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**Countryside
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John Ilet and Scott Black
Crest Nicholson
Crest House
Pycroft Road
Chertsey
Surrey KT16 9GN

29th October 2009

(Sent by e-mail to john.ilet@crestnicholson.com & scott.black@crestnicholson.com)

Dear Mr Ilet and Mr Scott

Consultation Response; West of Bewbush Development; Crest Nicholson open Day – October 2009

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS).

About CAFWS

CAFWS, a Local Access Forum, is an **independent statutory advisory body** established under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to give advice on countryside access matters. It has a balanced membership of knowledgeable and experienced users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers), landowners and other interests (including conservation, disabled access, landscape). More information about the Forum and its work can be found at www.westsussex.gov.uk/cafws.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex. Hosham District Council is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.

Comments

CAFWS, in accordance with its remit to protect and improve access to the countryside, has been keen to ensure from an early stage in the planning of this development, that green infrastructure and green corridors were an integral part of the Masterplan. The location on the urban fringe of Crawley made this especially important, as it provided opportunities to enhance the existing RoW network, in line with the aims and objectives of the West Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan (www.westsussex.gov.uk/rowip).

Early discussions with Horsham DC and Crawley BC resulted in the inclusion of a green multi-user circular route around the development, with access to the wider rights of way network, and included restoration of safe links to the south over the A264 and safe links over the railway. CAFWS supported this Masterplan at the Examination in Public, although continue to pursue a separate bridge crossing for Bridleway 1550. We have written evidence from Network rail that they will be looking for closure and diversion of the current unmanned level crossing (recent press articles reveal that the level of misuse of such crossings in West Sussex is at a

five year high), and we had concerns, stated in our submission, that the eastern bridge proposed for NMUs (Non-motorised users), buses and emergency vehicles, would at some stage in the future be opened up to other vehicular traffic, a concern strongly denied by Crest Nicholson to the Inspector at the EIP (Examination in Public).

The Masterplan was approved by the Inspector, and we understand is now the Principle Policy Document, subsequently being approved by Horsham DC and Crawley BC. Whilst the Inspector was not convinced that the expense of a fourth, separate bridleway bridge could be justified, he did accept "that this is an important issue because of the recreational potential of the bridleways's linkages to other attractions and networks." (Inspector's report, para 9.12). The Inspector's Recommended Changes to JAAP paragraphs 4.34 , 4.35 and Policy WB 15 (which we understand to be binding) support and add weight to the green infrastructure proposals shown on the Masterplan.

CAFWS is therefore very concerned to hear that the Plans on show at Crest Nicholson's recent Open Day, contained substantial changes as regards access routes. The multi-use circular perimeter route has been removed, along with the western NMU bridge crossing of the railway. The eastern bridge crossing, originally for walkers, cyclists, equestrians, buses and emergency vehicles only, is now proposed to be the primary vehicular route to and from the area of the development north of the railway line, in addition to carrying BW 1550.

Although we accept that flexibility in some aspects of the Masterplan will be necessary as further studies are done, the changes proposed to the green infrastructure are considered fundamental, and nothing we have heard provides sufficient justification for these changes. Crest Nicholson clearly believe that leisure routes are of very little importance compared to utility routes. CAFWS disagrees with this view. The circular route would provide enormous benefit to both new residents and existing local users for informal leisure and recreation, and enhance their quality of life, meeting the requirements of the Governments Healthy Living agenda.

Despite clear references in the JAAP and the Inspector's report, Crest Nicholson claim not to have understood they were required to provide a multi-use circular route within the development, although the Inspector quite obviously considered the multi-use circular green route as separate from the existing public rights of way. They propose that BW 1550 would provide such a route on the north and east of the development. This will result in greatly increased use of BW 1550, and thought should be given to its capacity to cope with this. Certainly on the eastern side, the bridleway will need substantial improvement work.

It is also worth noting that there is a proposal to have a bus route to the north side of the railway on the eastern side, which will require the loss of significant mature woodland. This will sever the existing BW 1550 by a road, and will be a major impact on the rural nature of the route.

Crest Nicholson do not wish to provide a route on the western side, claiming the track on the ground on this side is not a PROW (which is correct) and that, therefore, they do not need to keep it. Not providing this western link adds to their argument for not providing a western bridge. They propose that instead NMUs are brought back to the vehicular bridge in the middle of the development, which would be extra wide to give room for NMUs and would be known as a "green bridge". In the Masterplan, this

bridge was shown as the main (and only) vehicular access to the northern section of the development (800 houses).

The eastern bridge, shown in the Masterplan as only for walkers, cyclists, equestrians, buses and emergency vehicles, is now proposed by Crest Nicholson to be the primary vehicular route to and from the northern part of the development. This bridge is also shown as a bridleway. If this does happen, it would mean BW 1550 would change from a pleasant rural path, to a busy road through the development, albeit with a safe crossing of the railway. The developers argument for this is that by making the vehicular route longer and more difficult for car users, they will be promoting and encouraging other means of travel. CAFWS does not support this change of use for the eastern bridge, especially as the level crossing will be closed.

Although BW 1550 could form the northern and eastern sides of a multi-use circular route (with improvements paid for by the developer), CAFWS believes that the southern and western sides of the route should be provided, and this would include an NMU only western bridge. The JAAP, Access Infrastructure, para 4.115 wording states "Three bridges should be provided across the railway line; a central bridge for all modes of transport; an eastern bridge for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and emergency vehicles; and a western bridge for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

Thank you for considering these comments. They have also been sent to Hilary Copleston, Horsham District Council and Steve Dennington, Crawley Borough Council.

Yours sincerely



Jane Noble

Forum Officer, Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

www.westsussex.gov.uk/cafws

Copy for information to:

Hilary Copleston – Horsham District Council
Steve Dennington – Crawley Borough Council
Nick Scott – WSCC, Access Ranger
Paul Addison – WSCC, Development Plans
Peter Brown – Chairman, CAFWS
Glynn Jones – Vice-Chairman, CAFWS
All members of CAFWS

Craig Bowdery – Secretary to the Forum
Lisa Creaye-Griffin – WSCC Rural Operations Group
Manager
Jon Perks – WSCC Principal Rights of Way Officer
Deborah Urquhart – WSCC Cabinet Member for
Environment & Economy