

Atcham Parish Council

Berrington Parish Council

Wednesday 13 March 2024

Ref: Atcham to Cross Houses path

**Re: Request for Atcham and Cross Houses community-linking permissive path**

Dear Atcham Parish Council / Berrington Parish Council,

I am writing to you to suggest that a project is initiated for the establishment of a Permissive Path between the villages of Atcham and Cross Houses.

**Background**

The communities of Atcham and Cross Houses are approximately 1.5 km from each other. As you know, there is no provision for residents to safely walk between the two communities.

The two villages are connected by the lane which runs in a north-south direction, and which has been described by the local Highways Department as being an 'arterial' route, carrying over 1,000 vehicles per day. The lane is classified as a 'Class 1 Local Distributor' route. For residents in the village of Cross Houses in particular, this lane represents an important route connecting the village to the M54 and villages such as Uffington and Upton Magna.

Atcham is one of the poorest-served parishes in terms of local access to walking routes. Indeed, out of 201 parishes in Shropshire, Atcham is ranked the ninth-worst for Public Rights of Way, putting it in the bottom 5% of parishes – the overview of Shropshire can be seen in Figure A1 in Appendix A. This clearly indicates a general trend of poor outdoor access provision in the parishes immediately to the east of Shrewsbury (i.e. Atcham and Berrington).

Within 1 km of Atcham, there are no public footpaths at all.

**Public desire and support**

In the Community Led Plan produced for the parish of Berrington in 2019, of 44 questions asked about a broad range of topics, the question which elicited the largest number of positive responses was: "**would you support or use the following permissive pathways: Footpath from Cross Houses to Atcham?**" This question received 147 'yes' responses (83%), making it the question with the most support received in the entire survey.

It is understood that there has not been a Community Led Plan or survey produced for the parish of Atcham.

**The Proposal**

The suggested Permissive Path would sit entirely within Atcham Parish Council. The indicative suggested route is shown on Figure 1.

The suggested path is described as follows, starting in the north:

- The path would connect to the Old Atcham Bridge, following the eastern boundary of the field owned by Longner Estate, along the edge of the proposed overflow car

park. In order to discourage access to the river, it is suggested to fence off the river-side of the path entirely.

- Between the Longner-owned field and the field owned by the Diocese of Lichfield is an inlet to the River Severn. Here, a footbridge would be required. This would be amongst the most significant infrastructure assets required. An example of the type of footbridge which could be installed is shown in Photograph B1 – this was installed in late 2023 within Atcham Parish Council, just 1.1 km to the north-west of the village.
- Through the field owned by the Diocese of Lichfield it is suggested to continue to fence off access to the river.
- Entering into the National Trust-owned land, the narrow section between the lane and the River Severn is known as ‘Poole’s Yard’. Here, the path would need to run close the hedge with the lane, and care would need to be taken for the fence to have good foundations. There is a steep river embankment in this location. It is possible that a short section of boardwalk may be required in order to keep the path level.
- South of Poole’s Yard, it is suggested to keep the path close to the hedgeline, with a fence on the eastern flank and an access gate onto Brompton Lane.
- Due to the very low vehicular use of Brompton Lane, it is not suggested to continue the path beyond this point. Pedestrians continuing to Cross Houses would be able to either walk east to Brompton, and then south into Lower Cross, along the lanes, or continue south across the National Trust-owned land behind the woodland which backs onto ‘The Chestnuts’ development in Cross Houses.

### **Case Study**

Projects such as this have been successfully taken forward within Shropshire in recent years. In June 2022, a 1.2 km Permissive Path, known as the ‘Platinum Jubilee Pathway’ was opened between the villages of Ightfield and Calverhall.

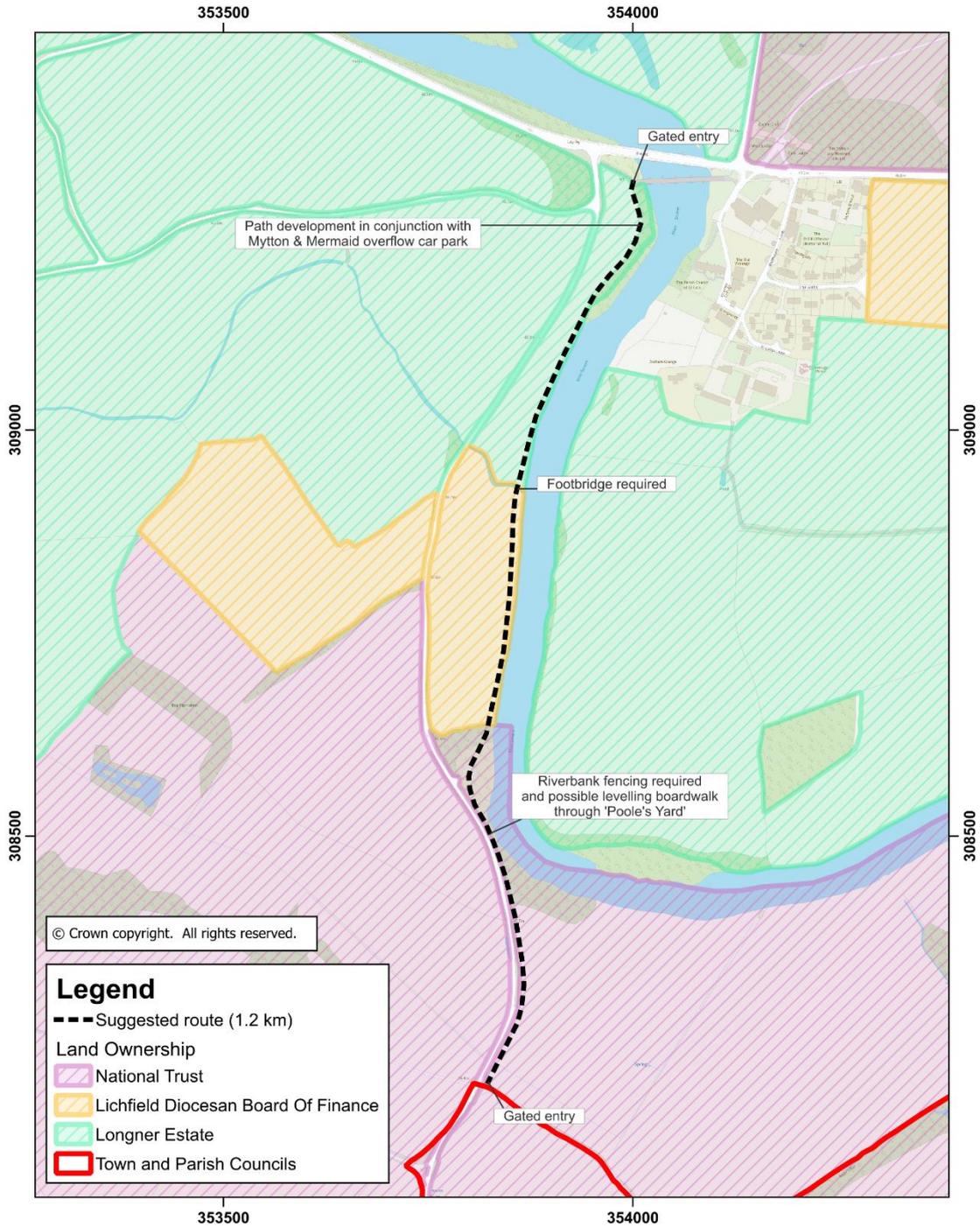
The Platinum Jubilee Pathway is a high-quality, enclosed Permissive Path forming a crucial route between the two communities. A selection of photos are included in Appendix B in Photograph B2 to Photograph B7.

The Ightfield to Calverhall Path benefitted from landowner support, with the Shavington and Cloverley Estate agreeing a ‘peppercorn rent’ for 99 years.

The project was financed by the Parish Council, a National Lottery grant, community fundraising and a Public Works Loan.

The permissive footpath officially opened in June 2022.

Figure 1 Suggested Permissive Path route (indicative) from Atcham to Cross Houses



## Key Stakeholders

The land required for the suggested path is owned by three landowners:

- The National Trust;
- The Lichfield Diocesan Board of Finance; and
- The Longner Estate.

The following parish councils would be involved:

- Atcham Parish Council (100% of the proposed route contained within);
- Berrington Parish Council (although none of the path is within the boundary, it is one of the most requested initiatives within the parish).

It is understood that negotiations are underway for part of the land to be leased to:

- Brunning & Price (The Mytton & Mermaid Hotel).

Tenant farmers would also be interested stakeholders.

Early discussions with the first two landowners indicate that they are supportive to the idea of the Permissive Path.

It is understood that the Longner Estate is in discussions with Brunning & Price regarding the provision of an overflow car park for the Mytton and Mermaid.

It is requested that a steering group, or similar, is formed and that the proposed path could be put forward to the Longner Estate and Brunning & Price for consideration as part of the overflow car park proposals.

The Longner Estate owns **75%** of all land within the parish of Atcham (see Appendix C), and all of the land surrounding the village which could reasonably be used to provide accessible walking provision (i.e. that which is outside of the Attingham Estate). Therefore, the Longner Estate, which according to the Title Register added the field in question to its portfolio relatively recently in 2010, is one of the most significant stakeholders with regard to this requested path. The National Trust, which supports this initiative, owns much of the rest of the land within the parish.

It is considered that the request for a permissive path is reasonable in the context of the Longner Estate. The estate land holding has very few existing footpaths (see Appendix C), with the only rights of way being concentrated around the hamlet of Preston, an isolated rural path at Chilton Grove and a short section of the Severn Way. The land requested for the permissive path which is owned by Longner is distant from the main estate, is the estate's smallest field parcel, and also periodically floods, reducing its agricultural value.

Brunning & Price would also be a key stakeholder. It is hoped that the company would be supportive of this proposed community asset.

## Challenges

The entire route of the suggested path is susceptible to flooding. This would require periodic closure of the path for safety reasons, with inspections being carried out following flooding events to ensure the safety of the path.

For the benefit of the landowners, this periodic closing of the path will act to prevent it being continuously used for a long period of time, protecting it from any future claims as a 'Public Right of Way', providing some reassurance to landowners.

The path would need to be adequately financed, which could be via a number of mechanisms: CIL, Grants, National Lottery Funding and local fundraising are some of the available options. It is suggested that as the path will benefit communities within two parishes, that it would be appropriate for costs to be shared between the parishes.

This letter outlines that the requested path project is **achievable, financially feasible**, has **precedent** within Shropshire and would **benefit two communities** within parishes which are amongst the poorest-served in all of Shropshire for access to footpaths or rights of way.

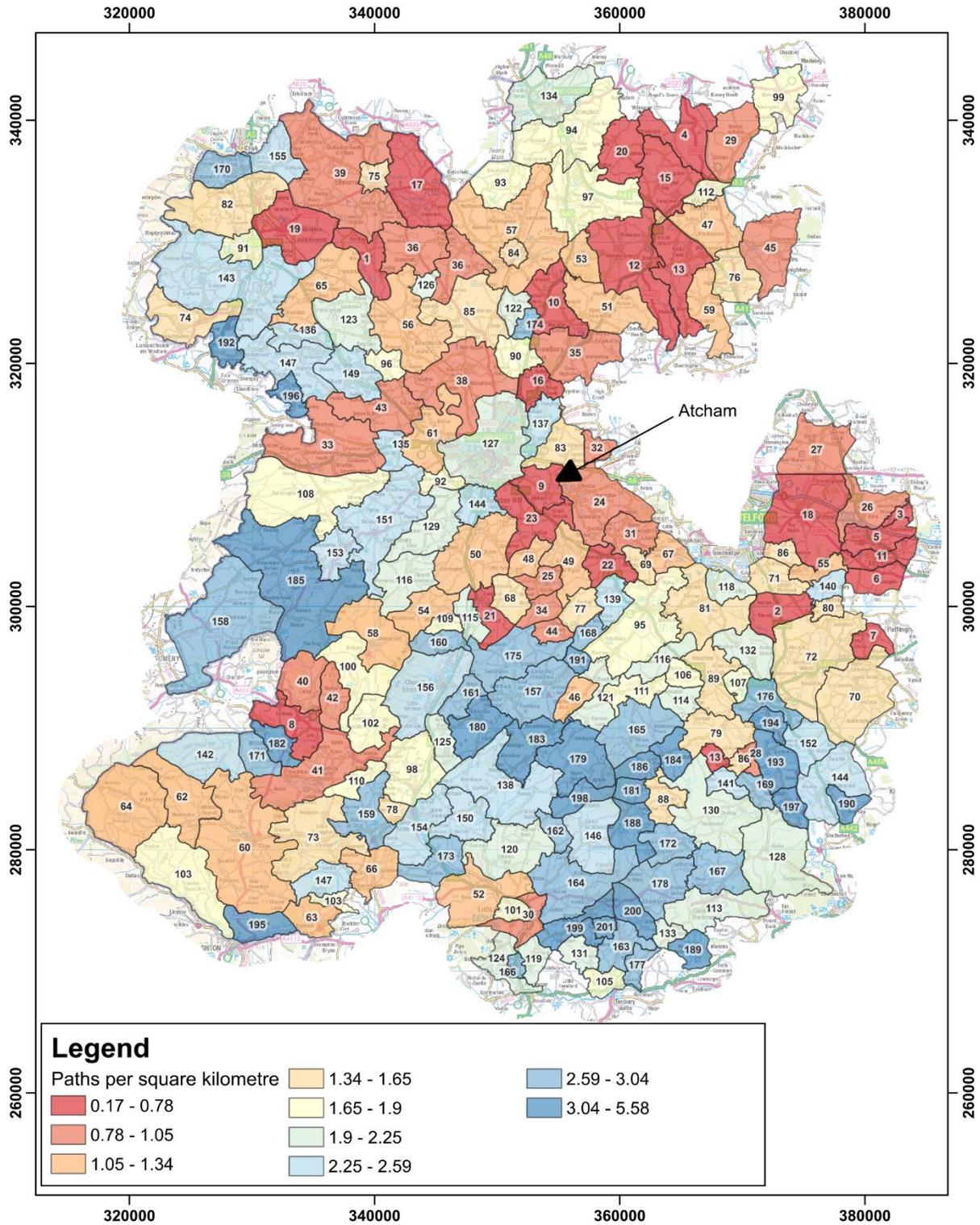
Yours faithfully,

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Andrew Abbott

Appendix A – Additional Figures

Figure A1 – Public Footpaths per square kilometre by Parish in Shropshire (with ranking)



## Appendix B – Photographs

### Photograph B1 – Footbridge installed by River Severn within Atcham Parish Council in 2023



### Photograph B2 Overview of the Ightfield to Calverhall permissive path alongside the lane



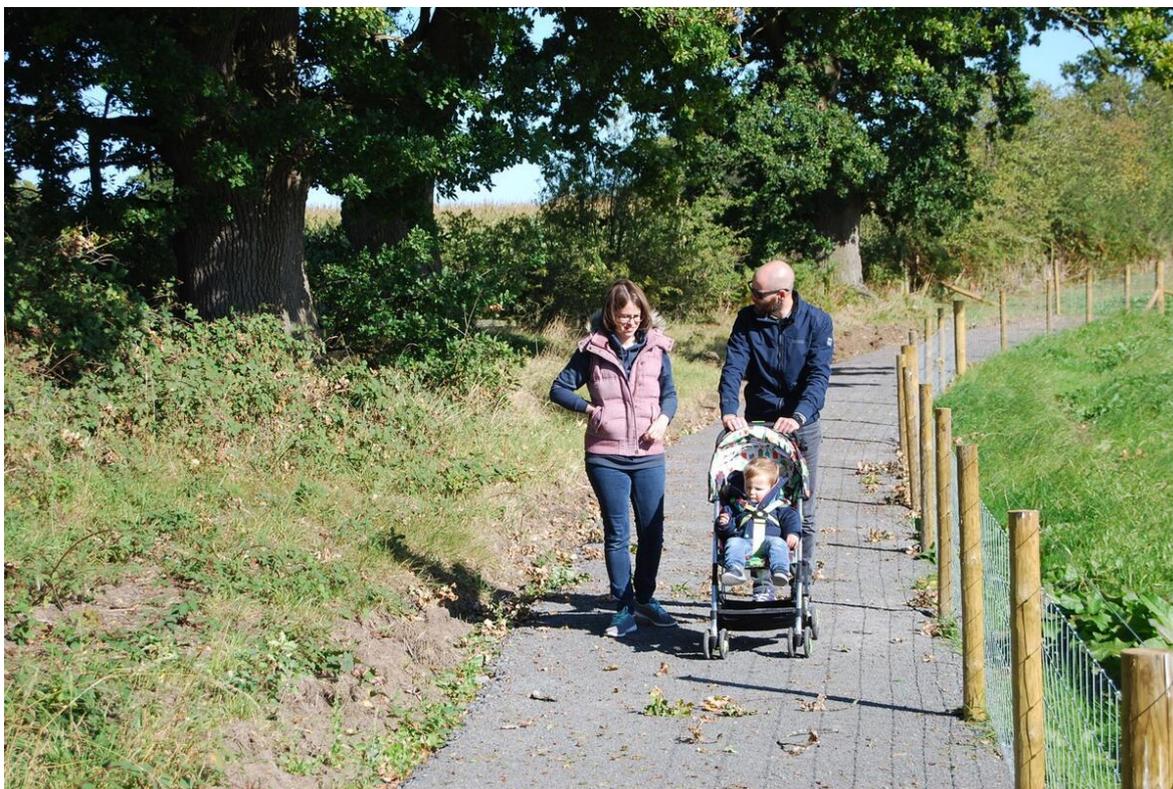
**Photograph B3 Example path: Ightfield to Calverhall**



**Photograph B4 Example path: Gates and fence along the Ightfield to Calverhall path**



**Photograph B5 Example path: Ightfield to Calverhall path accessible to all people**



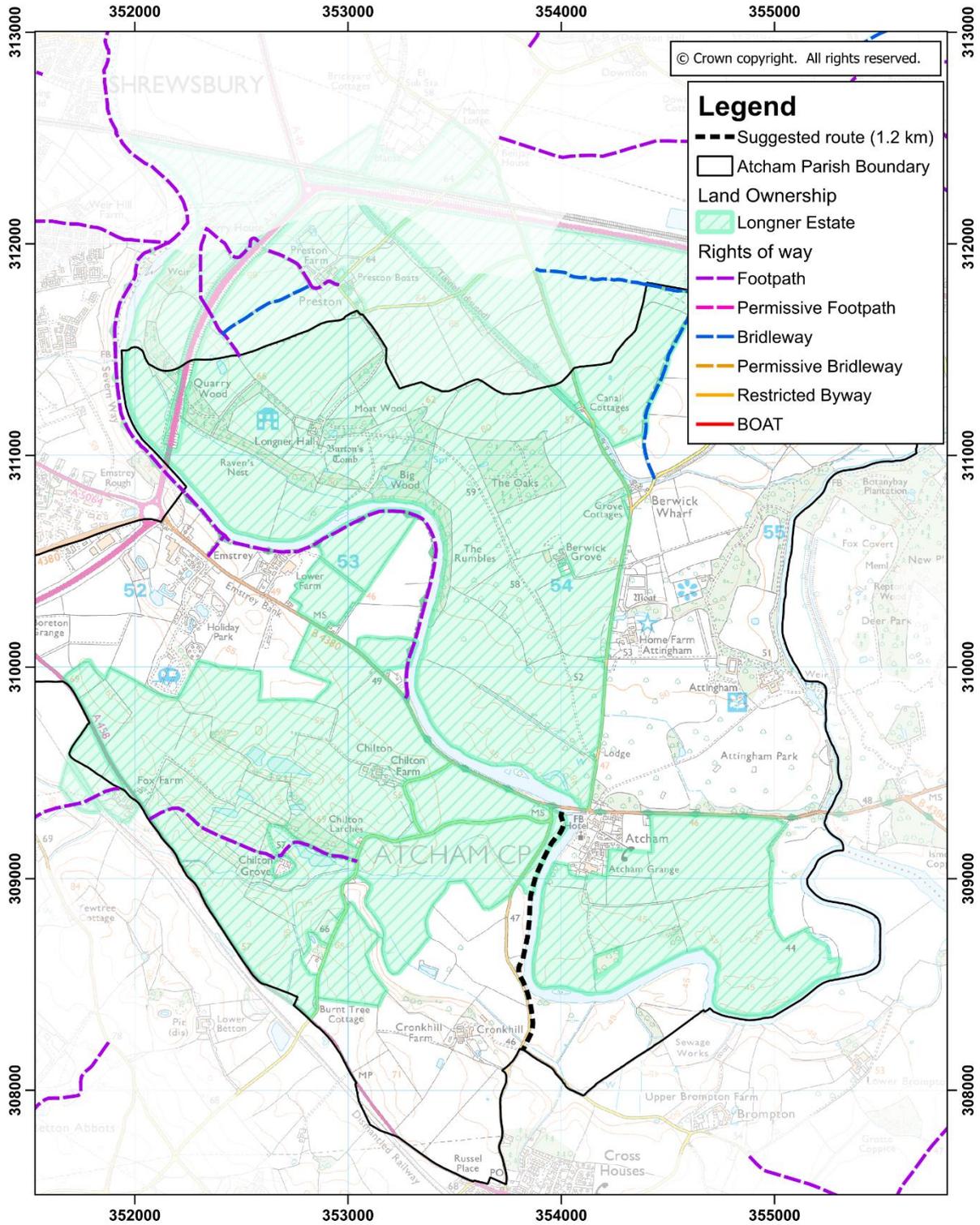
**Photograph B6 Example path: Secure fencing on the Ightfield to Calverhall path**



**Photograph B7 Secure field access gates along the Ightfield to Calverhall path**



### Appendix C – Longner Estate Land Ownership



## Appendix D – Mytton & Mermaid website

### Excerpt from Mytton & Mermaid website in May 2023

Love pubs? Like walking?

Read on...

With the help of the AllTrails App, we are planning to create a circular walk from the pub and through the surrounding area, to help you work up that thirst/appetite. You will be able to view the walk details via a number of ways *(varying levels of tech savviness required -Ed)*

Watch this space!

### Excerpt from Mytton & Mermaid website in March 2024

Walks near us...



We love the idea of a circular walk to work up an appetite! But although we are in a picturesque part of Shrewsbury, there are not any obvious countryside rambles from the pub that do not involve walking along the busy B4380.

However, we wanted to share some beautiful walks within easy reach of us...

[Click here for more details](#)