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If calling ask for

Our reference

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Fiona MacLeod

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**Eco-towns – Living a Greener Future – Consultation Paper - Proposed new Eco-town at Ford, West Sussex**

I am writing on behalf of the Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS), **an independent statutory advisory body** set up to give access advice to a number of bodies, including all levels of government, in response to this consultation. The Forum works closely with West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and other local authorities and a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) is being developed by WSCC to pinpoint deficiencies in the present network of public rights of ways (prows) and to prioritise future access.

The Forum has a remit to protect and improve public access to the countryside and is keen to contribute to this consultation to ensure that proposed large-scale development meets the needs of local people and that the chance is taken to improve opportunities for countryside access for present and future residents.

Before commenting on the consultation, CAFWS would like to emphasise the importance of considering the needs of the three main users of public rights of way (prows):

- **Walkers** – the need is to access the countryside, especially using circular routes of various lengths; internal paths need to link up with the wider network of prows and other means of accessing the countryside. Areas for **dog walking** must be accommodated.
- **Cyclists** – using cycle tracks and bridleways – an improved network will contribute to sustainable access to work and school
- **Horse riders** – riding is becoming a more and more important recreational activity around the urban fringe and contributes to the local economy

In addition, attention must be given to recreational access for all types of mobility impaired user groups, and Government initiatives highlighting the benefits of walking for health.

Although it is not appropriate for CAFWS to comment on the principle of establishing an Eco-town at Ford, the Forum welcomes the opportunity to review the consultation and has confined its comments to its primary function – to protect and improve opportunities for people to access and enjoy the countryside on foot, by cycle and by horse. The Department of Communities and Local Government is required, in accordance with section 94(4) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this Forum in carrying out its functions. High-level comments relating to the Ford proposal are shown on Appendix 1 attached to this letter.

In closing, may I emphasise that the Forum is keen to continue to contribute to the process to ensure the design of any new area of houses meets the needs of this part of the county in terms of access to the countryside. We will take steps to work with all concerned to bring forward specific proposals to enhance the network for all users. The Forum hopes these comments are helpful and looks forward to being involved at all stages of this and future consultations.

Yours sincerely,



Fiona MacLeod  
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