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Dear David
Poundbury Development Brief

I have had several conversations recently with various interested parties about the provisions and possible implementation of the pedestrian rights of way as detailed on pages 32-34 of the published Brief.

As you will know, this is a matter of contention, involving the Duchy of Cornwall (the landowner), the Farmer (tenant) and the Ramblers Association, Poundbury Resident's Association, and numerous other concerned and interested local residents.

As I now understand it, the Duchy will shortly be submitting a planning application outlining their suggestions in this respect concerning the alteration of footpath FP46, and suggesting an amended access under the A35 by means of the existing underpass to the south of the present footpath, and following the line of the perimeter footpath to access this. To my mind this seems a far safer option for any walker, rather than the present situation, which requires individuals to take their lives in their hands and to try to cross the very busy A35 amidst all its vehicular traffic.

The bone of contention that then arises from this sensible safe suggestion is that when you reach the other side of the A35, the present brief wrongly suggests a proposed dedicated right of way directly to the south, along a cart track service road, with again an access off this to the western direction and Maiden Castle. The Ramblers Association are keen to pursue this, but it is not an option that the Farmer is willing to permit and the Duchy of Cornwall does not then support this access. The Farmer's main reason is the risk this would cause to his sheep, from dogs (not on leads) that he already suffers from on a regular basis, on parts of his existing farm, and which, he states, is bound to increase if this were permitted. The intended outlined proposal from the Duchy then means upon leaving the underpass that you turn immediately west and along a new fenced path on the south side of the road, until you reach the former footpath or thereabouts where you rejoin the present right of way leading in the south-western direction.

On balance, I feel that the safety of all walkers is the paramount requirement, and the use of the underpass will I believe achieve this. I would suggest we try to achieve this factor, and not contemplate a further discussion, or a proposition that would then mean that the safety of the underpass arrangement is not achieved, simply because we cannot then agree the further access beyond the southern boundary of the underpass. Common sense means we can always continue to discuss this at a later date, but the residents and walkers have been waiting years to achieve the safe access across the A35 and this will allow everyone this very important necessary safe feature.

Further the Duchy are also talking about the access under the A37, on the other side of the Monkey's Jump roundabout, and they would like to bring this forward much in advance of the proposed date, thus again providing further safe access for everyone and the further ability to access our beautiful countryside. This latter is tied in with the situation on the first proposal that I have already mentioned, but could of course again be threatened by the none resolution of the other footpath and its access needs.

My suggestion would be to consider the value of necessary safe access on its own merits and not to get bogged down in the where with alls, about where it then goes or who does what, we cannot afford for someone to get killed or severely injured by further delay in the none resolution of this paramount issue.

I have spoken to Sally Lloyd - Jacob about this issue and kept her informed of my discussions and I am grateful to all parties for expressing their views, and talking to me about what is a complex and involved matter with no seemingly overall easy solution.

I am also grateful to the Rambler's Association, local Secretary, for his suggestion that consideration be given to widening Maiden Castle Road and establishing a joint cycle and pedestrian path along it to join up with the Sustran's route at Maiden Castle and thus providing a far safer for everyone along this access road. This would seem sensible given the use, and the nature of this road, and the speeds of vehicular traffic along it. I therefore hope that this can also be considered and that a joint dialogue about it could be commenced with all interested parties.

Kindest regards

cc Simon Conibear, Duchy of Cornwall
Sally Lloyd-Jacob, West Dorset District Council
Mary Foskett, Dorchester Strollers
Dr David Green, Footpath Secretary, Ramblers' Association
Maurice Allen, Poundbury Resident's Association
Gareth Morgan, Sustrans routes for people