

Appendix 3. Criteria for considering requests for Public Rights of Way Closure for Crime Prevention.

A Special Extinguishment Order may only be made for closure of a path if it is within an area designated by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as a high crime area under Section 118B (10(a) of Highways Act 1980.

The Council may make an application to the Secretary of State for, an area to be designated as a high crime area if:

- a) there are rights of way in the area that are demonstrable causes of a persistent crime problem; and
- b) the realistic alternative options to tackle the causes of problems have been examined, prior to the decision to make a submission to the Secretary of State.

Once an area has been designated, any path that is selected for closure must have a low level of legitimate use, a reasonable convenient alternative, high levels of persistent serious crime (i.e. theft, burglary, etc.) directly adjacent to the path and it must also be shown that other methods of crime reduction have been considered.

Officers in the Rights of Way Section have worked with officers in the Anti-Social behaviour team to consider requests for path closures using variables that link in with the statutory requirements for the processing of a special extinguishment order. A scoring system has been developed to assess requests using the following criteria.

- 1. Is there a cluster of crime near the path?** For sites where crime statistics are available, the level of reported crimes, including burglaries (both of domestic dwellings and other buildings), vehicle crime (including theft of and theft from a vehicle), criminal damage, interference with a vehicle, tampering with a vehicle and theft in a dwelling, have been taken into consideration.

A definite cluster of crimes near the path indicates a possible higher association of crimes with the path and stronger reason for closing the path.

- 2. What is the level of crime in the area?**

Where crime statistics are available, the level of key crimes per 1000 population is considered against the district average. A rate greater than double the district average gives greatest support for path closure. The weighting given to this variable is lower than 1 (above) as it is the levels of crime at properties adjacent to the path that is significant. However these figures give an indication of how much crime is disrupting the community near the path.

- 3. Where is the nearest alternative route on a Right of Way? –**
The source of this data is the Rights of Way Section's maps and records of rights of way. If a detour of more than 350 metres would be necessitated by the path closure, it is considered that the closure could significantly inconvenience path users.

A right of way is a route used by pedestrian, cyclists or horse riders that is separate from a road used by traffic. There are exceptions to this where a right of way is contiguous with a private access road.

- 4. Where is the nearest alternative route by roadside footway?**
Such routes are generally less desirable alternatives for path users for reasons of pedestrian safety. However, if there is a roadside footway (pavement) nearby that would involve a detour of less than 100 metres, this may not be a significant detour.

- 5. What is the level of legitimate use?**
This is measured by officer impression on a site visit. If the path had little apparent use, the chances of a successful closure are higher than if there is frequent apparent use the path. This is a rapid assessment of use. If the path scores highly on other factors a more detailed study of use is recommended.

- 6. Does the path have any strategic value?**
This is based on knowledge and experience of the relevant Area Rights of Way Officer, the Strategic Routes Officer and the Safe Routes to School Officers for their knowledge of the path. The route is also assessed on a site visit looking for links to shops, schools, train and bus stops.

- 7. Are any schemes planned for the path?**
This is assessed as 6.

- 8. Is the path physically closable?**
This is a practical consideration as some paths cross open ground which would make them very difficult / expensive to physically close