



**Devon Countryside Access Forum
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Transport Planning
Room 120
County Hall
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2 January 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

Sidbury Walking and Cycling scheme

The Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF) is a local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act). Its statutory remit is to give independent advice “as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area...” Section 94(4) of the Act specifies bodies to whom the Forum has a statutory function to give advice, and this includes the Forestry Commission.

The DCAF currently has seventeen members, appointed by Devon County Council, who represent the interests of landowners/managers, access users and other relevant areas of expertise such as conservation and tourism.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum wishes to make the following comments. This response will be on the agenda for formal approval at the next meeting on 22 January.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum supports the proposal to create a cycle and walking route from Sidbury to Sidford. This accords with the Forum’s position statements and would establish a safe, off-road link.

The Forum has a number of comments to make associated with the route and design elements and advises that these are taken into consideration during the planning application process.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is a local access forum. It is required, in accordance with Sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, to provide advice as to the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment.

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The proposed route cuts directly across three arable fields. A route along existing field boundaries would normally be preferable due to the impact on the landscape from fencing and the land management difficulties associated with working the smaller field areas around the track efficiently. A route adjacent to the western field boundary would appear more sensible, subject to full consultation with any affected landowners so that their views are taken into account in the final plans.

A route positioned to the field boundary could be bordered by a Devon bank, dispensing with the post and rail fencing. This would improve the visual impact, especially as the site falls within the East Devon National Landscape area, and would create the appearance of a green lane. Subject to technical investigations, it might also remove the need for a V ditch for some of the route, thereby reducing ongoing maintenance costs.

The Forum has some concerns about cyclists using Hillside as part of the route. Hillside is narrow and there may be issues between speeding cyclists and cars / pedestrians, with no option to have a separate footpath/cycleway. A similar problem has occurred in Lypstone where the Exe Estuary Trail goes through the village. Any connection from Hillside to Ebdon Lane appears problematic and therefore it is likely cyclists will be forced back onto one of the narrowest parts of the A375 before joining the proposed eastern Phase 2 option to the north. A route west along the back of the gardens of Hillside continuing along the field boundary, as indicated in the Phase 2 indicative alignment, might overcome these issues. Connecting the route in its entirety to Sidbury would appear essential to realise the full benefits from the initial Phase 1 investment.

Lighting to improve safety would be preferable as neither the proposed route nor the route advised above are close enough to the main road to benefit from the existing street lighting.

Feedback on the Forum's comments would be appreciated.

Yours faithfully



Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum
Chair: Sarah Slade
Vice Chair: Chris Cole