Briefing note for residents

Route 5 and the Lady Grove Underpass

November 2026 · Cllr Laurie Read, Long Wittenham Parish Council

This note is provided for information. It summarises correspondence I have had with Oxfordshire County Council and does not represent a formal decision of the Parish Council.

In brief

- The cycle and footpath from Long Wittenham into Didcot (National Cycle Route 5), including the underpass beneath the A4130 at Lady Grove Bridge, is in poor condition.
- When the large North East Didcot (Ladygrove East) development was approved in 2017, the developer legally agreed to fund improvements to this route. **Some of these works are now well overdue.**
- The County Council has confirmed that **none of the works have been done**. It is meeting the developer, Croudace Homes, on **11 November 2026** to discuss how to get them delivered.

Background

Route 5 is the main walking and cycling link between Long Wittenham and Didcot. Many residents use it to reach Didcot, the station, schools and shops. The section between the B4016 and the A4130, including the underpass, has a worn surface, poor drainage and overgrown vegetation, and parts of it feel unsafe.

In September 2026 I made a formal complaint to Oxfordshire County Council about its condition. The Council upheld the complaint and agreed to inspect the route. It also said the path is not currently part of its routine inspection programme.

While looking into this, I found that the 2017 planning permission for North East Didcot (reference P15/S2902/O) came with a legal agreement, known as a **section 106 agreement**. Under it, the developer must deliver two sets of improvements, each due once a set number of new homes are occupied:

1. **Lady Grove Bridge underpass works:** new steps with a channel for wheeling bikes, lighting, signage and resurfacing in the underpass, and cutting back vegetation. These were **due once 700 to 800 homes were occupied**.
2. **Route 5 upgrade:** widening the path to 3 metres with a sealed (tarmac-type) surface. This is **due once 1,200 homes are occupied**.

In October I asked the County Council, under the Environmental Information Regulations, what progress had been made. Its reply arrived on 5 November 2026.

The current situation

Homes built: 1,052 homes on the development were occupied by 30 June 2026. The 700-home point was reached in January 2025 and the 800-home point in May 2025.

Underpass works: overdue

- None of the works to the steps, lighting, signage, surfacing or vegetation have been carried out.
- The developer has not yet applied for the highways agreement it needs before it can do the work.
- The Council has not changed or waived the obligation, but it has not yet taken any enforcement action. It is meeting Croudace Homes on 11 November and says it will consider further action if an acceptable timetable is not agreed.

Route 5 widening: not yet due

- This is not yet overdue because 1,200 homes have not been reached.
- No surfacing design has been approved. Croudace Homes applied to divert the route but withdrew the application.
- Another developer, Cala Homes, is expected to submit a planning application later in 2026 that includes a new line for Route 5. Until then there is no timetable for the work.

What happens next

- **11 November meeting:** the key question is whether Croudace Homes commits to a firm timetable for the underpass works. I will ask the Council for the outcome.
- **Possible enforcement:** a section 106 agreement is legally binding. If no acceptable timetable is agreed, the Council can take formal action to make the developer carry out the work.
- **Route 5 upgrade:** at the current rate of building, the 1,200-home point could be reached during 2027. That is my estimate, not a Council figure. The upgrade then becomes due.
- **Cala Homes application:** when it is submitted, residents and the Parish Council will be able to comment on the proposed new line and standard of Route 5.
- **Council inspection:** the County Council has promised to inspect the existing path following my complaint. I am pressing for a date and for the findings to be shared.

How residents can help

- **Report problems** on the path or in the underpass, with photos, through FixMyStreet or the County Council's website. A record of reports strengthens the case.
- **Share your experiences** of using the route, such as safety concerns, flooding, falls or damage to bikes, with the Parish Council.
- **Watch for the Cala Homes planning application** and comment on it when it appears.
- **Contact our County Councillor** to ask that the Council presses the developer to deliver these long-overdue works.

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This document is available in other formats, such as large print, on request.

Sources

- Oxfordshire County Council response to Environmental Information Regulations request 28767, dated 5 November 2026, with the approved highway plans (drawings CSA/1720/208/A and JNY4873-31).
- FixMyStreet
  www.fixmystreet.com