

Article to be considered- *Agenda point 8- Consider council's response to BCP Rights of Way Improvement Plan, proposed response (103/21)*

BCP Rights of Way Improvement Plan -ROWIP- 2021 -2026

<https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/Roads-and-transport/Walking/Rights-of-way-improvement-plan.aspx>

This response to BCP focuses on the River Stour environs from Northbourne roundabout (Cherry Tree) to Holdenhurst Village.

‘Assessment of the Definitive Map and Statement

6.1 BCP Council has a statutory duty to prepare and maintain a Definitive Map and Definitive Statement of Public Rights of Way. These duties require that the Map and Statement are kept under continual review and are published.’

THVC commends Poole Council for its long-term comprehensive work towards its Definitive Map and Definitive Statement of Public Rights of Way and looks forward to this becoming the standard throughout BCP. THVC specifically notes there is great need for mapping within the Parish and there is a lot to be done. THVC looks forward to being in constructive future discussions with BCP on all aspects of this legal requirement.

Access across River Stour

The ROWIP identified that access across the River Stour is lacking.

- THVC acknowledges the excellence of the identified proposals for a new bridge crossing at the north end of the Stour Valley Nature Reserve through the Transforming Cities Fund, using the existing public transport bus links at the Northbourne/Cherry Tree roundabout, and maximising access with newly upgraded cycle tracks in Whitelegg Way and the installation of a 30-unit car park. THVC looks forward to the early completion of this crossing.
- At Berry Hill there is the Wessex Water private bridge which was installed a few years ago to the HGVs directly access North to Hurn, thus completely illuminating the unacceptable numbers of HGV traffic movements in Throop and North Bournemouth. At the time the Secretary of State, who approved the planning permission, granted segregated pedestrian/ cycling access across the bridge, but this was not enacted. THVC requests that this planning application is reviewed by working with Wessex Water towards providing another river crossing for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Footpath at Throop. The public footpath is very narrow and steep behind Throop Mill. There is only permissive access over the fields at Hicks Farm. Transforming City proposals make for a long permanent use public shared path across the water meadows, with lighting in winter ‘which will create an attractive commuting route between Throop and Hurn’ ROWIP needs to conduct a deep risk assessment as to whether this lit public access directed directly into a dangerous flood plain dangerous throughout the winter months is a suitable, safe, and permanent solution for commuters. A statement of the environmental impact this path would have is also required. There is already a bike problem with unauthorised motorised forms of transport roaring across the meadows causing illegal disturbance.

Policy CS 36 Stour Valley Project.

This policy is at least 15 years old and requires review, with special regard to BCP policies on sustainability and Climate Change. There are many admirable aspects of this core policy.

The proposed development of Hicks Farm is clearly out of step with BCP sustainability and Climate Emergency policies and needs urgent root and branch review and reassessment.

- The business model (public survey 2018) is completely drive by, and dependent on, massive vehicular destination access into the Throop Conservation Area and Green Belt with an enormous car park (100+) built for this purpose. Hicks Farm project requires extensive remodelling of how public access is made without motorised transport, for which this Rights of Way Improvement Plan is ideally placed to make an important contribution.

- The Hicks Farm development was originally proposed as part of the heathland mitigation offsetting and refocusing the public away from the important and overused Hengistbury Head. It was always a problematic assumption as to whether people, who wanted to see the sea, would naturally choose Hicks Farm, Throop as a realistic alternative. However, now that the BCP has a comprehensive Seafront Strategy, including the Durley Chine Environmental Hub and the Southbourne year-round visitor centre, it calls into question as to whether these developments are more suitable mitigation solutions for Hengistbury Head than Hicks Farm. Again, ROWIP improvement plan is an ideal opportunity to review the marketing of pedestrian/cycling for people who want to use enjoy BCP whose unique feature is the extensive sandy beach experience.

Stour Valley Way – Throop Road/ Holdenhurst Village Road

The Stour Valley Master Plan 2013 identifies Throop Road/ Holdenhurst Village Road as being a long access route up the Stour valley which runs the full length of THVC area. This lane is of crucial importance to the 'linked up' success of the overall project, and without which (along with other unconnected sections) the Stour Valley Way merely becomes a series of unconnected destinations which flies in the face of the overall purpose of the project.

Throop Road/ Holdenhurst Village Road is a narrow country lane, hardly 5.5m wide, which has always been very poorly maintained and subject to many potholes and continuous 'patching'. Already there are conflicts of road use between:

- HGVs to the industrial unit at Blue Roofs, Mar Key and Berry Hill
- Farm vehicles services the agricultural economy up and down the valley
- Regular residents' access
- Existing walkers and cyclists who already often have to jump out of the way of passing motorised vehicles
- Sole access for Holdenhurst Village
- 'Rat Run' to avoid Castle Lane

Please can ROWIP establish and publish how all these different road users are all going to be safely accommodated in the Stour Valley Way project.

We trust this assist and ask that BCP Council to consider the Village Council response accordingly.