



Devon Countryside Access Forum

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Representation from the Devon Countryside Access Forum

Appeal Reference: APP/Y11110/W/20/3265253 Land at Pennsylvania Road, Exeter

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is a statutory local access forum set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. Its members are volunteers, appointed by Devon County Council, to provide independent advice on “the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment”. Section 94(4) of the Act specifies bodies to whom the Forum has a statutory function to give advice, one of which is the Planning Inspectorate.

The DCAF currently has fifteen members 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 notes the appeal Reference: APP/Y11110/W/20/3265253 which relates to land at Pennsylvania Road, Exeter.

The area around the proposed development on the rural fringe of Exeter has a high density of bridleways, well-used by horse riders and other recreational access users. This has been particularly evident over the past year when more people have explored their local public rights of way network. These bridleways have excellent views and link to other areas with public access at Stoke Woods and Huxham Brake, owned by the Forestry Commission, plus a number of footpaths and minor roads. Exeter has very few bridleways and these are concentrated in this area. Any development proposals should seek to both protect and enhance these resources and the public’s access to them.

Stoke Hill, accessed from Exeter Bridleway 7 to the eastern edge of the development site, is identified as an Exeter viewpoint in the Exeter Green Infrastructure Strategy 2009. The hills, including the development site, fall within one of the strategic landscape settings identified in the adopted Core Strategy 2012 – hills to the north and north west - where “the character and local distinctiveness” will “be protected

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.

and proposals for landscape, recreation, biodiversity and educational enhancement brought forward, in accordance with guidance in the Green Infrastructure Strategy, through the Development Management DPD.” (Core Policy CP16)

One of the Forum's main concerns is the safety of vulnerable road users: walkers, horse riders, cyclists, dog walkers and disabled users. The Forum recommends that account needs to be taken of existing and projected traffic flows along Wreford's Lane and Pennsylvania Road to ensure adequate provision is made for public access to this important network of public rights of way and the safety of users. The roads are very narrow at this point with no pavements.

Since its inception, the Forum has prepared several position statements to use in response to consultations. Several clauses within those are pertinent to this appeal and are stated below. The Forum advises that the Planning Inspectorate should consider whether the development meets these criteria.

Green Space position statement – April 2019

- a) High quality walking and cycling routes should link housing to schools, shops, employment areas, recreational and sports facilities and rights of way.
- b) Maintaining and seeking improvements to biodiversity, alongside provision of greenspace, should be a key target.
- c) Surfaces and use of materials should be appropriate for the intended use and respect the character of the surrounding environment. For example, it may be appropriate to have a hard tarmac surface for key routes for all users, including cyclists and disability users. Elsewhere, softer surfaces more in keeping with the environment could be adopted and allow use by other recreational access users such as horse riders.
- d) The Management Plan for any development should recognise the intrinsic importance of the existing highway network (including public rights of way), verges and heritage features as assets for the public to appreciate the landscape and access other recreational opportunities.

Local Development Frameworks and Major Developments position statement - 2015

Existing Rights of Way and other access opportunities

The DCAF advises that the council should:

- 1) recognise the rights of way network and its contribution to health, tourism and sustainability;
- 2) protect the rights of way network from development proposals;
- 3) ensure new housing developments link to the rights of way network, where possible;

- 4) seek to improve the safety for rights of way users where routes meet or run along roads.

The Neighbour Plan position statement, revised November 2020, also incorporates some of the above statements.

Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Statement submitted on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum

*Chair: Sarah Slade
Vice Chair: Chris Cole*

1 April 2021