

Hawkspur Green Lane - Little Sampford Road

Since January 2016, the Parish Council have been in dialogue with Uttlesford District Council Planning Department requesting them to correctly name the lane from Little Bardfield, through Hawkspur Green, to Little Sampford as Hawkspur Green Lane.

UDC refuse to do so as it would admit their own previous catalogue of errors.

The lane runs from Little Bardfield in the south to Little Sampford in the north. Whilst the lane is un-signed, it has had a variety of identities over the years. These range from an original "Kings Highway", through "Sampford Road", "Walden Lane", "Hawkspur Green Road" and "Little Sampford Road".

However, everyone locally had thought that the lane, which is un-signed, was also unnamed. Some research revealed that Hawkspur Green Road was the name referenced in 1985 when Moor Hall was Listed Grade 2 and it was used by ECC and UDC in the Uttlesford Protected Lanes Assessment 2012 for the whole length of the lane with the code identifier of UTTLANE72.

In January 2016, the Parish Council approached Uttlesford District Council, under a provision within their Street Naming Policy for the lane to be officially named and signed as Hawkspur Green Lane. The term "lane" being correct for a carriageway which is too narrow to be classified as a "road". A "road" permits uninterrupted two-way traffic which this lane does not.

UDC initially said that their records for the part of the lane in Little Bardfield Parish indicated that it was unnamed whilst the part in Little Sampford Parish was named Hawkspur Green Road. UDC said that a ballot for any name had to be held and required 100% of the residents voting in favour. This unanimous voting majority requirement was queried. UDC's Legal Department then found that a 1925 Act did not require a ballot making UDC's Street Naming Policy illegal. Further discussions with UDC uncovered so many flaws in their Street Naming Policy that it had to be withdrawn and re-written. (When re-writing and re-issuing their Street Naming Policy, UDC removed the previous option for a Parish Council to request a Street Name change.)

By law, the local authority must ensure that all carriageways are named. In frustration, on 29 June 2017 the Parish Council threatened to appeal to a higher level of Government in the form of the MP, the Ombudsman, individually to all of the Uttlesford District Councillors and the local media citing "abuse of process" by the UDC Planning department for refusing the Parish Council their right to implement a name for an unnamed lane. (It was subsequently found that a District Council is not accountable to an Ombudsman for their actions.)

On 17 July 2017 UDC suddenly found that on 23 June 1997 (for no disclosed reason and without consultation) they had registered a name for that part of the single-track lane within Little Bardfield Parish as Little Sampford Road in the National Street Gazetteer and on 27

August 1999 had registered Hawkspur Green Road for that part of the lane north of Gambers Hall in Little Sampford Parish. UDC's continued use of the term "Road" is a contradiction of their own published policy definition for a lane, especially this one which is only 2.6 metres wide in places.

The significance of the difference between "road" and "lane", especially as far as Essex County Council Highways Department is concerned, is whether the carriageway is suitable for two-way routine or diversionary traffic or not. ECC Highways refer to the lane by its registered name Little Sampford Road. The Parish Council are in discussion with ECC to avoid the lane being signed as an alternative diversionary route.

In the latest 2019 Planning Application from UDC, the UDC Planning Department addressed the lane as both Little Sampford Road and Hawkspur Green Road - so internally UDC are still confused what the name of the lane is!

At 2.6 metres wide in places, the lane is obviously unsuitable for diversionary traffic from the Bardfield Road yet UDC refuse to accept this.

At April 2019 the lane remains unsigned and, to most people, un-named.