

Cogges Lane: A topic paper

Lower Windrush Valley Project, 2022

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Cogges Lane is a single-track road located immediately south of the Oxfordshire town of Witney, which extends from the Witney suburb of Cogges to Stanton Harcourt. Along its length are several residential dwellings, access to nature reserves, and connections to public footpaths and bridleways.
- 1.2. Cogges Lane is a key strategic route for the Lower Windrush Valley Project. It provides vehicle access to two of the sites that the project manages – Rushy Common Nature Reserve and Tar Lakes, where annual visitors, including families, dog walkers, bird watchers and ramblers are in the thousands. The Rushy Common car park is the starting point for several circular walks, and eight public footpath connections are present along the road.
- 1.3. The lane also has importance for the local economy – a planning application for an extension to Linear Fisheries has recently been approved, for which Cogges Lane will be the sole access point; this new area of commercial fishery is predicted to receive around 175 visitors a week in the high season. The Gill Mill quarry is due to complete its

restoration in the early 2040s, creating water-based recreation and eco-tourism lodges - emergency access points will connect onto Cogges Lane as part of the restoration plan.

- 1.4. The road is accessible by vehicles only from its start and end points at Cogges and Stanton Harcourt respectively. It is a single-track road with no formal passing places, although many informal passing places have formed along its length over time. There are currently no public transport links to the road.
- 1.5. There is no designated pedestrian or cycle path along the length of Cogges Lane. The Down Valley Way permissive bridleway runs alongside the western side the northern half of the road, which is the only formal place for pedestrians to walk without exposure to the highway. The road verge is very narrow in places, and pedestrians are often observed walking on the verge to avoid going onto the road.
- 1.6. A road assessment was carried out in March 2020 by the LWVP Project Officer to evaluate the road's existing condition - this assessment looked at road condition and defects as described in the Department for Transport's Technical Note on Road Condition. Evidence of wheel track cracking, transverse cracking, wheel track rutting, wearing course deterioration and severe edge deterioration was recorded along the road, as well as 20 significant potholes along the road, some of which are over 20cm deep.
- 1.7. There are several upcoming developments that are associated with the road including the Linear Fisheries commercial fishery extension, Gill Mill quarry restoration and the East Witney SDA – the latter involves the construction of 450 residential units, connects to the northern end of Cogges Lane which will serve as the primary route for vehicles to travel south. These three schemes are likely to cause an increase in use of Cogges Lane.
- 1.8. At present, the road is not in a suitable condition for a significantly increased number of vehicles to regularly travel down the road – the single track nature of the road will mean that increased vehicle use will lead to increased frequency of drivers meeting, which will in turn lead to worsening of the existing potholes and wear of informal passing places.
- 1.9. A number of measures to improve the road for vehicle users and pedestrians are suggested in this report. The resurfacing of the road will fix the potholes and other defects on the road to make it easier for vehicles to travel along, however when the road was previously resurfaced, it became a 'rat run' with increased use and speed seen along the lane – this then contributed to its subsequent deterioration.
- 1.10. The inclusion of formal passing places at suitable points along the road would help the flow of traffic, and prevent drivers from coming off the road and onto the verge. Some of the passing places that have been created by vehicles could be formalised and managed under the road's routine maintenance, with suitable associated signage.
- 1.11. The designation of the road as a Quiet Lane has previously been suggested for Cogges Lane. With this designation, cars are not banned and use of these roads is shared, however measures such as lower speed limits and road signs aim to encourage drivers to slow down and be considerate to more other users who can in turn use and enjoy country lanes in greater safety.

- 1.12. Other suggestions for the road within this report include making the road access only, to prevent the road becoming a rat run, and improving access for pedestrians and cyclists by widening the road in places to make space for a pavement and making the road a one-way only route.
- 1.13. With the predicted increase in use, it is likely that the road's condition will require more attention in the near future, either through re-surfacing the road, implementing formal passing places, or changing the way the road is accessed by pedestrians and vehicles. Additional investment in the road can potentially be provided through securing suitable contributions in Section 106 agreements.

We would like to see a Cogges Lane that is safe for all road users, especially cyclists and pedestrians, and therefore we would support the following:

- Upgrade the road with formal passing places to reduce the road edge and verge deterioration currently occurring
- Reduce the speed of the road by designating it a Quiet Lane
- Implementing measures to reduce traffic and improve walking and cycling infrastructure

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Cogges Lane is a single-track road located immediately south of the Oxfordshire town of Witney, which extends from the Witney suburb of Cogges to Stanton Harcourt. Along its length are several residential dwellings, access to nature reserves, and connections to public footpaths and bridleways.
- 2.2. The Lower Windrush Valley Project (LWVP) is hosted by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), and works with environmental organisations, mineral operators, landowners and the local community to strengthen and develop the evolving landscape of the valley. One of our key aims is to improve opportunities for people to access and enjoy the countryside. Cogges Lane is a key strategic route for the project, as it provides public access to two of the sites that we manage – Rushy Common Nature Reserve and Tar Lakes. We have undertaken this review of the road's use and current condition as we are predicting an increase in vehicle use in the near future due to upcoming local development, and have concerns over its ability to operate successfully with this increased flow of traffic.
- 2.3. As plans in the county and neighbouring settlements develop, the road is likely to become more heavily used by vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists – the LWVP believes that the road in its current state will not be able to accommodate such growth, and steps need to be taken to ensure safe long-term access along its length in the future.
- 2.4. This topic paper outlines the current status and use of the road, documents its existing condition, and gives suggestions as to how the road may be used to benefit users and the local community in the future. Please note that this report has been completed by a Lower Windrush Valley Project Officer, as opposed to a technical Highways

professional, and should therefore be used as a non-technical review and not a formal Oxfordshire County Council document.

3. Description of Cogges Lane

3.1. Cogges Lane (also known as Tar Road after the point it passes Tar Farm Cottage, a residential property) is a 5.6km single track road located in the West of Oxfordshire, extending south-east from Witney towards the village of Stanton Harcourt. The top of the road is a continuation of Cogges Hill Road and Stanton Harcourt Road, which runs through the Witney suburb of Cogges and over a bridge above the A40. The road terminates where it meets the B4449, to the west of Stanton Harcourt.

3.2. The road runs almost parallel to Station Road / Stanton Harcourt Road, which runs through South Leigh to the north, and the A415 which passes through Ducklington and extends southeast towards the village of Hardwick. Cogges Lane is a relatively minor route into the valley in comparison to the A415.

3.3. Cogges Lane is mostly flat, with a small decline in altitude from north to south of 17m. The road is set at the national speed limit, however the winding nature of the road means that this speed is rarely reached and not appropriate for vehicles to travel at. No street lighting is present along the road.

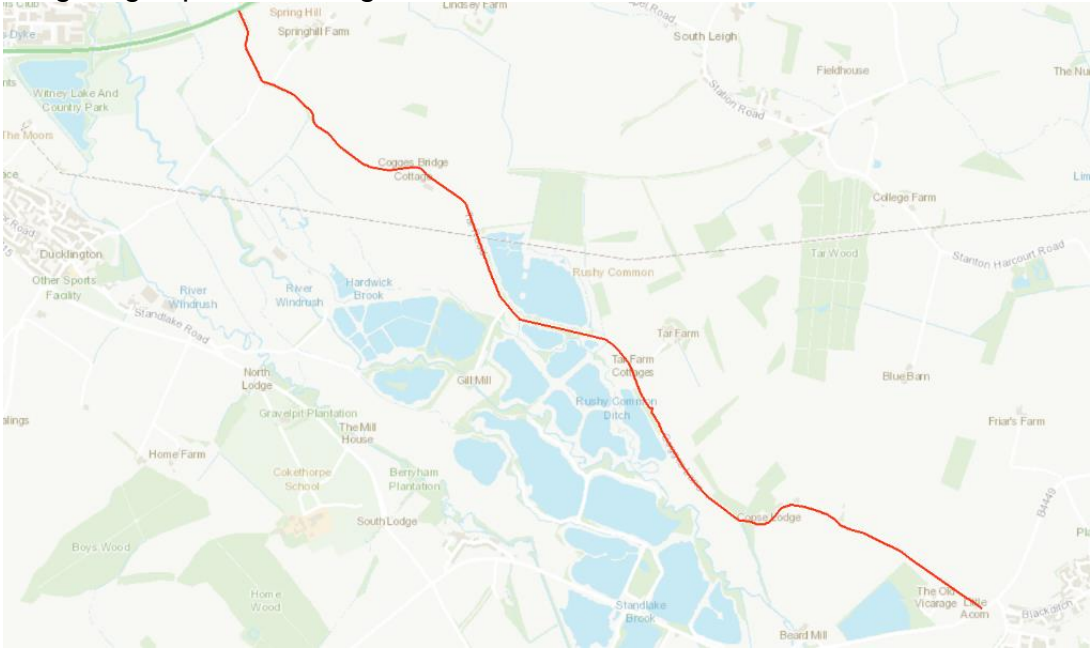


Figure 1: Cogges Lane

3.4. There is little road signage along the lane. An ‘uneven road’ sign with a notice that states it is a single track road with no passing places is present at the northern end of the road, followed by a ‘double bend’ warning triangle with a ‘no fly tipping’ sign (Appendix A Photo 1). The southern end of the road has two ‘unsuitable for HGVs’ signs, one of which is below an ‘uneven road’ warning triangle, with a notice that states it is a single track road with no passing places. The only other road signs present along the road are for the Rushy Common car park and Linear Tar Farm fisheries.

3.5. A hedgerow runs along both sides of the road along its length, sometimes separated by a small grass verge (Appendix A Photo 2). Ditches run on both sides of the road in

places – these become dry in the summer, and channel surface water runoff from the road when rains cause flooding in the winter.

3.6. The road and verges are under the management of Oxfordshire County Council's Highways team.

4. Why is Cogges Lane important?

- 4.1. The road acts as the sole vehicle access route to Rushy Common Nature Reserve and Tar Lakes – a car park is present to accommodate those visiting the site. Although no formal studies have been carried out, based on visitor surveys, it is estimated that annual visitors to Tar Lakes including families, dog walkers, bird watchers, scout groups and ramblers are approximately 75,000. Keyholders for the bird hide scheme the LWVP delivers at Rushy Common are mostly from Oxfordshire, but some travel from Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Gloucestershire and beyond. The bird hide is used by photographers, bird watchers and families, many of which are local to the area on a regular basis.
- 4.2. Rushy Common and Tar Lakes also offer excellent opportunities for community activities. Biodiversity related events such as pond dipping, bat walks and nature crafting are held at Tar Lakes, and scout groups use the two sites to teach participants about local wildlife. LWVP volunteer group sessions are also held at the sites – here a number of local residents come to help with site management activities such as scything, tree guard removal and willow control. Local walking groups and ramblers will often use the Rushy Common car park as a starting point for walks, and local interest groups will organise group visits to the sites to view the wildlife.
- 4.3. Cogges Lane also has a large number of public footpaths connected onto its length. The Down Valley Way, which runs alongside the northern half of the road, is one of the few footpaths travelling south that residents from Witney can access the rest of the Lower Windrush Valley¹. There are also eight other footpath connections onto the road, which extend to Ducklington, Stanton Harcourt, South Leigh and Hardwick. Public access to local greenspaces is one of the LWVP's priorities, and the immediate area is highlighted in the LWVP Strategic Plan as a place where "new stretches of footpath and bridleway that are greatly increasing the pleasure of walkers and cyclists in this area"².
- 4.4. The road links in with the OCC Corporate Plan 2019-22 strategy in providing Oxfordshire residents with access to healthy places in their communities³. The car park at Tar Lakes makes the site easy for families to access the site, and the lakes have safe routes along which to walk; the surfaced track around the public lake also allows disabled access. Runners are frequently seen jogging around the surfaced footpath around Tar Lanes, and although cyclists are not permitted to use the footpaths at the sites, they use the road itself as a means of exercise. Providing access to nature also provide many mental-health benefits, particularly for people living in urban areas – studies have shown that interactions with nature lead to reduced stress and anxiety, improved mood, and can promote psychological restoration⁴.
- 4.5. The road is important for the local economy. A planning application for an extension to Linear Fisheries has recently been approved, and the scheme aims to complete in the spring of 2022. Cogges Lane will be the sole access point for this commercial fishery, which is predicted to receive around 175 visitors a week in the high season⁵. The Gill

Mill quarry is due to complete its restoration in the early 2040s, creating water-based recreation and eco-tourism lodges⁶. Emergency access points will connect onto Cogges Lane as part of the restoration plan. On a smaller scale, the Tar Lakes complex and the connecting footpaths are frequently used by local dog walking businesses as a safe location to walk their customers' dogs. In addition to this, keys that allows the public to access the bird hides at Rushy Common are purchased for £15 from the LWVP, which provides a small source of income for the project.

5. Land use along Cogges Lane

- 5.1. Eighteen residential properties are present along Cogges Lane.
- 5.2. Two farms are present along the road. Springhill Farm is a pastoral farm with sheep grazing, and Tawneys Farm is a dairy farm (also known as the Beef Unit).
- 5.3. The road acts as the sole vehicle access route to Rushy Common Nature Reserve. This site is a former sand and gravel quarry, restored in 2006 to a nature reserve, and consists of a 13ha lake with gravel islands and varied lake margins, which is surrounded by semi-improved grassland; two large ponds are present along the site's eastern border. The site is most notable for its waterfowl community; birds such as lapwing, great crested grebe, greylag geese, red-crested pochard, and tufted ducks are frequently seen at the site. Other notable wildlife present at the site include barn owl, badger, common lizard, and nationally rare stoneworts. A bird hide is present on the southern shore of the site. No public access to the site, other than between the car park and the bird hide, is permitted to reduce the disturbance to wildlife.
- 5.4. Across the road from Rushy Common is the 8ha Tar Lakes complex. The site includes two flooded gravel pits, which form the Public Amenity lake and the Conservation lake, with marginal areas of grassland and tall herbs. Tar Lakes is managed to provide an area open to the public (rather than solely for wildlife interest) with surfaced paths around the Public Amenity lake. Interpretation boards are present at the site showing maps and the species commonly seen at the site. Benches and lifebuoys are also present. The site is a popular area for dog-walkers and families⁷.
- 5.5. An access track to Smith and Sons (Bletchington) Ltd's Gill Mill quarry leads west from the road. Gill Mill is an active quarry and has been in operation since being granted planning permission in 1989, extracting sand, gravel and clay; the site will total around 292ha when works are complete.
- 5.6. The remaining adjoining land along Cogges Lane consists predominantly of arable and pasture land.
- 5.7. Other quarry workings have been present historically, with a small gravel pits present near Cogges Bridge Cottage. A train line also previously ran under the road at location, travelling to Witney and Oxford⁸.
- 5.8. A disused badger sett is located close to the road on the southern border of Rushy Common. Active setts are also present at the nature reserves, and suitable foraging habitat is present along the road. Badgers have been observed as roadkill along the road in recent years.

- 5.9. Bats have been recorded commuting and foraging at Rushy Common and Tar Lakes, including common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule and Daubentons bat. There are several mature trees both at the reserves and alongside border the road that contain features that could act as bat roosts.
- 5.10. Hedgerows are present along both sides of the roads along the majority of its length. Hedgerows act as wildlife corridors, linking habitats and enabling bats, small mammals and insects to move around under cover from predators. The hedges that bound the agricultural land additionally act as a barrier to reduce the amount of pesticides, fertilisers and eroded soil reaching watercourses. Species within the hedgerow include hawthorn, hazel, elm, elder, dog rose, field maple, blackthorn and guelder rose.

6. Access along Cogges Lane

6.1. Pedestrian access

- 6.1.1. There is no designated pedestrian or cycle path along the length of Cogges Lane. At the top of the road immediately after the bridge over the A40, a short section pavement is present, which is then quickly taken over by grass and vegetation as the road travels south, before disappearing entirely (Appendix A Photo 3).
- 6.1.2. Tracks in the grass verges are seen alongside the roadside, showing where pedestrians have walked to avoid going on the road. The verge is very narrow in places, and pedestrians are often observed walking on the road where there is no safer alternative. There are a number of mammal holes within the grass verges, the larger of which are substantial enough to trip over (Appendix A Photo 4).

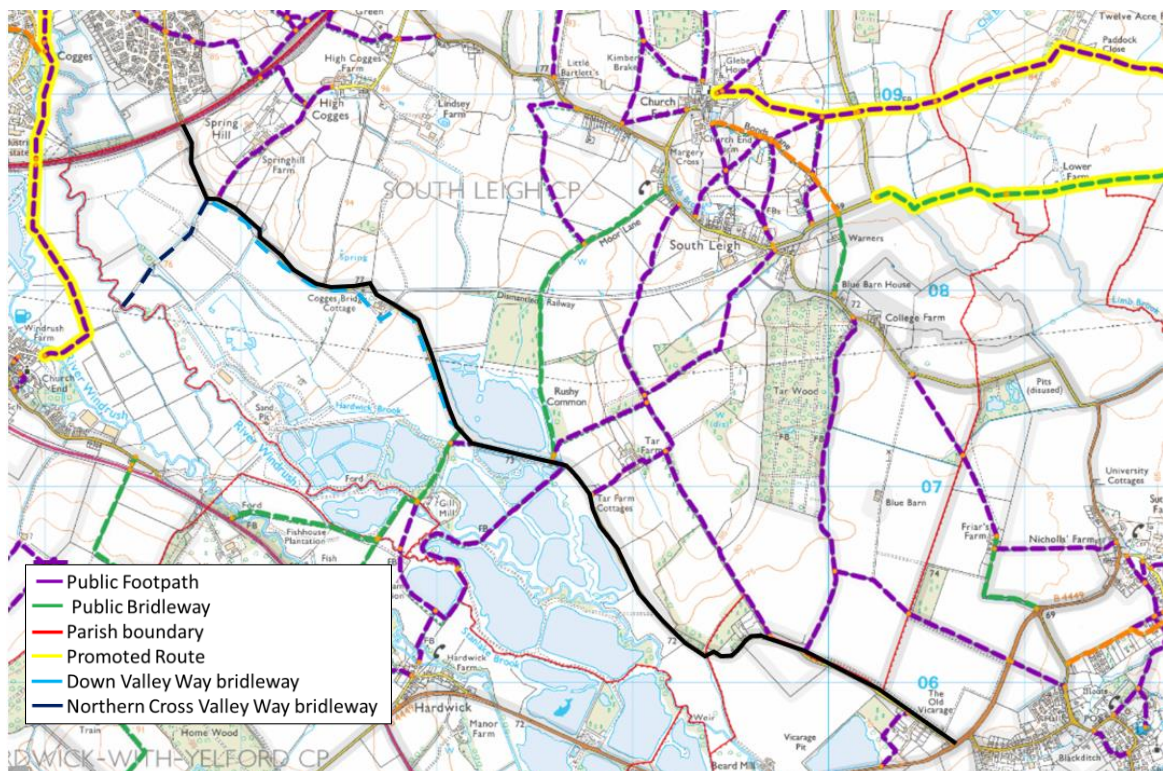


Figure 2: Public rights of way connecting to Cogges Lane

- 6.1.3. The grass verges are permitted to grow tall in the summer, often creating densely vegetated areas which completely eliminate the option for pedestrians to walk on them. People walking along the lane therefore have no option but to walk on the road during these summer months
- 6.1.4. The Down Valley Way permissive bridleway runs alongside the western side the northern half of the road, separated from it by the hedgerow. Although only accessible from each end of the footpath, this gives pedestrians a safe route along this part of the road and has views of agricultural fields and Gill Mill quarry⁹.
- 6.1.5. Several public rights of way connect onto the road, as shown in Figure 2 – these include eight public footpaths and two bridleways¹. The paths typically extend from the road to the neighbouring towns and local leisure facilities. The waymarking for these routes are generally clear.
- 6.1.6. A new ‘Gill Mill Circular Walk’ route is currently being promoted by the LWVP, which starts at the Rushy Common car park and passes along the Down Valley Way. The route then travels along the Northern Cross Valley bridleway, follows the western arm of the River Windrush, and returns to Cogges Lane via fishing lakes and the Tar Lakes complex¹⁰.
- 6.1.7. The track from the car park and around the Public Amenity lake at Tar Lakes is suitable for wheelchair users, and a grassy track is present around the Conservation Lake for walking.

6.2. Bicycle access

- 6.2.1. There is no dedicated cycle lane along the road, due to its single track nature. Cogges Lane is signed from the B4449 as forming part of the Oxfordshire Cycleway, and the end of a section of the National Cycle Route 57 is located 900m north of the lane, in the centre of Cogges¹¹.
- 6.2.2. Visitors are encouraged to cycle to Rushy Common and Tar Lakes, with directions for cyclists on the Lower Windrush Valley Project website and cycle racks available in the Rushy Common carpark. Cycling is not permitted at Rushy Common Nature Reserve and Tar Lakes.
- 6.2.3. The Down Valley Way and North Cross Valley Ways are bridleways that permit cyclists to travel along it, however the path is grassy and therefore not suitable for all bicycles.

6.3. Public transport

- 6.3.1. The nearest railway stations to the road are at Hanborough (10km miles from the northmost tip of the road) and Oxford (14km from the southmost tip of the road).
- 6.3.2. The nearest bus stop to the lane is located in Cogges, 0.5 miles from the top of the road – here the 213 bus travels to Witney and the 214 bus travels to Madley Park.

6.4. Vehicle access

- 6.4.1. The road is accessible by vehicles only from its start and end points at Cogges and Stanton Harcourt respectively. It is a single-track road with no formal passing places, although many informal passing places have formed along its length over time.
- 6.4.2. A carpark for visitors of Rushy Common and Tar Lakes is located halfway along the lane has space for roughly 20 cars and is open at all times. A height barrier restricts vehicles over 2.1 metres tall.

7. Road condition and issues

7.1. Road assessment

- 7.1.1. A road assessment was carried out on the 6th March 2020 to evaluate the road's existing condition. The assessment looked at road condition and defects as described in the Department for Transport's Technical Note on Road Condition¹². The locations of the defects can be found in Appendix C, and an example photograph of each defect along the road can be found in Appendix A. Please note that this survey was not carried out by a highways technician, and the results of the survey are subject to confirmation by highways professionals. The road condition can also be changeable due to continued highways modifications, so the condition of the road may have changed since the time of survey.
- 7.1.2. Wheel track cracking - Most vehicles follow a similar path on a road, resulting in the formation of identifiable wheel tracks - cracking in the area of the wheel tracks may indicate structural damage, especially if associated with the presence of a rut along the wheel track. This defect can be especially prevalent on single track roads, where users will be passing along the road in the same driving line in both directions. Of the approx. 5.6km length of the road, wheel track cracking was present on at least one side of the wheel track for approx. 1.5km in total along the road – this is 27% of its length.
- 7.1.3. Transverse cracking - single or multiple transverse cracks can often be related to the presence of a defect beneath the surface, such as a crack in the concrete layer of a composite road. There were two instances of transverse cracking along the lane – one at the very top of the lane near the A40 bridge and the other towards the bottom of the lane next to Copse Lodge.
- 7.1.4. Wheel track rutting - Wheel track rutting does not necessarily indicate structural damage if there is no cracking, but it is undesirable because the ruts can hold water which can cause skidding, especially in winter when the roads can become icy. Additionally, pedestrians may get splashed and there is a hazard to cyclists and motorcyclists. Wheel track rutting was noted in five locations along the lane, which are spaced relatively evenly along its length.
- 7.1.5. Deterioration of the wearing course – here the layer of chippings is worn away to reveal the smooth bituminous binder underneath. Deterioration is present to some degree along 92% of the road's length – the road surface is in best condition near to the entrance of the Rushy Common car park.

- 7.1.6. Settlement and subsidence - this includes areas of carriageway where patches or public utility reinstatements have caused the road to sink – this can also be caused by tree roots. No instances of settlement and subsidence were noted along the road.
- 7.1.7. Edge Deterioration - deterioration of the road edge can present a hazard to users and also lead to more extensive deterioration of the remainder of the carriageway as the edge support becomes eroded. 23% of the western side of the road has deteriorated, and 21% of the eastern side.
- 7.1.8. Potholes - potholes occur when surface chipping is worn away, and water is permitted to freeze and expand in the small cracks created, eventually wearing into a larger and larger gap – vehicles passing over the hole also increases the size over time. There are 20 significant potholes along the road, some of which are over 20cm deep. They often occur in succession, making it uncomfortable for road users to drive along.

7.2. Fix My Street

- 7.2.1. Past and current problems along a road can be viewed and reported using FixMyStreet, an online reporting that feeds information on roads and footpaths to local councils¹³. As of February 2020, 64 incidents have been recorded along Cogges Lane since 2015 – these are a mix of issues reports submitted by the public and those scheduled and resolved by Oxfordshire County Council.
- 7.2.2. The 31 public submissions have been summarised in Appendix C. The majority of these (21) are concerning potholes on and to the side of the road - several users have reported punctured tyres and other damage to their cars as a result of the holes.
- 7.2.3. OCC have reported and scheduled work for 31 potholes along the road – some of these are in response to the user submitted reports, and others have been identified by OCC themselves.

7.3. Lack of formal passing places

- 7.3.1. There are road signs at either end of the lane that state that there are no passing places. The lack of passing places has resulted in vehicle users frequently pulling onto grass verges and property entrances when meeting other cars, which in turn has led to severe edge deterioration and a number of large potholes forming on the edge of the road. These drops of up to 20cm from the road surface can be challenging for vehicles to navigate when meeting another car or a cyclist on the single-track lane.
- 7.3.2. Forty nine 'informal' passing places, i.e., places where the verge and the edge of the road has been worn down or widened, have been created along the road. These can quickly deteriorate and with frequent use become hazardous with sharp drops away from the road surface (See Appendix A for examples).
- 7.3.3. There have been past efforts to improve the most severely degraded informal passing places by filling them with gravel or tarmac in places.

7.3.4. This issue has been highlighted several times on FixMyStreet – OCC responded on one occasion with the following;

“There are no official passing places along this route. In fact there is a large permanent sign at the end that states 'Single track road with no passing places' together with an Uneven surface warning sign and an 'Unsuitable for HGVs' warning sign”

7.3.5. A small number of reflective wooden posts have been erected along the road verge in front of Tar Farm, to prevent people using the verge and access track to the property as a passing place.

7.4. Parking on the road verge

7.4.1. Vehicles are frequently seen parking on the section of road near to the western entrance to Tar Lakes, for easy access to the site for walking and dog walking. This entrance is on a bend in the road, and the parked cars can reduce the visibility for the cars travelling down the road.

7.4.2. This has led to the deterioration of the edge of the road near to the site entrance, which vehicles now also use as an informal passing place.

7.5. Fly tipping

7.5.1. Fly tipping is a less reported but persistent problem along the lane. Four incidents have been reported on FixMyStreet, all located near the southern entrance of the lane in 2019. Rushy Common car park has also been a target in recent years.

7.5.2. The lane has Oxfordshire Waste Partnership/WODC signs at both ends reminding users not to fly tip and informing them that covert CCTV is in operation along the lane.

7.6. Vehicle collisions

7.6.1. The Transport Statement commissioned as part of the Tar Farm Lakes commercial fisheries planning application gives data on the most recent collisions and injuries on the road (between 2011 and 2017)⁵.

7.6.2. Two collisions have occurred near the northern end of the lane within 150m of the A40 bridge, and another has occurred near to the entrance of Rushy Common (See Figure 3). The three incidents along the lane all involved drivers colliding with an oncoming vehicle, with no pedestrians involved.

7.6.3. Causation factors of 'travelling too fast for conditions' were recorded against the two collisions at the top of the lane, and one also noted the driver as 'careless / reckless / in a hurry'. The other recorded 'road layout' as a potential contributory factor.

7.6.4. It should be noted that these are only collisions that have been formally reported along the lane. Anecdotal evidence indicates that other collisions may have gone unreported along the lane (pers comms).



Figure 3: Cogges Lane collision locations

8. Reference in policies and reports

8.1. West Oxfordshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2015

8.1.1. This document identifies the infrastructure that is needed to support future growth in the West Oxfordshire District¹⁴.

8.1.2. The following items that are associated with improvements to footpaths or other footpaths on or around Cogges Lane have been extracted from the Appendix 1 - Schedule of Future Infrastructure Requirements.

Table 1: West Oxfordshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan items that relate to Cogges Lane

Infrastructure Project and Location	Delivery Partners	Estimated Cost	Funding Secured & Source	Funding Gap Anticipated	Funding Mechanism	Priority and Timescale
Cycle/foot path in selected locations along B4449 to link up existing FP/BWs that end at the road.	OCC	£100,000	None	£100,000	S106, CIL (when introduced)	Preferred 2019-2024
Creation of bridleway at Tar Lane to Beard Mill & B4449	OCC/LWVP	£50,000	None	£50,000	S106	Preferred 2015-2019
Stanton Harcourt new bridleway link from gravel pits and upgrade to bridleway	OCC/LWVP	£40,000	None	£40,000	S106, CIL (when introduced)	Preferred 2019-2024
Creation of Windrush Path as continuous definitive public footpath	OCC/LWVP	£40,000	None	£40,000	S106, CIL (when introduced)	Preferred 2019-2024

Provide/improve disabled access to key sites around Witney e.g. Witney Lakes, Rushy Common and Tar Lakes, Windrush Path.	LWVP/ Witney TC/OCC	£50,000	None	£50,000	S106, CIL (when introduced)	Preferred 2015-2031
High Cogges Footpath to bridleway status upgrade	OCC/LWVP	N/a – fully funded	Gill Mill/Smiths onsite provision	£0	Developer undertaking works	Preferred 2015-2019
Ducklington new Bridleway/Footpath connecting links	OCC/LWVP	N/a – fully funded	Gill Mill/Smiths onsite provision	£0	Developer undertaking works	Preferred 2015-2019
Ducklington Footpath to Bridleway status upgrade	OCC/LWVP	N/a – fully funded	Gill Mill/Smiths onsite provision	£0	S106	Preferred 2015-2019
Ducklington bridleway connecting link	OCC/LWVP	£20,000	None	£20,000	Gill Mill minerals and waste development	

8.2. East Witney Strategic Development Area Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Issues Paper, 2019

8.2.1. This document outlines the background, considerations and potential opportunities associated with the land to the east of Witney¹⁵, which is allocated in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 for the provision of around 450 new homes¹⁶.

8.2.2. The development area is in two sections – a large area ‘Cogges South’ to accommodate around 420 homes, and a smaller area ‘Cogges Triangle’ to hold around 30. This smaller area connects to the northern end of Cogges Lane and is the only means of vehicular access south from the development site.

8.2.3. The report reviews options for public footpaths extending to and from the development site. It is stated that “*The area south of the A40 is a rich leisure resource and is vastly underused. It will therefore be important in taking the East Witney site forward to consider how safe and convenient movement to the south of the A40 can be achieved*”.

8.2.4. New pedestrian and cycle routes are proposed for the scheme, which will provide connections primarily to Witney.

8.2.5. Cogges Lane is otherwise not discussed in the report.

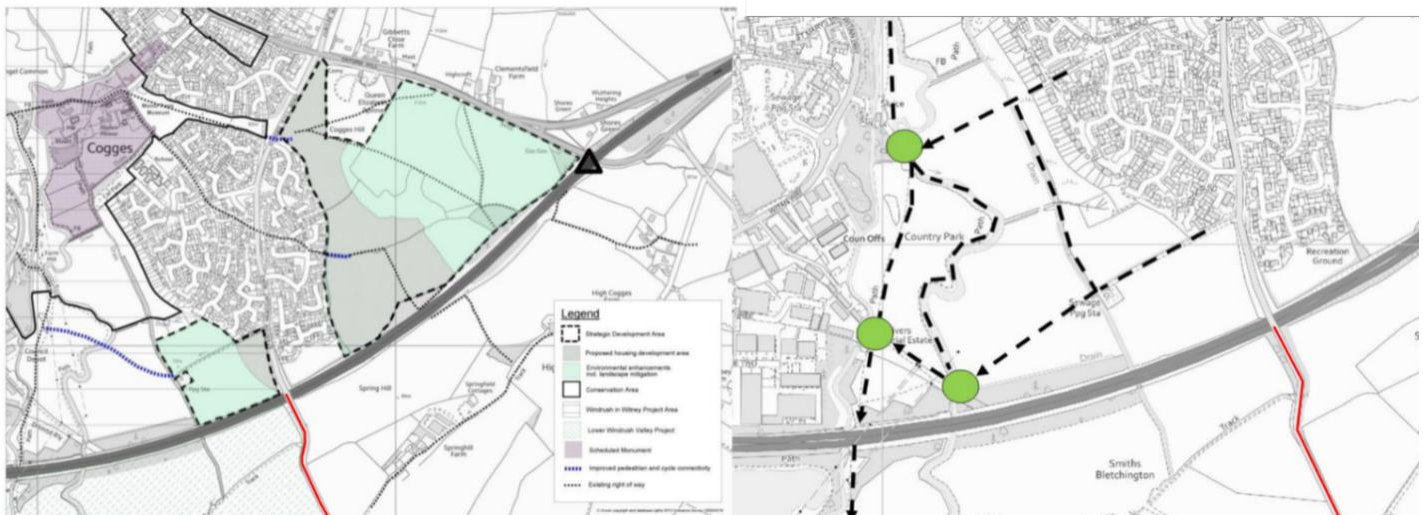


Figure 4: East Witney SDA Cogges Triangle location and proposed access routes

8.3. Lower Windrush Valley Strategic access and feasibility assessment, 2007

8.3.1. This study provides an assessment of access infrastructure across the LWV project area, which highlights the needs of path users, the issues for landowners and managers and the opportunities for enhancing the existing network & creating new access¹⁷.

8.3.2. Key professionals in the public section were interviewed to seek their views on access throughout the valley. A conversation with Paul Wilson from the OCC Highways team is summarised as follows;

“Much has been made of the barriers within the valley because of poor conditions for walkers, cyclists and riders resulting from speed and volume of traffic. Views were sought as to the potential for improving access on verges and, specifically, improving north-south access by re-designating Tar Lane and Cogges Lane (which together make up the minor road from Stanton Harcourt to Cogges) as a ‘Quiet Lane’. While there was a very positive response to the concept of making Tar Lane/Cogges Lane a Quiet Lane, the advice received is that there is no funding available to carry out improvements to the A415 or B4449 verges”.

It was noted that “the support of the highways engineers for the idea of designating Tar Lane/Cogges Lane as a ‘Quiet Lane’ should be built upon. This lane could be an important spinal route for access to all users north and south through the valley [...] but this is prevented at present by the speed and volume of traffic ‘rat-running’, a phenomenon that has reportedly increased since recent re-surfacing of the lanes.”

8.3.3. As a result of this conversation, it was concluded in the report that “*Tar Lane/Cogges Lane is potentially a very important route for countryside access in the north of the Valley. A proposal has therefore been put forward that this lane should be designated as a Quiet Lane. [...] However, there is a need to keep abreast of proposals for the Cogges Link Road – if there is a direct connection between Cogges Lane and the Link Road this will seriously undermine the chances of creating an effective Quiet Lane.*”

8.3.4. A Quiet Lane is a designated minor rural road with several traffic calming measures intended to meet the needs of walkers, cyclists, horse riders and the mobility impaired such as lower speed limits and road signs. Although the report mentions that Cogges Lane was put forward as a proposed Quiet Lane, there are no records of discussions and outcomes following this suggestion.

8.3.5. The Cogges Link Road was a route proposed around the south-eastern edge of Witney, between Witan Way (south of the town centre) to the Oxford Hill junction with Jubilee Way (on the eastern outskirts of the town) – this proposal was blocked in 2012 and did not go ahead.

8.4. A New Look at Old Paths: Countryside Access in the Lower Windrush, 2007

8.4.1. This report was prepared by the Lower Windrush Valley Project in August 2007 to condense the findings from the LWV Strategic access and feasibility assessment

into several themes and build on the evidence base by completing various audits on supply, demand, policy and resources¹⁸.

8.4.2. As the report draws on the findings of the Strategic access and feasibility assessment, much of the information surrounding Cogges Lane is the same. The report re-iterates that the road could be put forward to the local council as a Quiet Lane.

9. Future developments affecting Cogges Lane

9.1. Gill Mill

9.1.1. The Gill Mill quarry is located the west of Cogges Lane and is predicted to finish works in the early 2040s. The restoration has a biodiversity focus, with the scheme 'will also bring benefits to the local community with new recreational facilities, an extensive new network of rights of way and an on-going economic development benefiting the local area with the dual aim of supporting the nature conservation'⁶.

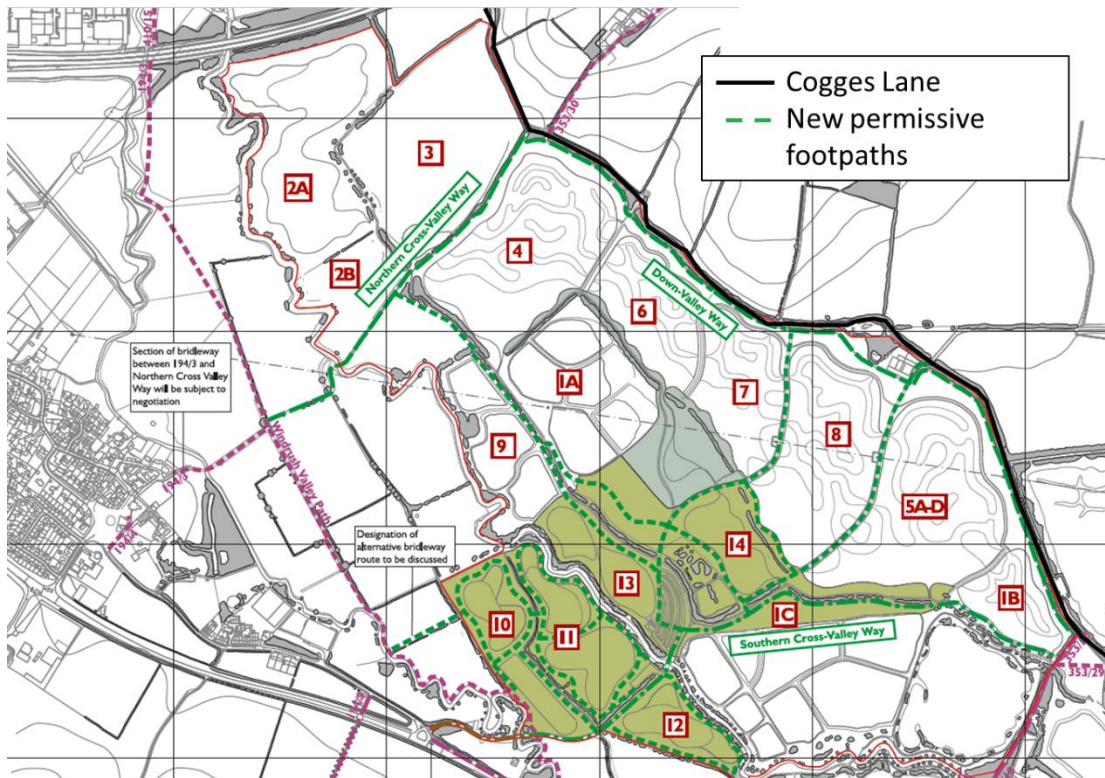


Figure 5: Gill Mill proposed permissive footpaths

9.1.2. As well as the creation of reedbeds, marshland, meadows and ecolodges, the plans propose the implementation of several permissive footpaths and bridleways post-development, which extend along Cogges Lane and across the development site. This will help to connect the lane with the rest of the footpath network in the area and give users the chance to explore the restored quarry sites¹⁹.

9.2. Tar Farm Fishery

9.2.1. A planning application has been approved for extension of Linear Fisheries to use several of lakes for commercial fishery, as well as new access, onto Cogges Lane,

areas of car parking, tracks and creation of swims (fishing platforms)²⁰. The scheme is due to complete in spring 2022.

9.2.2. The public footpath running east to west across the site will be retained, and the scheme will provide a new public right of way extending along the north-eastern boundary of the site alongside Cogges Lane, and connecting up to the public footpath next to Tar Farm Cottages.

9.2.3. The scheme is likely to see increased traffic along the road by new users accessing the commercial fishery, as assessed in the application's Transport Statement⁵.

9.3. East Witney Strategic Development Area

9.3.1. The East Witney Strategic Development Area is at the pre-application planning stage, with around 450 homes planned to be split across two sites¹⁵. The smaller 'Cogges Triangle' site, which will contain around 30 residential units, connects to the northern end of Cogges Lane and will serve as the primary route for vehicles to travel south from the scheme.

9.3.2. Cogges Lane is the only means of vehicular access south of the Cogges Triangle development. At present, the road is not in a suitable condition for a significantly increased number of vehicles to regularly travel down the road – the single track nature of the road will mean that increased vehicle use will lead to increased frequency of drivers meeting, which will in turn lead to worsening of the existing potholes and wear of informal passing places.

9.4. Tar Farm Solar Farm

9.4.1. A planning application has been submitted for a large solar farm located to the east of Cogges Lane.

9.4.2. The application proposes that site access would be via Cogges Lane to the south and the majority of increased traffic would be during the development period of 6-9 months, after which there would be limited visits for maintenance.

10. Future opportunities along Cogges Lane

10.1.1. As the road is likely to become more heavily used as a result of increased development, there are opportunities for its improvement for vehicle users and/or pedestrians and cyclists.

10.2. Resurfacing the road

10.2.1. Resurfacing the length of the road would fix the potholes and other defects on the road making it easier for vehicles to travel along.

10.2.2. When the road was previously resurfaced, it was noted in the LWVP Strategic access and feasibility assessment that it became a 'rat run' with increased use and speed seen along the lane – this then contributed to its subsequent deterioration.

We would therefore suggest that if the road is resurfaced, it should be carried out in conjunction with other traffic calming measures to reduce deterioration. There would be associated costs for the council with resurfacing over 5km of road, which would have to be carefully considered.

10.3. Inclusion of formal passing places

- 10.3.1. The inclusion of formal passing places at suitable points along the road would help the flow of traffic, and prevent drivers from coming off the road and onto the verge. This will be of particular importance as the road becomes more frequently used due to upcoming nearby developments, and there will be an increased rate of drivers meeting coming from different directions using the informal passing places currently present.
- 10.3.2. Some of the passing places that have been created by vehicles could be formalised and managed under the road's routine maintenance, with suitable associated signage. We would suggest that formal passing places are not located too close to the nature reserves as cars are likely to park in them to access the sites, as they currently do in the informal passing places in this location.
- 10.3.3. There are currently no public transport links running down the road – the road is currently too narrow and winding for buses to travel along. Although it will likely never be suitable for a regular bus service to access, improved road surfacing and implementing formal passing places could make the road more suitable for public transport means such as local community buses. This would allow those unable to walk or cycle the distance from local villages, and without access to a vehicle, to visit Rushy Common Nature Reserve and Tar Lakes.

10.4. Quiet Lane designation

- 10.4.1. The proposal of Cogges Lane becoming a Quiet Lane has been raised in the Lower Windrush Valley Strategic access and feasibility assessment. These are designated minor rural roads with several traffic calming measures intended to meet the needs of walkers, cyclists, horse riders and the mobility impaired. Cars are not banned and use of these roads is shared, however measures such as lower speed limits and road signs aim to encourage drivers to slow down and be considerate to more other users who can in turn use and enjoy country lanes in greater safety²¹.



Figure 6: Quiet Lane road sign

- 10.4.2. As part of a Quiet Lane designation, the speed at which people are permitted to travel along the lane could be restricted – at present, the national speed limit along the road is rarely reached due to the winding nature of the road, but those who do travel close to this speed could put pedestrians that are using the road in danger. A speed order reducing the road speed to 20mph would make the lane safer for pedestrians where there are no suitable places to walk other than the road (N.B. Speed orders are only applicable in designated quiet lanes or home zones and are not enforceable).

- 10.4.3. Although speed along a Quiet Lane is not legally enforceable, the signage would act as a visual reminder, for drivers in particular, that pedestrians and cyclists frequently travel down the road. If wanted for enforcement purposes, OCC would have to make a speed limit orders under section 84 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984). The use of the road could also be restricted to certain vehicles, for example, only cars and motorbikes, but this would be unlikely to be approved due to the range of vehicles that use the road at all times of day, e.g., farmers in HGVs.
- 10.4.4. For Cogges Lane to become a Quiet Lane, the council would have to decide what if any new speed or use restrictions should be put in place, and then formally consult groups likely to be affected by the designation, such as residents, businesses located on the road and other local organisations that frequently use the road. If all the consultees approve of the designation, the council is then able to implement the road's new measures.

10.5. Access only road

- 10.5.1. Turning Cogges Lane into an access only road would aim to reduce the number of people using the lane as a rat run at rush hour – this was previously a problem when the road was last resurfaced. Pairing a 'no motor vehicle' warning circle with an 'except for access' sign placed underneath would deter people from using the road as a commuting option to and from Witney.
- 10.5.2. However, it would be challenging to enforce the access only status of the road, and there is a chance that people visiting the nature reserves and future commercial fisheries will be confused as to whether they can access the sites down the road. This could be clarified in the sign, but may weaken the intention of the road's access only status as people would easily be able to claim they were visiting the reserves if questioned.



Figure 7: No motor vehicles except for access sign

10.6. Improved pedestrian access

- 10.6.1. The current lack of pedestrian pathways along the length of the lane imposes some safety concerns to those who walk to visit the sites – in particular those who access the area from the south where no pedestrian path such as the Down Valley Way is present. To stop people having to walk on the road, paths similar in nature to the Down Valley Way bridleway could be implemented along the road's length, where landowners are willing to have permissive routes on their land.
- 10.6.2. Due to the width of the road's verges in places, it is not possible to put a formal pedestrian pathway along the length of the road, however there are some stretches of verge that could be wide enough to create a more formal track within the grass for pedestrians to use. The road could also be widened in places where possible, to make space for a pavement on one side of the road on which pedestrians could walk.

10.6.3. The Windrush Path is a local route being created through the Lower Windrush Valley Project in association with local landowners and gravel extraction companies. The aim is to provide a continuous path from Witney to link up with the Thames Path National Trail at Newbridge. As developments and land use changes occur on Cogges Lane and throughout the Lower Windrush Valley, new locations for public and permissive footpaths may arise as part of the schemes, such as the permissive footpath at Tar Farm Lakes. This will give new locations for potential extensions of the Windrush Path, completing the route down the valley.

10.7. Improved cyclist access

- 10.7.1. As with the pedestrian access along the lane, there is no easy fix for improved access along the road for cyclists. Fixing the potholes that are typically present on the edges of the road would prevent cyclists having to stray into the middle area of the road into the path of oncoming cars.
- 10.7.2. The Down Valley Way, which is a permissive bridleway, is currently a grassy track that is not suitable for all bicycles to travel down. To make this more accessible to cyclists, the route could be converted to a dirt surfaced path, to make it easier to cycle down.
- 10.7.3. The widening of the road where possible could also help cyclists. One option could be to make the road a one-way route, and allow cyclists to travel in both directions along one marked side of the road. However this will likely bring difficulties for farmers that are sited along the road and their HGVs, and may make the nature reserves less attractive for the public to visit if they have to travel from a specific direction.
- 10.7.4. National Cycle Route 57, when complete, will run West to East, from Cricklade in Wiltshire to Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire. A section of this route currently stops in Cogges, on Stanton Harcourt Road, and the route begins again between Broad Street and Holywell Street in the centre of Oxford¹¹. Creating safe cyclist access along the road would help to extend the route eastward and connect two sections.

11. Resident's views

- 11.1. In September 2021 the Lower Windrush Valley Project sought resident and business owner's views via an informal questionnaire to homes and businesses on, or accessed from, Cogges Lane. We received a total of nine responses.
- 11.2. When asked 'How do you view the current condition of the road?', 0% of respondents answered 'Excellent' or 'Good', 38% answered 'Acceptable', 25% 'Poor' and 38% 'Terrible'.
- 11.3. When asked 'If you could make any changes to Cogges Lane, what would they be?' the responses were as follows:
- Re-surface the road: 63%
 - Add formal passing places: 63%
 - Designation as a quiet lane: 75%
 - Access only road: 25%

11.4. All eight respondents use a car or van on Cogges Lane, 1 uses a motorbike, 5 use a bicycle, and 6 use the road as a pedestrian.

11.5. Comments included:

‘As a resident of Cogges Lane / Tar Road it is not suitable for the usage of today’

‘This road has a 60mph speed limit which is clearly not suitable. The road is a dumping ground for tyre and rubbish from people who have been turned away from the dump. Couple this with no drainage work and lack of grass cutting - result? A hazard!’

‘The best way of keeping the traffic volume down is to largely leave as it. Improving the road is single largest driver to increasing traffic volumes, or so I believe.’

‘We live down Cogges Lane. Something needs to change.’

‘The road was resurfaced years ago which is now failing. There are no passing places, those that exist are informal ones. These have been creating by splay tar and chippings on mud.’

‘As I live on Cogges Lane, it serves me well.’

12. Conclusion

12.1.1. Despite its current poor condition, Cogges Lane remains an important road for residents of Witney and the surrounding towns and villages to access leisure activities. The road will see increased use as the Tar Farm fishery is implemented, and then again as the East Witney development progresses.

12.1.2. With the predicted increase in use, it is likely that the road’s condition will require more attention in the near future, either through re-surfacing the road, implementing formal passing places, or changing the way the road is accessed by pedestrians and vehicles. Additional investment in the road can potentially be provided through securing suitable contributions in Section 106 agreements.

12.1.3. Therefore, in the long term, we would support the following:

- Upgrade the road with formal passing places to reduce the road edge and verge deterioration currently occurring
- Reduce the speed of the road by designating it a Quiet Lane
- Implementing measures to reduce traffic and improve walking and cycling infrastructure

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14. Appendix A: Photos

	
<p>Double bend and fly tipping sign</p>	<p>Typical road and verge layout</p>
	
<p>Grass encroaching pedestrian path</p>	<p>Mammal hole</p>
	
<p>Bird nest in hedgerow tree</p>	<p>Wheel Track Cracking</p>
	
<p>Wheel track rutting</p>	<p>Wheel track rutting</p>



Edge deterioration



Potholes



Informal passing place

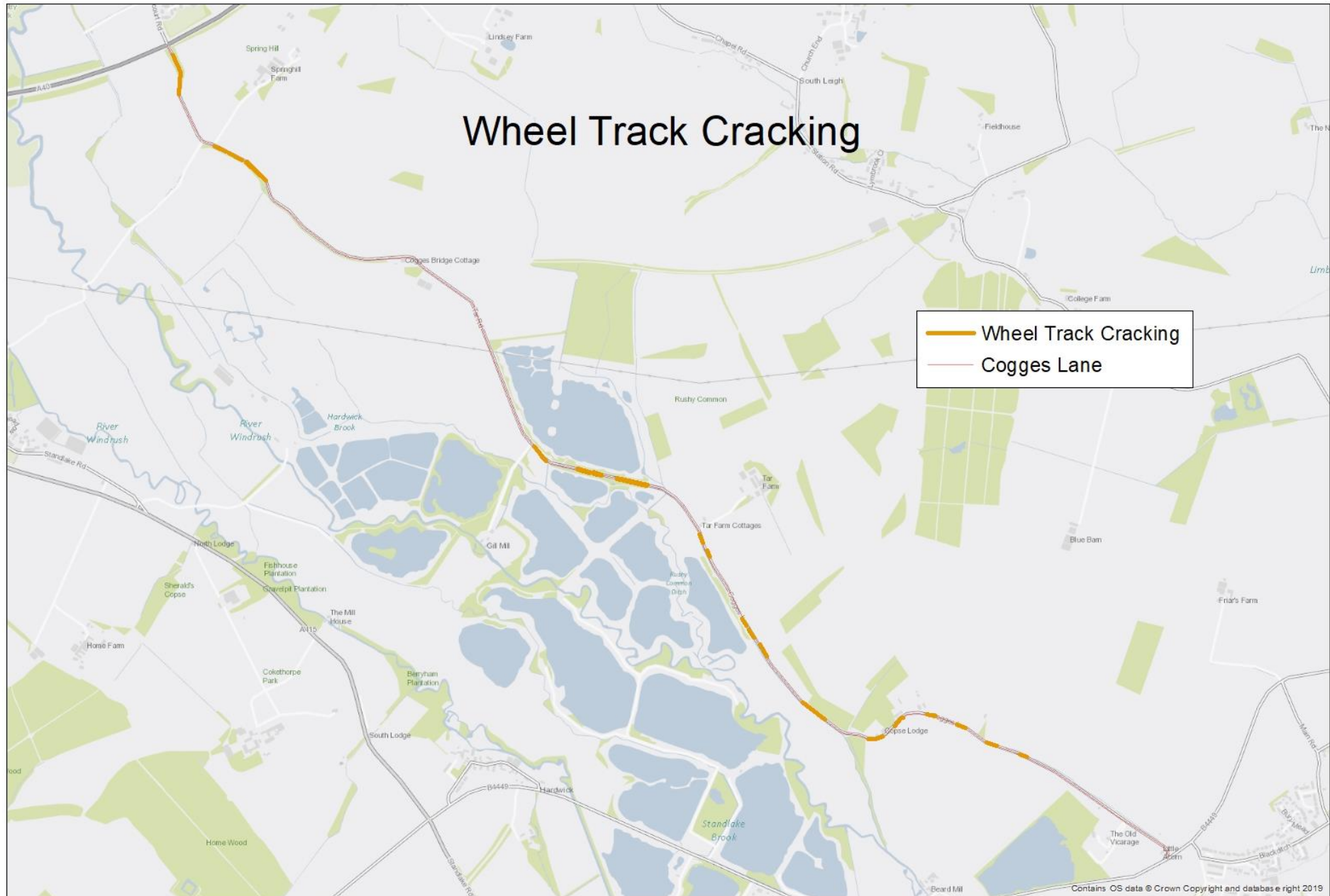


Informal passing place with signification deterioration



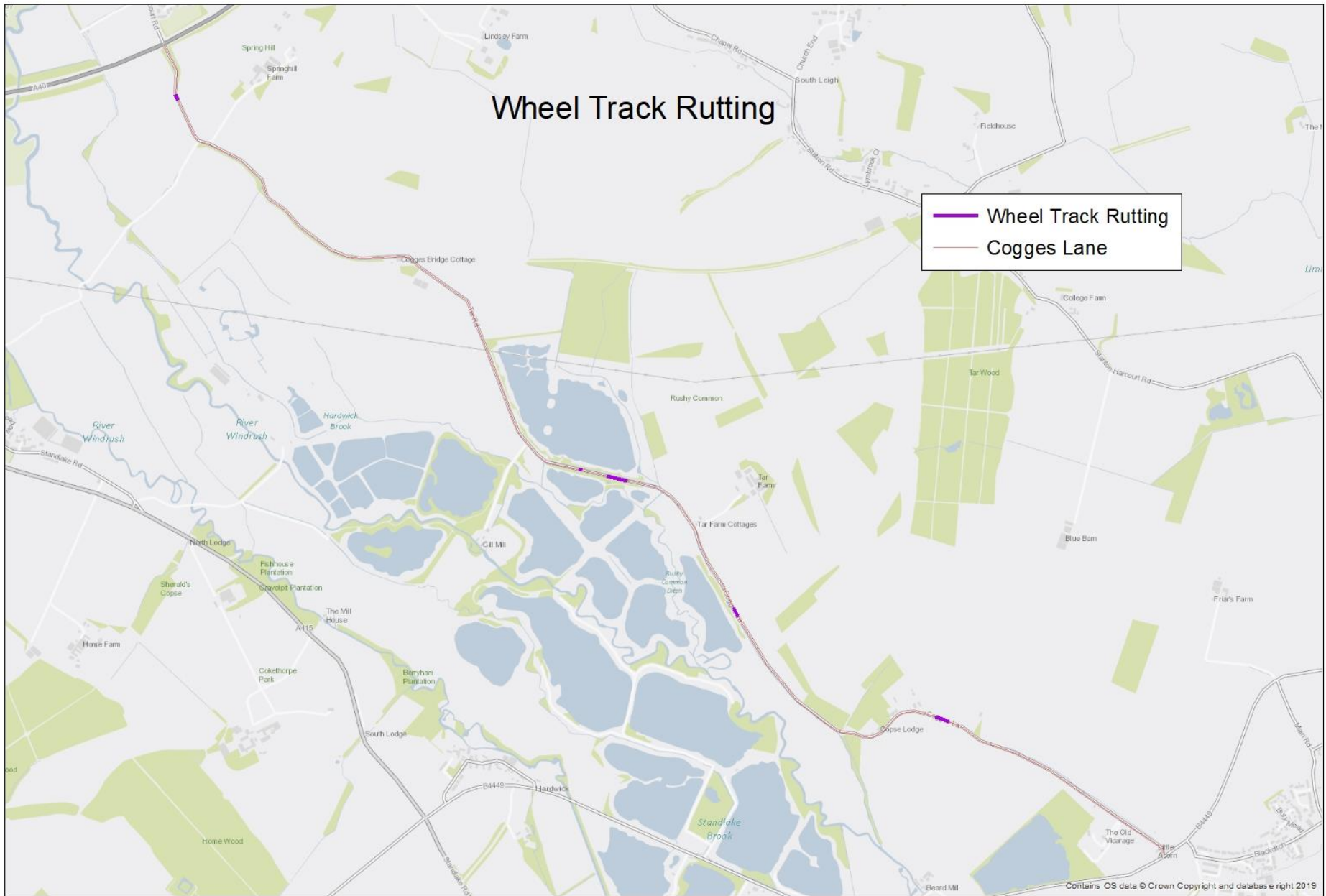
Previously tarmacked passing place

15. Appendix B: Road Defect Maps



Transverse Cracking

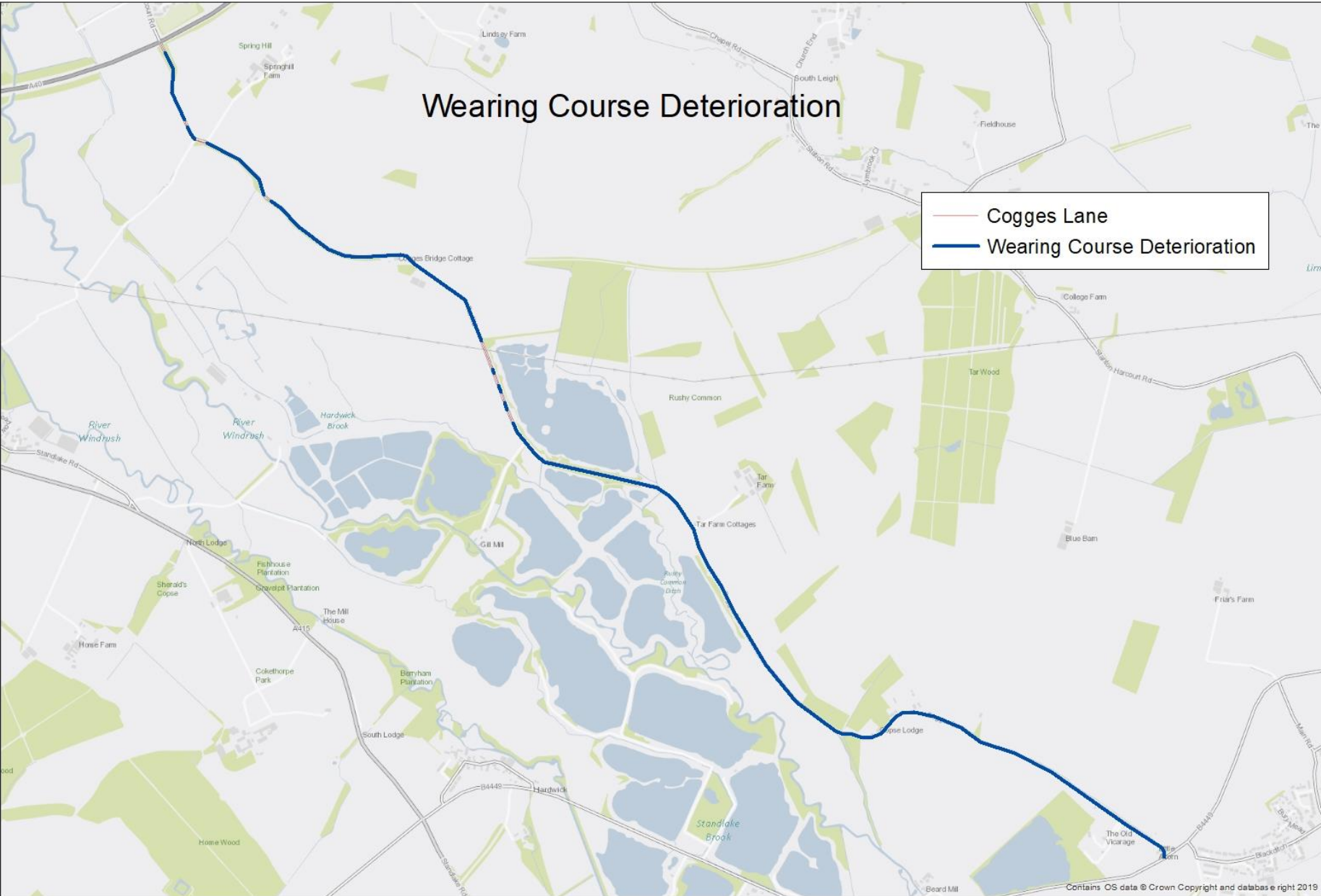


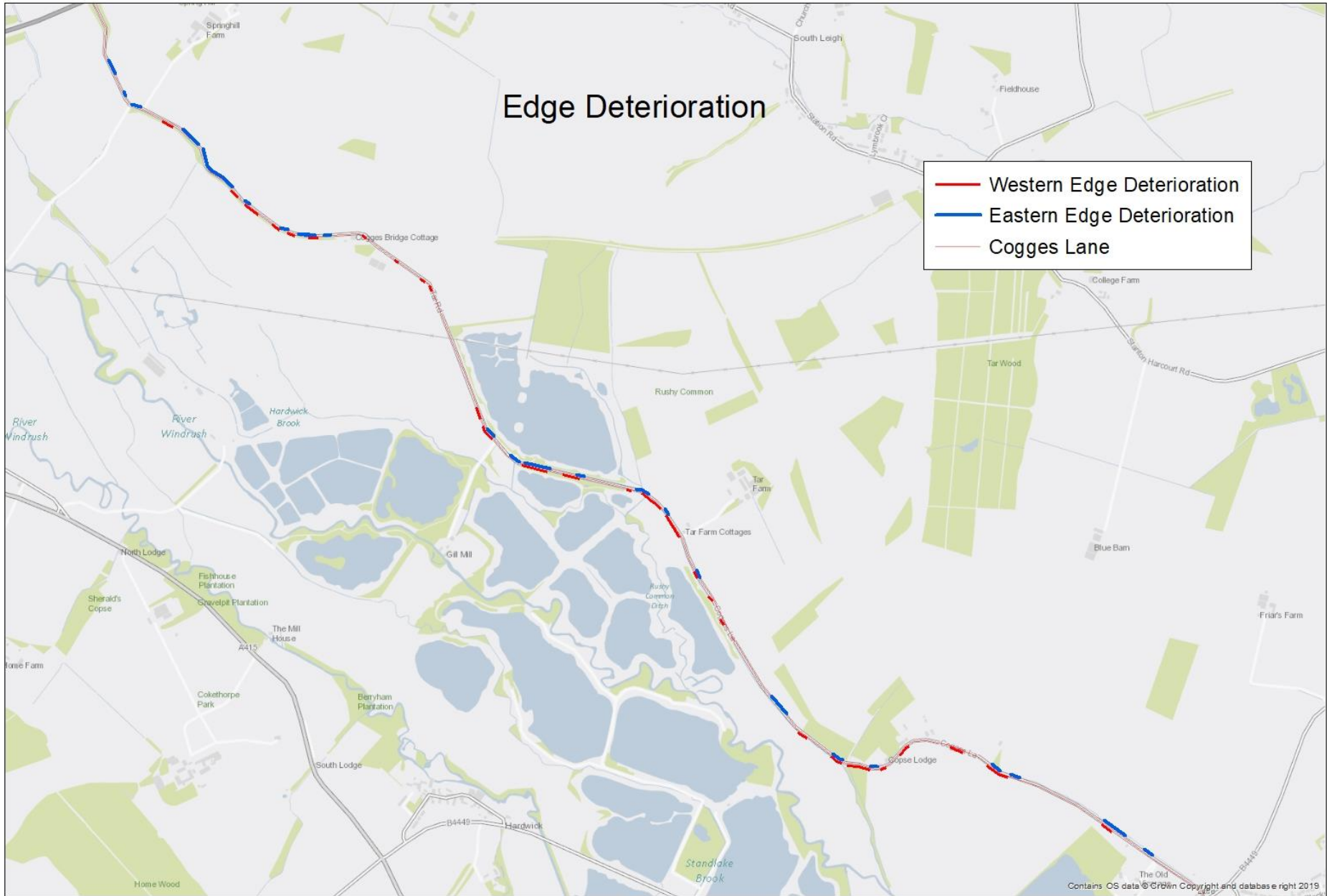


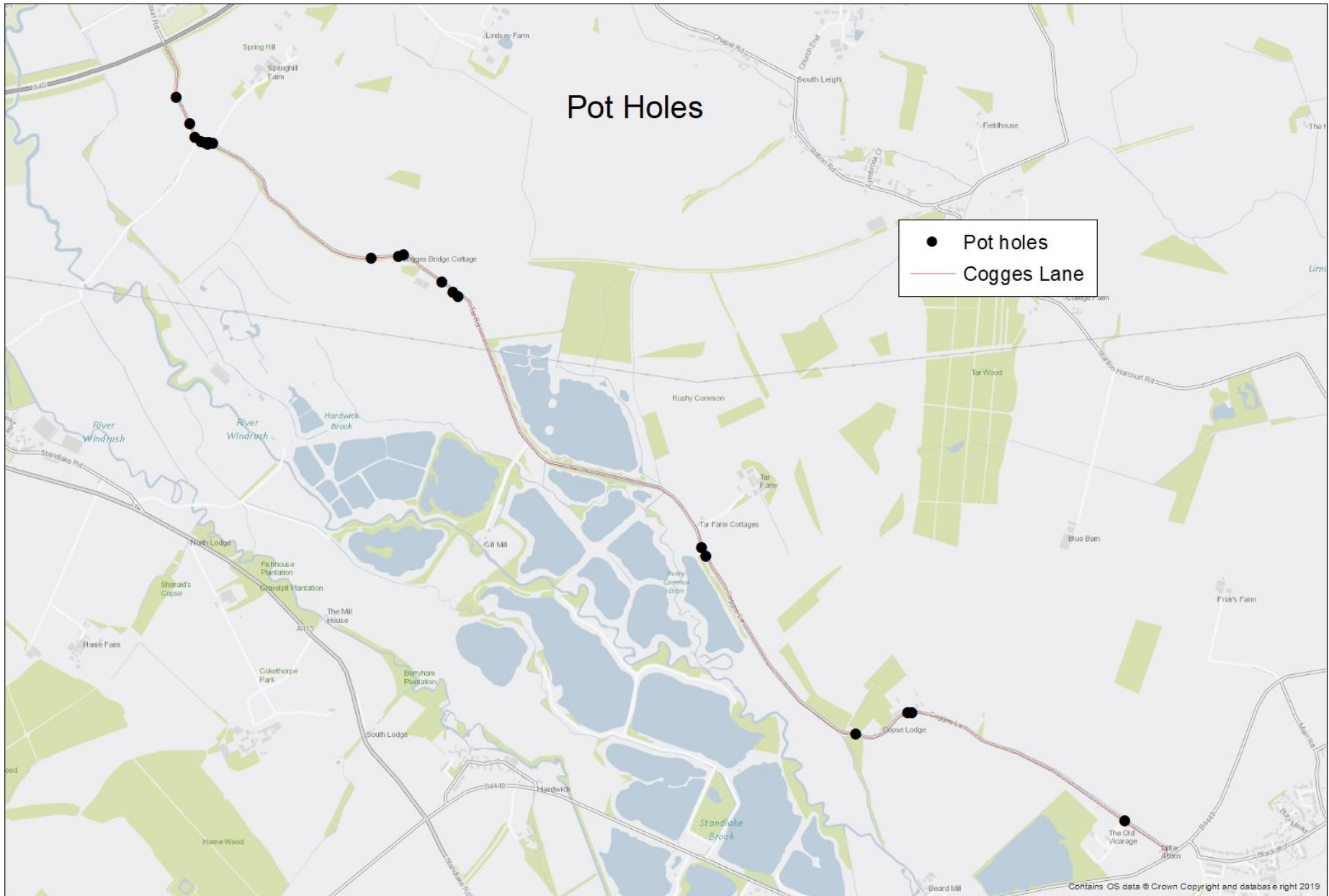
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Wearing Course Deterioration




— Cogges Lane
— Wearing Course Deterioration

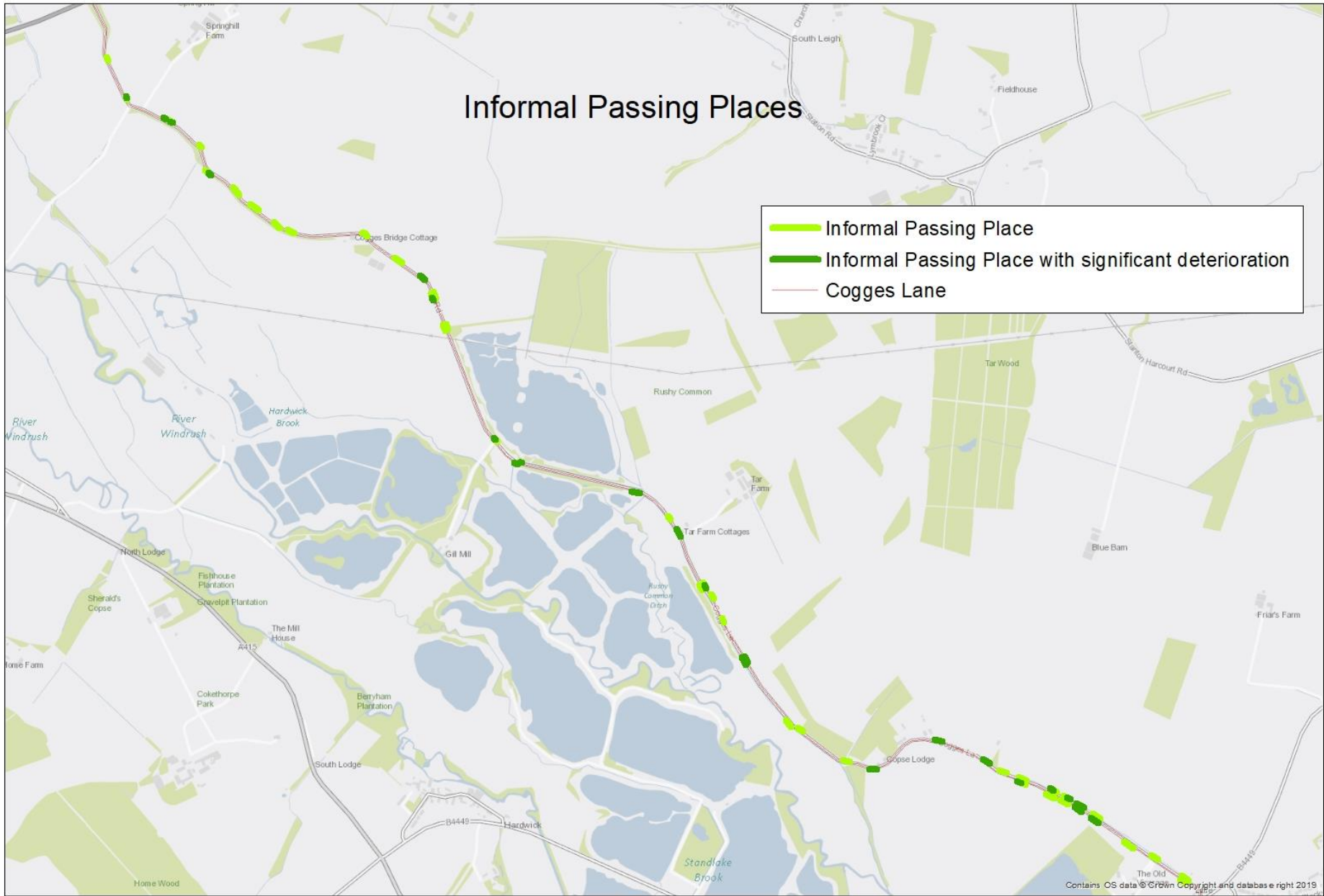






Informal Passing Places

-  Informal Passing Place
-  Informal Passing Place with significant deterioration
-  Cogges Lane



16. Appendix C: Fix my Street Public Submissions

Date	Problem	Outcome	Comments
2018	Inadequate passing places	Closed to updates	Submitted: The single track High Cogges road from Oxford Hill tyo Stanton Harcourt is the only way to connect to the A415 without getting snarled up in the witney town centre tarffic. It is becoming more popular and the inadequate passing places and potholes are dangerous and inadequat
2017	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: Large pothole just after farm buildings on LHS heading towards Stanton Harcourt. Also significant erosion /fall away from the road at the edges which is becoming dangerous.
2018	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: Many edge potholes along route
2019	Edge potholes	Unknown	Response: this area is scheduled to be repaired by the Dragon patcher machine however I am unable to confirm the exact date. The programme is currently being prepared and work shall commence in the near future.
2018	Edge potholes	Fixed	Submitted: 25 inch pothole on edge of road
2017	Pothole	Closed to updates	Submitted: The deep groves at either side of the carriageway could damage a car if you have to suddenly pull over when a larger vehicle is coming towards you. They have been like this since last winter and need filling in.
2017	Edge potholes		Submitted: This is edge erosion which has been caused by drivers taking the decision to drive off the carriageway when meeting an oncoming vehicle onto an area of land that is not suitable for vehicles. Driving off the carriageway is carried out at your own risk.
2018	Pothole	Closed to updates	Response: Thank you for your report. The potholes in the location this report has been plotted are off the carriageway, in the verge area, which is not maintained or built for vehicles to drive on. If you have plotted this in the wrong location please submit another report and the matter will be investigated.
2018	Passing places	Closed to updates	Submitted: This is a narrow road, well used, road and is the only access road to the Tar Lakes public amenity lakes and Rushy Common Nature Reserve and bird hides. The passing places along the road have become increasingly potholed and are now dangerous to drive in. This is resulting in increased numbers of people pulling on to the grass verges and creating further issues. Response: There are no official passing places along this route. In fact there is a large permanent sign at the end that states 'Single track road with no passing places' together with an Uneven surface warning sign and an 'Unsuitable for HGVs' warning sign
2019	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: Tyre burst as a result
2019	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: At many of the passing points along this single track road there are very deep potholes that result in severe bottoming out of my standard Passat. It's only a matter of time before a vehicle becomes stuck and results in a blocked road.
2019	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: Large 1m pothole a danger to cars and cycles On right side of road heading towards witney

2016	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: There is a deep pothole starting on the inside of the bend, owing to the grass on the verge you are un sighted till you hit it.
2018	Pothole	Closed to updates	Submitted: Needs Huge pothole often filled with water and therefore not seen in the dark on this narrow single track lane, also a cycle way - used by many cyclists - having caught my tyre in it I believe it may have caused damage to my suspension as it is so deep with very defined edges, impact marked my wheel. If a cyclist were to hit this could well result in serious injury. Please repair urgently. On RHS as you drive from Stanton Harcourt towards Cogges, after the houses on the LHS but before you get to the houses on the RHS.
2015	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: Pothole south of bungalows on bend
2019	Public Footpath sign knocked down	Closed to updates	
2018	Pothole	Closed to updates	Response: Potholes on the highway have recently been marked up for repair and added to our maintenance system. There are areas along this route where drivers have chosen to drive off the highway onto the verge area which is not suitable for a car. This area is signed as a single track road with no passing places either end.
2020	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: The edge of road was sprayed with chippings to coat a passing place now this is breaking down with 3 pot holes resulting.
2016	Flytipping	Unknown	
2015	Grass length	Closed to updates	Submitted: The verges of Cogges Lane / Tar Road have not been cut this year. This makes it very dangerous to drive along as the sight lines are so poor. To make matters worse this is part of the Oxfordshire Cycle Path so cyclist are even more at danger in this single track road. Response: We have inspected this problem according to our Highways policies and have assessed that no further work is currently required. However we will continue to monitor it over the next 3 months. Thank you for your report.
2019	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: Multiple potholes between B4449 and Copse Lodge
2018	Pothole	In progress	Submitted: These two [potholes] are responsible for a recent tyre replacement x 2 that I incurred due to two cars passing each other on this narrow road. When pulling to the side to allow a car past, my car suffered hitting the attached resulting in two tyres being damaged. I broke down on the neighbouring main road and was recovered by a mobile tyre repair company who managed to temporarily fill my tyres with air and I then proceeded to the near by Abby tyre company in Witney. I understand that due to the nature of the damage being caused by this particular road, I can be reimbursed the amount of the invoice which is £150.03 inc vat. I can issue a copy of this for your if you wish.
2018	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: Theses holes are often filled with water so unable to see depth of hole - could cause injury to cyclists and damage to vehicles.
2018	Pothole	Fixed	Submitted: Large pothole damaged vehicle

2017	Passing places	Closed to updates	<p>Submitted: The road has no tarmac passing places between Stanton Harcourt and Cogges. All verges off the road are so heavily rutted they are dangerous to vehicles. Surely there is a requirement to provide hard surface passing places rather than expect people to drive off the road to allow passing??</p> <p>Response: Unfortunately the lane would pre date this era of motorised traffic and as such would as the name suggests, just be a small lane. It is unlikely that passing places were necessary prior to the surface being formalised, this is talking about many many years ago of course. Unfortunately with funding, of lack of being what it is now, providing passing places would be costly and funds simply are not available. We have erected signs to indicate there are no passing places so if people choose to proceed it as at their risk. There are alternative routes of higher quality nearby.</p>
2019	Flytipping	Unknown	
2020	Leaking water main	Closed to updates	<p>Response: The issue has been passed to the relevant team for consideration for future programmed works to put grips in, I found no evidence of any water leak at this time</p>
2020	Leaking water main	Closed to updates	<p>Response: Unfortunately there was no visible water leak and although there was standing water which I believe is from the rain at edges of the carriageway. However if there is a water leak that would be a thames water issue</p>
2019	Illegal water connection	Closed to updates	
2017	Pothole	Fixed	
2019	Flytipping	Unknown	
2019	Flytipping	Unknown	