



Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Ms E Harper
Planning, Transportation and Environment
Devon County Council
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
EX2 4QD

1 September 2020

Dear Ms Harper

DCC/4187/2020 – Marsh Barton Station planning application

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...” Section 94(4) of the Act specifies bodies to whom the Forum has a statutory function to give advice and this includes Devon County Council.

The DCAF currently has sixteen 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 supports proposals to develop a station at Marsh Barton and recognises the very valuable contribution this will make to sustainable transport links in and around Exeter. The new 3m wide cycling and walking bridge will enable users to avoid the narrow bridge on Clapperbrook Lane.

The Forum appreciated the opportunity to provide earlier advice and welcomes the incorporation of some of its pre-application recommendations and the feedback response included in the Community Consultation Statement.

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 Forum's main concerns relate to road safety and it is not confident this has been fully addressed in the application. It would welcome further information and feedback on these points. The key areas are:

1) Clapperbrook Lane

Clapperbrook Lane is well-used, despite its narrowness and poor lines of sight, and has become increasingly so during COVID-19. Cyclists, pedestrians and dog walkers use the lane to access the riverside trails and the Double Locks pub. Cycling movements are currently around 400 per day. Although parking at Bromhams has now been restricted to three hours maximum, it is not known whether overall car movements have diminished. Some cyclists may continue to use Clapperbrook Lane rather than the new bridge to avoid pedestrians. Car numbers may well increase as no provision for parking or drop-off has been made on the Marsh Barton side.

2) Intersection between Clapperbrook Lane, the new bridge and the station

The graphic depiction in Visualisation 1 shows that cars will have to make a sharp turn across the end of the new cycle/walkway to reach the drop off point or disabled parking at the station, and vice versa. This intersection is clearly a point where there are significant safety implications for vulnerable users and warning signs need to be clear to minimise risk. Bollards could present an additional collision risk for cyclists. It should be apparent who has priority through the use of stop signs and road markings or rumble strips on the road and the end of the cycle/walkway.

The Forum advises that prioritisation is given to marked walking and cycling trails to the station and drop-kerbs in Marsh Barton as part of s106 monies as future developments take place. Improvements to the safety of access users using the route to the Double Locks would also be beneficial as outlined in the Forum's earlier correspondence.

Yours sincerely



Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Response sent on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Vice Chair: Chris Cole*



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Marsh Barton Station

Pre-application comments

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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 Devon Countryside Access Forum is grateful for the opportunity to make observations on proposals for a new station at Marsh Barton. Following the site visit and subsequent discussions at the Forum meeting on 23rd January, the comments below have been agreed.

GENERAL

1. The Devon Countryside Access Forum welcomes and strongly supports the proposal for a new station at Marsh Barton and the potential this has for improving sustainable transport links in and around Exeter.
2. The new bridge over the railway line will improve safety and access for walkers, cyclists and disabled users
3. The proposal will link to an extensive network of cycling and walking routes.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

- a) The legal status of the new walking and cycling bridge needs to be clarified and pre-application consideration given to future maintenance. The bridge will be a valuable improvement and must be an integral part of the station proposals.
- b) Bromhams Playing Field car park could become a parking destination leading to congestion on what is essentially a single-track road. The car park is already heavily

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used by working people, dog walkers and people accessing the Exe Estuary Trail and valley parks. The vision is intended to reduce car parking in the Marsh Barton area, but this is an unknown factor particularly as additional jobs and sizeable housing schemes are part of proposals for the area. Bromhams car park and access to it should be considered as part of the overall planning application and discussions.

- c) Visibility over the hump-back bridge is poor and there are limited passing places on Clapperbrook Lane. The Devon Countryside Access Forum does have concerns about increased usage of this road and the impact on vulnerable road users. Construction of the new bridge may provide the facility to create a passing place on the canal side of the existing bridge.
- d) The Devon Countryside Access Forum recommends that the off-road route should be extended closer to the eastern boundary of Grace Road playing fields and Salmon Pool bridge.
- e) Where the new bridge and off-road route meets the main highway, safety measures will need to be put in place to reduce the risk of accidents and in particular the risk of collisions between cyclists and other users. Chicanes may not be appropriate due to risk of collision and poor access for disability users. Forum members are aware that chicanes have been removed between Digby Station and the Exeter Chiefs ground. Signage or rumble strips may be preferable.
- f) The intention is to provide no parking, other than disabled parking. The Devon Countryside Access Forum strongly recommends that some parking is considered on the Marsh Barton side to reduce traffic using Clapperbrook Lane.
- g) Drop-kerbs and improved pavements should be provided in the vicinity of the station in Marsh Barton to aid people with limited mobility or visual impairment.
- h) The Devon Countryside Access Forum advises that provision of disabled parking on the Marsh Barton side of the station needs further investigation. It is unclear how traffic movements to the Exeter Energy Recovery Facility will be managed alongside disabled parking if disabled users must cross the entrance to the energy recovery facility to park, and again to reach the station. This is also marked as a drop-off point and similar comments would apply.
- i) The proposed ramp gradient of 1:15 is acceptable so long as there are level resting platforms at appropriate intervals. See guidance and information from the Field Fare Trust <http://disabledramblers.co.uk/wp3/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Information-Sheets.pdf> and the Sensory Trust <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/factsheets/outdoor-access-3-ramps.html> The Forum advises that the length of resting platforms and distance between them should be checked.
- j) The ramp surface should be non-slip. The new bridge and ramps should be of sufficient width to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and disability access users.
- k) The new bridge and ramps should have handrails and a change of surface before ramped sections should be incorporated to warn visually impaired users.

- l) Consideration should be given to installing electric bike storage.
- m) Waiting shelters on the station platforms should be fully accessible for wheelchair and mobility scooter users.

WIDER RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE-PROOFING

- 1) The station will connect to off-road walking and cycling routes through the Riverside Valley Park and nearby green space. To ensure increased use of these routes from the station, Devon County Council is advised to investigate lighting options to encourage year-round use at commuting times. Seeking vandal-proof options and minimising light pollution is critical.
- 2) The station is likely to lead to increased use of the road and path to the Double Locks and to the Exe Estuary Trail. The Devon Countryside Access Forum recommends improving facilities for pedestrians on the road to the Double Locks, and more clearly segregating pedestrians and cyclists to reduce the risk of accidents.
- 3) The Double Locks, Exeter Quay and Exe Estuary Trail are major destinations and use of Bromhams car park area is likely to increase. The crossing of the canal bridge to the car park is difficult and dangerous, particularly in the summer, and improvements in access to the car park would be welcome.
- 4) Provision for disability access in the wider Marsh Barton area is poor. Devon County Council is advised to look at drop kerbs and ensure these are consistent over the industrial estate and located opposite each other. The condition of pavements and positioning of promotional signs on pavements should be examined to improve accessibility. At a minimum, this should be looked at when signing pedestrians to the new railway station from nearby destinations.
- 5) Providing additional car parking on the Marsh Barton side of the station would be beneficial and should be considered in the context of any new housing development.
- 6) The Devon Countryside Access Forum recommends that Devon County Council explore a s106 agreement on any new housing development in the area to assist with future maintenance of the new bridge and to help develop improvements to functional and recreational access in the wider area, as described above.
- 7) Devon County Council is advised to explore with the rail franchisee how provision for cycles can be improved, for example cycle storage on trains and access for cyclists and mobility scooters at Starcross Station and on the Exmouth ferry. This would encourage sustainable transport and recreational access across a wider area.