

Martlesham Heath Householders Limited

Response to

East Suffolk Council Draft Cycling and Walking Strategy

(November 2021)

Martlesham Heath Householders Ltd (MHHL) as Landowners

1. When Martlesham Heath Village received planning permission in 1975, it was a condition that a separate company limited by guarantee was set up to manage the open spaces of Martlesham Heath. Some 46 years later, Martlesham Heath Householders Limited is still active in managing the open spaces and other assets, such as the Control Tower, on Martlesham Heath Village. The set-up of Martlesham Heath is unusual, in that the 1400 households of the village are all shareholders of the company and every year pay an annual charge of £35 for the upkeep of our 140 acres of open spaces and other assets. MHHL is run by unpaid Volunteer Directors and Volunteers. The shareholders individually are all part owners of our private land and assets.
2. The shareholders on the Heath take great pride in their village and indeed there is great emphasis in protecting the open spaces which includes a site of special scientific interest (SSSI). MHHL is continually enhancing the landscape of the Heath by planting bulbs, trees and shrubs as well as on-going maintenance. Whilst the open spaces belong to the shareholders, access is allowed to the general public in a wider community spirit.



3. MHHL has an informative website which shows, amongst other things, our land ownership. [Home | Martlesham Heath Householders Ltd \(mhh.co.uk\)](http://mhh.co.uk)
4. The stance of the Directors of MHHL is that we wish to engage positively with East Suffolk Council (ESC) in their consultation as we acknowledge that if there is money available to improve cycling routes, then our shareholders would benefit.
5. If any proposals we as Directors make as part of this consultation and are accepted by ESC, these proposals would have to be ratified at an annual general meeting or an extraordinary general meeting.
6. The Directors are encouraging all shareholders to make their own individual comments via the consultation website.

Overview of Ipswich to Melton Corridor Proposal

7. We note the purpose of the strategy is:

The East Suffolk Cycling and Walking Strategy identifies potential cycling and walking infrastructure opportunities across the district. The Strategy focusses on the identification of new infrastructure opportunities rather than the maintenance of existing infrastructure. It provides context and information to support detailed infrastructure proposals and inform decision making to support cycling, walking, and equestrian use.

8. Without being too cynical, we question why you are not maintaining existing infrastructure at present rather than concentrating on new projects. Below are 3 photographs which show the lack of maintenance on a key cycle footpath near the underpass to the A12.

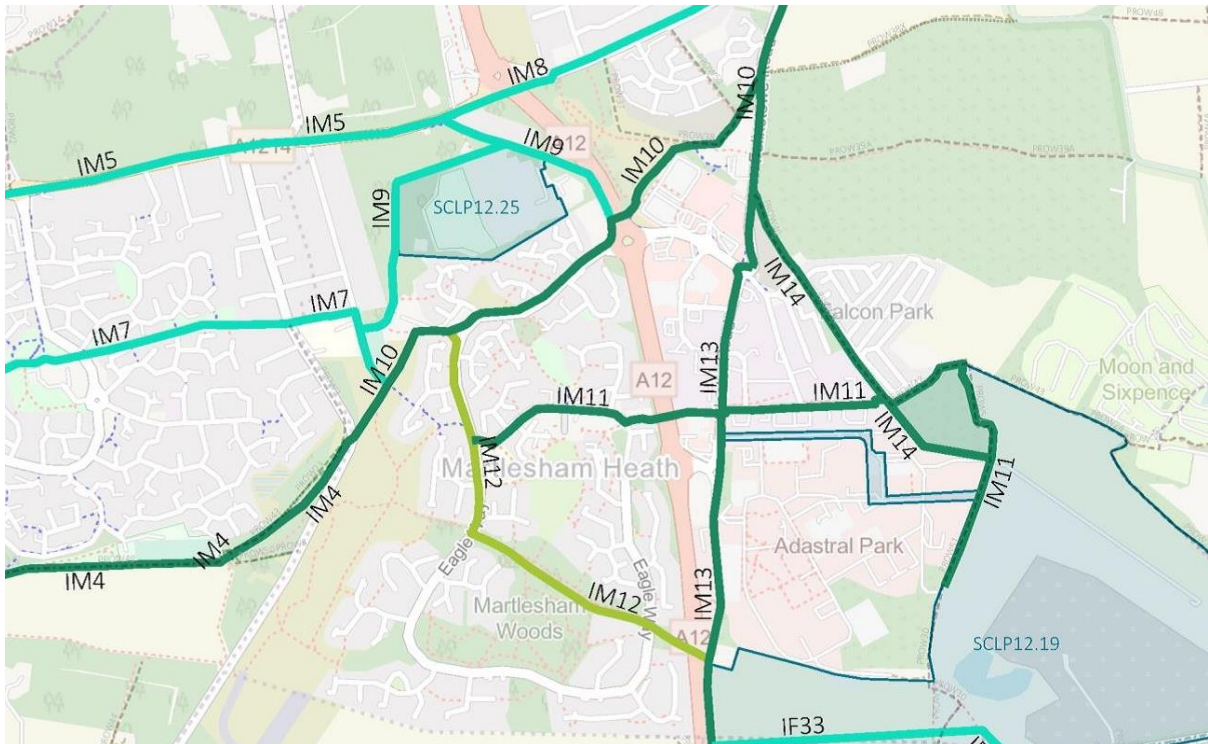


9. We note that a key feature of this corridor is the conversion of the Long Strops Bridleway into a combined cycle/footpath, which has a tarmac surface. If indeed you wish to support equestrian use, how is this possible if the

Bridleway is to be tarmaced? Near Mildenhall in 2013 there was outrage by local horse-riders when a nearby Bridleway was to be tarmaced over. Horses do not like a tarmac surface. In this situation Suffolk County Council reached a compromise with the riders where a grass strip was to be left available for the horses to use. The fundamental question which must be answered by ESC is; will equestrians be able to use the Long Stroops Bridleway? If there is to be an adjoining grass strip to the tarmac, would the existing Bridleway be wide enough?

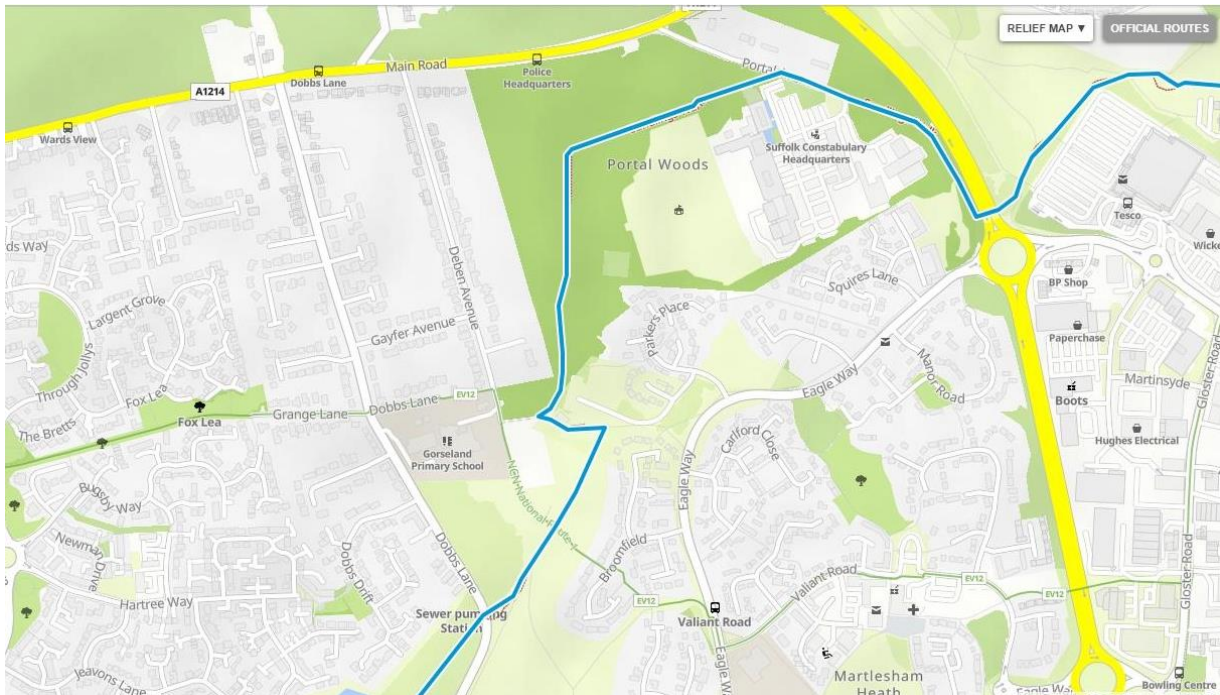
10. The proposals for this corridor show most routes as a combined cycle/footpath. In Holland, the tendency is to keep cycle/footpaths separate. For walkers, tarmac is not necessary and walking on an unmade surface through woods is part of the experience. The Sandlings Walk, as it passes through MHL land, is largely on natural heathland. We urge ESC not to be fixated on combined cycle/footpaths as speeding cyclists can cause serious injury to pedestrians when a collision occurs.

11. The ESC proposals give different priorities to different routes. It is our view, given the expected usage of the routes to be taken by cyclists, especially schoolchildren, is that the Main Road (A1214) IM5/IM8 route should be "very high priority" and the IM4 route should be downgraded to "high priority".



MHHL's position on proposed new routes across our land

12. The Board notes that the total distance of MHHL land ESC wish to use for new cycle and footpaths would total 1 mile. We wish to point out that in the past we have been very accommodating with Local Authorities for access to our land. Indeed, we have the long distance Sandlings Path across our land. The route is shown below in blue.

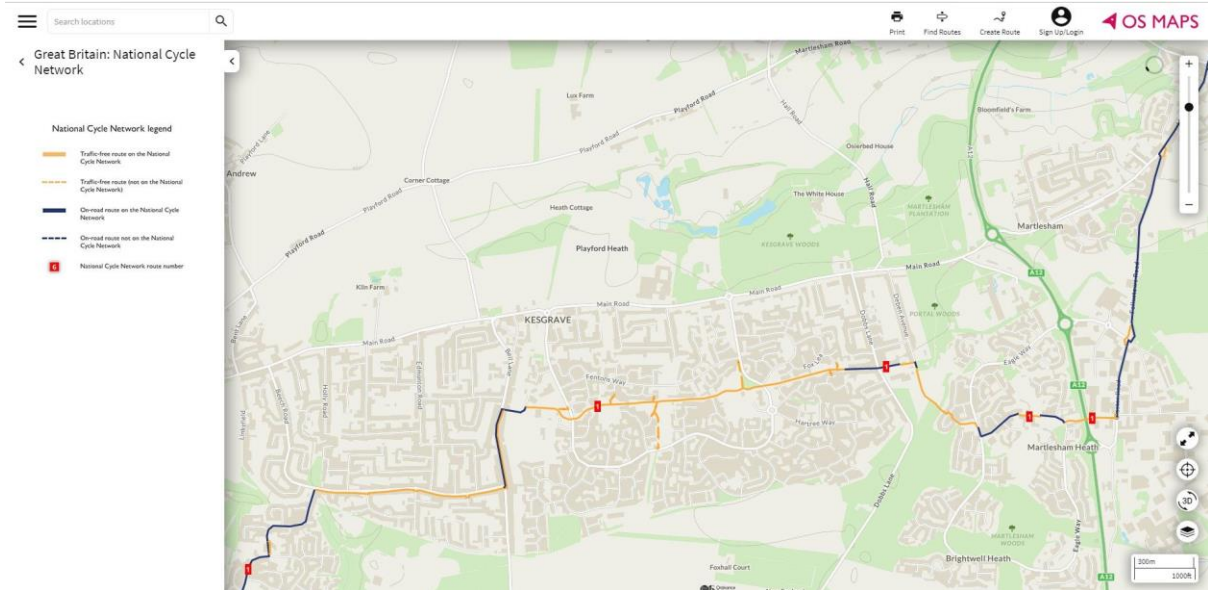


13. Besides the Sandlings path, MHHL also has 2 permitted, combined cycle/footpaths across its land. One route follows the perimeter track around the Police HQ and the other is from Birchwood School to the Grove.





14. The Board is happy to meet officers from ESC and walk routes on our land as appropriate. However MHHL is against the imposition of any more tarmac and lit cycle paths on our land. Since the village was built there has been continued pressure on our open spaces from more recent neighbouring developments and the flora and fauna on our open spaces is deteriorating accordingly.
15. The Board has familiarised themselves with the compulsory purchase process but would hope the Council would not attempt to use such a process.
[Compulsory purchase process and the Crichel Down Rules - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
16. The Board has also familiarised themselves with the 2020 Cycle Infrastructure Design Publication and notes the minimum footpath/cycle path dimensions as quoted in chapter 5. [Cycle infrastructure design \(LTN 1/20\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
17. The Board is also aware of the Brightwell Lakes development and its emphatic view is that the existing bridge over the A12 should be used as the only connection to Martlesham Heath Village. The Board's view is that the existing bridge is perfectly adequate and would easily cope with increased usage from the completed Brightwell Lakes development. By using the existing bridge, damage to our woodlands will be avoided and people will be encouraged to visit the Martlesham Heath village centre thereby providing potential integration between the two communities
18. National Cycle Route 1 is already in existence but its route is not integrated into the ESC draft strategy.
[Route 1 - Sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)



IM11

19. The Board notes that cycle route 1 and route IM11 coincide up to Eagle Way. Although ESC believe the current route through Broomfield is somewhat narrow, the Board is happy to discuss using part of the MHL land (the mature flowerbed with trees in it), to smooth out the Broomfield “kink”.





20. The Board notes that as part of the now approved McCarthy and Stone development, the plans show a 3 metre wide shared cycle /footpath along northern side of the site, thereby avoiding the public highway along Eagle Way (IM11/Cycle Route 1).

IM10

21. The Board does not accept the proposed route IM10 as a cycle route as it crosses our land. The Sandlings path does cross our land as shown on the photographs below but as we have said previously, we are against any more tarmac paths on our “Western Corridor” which includes a SSSI.



22. The Board may consider offering our path from Dobbs Lane to Cycle Route 1 as a permitted route with an all-weather non-tarmac surface. At the T junction with the existing route 1 as shown in the photographs below, cyclists could then go left or right to their chosen destination. Should cyclists wish to go eastbound along the Ipswich/Melton corridor, we propose they use existing cycle route 1 leading to routes IM7, IM9, IM11 and IM13.



IM12

23. Unfortunately all of the Directors were personally dismayed by the proposal to put IM12 through 2 of our woodlands: Birch Woods (shown as Martlesham Woods in the draft strategy) and the woods between Coopers Road and Lancaster Drive. We find this proposal quite bizarre and incomprehensible given the emphasis on protecting the environment. The Board totally rejects this proposal together with the siting of a new bridge across the A12. The IM12 route has been walked and approximately 25 mature trees would need to be felled. Damage would also be done by contractors' vehicles and plant.

24. Notwithstanding our objections of driving a tarmac path through the woods, it is the Board's view that there is insufficient width of Council verge to put a cycle route northwards along the west side of Eagle Way.







IM9

25. The Board also totally rejects the proposal of route IM9. The route is along a WW2 perimeter airfield track and has already permitted route status. From the photographs you will see that the track is wide and the surface is tolerable for bicycles.



26. The Board feels that any development with extra tarmac and lighting through the woods would detract from the area around the Control Tower Museum, which we consider to be a heritage area, giving a flavour of how Martlesham Airfield was. Martlesham Heath Aviation Society has been consulted on the proposal for IM9 and is also totally against it. What we have at the moment is very acceptable. Indeed, Portal Woods Conservation Group, we are sure would not be in favour.



Conclusion

27. MHHL is happy to take a positive approach to some of the wider ESC proposals and engage constructively with officers from the Council.

28. The proposals seek to create new cycle/footpaths but say nothing about maintenance of existing paths. The Board hopes that funds are made available to improve and maintain existing cycle/footpaths along the Ipswich/Melton corridor, thereby meeting the needs of the local communities.

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