

My name is Colin Offer and I am the longest current serving member of the council, with 30 years' experience.

I have been through the documentation to see when problems started to be reported with these footpaths, and it's recorded that the Parish Council were aware of the footpaths crossing the field, in 2011, and concerns were raised regarding the upkeep of these paths, when Mr and Mrs Stalker submitted an application for temporary workers' accommodation on this site. This information is detailed in the Parish minutes, and concerns were raised about the footpath, by both the council and residents of the Marsh, in the planning process.

In the original first application, submitted by Bower Mapson, in 2013, 2 years later, it was highlighted, by Swindon Borough Council, that there was a need to submit the appropriate paperwork for a formal review of these footpaths, with comments recording the issues with the rights of way, by both Bower Mapson and residents. Bower Mapson stated that the new route was deemed to be highway, and so this was the route the development proposed to incorporate.

The plans, submitted for the purchase of the properties, clearly shows the position of footpaths on the site; there is also a large brochure which provided details of the footpaths. Bower Mapson submitted land surveys to Swindon Borough Council, along with a detailed application, so it was assumed, by the Parish Council, that everything was in order.

Mr Mapson had already done a terrific job on work at Green Lane bridleway and footpath, connecting the Marsh to central Wanborough, so we assumed that all had been done correctly on the Suters Close development. Mr Mapson was seen as something of a hero, at that time, for his efforts in supporting Wanborough in charitable donations and supporting footpath projects.

It came as a bit of a surprise, when such a large group of around 50 people attended a Parish Council meeting, where I was the chairman in 2018; they signified that they were angry at the closure of the footpath, and most of this group considered that they had walked this path for twenty years!

I find it difficult to understand why a decision was made to object to this footpath. From a recent discussion on the footpath, there were 4 votes on each side, and the casting vote, by the chairman, was needed to object to this footpath. It is true that we owe Bower Mapson a great deal of thanks for their work on footpaths in the village, but maybe not in this particular case.