

West Sussex Local Access Forum

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Draft

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Draft West Sussex Active Travel Strategy 2023-2036 & Draft West Sussex Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) - Consultation

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of 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.

WSCC Active Travel Strategy 2023 -2036

The Forum would generally agree with many of the aims and objectives of the Strategy. However, without adequate funding streams these will be difficult to achieve. We understand that levels of funding will be significantly determined by Active Travel England's (ATE) decision whether or not to upgrade WSCC's AT Level.

The draft Strategy is a review of the existing WSCC Walking and Cycling Strategy written in 2016. In para 1.2.5, ATE expects that approximately 90% of national objectives can be achieved by walking, which significantly reduces the role to be played by cycling in achieving these objectives. In this case the Strategy needs to reflect this change and to set out what criteria will be used to determine the specific locations and the specific nature of the improvements.

While 'wheeling' falls within the scope of the Strategy it seems to be under-represented within the document itself and is mentioned only in a handful of places. A more consistent approach is therefore recommended.

Active Travel (AT) schemes within the strategy mainly focus on routes between built-up areas, where the distances involved will inevitably favour cycling. The opportunity should be taken to also consider the benefits of local connections between smaller communities, including new developments. During the planning of these schemes consideration should be given to enhance or establish new connections to adjacent Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and other routes on the wider access network. Improvement to road crossings would greatly improve connectivity.

We consider that the difference between the functions of travel, i.e. between leisure and utility/functional purposes should be distinguished throughout the Strategy. PRoW can be used for transport purposes, such as travelling to school, shopping etc but their primary use will be for leisure and recreation. Improved active travel choices can allow better access to PRoWs.

We have made particular comments as follows:

Pg 8 2.1.10

We are pleased to note the inclusion of equestrians in this document. Horse riders make journeys in a physically active way, are recognised as vulnerable road users, and are in need of protection with the provision of off-road paths and signalised crossings of busy roads. We are aware that there are 24,000 horses passported to residents living in West Sussex, who make a significant contribution to the local economy.

Although Active Travel England (ATE) has advised that AT funding cannot be used directly to improve the safety of horse riders, it does encourage local authorities and funding partners to consider safety improvements for horses during the design and implementation of new or upgraded AT projects. LTN 1/20 also recommends that equestrian groups are considered in the design stage for certain AT schemes. ATE will work with local authorities to ensure that the needs of different road users are considered throughout the process.

P10 2.2.6

The Forum agrees that urban and rural AT routes, which include PRoW, connect people and places. New developments can urbanise existing rural PRoW with a change from leisure to include utility use. PRoW can be of benefit to all Non-Motorised Users (NMUs).

P11 2.3.3

We agree that encouraging people to walk and cycle more often and offering skills training e.g. cycle training in schools, will ensure the benefits of active travel are available to as many people as possible.

Travel to school is an important part of all this. While there are some good reasons why children are driven to school, we can assume that for a significant number there is a choice. By providing high quality active travel routes to school and working with schools and the County Council to encourage/persuade students to use them, that choice swings in favour of walking, wheeling or cycling.

P14 2.3.10-11

We agree that safety considerations are critical to prevent perceived risks being a deterrent to use. especially in relation to crossing busy roads.

P17 2.4.5-6

We agree that it is important to improve infrastructure for NMUs and for the need to encourage walking and cycling as a modal shift away from motor vehicles for shorter journeys.

Pg 17 2.5.1

We strongly support the view of the positive benefits that access and exposure to nature can have on people's mental health and well-being.

Pg 21 3.3.10

The draft LCWIP identifies candidate AT schemes primarily intended to support cycling. It is not clear how walking and wheeling will be considered in areas outside the scope of Borough and District LCWIPs. This risks the exclusion of the needs of rural areas.

Pg 24 4.2.3-4.2.5

We agree that all new developments should connect to the wider access network and that the needs of all active travel modes (including equestrians) should be considered within the design of all road network improvements.

Pg 25 4.3.1-2

We strongly support the need for on-going maintenance of all walking and cycling routes. Regular routine maintenance inspections should lead to prompt repair works.

Pg 25 4.4.2-4

We also agree that bus and train travel should be integrated with active travel routes as this will help maximise use.

Pg 32 7.2.8

We welcome the inclusion of WSLAF as one of the organisations to be consulted. We would support the inclusion of a group representing, or being advocates for disabled groups.

(Draft) WS Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

The Draft identifies a shortlist of schemes between significant areas of population. As these schemes will need to be supported by external funding their delivery may take some years. We would like to see a clear timeline for delivery.

We note that of the inter-community strategic cycle route corridors identified, there is one candidate scheme in the north of the county and the remainder are along the south coast. While we appreciate that priorities have to be assessed against a set of criteria, the results appeared to be skewed in favour of one part of the county and we wish to see other schemes in other parts of the county developed and brought forward as soon as possible.

However, the inclusion of the A24 corridor between Findon and Washington seems to be somewhat at odds with the other candidates, albeit that it apparently meets the selection criteria.

- Washington is not an obvious endpoint as it is neither an employment centre or transport hub, and offers onward connection north on the A24, or east – west on the A283, neither of which are suitable to support active travel in their current form
- It is not apparent if the existing PRoW (2106 or 2092) to the west of the A24 were taken into account. These PRoW are already widely used, and can connect through to Washington, albeit that a deviation is needed via the South Downs Way to pick up bridleway 2666 in order to cross safely into Washington via the bridge over the A24.
- PRoW and the Wiston Estate were involved in discussions in early 2019 to divert BW 2283 over Highden Bridge to the south, to provide a safe, grade separated crossing of the A24. The bridge was built in the 1990s to bridleway standard but never officially dedicated, although it is used by all NMUs unofficially. This project should be completed.
- A previous consultation on the A24 corridor incorporated enhancements to the junction of the A24 and the A280 (Long Furlong) for NMUs, including improvements to the connection with the southern end of bridleway 2106
- All potential routes involve relatively steep slopes at the northern end of this corridor as the A24 does not pass through a natural break in the South Downs.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the West Sussex Local Access Forum. West Sussex County 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.

The Forum looks forward to being updated on progress on the consultation, and to future involvement regarding any matters concerning access.

Yours sincerely



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West Sussex Local Access Forum

Copy for information to: All WSLAF members