

Brian Hayden-Smith

I am speaking tonight as one of the many residents who have enjoyed using Granta Park over the past 20 years, in my case as a dog walker and a family walking area, including trips with the grandchildren to feed to fish. I'm retired now, but in my capacity as a chief officer with the County Council, I was personally involved with Roger Quince, then head of Granta Park, when the new permissive path was established to Pampisford Rd, and also had responsibility for the rights of way network.

Along with other residents, I am unhappy and disappointed that this action has been taken, but we recognise that security concerns underpin the decision and a return to open unrestricted access will not happen. However, villagers wish to better understand these security concerns, and particularly who advised TWI. This is especially since the new gates will only keep out genuine pleasure walkers but would not keep out determined intruders, as the whole site has porous boundaries.

We would like to know why access to villagers was not sorted out before the gates were installed, as this was something requested by the parish council chairmen when they were notified in May that TWI would be restricting public access to the site. We are pleased to hear that TWI maintain they are still looking to find a way to achieve this. We would like confirmation of this and we see no reason why this cannot be resolved within the next three months.

We also want to understand why the restrictions apply to the whole of Granta Park, whereas a tighter security cordon around the TWI buildings seems a more obvious solution. Our knowledge of other Science Parks in the area is that tight security has been restricted to sensitive areas and the buildings.

We want to know what consideration was given to safety issues when this decision was made. Granta Park provided an important off-road and safe route for school children, runners (both from Granta Park and the villages) and walkers. This decision forces people to use roads with limited or no footways and breaches a vital link to the rights of way on the land settlement. Losing the path from Pampisford Rd is a significant safety issue for the villages, as it puts people, many of them schoolchildren, in direct danger from an increasingly busy road, especially at commuter times.

We want clarity about the metal fence that has blocked the access to Granta Park from Bourne Bridge Rd, via the old coach road, an historic route from Abington Hall to its North Lodge, and so probably used by most visitors to the Hall. This has denied access not only to residents but more particularly to local employees and cyclists, who used this as a safe route. They have been forced to add to the high volume of traffic into Granta Park from Newmarket Rd, where there is no footway beyond the river bridge. A fence is very different to the gates with a key pad for authorised users at the High St and Pampisford Rd. It appears this was a request from the owners of Bancroft Park Farm which includes Sluice Wood, through which the coach road passes. Why was this action taken, when in our understanding, there is an easement embedded in past conveyances, giving a right of access to authorised users to Abington Hall, and by extension Granta Park? In addition, it was also part of the safe cycle route from Granta Park to the cycleway across to Babraham.

We are also concerned about future access for existing and authorised users. The village cricket club uses the cricket pitch, so how will this work for players and spectators? What arrangements will

apply to the Amenities Building, access to which was agreed as part of the planning process? And what about the arrangements for the future 10K running event?

We want TWI and Granta Park to understand how upset villagers are. We are pleased that you are attending this meeting tonight, and hope it gives you some idea of the strength of feeling and how much the area has become a much-loved and important part of the village. We look forward to hearing your responses to our questions. We are very clear that some sort of managed access must be put in place for villagers and until that happens we will not go away. We really hope a mutually acceptable way forward is found.

I want to finish with a personal comment. I knew Bevan Braithwaite quite well because of my work. When I moved into the village, almost twenty years ago, I spoke him about the permissive paths and whether TWI encouraged their use. It is rather ironic that he answered absolutely in the affirmative, adding that he believed that having villagers on the site added eyes and ears for security. I know the world has moved on, and security concerns have increased, but I have no doubt that faced with the need to increase security, he would have sat down with village representatives and found an agreed way forward. I hope that is the spirit in which we can now move forward.