

SURREY RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Head of Service:	Justin Turvey, Head of Place Development
Report Author	Justin Turvey
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Draft Response to Surrey County Council consultation Appendix 2 - Surrey Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Consultation Draft November 2024

Summary

Every council that is responsible for public rights of way must have a Rights of Way Improvement Plan which sets out how public rights of way meet the needs of the public now and in the future.

Surrey County Council have published a 'Surrey Rights of Way Improvement Plan', Consultation Draft for comment. This would be the third version of the Plan, the last version of the Plan being adopted in 2014. The consultation on the draft Plan closes 9th February 2025.

The consultation document is split into 11 objectives. Proposed comments on the consultation are attached at Appendix 1.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the contents of the consultation.**
- (2) Approve the draft response (attached at Appendix 1).**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Surrey County Council 'Surrey Rights of Way Improvement Plan', Consultation Draft November 2024 was published on 15th November. The consultation closes 9th February 2025.

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- 1.2 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is a strategic document by SCC rather than a detailed one and contains no specific proposal affecting rights of way within the Borough. However; as document it does contain information regarding SCC's strategies for rights of way and is therefore presented to this committee for consideration.

2 Background

- 2.1 Every local highway authority must, by law, produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The ROWIP should set out the council's strategic goals and priorities for public rights of way. SCC are the highway authority for Epsom & Ewell.

- 2.2 ROWIPs must be reviewed every ten years, and once adopted, the consultation document will become Surrey's third Rights of Way Improvement Plan, superseding the 2014 Plan.

- 2.3 ROWIPs are required to:

- Refer to other relevant plans and strategies that may affect use of the network, including Local Plans; healthy living; leisure; tourism; transport and community strategies
- Assess where the existing rights of way network is considered to be deficient and where it could be changed to better reflect current needs
- Assess the extent to which the rights of way network is accessible to blind and partially sighted people and those with mobility problems
- Indicate how any identified deficiencies could be remedied

- 2.4 The consultation draft of the ROWIP identifies 11 objectives:

- Objective 1: To improve our understanding of the needs of all our users, including those presently under-represented, to make sure that the rights of way network continues to evolve to meet their current and future needs.
- Objective 2: That the network is as accessible as possible to as many people as possible, regardless of their physical mobility, disability, ethnicity, age, income or other factors, through working with partners, improving the quality of the network and providing information.
- Objective 3: To maintain the network in the best possible condition, prioritising safety and targeting maintenance to where there is the greatest need.

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- Objective 4: To improve the condition of the public rights of way network through supporting others with a responsibility towards public rights of way, including landowners.
- Objective 5: To uphold the council's legal duties to provide an up-to-date definitive map and statement which is accessible to the public, and to execute other work streams in relation to legal work to record, protect and vary public rights of way, in order to underpin the objectives and actions in this Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- Objective 6: To ensure that development does not impact negatively on public rights of way or their users; that they are protected and any impacts on them are appropriately mitigated. This should be both within the development and in the wider catchment. Rights of Way requirements associated with Strategic sites should be included in Local Plans
- Objective 7: To improve the safety of our users in respect to the impacts of traffic, through seeking improved connections and crossings where there is the greatest need, working with partners on information and initiatives to improve safety and to increase active travel and liveable neighbourhoods.
- Objective 8: To ensure that public rights of way contribute to conserving and protecting the outstanding biodiversity, landscape and heritage of Surrey, whilst also providing opportunities to appreciate and understand them.
- Objective 9: To protect the network from and adapt to the impacts of climate change through improving our maintenance techniques, applying best practice, seeking to innovate, using new materials and improving our understanding of changing weather patterns and other impacts on the public rights of way network.
- Objective 10: To raise awareness of the public rights of way network and to support existing and new users with opportunities to find out about public rights of way, to explore them, to make the network a more welcoming place and to help people to find their way around.
- Objective 11: To encourage responsible use of the countryside, to increase understanding and consideration between users and to lessen impacts on landowners, their businesses and livestock

2.5 There consultation form contains questions relating to each objective. A suggested response to the questions is set out at Appendix 1, along with officer commentary and additional suggested comments under each question where considered necessary.

3 Risk Assessment

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Legal or other duties

3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1 None for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council in consideration of the consultation. Surrey County Council have considered impacts, for example, in consideration of access to rights of way by under represented groups.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 None arising from this report.

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None arising from this report.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 None arising from this report.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None arising from this report.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 None arising from this report.

5.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from this report.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** None arising from this report.

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None arising from this report.

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6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None arising from this report.

6.5 **Partnerships:** This report relates to a consultation from Surrey County Council.

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- None.

Other papers:

- None.