs) and dogs. The *British Standard* (BS5709: 2006) states that in the absence of explicitly identified counter reasons the following structures should be used in this order of preference [3.2]: Gap, Gate, Kissing Gate, Stile (called the '*principle of least restrictive option*').

Government guidance also states that landowners must seek the local highway authority's permission before installing any new structure (stiles and gate) on a public right of way. Unauthorised structures are considered obstructions and may be removed by highway authority at landowner's expense. The *British Standard* states *the new structures shall not be stiles unless exceptional circumstances require them* [3.1.3] [4.5.1].

Where a stile needs replacing landowners are asked to consider using a gate, or preferably a gap, to ensure less of an impediment to people with mobility problems. Landowners can claim some of the replacement cost from the highway authority.

Poor Footpath Maintenance

Within Witherley Parish the majority of the footpaths are well maintained. Although highway authorities are generally responsible for footpath surfaces and drains, landowners are responsible for the repair of damage to paths caused by their vehicles, including restoration after ploughing and hedge control. Responsibilities for improving the condition of damaged paths should be investigated further.

Footpaths too narrow

Government guidelines indicate that cultivation (ploughing) should not go beyond the minimum width of a field edge: 1.5 metres for footpaths; 3 meters for bridleways. Any footpaths with restricted width should be investigated

Cross-field paths

Landowners should avoid cultivating a cross-field footpath or bridleway. If they have to cultivate, the path should be of a minimum width – 1 metre for footpath; 2 metres for bridleway, and be reasonably convenient to use within 14 days of first being cultivated (24 hours for any subsequent cultivation). Within Witherley Parish footpaths numbered T35; T36; T37; T39; T38; T29; T31; T27 (plus others need to add) have at least one section that is cross-field.

Livestock (including bulls)

Government guidance states that bulls of recognised dairy breeds* that are over the age of 10 months are banned by law from fields containing a public right of way. (*Ayrshire, British Friesian, British Holstein, Dairy Shorthorn, Guernsey, Jersey & Kerry). Bulls over 10 months for other breeds must be accompanied by cows /heifers in fields with public access.

Actions for the PC, SG and E&H Group

1. To create a leaflet for the circular walk within Witherley Parish.
2. To investigate if any footpaths are in poor repair and/or too narrow. These need to be reported to the correct section within HBBC??
3. To encourage landowners & tenant farmers to replace a stile structure with Gap; Gate or Kissing Gate as specified by the British Standard (BS5709: 2006) order of preference.
4. To note if any footpaths have bull signs with warnings to walkers. To investigate if Government guidance is being abide by.????
5. Investigate if it is possible to join footpath T32 up with footpath T35. Discuss with landowners and HBBC, LCC.
6. Footpaths T49B & T49D were removed when Mira built the Autonomous track in the east of our Parish. Discuss with relevant parties the reinstatement / re-routing of these footpaths. Relevant parties include Mira, HBBC, Higham-on-the-Hill Parish, LCC.

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E&H Group