



Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Tiverton EUE (Area B) Public Consultation
Growth Economy and Delivery
Mid Devon District Council
Phoenix House
Tiverton
EX16 6PP

8 April 2020

Dear Ms McCombe

Tiverton EUE (Area B) Public Consultation

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 District Councils.

The DCAF currently has fourteen 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 timing of this consultation did not coincide with a public meeting of the Devon Countryside Access Forum. This response reflects previous advice given by the Forum and will be on the agenda for formal approval at its next meeting, when a date can be arranged.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is attaching its Greenspace Position Statement to inform the development of appropriate greenspace associated with the Area B development in Tiverton.

Proposed country park and its future management

The Forum would like to provide specific comments on the proposed new country park,

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.

26 ha in size. Abutting the existing Grand Western Canal country park, the new area allocated for an additional country park will be a very valuable addition. It will create a larger total greenspace area and be an important recreational access area for residents of the new development, as well as providing sustainable transport options. However, the Forum does have some concerns, as outlined below:

The Terms of the Masterplan state that “the plan is illustrative and as such is designed to provide guidance about the quantity and location of different land uses as well as where key connections should be made throughout the neighbourhood. The plan is intended as a flexible tool so that the shape of different aspects of the new garden neighbourhood can be designed in many ways to respond to different circumstances. The actual position and alignment of routes, shape of blocks, streets and open space will of course vary from what is illustrated in the plan.”

The Devon Countryside Access Forum advises that the new country park, along with additional open space, gardens, allotments and green connections, are integral to the success of the development and the health and well-being of residents. It therefore advises that the park and additional green elements should not be diminished or compromised during the planning and development process.

The Forum regards the financing of open space and its future maintenance as highly important. Robust arrangements need to be put in place, particularly for the country park which should be considered separately from the smaller areas within the site. The Forum notes that planning obligations (section 106) may be used to finance the initial provision of the country park but that “day to day management and routine maintenance of existing open space may not be funded by S106” (MDDC Cabinet meeting, 7 March 2019). In this respect, the Devon Countryside Access Forum strongly supports comments in the Masterplan referring to the need to establish mechanisms for the funding and “robust and consistent” future maintenance arrangements as part of the planning application(s) and before any development takes place. Arrangements for an appropriate management trust or company must be explored, together with future funding in the long term, to ensure stewardship of these assets in perpetuity. As the adjoining Grand Western Canal country park is currently owned and managed by DCC, it would be appropriate for early discussions to take place to see whether a suitable agreement could be forged to secure the provision, management and maintenance of the country park in Area B. To ensure this park is used, valued and respected by local residents, it is important that it is well-managed and maintained to deliver access and biodiversity benefits.

Sustainable transport

The development of Area B provides an opportunity to ensure excellent cycling infrastructure: within the development, making use of the existing Sustrans route along the old railway line and adding new sustainable transport connections to employment, retail and leisure areas. These aspirations are included in the Masterplan and reference is made to “delivery of a robust Travel Plan including measures and targets to maximise the transport sustainability of the development, minimising its carbon footprint and any adverse air quality effects.” Mid Devon District Council is advised to ensure that developer contributions, cited in the Masterplan, towards well-connected cycling infrastructure and pedestrian links to the railway walk, Grand Western Canal and nearby rights of way are indeed secured at the outset. Maintenance of these links is a factor that also needs early consideration to ensure long term funding.

The Forum would be pleased to receive feedback.

I should be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this submission.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Hilary Winter.

Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum

*Chair: Sarah Slade
Vice Chair: Chris Cole*