

Walking group rage at closure of Footpath 14

The chairman of Sandbach Footpath Group is "furious" that a stopping-up order has been issued on one of the town's "most idyllic" walks.

The order on footpath number 14 off Hawthorne Drive, Sandbach Heath, which gives developers Persimmon Homes permission to terminate it, was issued by Cheshire East Council last Tuesday.

Trevor Boxer, chairman of the group, said that he and the members were "furious that Cheshire East had issued a stopping-up order on Sandbach Footpath 14", also known as a footpath extinguishing order.

He said: "The objections from Cheshire East Council's

own public rights of way unit have been ignored on two previous occasions, as well as objections from numerous members of the public, footpath groups and the Open Spaces Society."

Mr Boxer said he was "baffled by the lack of planning and foresight" and added: "With a few minutes' design work, the development site could have been laid out slightly differently to accommodate the footpath to everyone's satisfaction."

"As it is, the builders, Persimmon Homes, seem to have pre-empted the order being finalised by apparently making the foundations of some houses over the line of the footpath."

"All is not lost because Cheshire East has given until 23rd May to object to the extinguishment and, needless to say, Sandbach Footpath Group will soon be objecting in the strongest possible terms."

Mr Boxer described to the

Chronicle how on Tuesday, 23rd April — the day the stopping-up order was issued — he led the footpath group via the footpath, the disputed building site and on to the St John's area into a network of footpaths in green open country before returning after a circular walk of about four miles to Hawthorne Drive.

Mr Boxer said: "This walk is part of the Sandbach Walking Festival, Saturday, 29th June to Sunday, 7th July, which will go ahead, along with many other walks, irrespective of any decision on the order by Cheshire East Council."

For those interested in walking and preserving the footpaths, Mr Boxer said: "Look at our website, sandbachfootpaths.org or try the Facebook page by searching for Sandbach Footpaths Group. We do a walk about once a week and groups of 10 or, on occasion, as many as 50 enjoy a friendly walk and talk through the local countryside."

Full programme leaflets for the festival are available from various Sandbach shops and in the library.

Mr Boxer added that the address for sending objections is: Interim Director of Governance and Compliance Services, Public Rights of Way Unit, 2nd Floor Old Building, Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ.



Taking a closer look at the foundations from the temporarily diverted footpath.



Sandbach Footpath Group fuming by the foundations on the footpath.