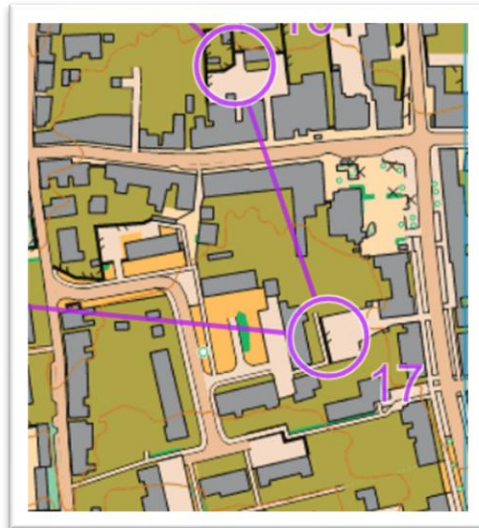


## Learning from an Urban event

### Good Planning Protects the Sport

British Orienteering recently concluded an investigation following an urban orienteering event where a small number of competitors entered a sensitive residential access route after making a navigational error.



The control (no.17) was correctly mapped and located on the east side of an uncrossable fence. Most competitors navigated it successfully, however, at least one competitor attempted to cross a mapped uncrossable fence and several competitors entered a residential area that local residents reasonably perceived to be private.

It is important to note that the fence was correctly mapped as uncrossable however could actually have been relatively easily climbed by competitors, in contravention of the rules.

Although more serious allegations made during the complaint could not be substantiated, the incident demonstrates how a small number of navigational errors can have consequences far beyond the competition itself.

### Why this matters

The impact extended well beyond the event:

- A resident experienced genuine distress and lost confidence in the sport.
- Relationships with the local community were adversely affected.
- Significant volunteer time was spent by the organising club responding to the complaint.

- British Orienteering devoted considerable time and resources to a formal investigation.
- A participant was temporarily prevented from competing whilst the matter was investigated.
- Organisers, planners and officials were required to review maps, route choices, mapping decisions, GPS tracks, video evidence and witness accounts.

All of this arose from a very small number of competitors making navigational errors during an otherwise successful event.

The lesson is not that urban events should avoid technical route-choice challenges. Rather, it is that the consequences of those challenges should be considered where they are adjacent to homes, private driveways or other sensitive locations.

### **Learning for Mappers**

Regardless of legal ownership or public access rights, residential access routes should be considered sensitive locations where interaction between competitors and residents is foreseeable and may cause concern. Where competitors should not enter such areas, they should normally be represented using the olive-green private area symbol or other appropriate out-of-bounds symbols, even if they are physically accessible.

A private alley or residential access route that is clearly visible may still need to be represented where omitting it would mislead competitors. However, this should be done in a way that clearly indicates that the area is not available for use. As a general principle, paths within sensitive residential areas that competitors should not enter should not be mapped as runnable routes.

### **Learning for Planners, Controllers and Organisers**

Urban events inevitably involve complex route choices, but they also require careful consideration of community impact.

#### **When planning events:**

- Consider not only the intended route choices, but also the routes competitors may take if they make a navigational error.
- Pay particular attention to residential access routes, private driveways, courtyards and areas where members of the public may reasonably expect privacy.

- If there is any reasonable doubt about whether a route is appropriate for competition use, err on the side of caution. It is generally preferable to remove, omit or otherwise discourage use of a questionable route than risk competitors entering a sensitive location.
- Ask not only "Can competitors get there?" but also "What happens if they get it wrong?"

Good planning is about reducing the consequences of foreseeable mistakes, not just designing the intended route.

### Learning for Competitors

**Competitors play an important role in protecting the reputation of the sport.**

#### Remember to:

- Respect all mapped uncrossable features and out-of-bounds areas.
- Use the control description as well as the map when approaching controls.
- If a route proves impossible because of an uncrossable feature, reroute rather than attempting to negotiate it.
- Treat members of the public with courtesy and respect at all times, recognising that every interaction contributes to the reputation of orienteering – follow the [Code of Conduct!](#)

### A Shared Responsibility

Most urban events take place without incident, thanks to the careful work of planners, controllers, organisers and competitors.

This investigation demonstrated that a single navigational error can escalate into a significant complaint, a lengthy investigation and reputational damage for the sport. By giving careful consideration to sensitive locations, reinforcing existing competition rules and maintaining positive relationships with local communities, we can continue to deliver challenging urban orienteering while protecting the goodwill on which future events depend.