

Jane Noble
Senior Access Officer, Rural Strategy
Environmental and Economic Policy Service
(01243) 756863 (Tel)
(01243) 777232 (Fax)
jane.noble@westsussex.gov.uk
www.westsussex.gov.uk/countryside

**Countryside
Access Forum
for
West Sussex**

The Grange
Tower Street
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RH
(01243) 777100

Our reference: JN/2008.22

The Strategic and Community Planning Department
Horsham District Council
Park North
North Street
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

12th December 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

Local Development Framework for Horsham District Council - the West of Horsham Design Principles and Character Areas Draft Supplementary Planning Document.

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS). CAFWS is an **independent statutory advisory body** established under the Countryside and Rights of Way 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).

This letter constitutes formal advice from the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex. Horsham 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.

There are many excellent references in this document to the protection/enhancement of existing rights of way, the two most important of which are Old Wickhurst Lane and Mill Lane. The commitment to a sensitive setting of development in their vicinity and the retention of the character of the lanes is supported and welcomed.

However, the Forum feels very strongly, that in order to achieve these aims, at least one of these lanes, and preferably both, should have grade-separated crossings of the new southern dual carriageway to enable the many and varied users of these paths to continue their use in complete safety, and to encourage residents to walk/cycle into the countryside directly from their own homes rather than taking the car for the first mile or so.

The Mill Lane bridleway will be a strategically important link from the new development to the Downs Link, a promoted, long distance multi-user route, and the wider public rights of way network in the countryside. It will be used by walkers, dog walkers, cyclists (including children), equestrians (including children) and the disabled (including those with mobility vehicles). It will also provide, via the Downs Link, a safe off-road route to the leisure facilities of Southwater Country Park.

This bridleway is, at present, severed by the A264 at the northern end, a situation which should be addressed by the proposed downgrading of this road. As it is proposed the new southern dual carriageway will be set into a cutting. It is felt a suitable, well-designed bridge for Mill Lane would not have a detrimental visual impact, and the bridge could also act as a corridor for wildlife. In the event of the road not being in a cutting, then a subway crossing would be an acceptable alternative to a bridge.

Old Wickhurst Lane is the main route to the southern part of Mill Lane for those coming from West Horsham (via the Tanbridge-Tesco footbridge) and from the older parts of Broadbridge Heath (via the underpass beneath the A264). At its southern end Old Wickhurst Lane also links to another strategically significant footpath which runs eastwards to the A24 and via an underpass to Horsham and the public rights of way network beyond (as stated in paragraph 2.11).

The new southern dual carriageway will be the link from the A24 to the A281, and will therefore carry a very large amount of traffic, including heavy goods vehicles. The volume of traffic on new roads is almost invariably underestimated, and there are many instances all over the county, Horsham Northern Bypass being a classic case in point, where these underestimates have resulted in the severance of rights of way, as using at grade crossings is, or is perceived to be, dangerous/unpleasant. Mistakes of the past must not be repeated in this day and age, once a road is built it is too costly/not feasible to correct mistakes.

The Forum hopes these comments are helpful and looks forward to being involved at all stages of this and future relevant consultations.

Yours faithfully



Jane Noble
Forum Officer, Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex
<http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/cafws>

Copy for information to:

Peter Brown – Chairman, CAFWS
Glynn Jones – Vice-Chairman, CAFWS
All members of CAFWS
Craig Bowdery – Secretary to the Forum
Christine Luff – WSCC Right of Way Team
Leader

Lisa Creaye-Griffin – WSCC Rural Operations Group
Manager
Deborah Urquhart – WSCC Cabinet Member for
Environment & Economy