



Devon Countryside Access Forum
c/o Public Rights of Way team
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Planning Central
East Devon District Council
Blackdown House, Border Road
Heathpark Industrial Estate
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23 July 2021

Dear Mr Stephenson

Planning application number 21/1392/FUL – car park improvements

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 list includes district councils.

The DCAF currently has fifteen 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.

This response has been agreed by DCAF members and expands on comments made during the earlier consultation in November 2019. It will be put on the agenda for formal approval at the next meeting in September 2021.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum notes the planning application for works at Joney’s Cross, Four Firs, Stowford Cross and Frying Pan car parks. The Forum supports this Phase 1 application for sympathetic improvements to the layout, entrance points and surfacing, particularly at Joney’s Cross and Four Firs which are the two main car parks on the Pebblebed Heaths. The proposed works will encourage people to use those car parks. Having these car parks as ‘hub’ sites with interpretation boards and dog bins will enable responsible use of the heaths to be promoted.

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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In line with its Disability Access Position Statement, the Devon Countryside Access Forum welcomes the provision of designated disability parking spaces. Improved, regraded surfaces will also assist use by people with wheelchairs, pushchairs or motorised mobility scooters. Some access users use transit vans to transport mobility scooters and it is therefore important that the dimensions of the disabled bays accommodate such vehicles and allow side clearance to off-load a scooter. This could be achieved by allowing extra room on the end of row disabled parking space. The Forum has previously made comments about earth bunds and advises that any exits from car parking areas to the heaths should not preclude disability use. Suitable gates, 1.5m wide, would allow easy access for all users.

In accordance with previous advice the Devon Countryside Access Forum has given, road safety for vulnerable access users is critically important. The drawings for Joney's Cross specify a 3m wide pavement and a visibility splay with drop kerbs. Improvements at Four Firs are also outlined. The Forum trusts that these will provide a safe refuge and good lines of sight of approaching traffic.

It would be helpful if signs from car parks could indicate the direction of key walk routes, with a wheelchair symbol to show whether they are suitable for such use. This is particularly important if a road crossing is needed to reach a route.

There appears to be a mismatch between the line of the bridleway (Newton Popleford and Harpford bridleway 29) and where it exits the car park, shown on the Public Rights of Way Definitive Map (www.devon.gov.uk/prow) and the bridleway exit marked on 70079322-0100-007_REV P04 (Joney's Cross Car Park General Arrangement). Extracts from these are shown in Appendix 1. It would be helpful if this could be clarified to ensure certainty and safety for equestrians (and cyclists and walkers using the route). Exiting as shown on the Plan, closer to the road junction, appears to pose road safety issues as access users using the minor road from Joney's car park, seeking to cross the A3052, could be at greater risk from vehicles and poor visibility on this section. The Car Parking Strategy states "retain this path", in other words the bridleway, "through gorse and along roadside for access to Aylesbeare Common and East Devon Way." It is also proposed to block an informal path nearby which exits onto the A3052 roadside grass verge and which currently provides a refuge with good visibility.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum would welcome feedback on its comments.

Yours sincerely



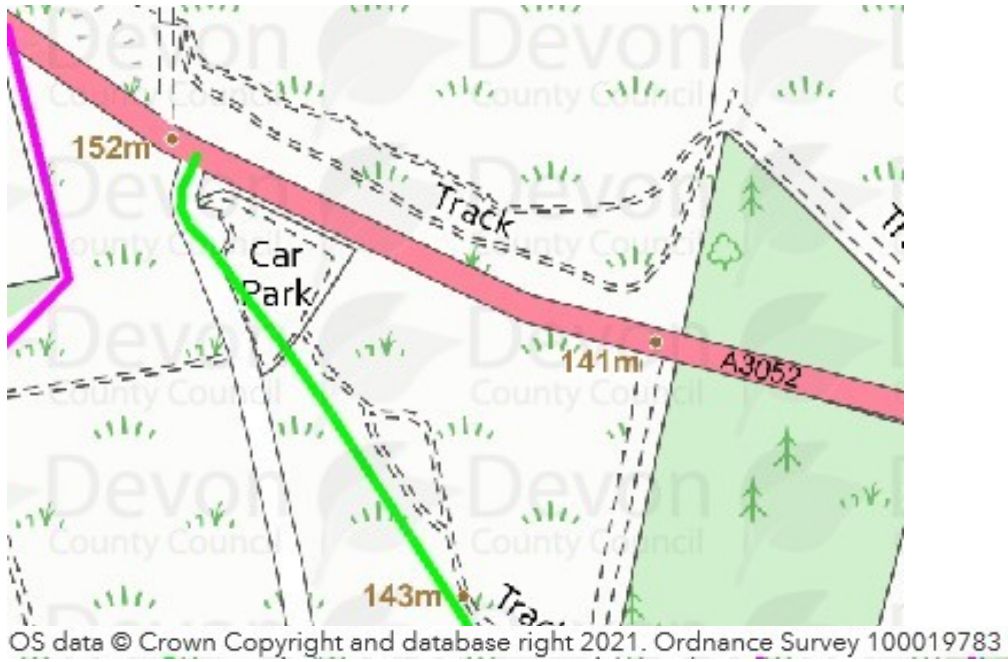
Hilary Winter
Forum Officer

Letter sent on behalf of the Devon Countryside Access Forum.

*Chair: Sarah Slade
Vice-Chair: Chris Cole*

Appendix 1 – Bridleway (Newton Poppleford and Harpford bridleway 29)

Joney's Car Park – Devon County Council Public Rights of Way interactive map



Joney's Cross Car Park general arrangement - 70079322-0100-007_REV P04

