

50 New Road  
Tadley  
Hants  
RG263AN  
1-4-2011

Mrs C.Griffiee  
The Planning Inspectorate  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Temple Quay  
Bristol BS1 6PN

Dear Mrs C.Griffiee                      **Common Land Casework Officer Application Ref no (com 128)**

*I am writing to maintain my objection to the proposed work on Padworth Common, and add my comments on the applicants statement and revised proposal.*

*The proposal to fence was only put around the common once, I did not see it advertised there on three separate occasions. I never saw the application re advertised when the -(error in advertising)-occurred, which is odd, because I am on the common a lot.*

*Importantly, there has been a general lack of consultation for ramblers, locals, and horse riders by West Berks Council, who need to improve their attitude and methodology to avoid the conflicts that arise, when views are not heard or listened to. People do not want an area of common land, which has never been fenced historically enclosed .We are being stopped from easily accessing our common.*

*In the response statement mention is made that everything regarding the application has been done appropriately and above board. This can hardly true when the OSS, one of the designated statuary consultees, have not been kept informed properly, and local people have not been offered any meetings to discuss issues regarding the common.*

*Regarding the funding available from the Stewardship grant , I feel the monies available for maintaining Padworth Common should be used to fund other methods of enhancing the area and wildlife other than enclosure and grazing.*

*The enclosure of land is an infringement of our rights. In the past locals would coppice and collect Birch for Brooms, etc and controlled fires would take place , as well as driven grazing ie, the precious stock would be driven home at the end of the day. I would also question whether experiences in managing large areas of land are relevant to Padworth, a unique and relatively small area.*

*Its' beauty lies in its diversity and I would question a blank demand to turn it all to heath. I feel it is wrong to destroy woodland as such. The area is now sadly lacking in mature trees. At the moment there are lovely swathes of birch at various stages of growth, a few mature and younger varieties of oak, a pleasant mixture of gorse, heather, boggy marsh, scrub and dry areas.....a lovely variety with plenty of different paths and walks. Perfect, as it is. I feel diversity is the key, not just heathland. A compromise for conservation and users is necessary.*

*There are several successful heathland areas nearby, at Silchester, Pamber Heath etc, so that the need to enclose Padworth is lessened. In fact, Decoy Heath just down the road from Padworth off ~~Impstone Road~~, OS grid SU614635 is very successful. It comprises 7 hectares, of which half is woodland. And yet, it still manages to encourage 80 species of bird breeding there: Tawny Owl, Linnet, Snipe, Skylark, Nightjar. All encouraged without removing all the woodland. I have spoken to a representative of BBO Wildlife Trust, and he said, that it is not their policy to graze cattle for long periods of time on commons. As they can cause more disturbance to some sensitive creatures, than the good it might do by chewing young birch....My point is that it has to be a balance on Padworth. To create purely heath, as proposed with the cattle, makes the land very flat and boring. As an artist who uses Padworth for all my inspiration, as does my daughter, (a photographer) it would be a very sad loss.*

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*Interestingly, in another area where enclosure has been proposed, grazing has only been suggested for twice a year, for 4 to 6 weeks only. (See Kingswood Common, Berks Bucks Oxford Wildlife Trust) I feel it is about time one local area is left as it was, and not enclosed. I have personnel experience of Tadley Common. Here, not only has the fencing not faded, remaining an eyesore, but that the main plant that thrives is gorse which the cattle understandably avoid.*

*Padworth is a particularly horse dense riding area with as many as 6 horse yards immediately accessing Padworth freely. Therefore, from a safety point of view barbed wire should never be used, rustic post and rail would be much more pleasing to the eye; horses can shy into barbed wire. Sadly, there have been instances of deer trying to jump barbed wire; as the deer on Padworth will now have to do. They misjudge the height properly get caught up; and die a slow death impaled on a fence. The statement also touches on the issue of old barbed wire fencing on the North side and I have always wondered why this hazard has not been removed :especially if it is known about. The other issue is the deer having to jump into the main road , recover, then jump another fence to get into the other area of Padworth Common, this puts them more at risk from traffic .....*

*The statement mentions the enclosure will stay in place for 10 years this seems excessive; also, what guarantee do we have that such fencing would be removed after 10 years? I suspect once up, it would never come down. We need a statement from the council of what their long term plan is and a written legal promise that cannot be forgotten or lost.*

*Regarding the purpose of the Common, sadly the majority of the walkers etc that I talk to on the common do not know that the common has the threat of enclosure over it, and certainly do not want livestock. The introduction of cattle is a misguided idea, as in the past during bouts of bad weather ie deep snow, many locals reported the distress of the cattle enclosed on Tadley common, which were not given adequate extra fodder*

*or had access to water in freezing conditions. The farmer was struggling on his own farm and could not reach them. It is the BBO Wildlife Trust's policy not to over winter cattle on local commons as they have been shown not to do well.*

*I am particularly concerned that the introduction of cattle will muddy further the wet areas ie ponds, marsh, stream as it is a small area. At the moment my daughter can access the common happily in her wheelchair. She can sit and draw and paint on her own without being disturbed by curious cattle. There would now be a very high chance of her coming across cattle. Additionally, if the area is fenced, she will have to try and gain entry via the proposed gates and because of her disability this may prove difficult for her. In addition the gates would have to be RDA Riding for the Disabled friendly as she is a keen rider.*

*The Royal Watercolour Society like my watercolours of Padworth Common, and I always mention the beauty of the area and would not like to see the present landscape change. The fencing is a debatable method of conservation and I would hate to see too many trees, our lifeblood, chewed or destroyed by cattle. Padworth is not as quoted in the reply 'a shadow of its former self': it has been a very attractive and well used area for years. The sense of history oozes out of the landscape, fencing would ruin this.*

*The council has also not made a clear statement that they will not be considering grazing horses. We need in writing that they will not be doing this, as it would be a highly contentious issue. Because of the large amount of ridden horses in such a small area coming across a loose herd. Ridden horses are spooked by a loose wild herd. In particular young colts and or stallions, would make it impossible for all the owners of (in season) mares to ride across the common safely.*

*Although in the response statement the council says it does not intend to restrict access, this does not relate to the experiences of people on the ground. We have been for example, allocated small bridle routes, which*

*have been moved at will over the years. Then told where we can and cannot go; in a section 15 area! We should not be having our legal access denied.*

*Regarding the bridle way gates and revised map of fencing. It seems a contradiction that we are again being cordoned off to areas of the common.... to the so called (designated bridleways), as once again this is disadvantaging us. So it is not acceptable, as it is simply not an improvement for horse riders. It has a danger element as well, because with the idea of the bridle route being outside the enclosed area, we do not have the choice to get off the road quickly, away from very heavy traffic. In addition, the proposed gates need very careful consideration. As one cannot assume that all horses are good at using gates. Horses only negotiate large farm field gates on a regular basis, and this is with a handler on foot which is totally different. Such gates are wide and safe. Each new gate would need to have a good mounting block either side of it. So that people who have to dismount to negotiate gates are not excluded and can get back on again. Small self closing gates are not good for horses as seen on Snelsmore Common. There are incidents of accidents with such gates. Horses are vulnerable to hip damage through knocks, and bolting off once such gates close very loudly. The proposed gates would have to be very well set back to avoid any roads and accommodate groups of riders. Allowing space to turn and get through safely. There are specified distances required. Field gates would be the first choice as they are user friendly. Then Worcester Gates which are good. A lot of Padworths' dog walkers are elderly, as are some of the horse riders so gateways would have to be easy to use for hands like mine prone to arthritis.*

*On Pamber Forest the gates do not receive regular maintenance, and so the gates are a blockage.*

*The proposed gate at point 5 on the map provided from the common leading to the bridleway to Raghill Farm would be very difficult to negotiate. It is on such a steep slope. Even with levelling and spacing you cant get rid of a hill without changing the landscape. We also need*

*reassurance that monies will always be available for any extra gating should supplied gates prove insufficient upon actually being used; or need moving.*

*Responding to comments in the reply statement on horse riding abilities. Please note; a sensible rider would avoid heavy oncoming traffic by diverting to a driveway or other safe place, if they needed to, and would definitely not endanger themselves or the horse by going anywhere near a pheasant shoot . In fact, the local shoot kindly send us updates on when and where these are to happen, so that we can safely avoid them. So these events are not comparable to dangerous gate manoeuvres. It is a first lesson in basic horsemanship, that everyone learns; to be very careful leading an equine through a gate, let alone riding it, as they can get hurt. Also, why have the sightlines for people crossing the road not been improved before now? The view has always been blind there and I have seen traffic visably startled by ramblers and horses trying to cross the road by stepping and looking out.*

*The Common may have been missmanaged in the past, but local users should not have to suffer because of this by the imposition of fencing.*

*I have enclosed a map with the extra gateways that are needed, as well as the suggested ones, marked 1 to 12. In particular access point no 9 is very important as it gives us a route to Burnt Common another section 15 area ,which will be needed when the common is opened up again re established and re used .*

*Yours faithfully  
A. Cooper mrs*