

# Central Bedfordshire Council

Development Management Committee

3 April 2019

## The Creation, Extinguishment and Diversion of Public Rights of Way as Part of the Dualling of the A421 Between Milton Keynes and Junction 13 of the M1 Motorway

Responsible Director:

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### Purpose of this report

1. This report details the need for public path orders to be made under the Highways Act 1980 to create, stop up and divert a number of public rights of way affected by the dualling of the A421 between Junction 13 of the M1 motorway and the Eagle Farm roundabout in Milton Keynes.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. **Approve** the making of a public path order under Section 26 of the Highways Act 1980 to create a public footpath and cycleway (Aspley Guise Footpath No. 35) between the Cranfield Road overbridge (point T on the plan at Appendix 1) along the edge of the extended highway land purchased for the dualling works via points B-U-V-W-X to its end at point Y close to Junction 13 of the M1 motorway.
2. **Approve** the making of a public path order under Section 118 of the Highways Act 1980 to stop up parts of Aspley Guise Footpaths Nos. 1 and 2 between points A-B and C-G on the plan at Appendices 2 and 3 respectively and Hulcote and Salford Footpath No. 10 and Aspley Guise Footpath No. 32 (between points J-K and K-L respectively) as shown on the plan at Appendix 4.
3. **Approve** the making of a public path order under Section 119 of the Highways Act 1980 to divert part of Aspley Guise Footpath No. 2 from the line H-I to the line X-I and to divert part of Aspley Guise Bridleway No. 25 from the line C-D-E-F to the line C-V-F via a new bridleway bridge as shown on the plan at Appendix 3.

## Issues

2. Central Bedfordshire Council has recently started the major works phase on the dualling of the single-carriageway section of the A421 located between Junction 13 of the M1 motorway and the Eagle Farm roundabout in Milton Keynes. Currently four public rights of way cross the nearby M1 motorway and then cross at grade (or are subsumed within) the A421, these are:
  - Aspley Guise Footpath No. 1 (partly in Hulcote and Salford) (points A-B)
  - Aspley Guise Bridleway No. 25 (points D-E)
  - Aspley Guise Footpath No. 2 (points G-H)
  - Hulcote and Salford Footpath No. 10 / Aspley Guise Footpath No. 32 (points L-Y) which connects via highway land to Aspley Guise Footpath No. 34 (at point Z).
3. In 1984 the Hulcote & Salford - Aspley Guise parish boundary was changed to run along the centre of the M1 motorway. Some of the affected paths listed above, whilst still being recorded as being in Aspley Guise, now lie in the parish of Hulcote and Salford on the northern side of the M1 motorway.
4. The dualling works will include the replacement of the existing Cranfield Road overbridge (shown at point T on the plan at Appendix 1) and the construction of a new bridleway bridge to carry a diverted Aspley Guise Bridleway No. 25 (points C-V on Appendices 1 and 3).
5. The volume and speed of traffic currently make it very difficult to use these path crossings, with users needing to wait for long periods until a suitable and safe opportunity to cross arises. The creation of a dual carriageway is likely to increase traffic volumes and vehicle speeds, making crossing even more hazardous. There are no plans to provide either safe crossing points or bridges for the three affected footpaths.
6. Instead, it is proposed to stop up these routes and to provide a combined footpath and cycleway along the southern side of the dual carriageway to connect with the two new bridges and footpaths to the south of the A421.

## Land ownership

7. A strip of land, approximately 26 metres wide, lying on the south side of the current A421 has been purchased by the Council to accommodate the new westbound carriageway, associated earthworks and the proposed rights of way changes, including the new bridleway bridge. At the time of writing (19 March 2019) the land title (BD323548) is still pending transfer with the Land Registry. It is anticipated that the title transfer will be completed prior to any orders being made. If this has not happened, notice of the orders will be served on the previous owners and tenants for completeness.
8. The proposed diversions of Aspley Guise Bridleway No. 25 and Footpath No. 2 will affect land held by Thomas White Properties Ltd, which is selling the aforementioned strip of land to the Council.

9. Parts of Aspley Guise Footpaths Nos. 1 and 32 and Hulcote & Salford Footpath No. 10 cross land and the motorway bridges held by Highways England. The remainder of Footpath No. 10 is owned by a British Virgin Isles-registered company, Salcombe Financial Ltd.

## **Descriptions of routes**

### Routes to be stopped up or diverted

10. Aspley Guise Footpath No. 1 currently has a junction with the unaffected sections of Aspley Guise Footpaths Nos. 1 and 11 (both in Hulcote and Salford) at point A (see plans at Appendices 1 and 2). These footpaths run parallel to the northern side of the M1 motorway. The affected section of Footpath No. 1 crosses the motorway using an agricultural access bridge and terminates at the northern highway boundary of the current A421. Another short spur of Footpath No. 1 extends southwards from the southern highway boundary of the A421 to connect to the unaffected remainder of the path (at point B) which then runs due west to Cranfield Road. The length of the affected route is approximately 117 metres.
11. Aspley Guise Bridleway No. 25 currently has a junction with Aspley Guise Bridleway No. 2 (point C on plan at Appendix 3). Bridleway No. 2 heads northwards across the M1 motorway to Aspley Hall. Bridleway No. 25 runs westwards down an access ramp to stop at the northern carriageway boundary of the current A421 (at point D). Another part of the bridleway starts on the southern side of the A421 (at point E) and continues south-westerly to point F and then onwards to eventually connect to Salford Road. The total length of the affected route is approximately 280 metres.
12. Aspley Guise Footpath No. 2 starts at its junction of Aspley Guise Bridleways Nos. 2 and 25 (at point C on the plan at Appendix 3) and heads east-south-eastwards for 140 metres along the northern highway boundary of the current A421 (point G). Another part of the affected footpath starts at the southern highway boundary of the A421 (point H) and continues due south to connect with an unaffected section (at point I) which then heads generally south-west ward towards Glebe Farm. The total length of the affected route is approximately 355 metres.
13. Hulcote and Salford Footpath No. 10 starts at its junction with Salford Road (at point J on the plan at Appendix 4) and zig-zags in a generally southwards direction to connect with Aspley Guise Footpath No. 32 (at point K). Footpath No. 32 heads generally southwards and then eastwards to terminate at the northern edge of the A421 carriageway (at point L). The total length of the affected route is approximately 580 metres.
14. Whilst no counters are installed on any of the routes that cross the M1 motorway and A421, the approximate level of use can be gleaned from the state of vegetation and the amount of surface wear on the paths. The following table describes the present state of the paths in question.

Path No.	State of vegetation	Surface condition	Estimated current level of use
Aspley Guise FP 1	This is mainly concrete agricultural occupation bridge. Concrete steps lead down on south side of bridge.	North of the A421, worn vehicle tracks (quadbike?). No sign of any worn track is present through grass at top of steps.  South of the A421 there is little sign of recent use.	Low to infrequent use
Aspley Guise BW 25	Muddy aggregate track leading up to and along muddy concrete agricultural occupation bridge	North of the A421, well-worn path within mud. No hoof prints but footprints and multiple bicycle tracks and one motorcycle track visible.  South of the A421 the ground has been levelled. Bicycle tyre tracks show this route is still well used.	A reasonable to high level of use by cyclists with potentially lower pedestrian use.
Aspley Guise FP 2	Path overgrown with trees and scrub.	North of the A421, slight evidence of a narrow track which quickly peters out.  South of the A421 the ground has been levelled and no physical trace of the path exists apart from the road-side signpost.	Very infrequent use – unused.
Hulcote & Salford FP 10	Overgrown – chest-high weeds	No worn path visible apart from a narrow animal track (deer)	Probably unused
Aspley Guise FP 32	Long grass and heavy scrub and trees and then up a grassed-over flight of steps	Aggregate path partially overgrown with grass. No worn path visible.	Infrequent use
Aspley Guise FP 34	Arable field-edge path	No real sign of recent use	Infrequent use

 <p>Aspley Guise FP 1 (point A)</p>	 <p>Aspley Guise BW 25 showing cycle use (point C)</p>
 <p>Aspley Guise FP 2 prior to current works (point H)</p>	 <p>Aspley Guise FP 2 (between points C-G)</p>
 <p>Hulcote &amp; Salford FP 10 (looking towards point J)</p>	 <p>Aspley Guise FP 32 (point L)</p>

### Routes to be created

15. A new section of Aspley Guise Bridleway No. 25 will be created over a new bridleway bridge over the dualled A421 between points C-V-F (see plan at Appendix 3). This route will have a length of approximately 300 metres and a width of 3.5 metres across the new bridge and along the earth ramp.

16. A new part of Aspley Guise Footpath No. 2 will be created as part of a diversion to run from point I in a north-eastwards direction for approximately 125 metres to connect with the new (provisionally) Footpath No. 35 at point X (see plan at Appendix 3). The new footpath will have a width of 2 metres.
17. A new combined footpath and cycleway in Aspley Guise (provisionally Aspley Guise Footpath No. 35) will be created to run generally alongside and within the southern highway boundary between its junction with Cranfield Road (at point T) and point U before heading southwards to connect with the realigned Aspley Guise Bridleway No. 25 at point V (see plan at Appendix 1). The new footpath would connect to the unaffected section of Aspley Guise Footpath No. 1 (at point B). From point V, the new footpath would head eastwards and north-eastwards back to the edge of the dual carriageway (at point W) to then continue generally east-south-eastwards along the maintenance/access track to the adjoining drainage pond to connect with the new terminus of the diverted Aspley Guise Footpath No. 2 (at point X) before continuing to and then across the access road to the Hayfield Business Park. The new footpath will then continue between carriageway and new drainage pond to terminate at the boundary of the Highways England land (at point Y) where a waymarked grassed footway then meanders east-south-eastwards to connect to Aspley Guise Footpath No. 34 (at point Z). The new footpath/cycleway is currently programmed to have a crushed aggregate surface, with a width of 3 metres and a length of approximately 2120 metres. However, the A421 Operational Board has recently approved the request for a quotation from the main contractor for upgrading the surface to tarmac.

## Legal and Policy Considerations

18. The Council's power to create, stop up and divert public rights of way is limited primarily to Sections 26, 118 and 119 of the Highways Act 1980 respectively. The legislative tests of these sections in relation to the affected footpaths and bridleway are discussed in detail at Appendix 6 and summarised below for convenience.

Path Number	Comments on legislative tests
<b>Creation under Section 26</b>	
Aspley Guise Footpath No. 35 Points T-B-U-V-W-X-Y (Appendix 1)	This footpath would be created as a footpath/cycleway within the extended highway land bought for the dualling. It would connect all the affected paths via the new bridleway bridge and provide an off-road conduit for future sustainable transport connectivity between the employment centres at Magna Park, Eagle Farm, Milton Keynes and ProLogis Park, Marston Gate, Ridgmont.
<b>Extinguishments under Section 118</b>	
Aspley Guise FP 1 Points A-B	Whilst this path is used to some degree, it is close to the proposed new bridleway bridge which would provide a more convenient route across the dual



(Appendix 2)	carriageway. Consequently, it is unlikely this footpath will be needed or used if retained.
Aspley Guise FP 2 Points C-G (Appendix 3)	This footpath is subsumed within the current A421 highway verge and is unused, walkers preferring to use the current bridleway crossing point. Once the bridleway bridge is installed this route would become redundant.
Hulcote & Salford FP 10 and Aspley Guise FP 32 Points J-K-L (Appendix 4)	This long route is part of a longer route which does not appear to serve any apparent purpose or to connect areas of housing or places of interest. North of the motorway, it appears unused. Whilst this is the only pedestrian crossing of the motorway within a 2.4 km section, the footpaths to either side provide better links from the nearby centres of population and bridleway network to the south and north of the motorway (see plan at Appendix 5). The footpath is unlikely to be needed or used to any great extent if it were retained.
<b>Diversions under Section 119</b>	
Aspley Guise Footpath No. 2 Points H-I to points X-I (Appendix 3)	This footpath needs to be diverted slightly to avoid the cutting being constructed alongside the new section of carriageway: the new route would provide an at grade connection to the new footpath/cycleway. Depending on direction of travel, the new route would be slightly longer or shorter and would cross similar arable land to the existing path.
Aspley Guise Bridleway No. 25 Points C-D-E-F to points C-V-F (Appendix 3)	This bridleway is being diverted over a new bridleway bridge which will form the only traffic-free crossing point over the new dualled section of the A421. The new route will provide a much-needed improvement to the local public rights of way network.

## Options for consideration

19. The dualling of the A421 with the consequent increase in both traffic flow and vehicle speed means that the at grade crossings of the dual carriageway will become increasingly more dangerous to use on foot and especially with a horse. The provision of a bridleway bridge will remove at grade equestrian traffic and will provide a central traffic-free crossing for pedestrians who previously had used Aspley Guise Footpaths Nos. 1 and 2. There is, however, no direct replacement for the route comprising of Hulcote and Salford Footpath No. 10 and Aspley Guise Footpath No. 32 beyond utilising other existing parts of the local public rights of way network, see Appendix 5.

20. No provision has been made within the scheme for any other bridge or tunnel crossing of the dual carriageway due to the costs involved and to the relatively low level of public use of the affected footpaths. Similarly, no provision has currently been made for pedestrian gaps within the highway safety barriers along the dualled section of the A421 to accommodate users of the footpaths that cross the A421 as these are planned to be stopped up. However, the option of barrier gaps for the footpaths has been referred back to the designers in case any of the proposed extinguishment orders are not confirmed.
21. The Central Bedfordshire and Luton Joint Local Access Forum has opposed the stopping up of the at grade pedestrian crossings so that these can be more intensively used should residential development take place to the south of the A421. Were these paths to be retained, modifications to the approved design and imminent works would be needed to provide crossing points through the various highway safety barriers and the provision of a wider central reservation to accommodate walkers safely. However, given the hazards involved in crossing the dual carriageway and the provision of alternative routes (where possible), the Council considers that the safety gains outweigh the loss of network connectivity. The option of re-creating these footpath links if development does take place in the future will continue to exist for as long as Highways England maintains and retains the two motorway bridges currently used by Aspley Guise Footpaths Nos. 1 and 32 and Hulcote and Salford Footpath No. 10 between points A-B and at point K respectively.

## Consultations

22. The Aspley Guise, Hulcote and Salford, Husborne Crawley and Brogborough parish councils were all consulted on the proposal, but no responses were received.
23. The four local ward members and the Executive Member for Community Services have been consulted. No response has been received to date.
24. The Central Bedfordshire and Luton Joint Local Access Forum ("JLAF") was consulted. At a recent meeting, the forum resolved that: *"The JLAF are happy with the proposed bridleway crossing but opposes any further bridleway closures. The JLAF would like to see footpaths retained and not extinguished as there is likely to be future developments to improve links using these paths."*
25. In response - the Council must have regard to the views of the JLAF in considering how to proceed with any proposal affecting public rights of way. The Council has considered the merits and risks of retaining the footpaths across the A421 and considers that the reduction in public access is outweighed by the improvement in public safety by directing users via the new bridleway bridge.
26. The Ramblers have been consulted. The chairman of the Bedfordshire Area Footpath committee has responded, stating: *"...We can appreciate and understand the need to avoid having "at grade" crossings on a duelled highway and can accept that alternatives are necessary. However, the map appears to indicate that Aspley Guise Footpaths 35 and 36 to be created are routed along the side of the road. Footpaths in these locations are dangerous, noisy and very unpleasant to walk along and we believe alternative routes away from the roadside should be provided. The map certainly indicates that space is available within the Highway Boundary to*



*accommodate these footpath links some distance away from the road and would ask that our suggestion be pursued...”*

27. In response, this consultation used an older version of the scheme which had the footpath running alongside the carriageway. The current proposal has the footpath/cycleway generally located at a distance of between approximately 15 and 25 metres from the carriageway as requested by the Ramblers.
28. The British Horse Society, Cycling UK and the Open Spaces Society were consulted. The British Horse Society has stated that “...we support the replacement of the at grade crossing with a bridge in view of the upgrading of the A421...  
...some riders would prefer a parapet infill of more than 1m, but the Highways specification is only 60cm, (TD19/06 which so far as I am aware is still the latest standard). The BHS would not object to the proposal on this basis. The bridge appears to be over 3.5m wide (internal measurement) so that is also in accordance with specification.”
29. The landowners affected by the diversion of Aspley Guise Footpath No. 2 and the stopping up of Hulcote and Salford Footpath No. 10 have been consulted. One of the owners is a property holding company in London and the other a holding company in the British Virgin Isles. No response has been received to date. In anticipation of a lack of response, special dispensation has been applied for and granted by the Secretary of State for notices relating to the order to be served on the land rather than on the land owners so as not to prejudice any tenant or occupier of the land.
30. Highways England and The Bedfordshire Group of Drainage Boards have been consulted as land owners and interested party respectively. Highways England has responded to state:
  1. “Extinguish the northern section of Aspley Guise footpath no.1 between points A-B. Highways England **objects** to the permanent closure of this section as this renders our structure over the M1 redundant and not giving any users any option to continue. Highways England (HE) has no plans to remove the structure over the M1. Therefore wish to allow the footpath to be accessed by current/future users after works are complete. We understand that a temporary closure of this route to allow the works for the dualling of the A421, but an alternative route will be required across the new dualled A421 once complete.
  2. Extinguish the northern section of Aspley Guise footpath no.2 between points C-G. Highways England raise no objection to the temporary or permanent closure of this section of footpath no.2 as the new revised route would appear to give better connection to other footpaths.
  3. Extinguish the northern section of Hulcote & Salford footpath no.10 and Aspley Guise footpath No.32 between points J-K-L. As point one above, Highways England **objects** to the permanent closure of this section as this renders our structure over the M1 redundant and no provision within the new dualled A421 for users to continue. Highways England (HE) have no plans to remove our structure over the M1. Therefore, wish to allow the footpath to be accessed by current/future users after works are complete. We understand that a temporary closure of this route is required to allow the works for the dualling of the A421,

*but an alternative route will be required across the new dualled A421 once complete.*

4. *Divert part of Aspley Guise Bridleway no.25 from the line with C-D-E-F to the line C-V-F. Highways England raise no objection to diverting the above bridleway 25 as the new route appears to create a better connection to the existing bridleway and other footpaths.*
5. *Divert part of the Aspley Guise footpath no.2 from the line H-I to the line X-I. Highways England raise no objection to the diverting the footpath as described above in point 5.*
6. *Create a new footpath (provisionally Aspley Guise footpath No.35) along the line T-B-U-V-W-X-Y. Highways England raise no objection to the provision of the new footpath, provided that provision be made to link with section A-B and J-K-L, which cross the structure over the M1.*

*...As mentioned above Highways England has no plans to remove the two M1 structures described within this consultation. As it is Central Bedfordshire who are stopping up and effectively making the M1 motorway bridges redundant, it would be for the Central Beds A421 project team to find a solution and put this to Highways England as an acceptable solution. To remove the two M1 bridges would cost an estimated £1million per structure and the disruption to the M1 function whilst any works were undertaken. As mentioned above HE have no plans to remove these structures. If HE had been advised of the intention to stop up footpaths/bridleways by Central Beds earlier and prior to any works both on the A421 dualling and the M1 junction 13-16 Smart Motorway, this could have been considered as part of both sets of works. To put the onus on Highways England is not acceptable.”*

31. In response – the Assistant Director for Highways and the A421 Project Manager have considered the objections made by Highways England and continue to support the proposal to stop up Footpaths Nos. 1 and 10. However, the A421 project designers have been asked to provide contingency designs for installing appropriate gaps in the highway safety barriers should the required extinguishment orders not be confirmed.
32. Anglian Water, Cadent Gas Ltd., UK Power Networks, Openreach and British Telecommunications Plc have been consulted as statutory undertakers. UK Power Networks, Cadent Gas, National Grid and Openreach have confirmed the orders will not affect access to its plant/network.

## **Reasons for decision**

33. The A421 is proposed to be dualled between junction 13 of the M1 motorway and the Eagle Farm roundabout in Milton Keynes. The anticipated increases in traffic flow, volume and speed will make crossing the dual carriageway more hazardous. Consequently, it is expedient for the at grade footpath crossings to be closed and paths re-routed via the new bridleway bridge and new Footpath No. 35.
34. The Highways Act 1980 gives a variety of options for the creation, diversion and stopping up of public rights of way and cycleways. The Council has opted for the concurrent use of sections 26, 118 and 119 of the 1980 Act as this achieves the

desired result without direct recourse to the Secretary of State or the courts. It also enables the new footpath/cycleway to be recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement as a footpath which will enable the public to route-plan more effectively.

## **Council Priorities**

35. The proposals within this report support the following Council priorities:

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire
- Delivering great residents' services
- Protecting the vulnerable, promoting wellbeing
- Creating stronger communities

by providing a new east-west footpath/cycleway and by increasing the safety of users by removing the at grade crossings of the proposed dual carriageway and the creation of an alternative crossing via a new bridleway bridge.

## **Corporate Implications**

### **Legal Implications**

36. The Highways Act 1980 empowers the Council to create, extinguish and divert public rights of way under sections 26, 118 and 119 respectively. These sections have been used as they provide the most efficient mechanism to alter the local public rights of way network and to record the new footpath/ cycleway on the Definitive Map and Statement, thus enabling the public to see more easily the publicly available network.
37. Anybody can object to the making of any public path order. If an objection is made and not withdrawn, the Council cannot confirm the orders but would need to forward them to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for confirmation. Depending on the nature and number of objections it is possible they may be dealt with either by the written representations process or by a public hearing.
38. It is possible that some or all the orders may not be confirmed, and so modifications may need to be made to the current project design to ensure that the legal lines of the affected public rights of way are not obstructed by structures or banks or cuttings.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

39. The costs of the Council's administration and advertising costs associated with the proposal are to be funded from the A421 dualling budget. This is likely to be approximately £3500 for administration and £2000-£2500 for advertising the making, confirmation and certification of the orders. If objections are received and not withdrawn additional administration costs associated with the Secretary of State process are likely to cost approximately £1000 plus the costs of any hearing venue (around £350) and any further legal advice (possibly up to £1500).

40. If the proposed extinguishment and diversion orders are not confirmed, the legal lines of Footpaths Nos. 1, 2, 10, 32, and Bridleway No. 25 will need to be physically accommodated within the layout of the new dual carriageway. This will need changes to the layout of highway safety barriers and possibly the provision of steps up/down any cutting or embankment. A significant cost would be the potential widening of the central reservation to accommodate pedestrian or equestrian refuges. These costs would need to be borne by the A421 dualling project's contingency budget rather than by the Highway Assets Team.

### **Equalities Implications**

41. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
42. This project would see the removal of four at grade crossings of the dualled A421 and the creation of a new bridge crossing. The current routes all cross the M1 motorway via three bridges and then descend to the level of the A421 via either a tarmac ramp, wooded earth slope or steps. The new bridge crossing would enable people with mobility issues to safely cross the dual carriageway without any risk to themselves. The ease of crossing the A421 outweighs the increase in distance that users may need to go to access the bridge compared to the current routes. The proposal also includes a new east-west surfaced route which will be relatively level or have gentle gradients which will link the various paths together. The detrimental impact on equality and diversity is therefore likely to be negligible, the proposal instead providing an improvement in public access.

### **Community Safety Implications**

43. The Council has a statutory duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to consider the community safety implications that may result from making the decision set out in the report. The proposal to remove four at grade crossings of the dual carriageway, replacing these with a single bridleway bridge will significantly improve the safety of members of the public trying to use these routes. Additionally, the provision of a new footpath/cycleway between Junction 13 and Cranfield Road will also reduce the number of cyclists on the A421 – thus significantly reducing the chances of vehicle-cycle conflict.

### **Sustainability**

44. The current public rights of way network to either side of the A421 is bisected by the M1 motorway and A421. Whilst this proposal will reduce the number of north-south travel options across the network, it will increase the opportunity for easy east-west travel between the two local major employment centres of Marston Gate, Brogborough and Magna Park, Milton Keynes and provide an off-road walking and cycling option to the A421.

## **Risk**

45. Both Central Bedfordshire Council and Milton Keynes Council are contributing £3 million each to a project costing around £28.5 million. The non-confirmation of orders stopping up and diverting the public rights of way that cross the A421 at grade would result in the current approved design needing to be modified to safely accommodate these rights of way. This is likely to lead to additional costs and delays.
46. If the footpaths across the M1 motorway are successfully extinguished, the Council will need to consider how to react to Highways England's suggestion that Central Bedfordshire Council pay for the decommissioning of the two bridges if these become redundant.

## **Conclusion and next Steps**

47. The dualling of the A421 is likely to increase traffic flow, volume and speed and will increase the risk to the public of using the four at grade pedestrian or equestrian crossings. The proposed diversion of the Bridleway No. 25 to a new bridleway bridge and the creation of a connecting footpath/cycleway along the south side of the dual carriageway will eliminate this risk and facilitate east-west sustainable travel.
48. Orders to effect the proposed changes will need to be made swiftly once the report is approved. During the order making process and the subsequent objection period, the affected routes and any connecting routes will be temporarily closed by a traffic regulation order. Once the orders are confirmed, temporary closures of the new routes will be required until the new routes have been laid out and works have diminished to a level that will enable the public to use them safely.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1** – Overview plan of the proposed rights of way changes

**Appendix 2** – Plan of Aspley Guise Footpath No. 1

**Appendix 3** – Plan of Aspley Guise Footpath No. 2 and Bridleway No. 25

**Appendix 4** – Plan of Hulcote & Salford Footpath No. 10 and Aspley Guise Footpath No. 32

**Appendix 5** – Local public rights of way network showing access corridors

**Appendix 6** – Legal and Policy Considerations

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