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If calling ask for

Our reference

Your reference

Fiona MacLeod

30th November 2007

Dear Sir

West Of Crawley Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP) - Preferred Options

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 document. You will remember that the Forum is keen to contribute to this process to ensure that the 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. Some new routes may be necessary and, with an increase in population of several thousand, existing paths will need to be upgraded.

Before commenting on the document, 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 1995 it was calculated that there were 1,140 horses and ponies kept within 5 miles of the centre of Crawley!

In the following comments on the Preferred Options document, the Forum has looked at the wider picture as well as addressing the needs of the new residents so that some mistakes of the past can be rectified. As an example, Bridleway (BW) no. 1550 has effectively been severed at the southeast corner of the site by the dualling of A264 some years ago and yet should be a locally important link to St Leonard's Forest to the south. It is worth mentioning this link has been identified as high priority and put forward as a project that would help deliver the West Sussex County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan, particularly as road severance has been identified as a major issue.

Development Vision para 2.3 – The vision is endorsed and supported

Green neighbourhoods para 2.15 – support for both objectives and the opportunity should be taken to correct past mistakes as described above.

Green infrastructure para 3.15 – We support the general thrust which should lead to better access to the countryside for all. Locating paths within the development next to existing woods and hedgerows will improve enjoyment and provide good links into the wider countryside – care must be taken to retain as much of a rural feel as possible. There are no existing paths through the site, but BW 1550 follows the eastern and northern boundary and is a strategically important route; its rural character needs to be protected and we would recommend a tree screen along the northern boundary to form an effective buffer.

Recreation para 3.75-79 – It is understood that this section is primarily looking at formal recreation, but CAFWS feels that an extra paragraph is needed to recognise the importance of informal recreation within and outside the boundaries of this development, and state as an objective improved links to the wider network of paths.

Highway Infrastructure para 3.95 – Please note that Rusper Road, Charlwood Road and Ifield Drive are all presently important routes for walkers and, particularly, horses; this use may not be possible with further build up of traffic and new parallel routes may be needed.

Highway Infrastructure Preferred Option para 3.99-100 – a new bridge over the railway needs to accommodate the three main path users. It should be noted that BW 1550 has to use a level crossing to cross the railway. The brief must also ensure there is a safe grade separated crossing of the A264 for all users.

Sustainable Transport Preferred Option para 3.104 – a cycle link should also extend westwards to Faygate Station and indeed eventually to Horsham: the establishment of a Horsham to Crawley Cycle Route is a long standing ambition.

Appendix C – Chapter 5 – CAFWS strongly supports the statement that “development should take opportunities to promote and enhance strong physical links between the new neighbourhood and adjoining countryside.” Accordingly CAFWS looks to both Councils to work with West Sussex County Council to review the condition and extent of paths and other countryside access opportunities serving that area and take steps to identify necessary improvements. Now is the time to anticipate the impact several thousand additional feet will have on path surfaces.

Appendix C – Chapter 9 – in the final paragraph of this summary, for reasons explained earlier, specific mention should be made of horse riders.

Due to timescales, this preliminary response has not been ratified at a full Forum meeting, however it has been sanctioned by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

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

Yours sincerely,



Fiona MacLeod
Secretary
Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex

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