

Comments on the West of Horsham Masterplan

By Nigel Sloan, a walker, on behalf of Countryside Access Forum for West Sussex (CAFWS)

General

1. The policy statements & visions seem to be fine. The question is to what extent they will in practice be observed.
2. At CAFWS we have had a presentation on 'An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in South East England by Patrick McKernan of the Forestry Commission which is based on the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) originally developed by English Nature, now part of Natural England. ANGSt recommends that people living in towns and cities should have:
 - An accessible natural green space within 300m from home, at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km of home, one accessible 100ha site within 5km of home; and one accessible 500ha site within 10km from home. I would have expected to find this reflected in one of the criteria used in the Sustainability Assessment, but there is nothing there of that kind. Why not?
3. Specific mention is made of horse-riding and of walking, but not of dog-walking. Given the high popularity of dog ownership in Horsham, this leisure pursuit deserves its own mention.
4. Mention is made of the need for recreational facilities & green space within the site, but not about the need to improve such facilities and spaces in the immediate vicinity of the site to cope with the greatly increased usage.
5. Where possible, the rural character of the existing paths within the development area should be retained eg retaining ancient hedgerows and providing for their future management.
6. The present route of the Downs Link through Christs Hospital is very unsatisfactory: WSCC are developing an improved route for which financial support from HDC would be welcome.
7. It is suggested that a detailed audit of all Public Rights of Way within half a mile of the area covered be undertaken to assess their condition and their adequacy for the likely increased level of usage.

Mill Lane

8. If Mill Lane is to fulfil its potential as a green corridor, then there must be an absolute commitment to a grade-separated crossing of the new southern bypass - at present the word "likely" is used, which is not strong enough.
9. If Mill Lane is to serve not only as a link for walkers/cyclists/equestrians, but also for wildlife, then the crossing of the southern bypass needs to be designed to ensure continuity of the hedgerows and grass verges as well as the central pathway. This is probably not achievable as an underpass, so would be better as a full-width earth-covered bridge planted with grass and hedge-rows on both sides. The existence of these hedgerows should overcome the normal hesitation of equestrians to cross bridges.
10. It is already mooted that for noise-abatement purposes the new southern bypass is likely to be partly in a cutting. All the more reason to put Mill Lane over it on a bridge rather than under it as an underpass. If the level of the bypass can be lowered in the vicinity of the Mill Lane Crossing, then the approaches to the bridge need not be substantial or steep.

11. Mill Lane must not be crossed by any of the streets serving the houses, but there should be small access paths off it at frequent intervals.
12. Mill Lane should continue northward across the old line of the present BBH bypass, with new hedge-planting.
13. Mill Lane should continue southwards as a high-quality multi-use path to the junction with the Downslink: fortunately it has just been upgraded by WSCC.
14. The development of Mill House as a pub (good idea) must not be allowed to interfere with the continuity of Mill Lane as a traffic-free hedged route.

Old Wickhurst Lane

15. If Old Wickhurst Lane is not needed as an access route into/out of the development, then it should be converted back into a multi-use green lane and treated in the same way as Mill Lane. It too would need a wide earth-covered bridge over the new southern by-pass so as to provide a green link to Highwood Hill.

East –west link joining Mill Lane, Wickhurst Lane & Shelley School

16. So that children attending the proposed new site of Shelley School can walk/cycle in safety to school, multi-use car-free paths should be established running east-west linking the southern boundary of the school with both Mill Lane and Wickhurst Lane.

Western end of Development Site

17. Contrary to policy, this part of the site will be cut off from the surrounding countryside by the increased level of traffic using the A264 and the new southern bypass. Will need a grade-separated pedestrian link half-way between the A264 and Mill Lane, so as to access the sports pitches and Newbridge Nurseries.
18. In order to link this part of the site to the wider footpath network, there will also need to be a grade-separated pedestrian link across the A264 roughly at the point of the gas pipeline crossing, leading to the footpath which joins the A281 just north of the existing junction with the A264.

Broadbridge Farm & Highwood Hill

19. The open spaces of both the fields and the woodland would provide a superb area for informal recreation, dog-walking etc., but it is far too important to be left to the goodwill of the landowner to provide “permissive” access. HDC should do the same here as it did at Chesworth Farm – buy the whole site and develop it as public open space, consistent with preserving the SSSI status of the woodland.

Area West of A24

20. Mention is made of the need to keep existing hedgerows, but there is no coherent plan of how it is intended to marry the need to keep hedgerows with the need for traffic-free routes through the site. This needs to be remedied.
21. Any such plan should link the proposed extension of the Horsham Riverside Walk with the crossing points over/under the railway line and the A24.

Tower Hill

22. Just south of the railway line there is some nice countryside, served by a small network of rights of way. These should be enhanced and linked in to the development, and the current dead-end bridleway 1635 (cut off by the A24) either turned into a circular route or extended across the A24 on a new bridge.

Christ's Hospital Station

23. Consideration should be given to providing cycle links between the site and Christ's Hospital Station. These would serve two purposes:

- a) Enable residents of the new development to access their nearest railway station by bicycle.
- b) Enable residents of the housing around Christ's Hospital to access the facilities of the new development by bicycle.

Riverside Walk

24. The Horsham Riverside Walk should be extended along the full length of Boldings Brook and the R. Arun, and continued alongside the Arun, under the A24, to link with the existing footpath 1628/1 which runs from Christ's Hospital Station to Mill Lane.

25. I would not support the upgrading of footpath 1628/1 to BW status, as that would destroy its character

26. Given the popularity of riverside walks, there is a case for negotiating with landowners for the extension of the Arun riverside walk downstream as far as Rudgwick.

Noise

27. Mention is made of the need for noise abatement measures for the new roads, but these need to be extended to cover the existing A24, a major source of noise pollution at present.

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