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3 March 2024

Service Director
Legal and Democratic Services
City Hall
PO Box 3399
Bristol
BS1 9NE

05 MAR 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Objection to the Extinguishment of Footpath BCC/589 – Reference 9931064

I am writing to formally object to the proposed extinguishment of this section of footpath BCC/589 which runs along the River Avon near Avonmeads Retail Park. This path is a treasured local amenity and an integral part of the River Avon trail, a 23-mile route that runs from Pill to Bath. The decision to extinguish this footpath would not only result in the loss of a scenic and peaceful route but would also significantly diminish the enjoyment and safety of walking in an area that is otherwise dominated by traffic and built-up urban surroundings.

The footpath provides an invaluable green corridor in an area that, for pedestrians, is typically hostile due to the high volume of traffic along the nearby roads - some of which carry 6 lanes of traffic - and limited pedestrian infrastructure. The path offers an uninterrupted view of the River Avon, which is a major asset to the community.

The removal of this path would deny locals and visitors the opportunity to enjoy the riverbank in a safe and tranquil environment, which is vital for mental and physical wellbeing. Given the need for accessible green spaces and recreational routes, particularly in urban areas, this footpath is an essential resource that should not be lost. Whilst visiting this area in the past few weeks, it is clear that this path is still regularly used by the community.

While I acknowledge that a landslip has affected the path, I would like to point out that it is indeed still passable with some effort, even in its current state. A relatively modest amount of maintenance, including the clearance of scrub and potentially the installation of steps, could restore this path to a safe and usable state for the foreseeable future. Though this would require some investment, the benefits of retaining this route far outweigh the costs. I would also highlight that similar solutions have been successfully implemented elsewhere, even in more challenging terrain. For example, many coastal paths in the Kent area have been maintained and improved despite ongoing coastal erosion, demonstrating that with the right intervention, such paths can remain accessible and safe for walkers.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages the protection of public rights of way and the promotion of active travel, which includes walking and cycling as viable and sustainable modes of transport. The NPPF stresses the importance of preserving and improving walking routes to foster healthier, more sustainable communities. The proposed extinguishment of this footpath contradicts the framework's objective to protect and enhance walking and cycling routes for the benefit of the public, especially in urban areas where green spaces are already limited.

The proposed alternative route, which would involve walking along busy roads frequently used by HGVs, represents a health and safety concern and forces pedestrians along a loud, polluted stretch of road that is outside the clean air zone. Not only would this alternative be far less enjoyable, but it also poses a danger to pedestrians, particularly in an environment where heavy traffic is prevalent. This is

contrary to the city's stated ambitions to encourage sustainable transport and reduce dependence on cars. The proposed route is inconsistent with these goals and would undoubtedly deter many people from walking in the area, forcing them to seek alternatives that are less safe.

The closure of this footpath also needs to be considered in the broader context of the council's ongoing infrastructure challenges. Recent closures, including the nearby Sparke Evans Bridge, have already forced pedestrians to take longer, more dangerous routes across six lanes of traffic to access this path at the point of proposed extinguishment. Losing this footpath would further compound this issue, limiting access to areas of natural beauty and public space while adding additional strain on already congested road networks. This is not just a local issue but part of a wider problem affecting Bristol's infrastructure. The continuing closures of essential routes and bridges highlight a decades-long failure to adequately maintain and protect vital rights of way, which are a key part of the city's infrastructure. Ensuring the continued access to this public right of way would help to undo this poor legacy, something I'd expect the Green-controlled council to be in favour of. It is well documented that pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, such as accessible green spaces and walking paths, supports not only public health but also the local economy by attracting visitors and encouraging local engagement with the area.

Given the council's commitment to sustainability, promoting walking, and supporting healthy lifestyles, I strongly urge you to reconsider the proposed extinguishment of this footpath. This aligns with the NPPF's goal of creating more sustainable, walkable communities that support both the environment and public health. Rather than removing this important right of way, I believe it would be far more beneficial to invest in repairs and maintenance to ensure that this path remains open for future generations. I am confident that, with the appropriate investment, this path could be made safe and accessible for years to come.

Thank you for considering my objection.

Kind regards

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