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West Sussex Local Access Forum



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Sent by email to: HiongChing.Hii@westsussex.gov.uk

Hiong Ching Hii
Project Manager
Major Projects
Economy, Infrastructure & Environment
WSCC Highways & Transport

Dear HC

Ref : A2300 Improvements Scheme

I am responding to the above consultations on behalf of West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF).

West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) is an independent advisory body, established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to give access advice to local authorities, statutory organisations and non-government organisations. In giving that advice, the Forum's main objective is to ensure the existing network of public rights of way (prows), as well as the wider access network, is protected and where possible enhanced. The Forum has a balanced membership of knowledgeable and experienced users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers), landowners and other interests (including conservation, disabled access, landscape). For further information about the Forum please visit www.wslaf.org.

Thank you for your letter dated the 14th January 2019 in reply to our response to the consultation on the A2300 Improvements Scheme. The Forum has discussed your letter at our last two meetings and wish to respond to a number of the points raised.

For clarity and reference purposes we have copied paragraphs of the letter in blue and have added our comments below.

When the A2300 was first constructed in the 1990s, additional land was purchased to the north of the carriageway to allow for future dualling. There was no allowance made at the time for a 3m wide shared use footway/cycleway when determining the amount of land to be purchased, so therefore currently there is only room available for a 2.5m wide footway/cycleway without needing additional land outside of the existing highway boundary. However, we are considering widening the proposed footway/cycleway to 3m where possible, and have contacted a number of the landowners about this matter.

The Forum considers that a Non-Motorised User (NMU) multi-user route would provide the greatest and longest term benefit for all potential users rather than restricting use to pedestrians and cyclists. We note the available width of 2.5m at present is less than the usual minimum width for a new NMU route but many bridleways in WS that are shared satisfactorily by riders, cyclists and walkers are less than 3m wide and we do not consider this a reason to restrict types of user.

We are pleased to note that consideration is being given to increasing this width to 3m where possible and this is welcomed. This additional width increases the route's suitability for multi-use in this location as the number of horse riders is likely to be few compared to walkers and cyclists, and riders generally avoid the busiest times. Access to such a route can be a crucial link for them.

It is recognised that the proposed scheme will result in some severance of local routes, although these are not designated routes e.g. Public Rights of Way. We are looking to provide uncontrolled crossings across the A2300 either side of the A23/A2300 Services (eastern) roundabout and Cuckfield Road roundabout and also a footway/cycleway along the southern verge of the road to help access these crossing points from Pookbourne Lane and Bishopstone Lane. Several Non-Motorised User (NMU) counts were undertaken at various locations over a significant period of time last spring and summer and the results indicated that there were very few horse riders crossed the A2300. Besides, any form of controlled crossings such as toucan or Pegasus crossings will have negative impact of the business case and put funding of the scheme in jeopardy. We are, however, working closely with Mid Sussex District Council and Homes England with regard to NMU linkages between Northern Arc development and the A2300. There is also a separate scheme which looks to enhance the walking, cycling and horse riding provision throughout the area between Burgess Hill and the A23.

Many NMUs will not use uncontrolled crossings of a road with a 70mph speed limit for very obvious safety reasons. This will be detrimental to use and the A2300 will be built as a barrier to access, which Members strongly believe should not be happening. There are many examples in the county of signalized crossings being installed retrospectively (note A264 Pegasus at Kilnwood Vale), at much higher cost. For NMUs 'quiet' roads are just as important as access routes as PRoW. Although the Pookbourne Lane/Stairbridge Lane crossing is currently used by some NMUs, the perceived, and real, danger means that not all will use what they will consider to be an unsafe crossing.

We note that the movement counts showed limited use but suppressed demand is difficult to measure as crossings considered unsafe will not be used. This is particularly true for horse riders and cyclists and walkers with young children, who we all should be encouraging to use such routes for their health and well-being. In our view WSCC should not be promoting this type of uncontrolled crossing as a safe option.

We are particularly concerned about the comment that a controlled crossing at the western end of the A2300 would negatively impact the business case for the scheme. This could have a detrimental effect on access in all future road improvement schemes and we would be grateful for some further information on where this is included in the WSCC policies or strategies. The safety of vulnerable road users should be paramount.

Technically, there is no speed limit proposed for the new dual carriageway. The absence of a proposed speed limit means the road will be de-restricted, and a 70mph speed limit will automatically apply. The proposal for a de-restricted road is totally in keeping with the rural nature of the dual carriageway, and fully in accordance with the fact there will be no street lighting, except at the roundabouts. It is worth noting that Surrey and Sussex Police has confirmed that they would not support a speed limit of 50mph along the dualled A2300 as such measures would not be self-enforcing. Moreover, the County Council's speed policy, which is dictated by the national policy towards speed limits, is to impose a national speed limit at rural locations unless there is sufficient justification to lower the speed limit i.e. through villages, at accident hotspots, or along stretches of sub-standard road construction, etc. As this will be a new dual carriageway constructed to current standards through a rural area with no street lighting (except at the roundabouts), there is little justification at this stage to propose anything other than a national speed limit.

In our view a road of this type with no controlled crossings will be a barrier to access from south to north and vice versa for many years to come. We believe the speed limit is irrelevant if a signalised crossing is delivered at the western (Hickstead) end of the A2300 near the roundabout (which itself has lighting) which link off-road paths to Pookbourne and Stairbridge Lanes and/or to Jobs Lane. The 70 mph speed limit reinforces our view of the need for a safe NMU crossing, such as a bridge or Pegasus. As more development is planned along either side of the road, the rural nature will become more urbanised, and residents both present and future will wish to cross this road at the western end whether walking, cycling or riding.

The design is at preliminary stage at present, and due consideration will be given to sight lines, tactile paving and dropped kerbing arrangements and signage during detailed design stage. It should be noted that there is very limited amount of space available under the existing A2300 overbridge at West End Farm, but we will endeavour to incorporate a maximum gap between road and footway/cycleway during detailed design stage. All design will be subject to road safety audits.

We welcome the intention to include the current access proposals in the scheme within a wider Burgess Hill network but consider that the design should allow for future access needs and should not be focussed solely on transport requirements. It is difficult to understand how an at-grade, uncontrolled NMU crossing of a 70mph dual carriageway would meet the requirements of any road safety audit.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the West Sussex Local Access Forum. West Sussex County Council is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this Local Access Forum in carrying out its functions.

Thank you for considering WSLAF's comments. Members look forward to being updated on progress on this matter and would welcome being consulted in the future on any similar matters that may impact on access.

Yours sincerely



Jane Noble, Forum Officer
West Sussex Local Access Forum

Copy for information to: All WSLAF members