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West Sussex Local Access Forum



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Sent by email to: Steven.King@midsussex.gov.uk

Dear Mr King

WSLAF response to Land to the rear of Friars Oak, London Road, Hassocks, W Sussex – Application No. DM/19/1897

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of the West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF).

West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) is an independent advisory body, established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to give access advice to local authorities, statutory organisations and non-government organisations. In giving that advice, the Forum's main objective is to ensure the existing network of public rights of way (prows), as well as the wider access network, is protected and where possible enhanced. The Forum 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). For further information about the Forum please visit www.wslaf.org.

There is a very significant amount of development taking place south of Burgess Hill, which will greatly increase the number of vehicles using local roads. Many of these roads, and especially the A273 London Road, are already dangerous and unsafe for non-motorised users (an elderly driver and a horse lost their lives in a fatal accident on this stretch of road a few years ago), and this situation will only get worse in the future.

It is vital that vulnerable road users (walkers, cyclists, equestrians) are protected, and provided with a safe off-road network of multi-use paths, and these can be built in to the green infrastructure required to be provided in new development. This will comply with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) para 98, which states *Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks.*

Mention is made in the Design and Access Statement of building a new pedestrian tunnel under the railway, but Members feel strongly that this should be built to bridleway (multi-use) standard, to provide a safe link for the future for all vulnerable users, and connecting the development to the wider countryside.

The development should also provide a multi-use east west route by facilitating the upgrade to bridleway of footpaths 9C and 5K. This would enhance the public rights of way network, provide connectivity with the Burgess Hill Green Circle, and provide for the future safety of all vulnerable road users in the area. This will also comply with Mid Sussex Local Plan Policy DP22 Rights of Way and other Recreational Routes which states

Access to the countryside will be encouraged by:.b) Supporting the provision of additional routes within and between settlements that contribute to providing a joined up network of routes where possible.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the West Sussex Local Access Forum. Mid Sussex 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 Local Access Forum in carrying out its functions.

Thank you for considering WSLAF's comments. Members look forward to being updated on progress on this matter, and would welcome being consulted in the future on any similar matters that may impact on access.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Noble', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jane Noble, Forum Officer
West Sussex Local Access Forum

Copy for information to: All WSLAF members