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West Sussex Local Access Forum



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Sent by email to:

A29Realignment@westsussex.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

WSLAF response to A29 Realignment Scheme

I am responding to the above consultation on behalf of the 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.

The Forum's main concern in regard to this Scheme, is to ensure that all opportunities to improve and enhance facilities for non-motorised users (NMUs) are considered. This should include looking at providing/creating links, ideally multi-use (bridleway) links, to the wider network of public rights of way (PRoWs) outside the Scheme area, both to the South Downs National Park (SDNP) to the north, and the villages and coast to the south.

One of the stated benefits of the proposals is to improve pedestrian and cycle connections and to provide new facilities. Members consider that the Scheme should provide an opportunity to improve access for as many vulnerable road users as possible, walkers, cyclists, equestrians, and the disabled. The construction of any new development and road with the consequent increase of traffic on local roads, requires well thought out provision for local NMUs, to avoid the unintended consequence of creating a barrier to access.

WSSC's [Rights of Way Management Plan](#) (RoWMP) and the Arun Local Plan both recognise the lack of NMU routes (PRoWs) on the Coastal Plain, the network is described as "disjointed and deficient in bridleway access", and the need to improve and provide safe access is acknowledged. Members would like to see NMUs encouraged to leave their cars/horseboxes at home, but in order to do this facilities provided must be easy to access and use, follow a natural desire line, and be enjoyable and safe.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 75 states '*Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local Authorities should*

seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way'. The Forum believes that providing a safe road crossing is just as much a 'link' as providing a new public right of way. In both cases the intention is to provide a safe connecting network that all NMUs feel comfortable using.

The proposed provision of a shared footway/cycleway alongside the new road is welcomed, especially the green verges and planting of trees, to provide protection and a better environment for users. The opportunity for this to be a multi-user route suitable for all NMUs where this would improve connectivity by allowing links between routes off the road should be considered.

Members have raised concerns regarding NMU provision north and south of the new road where they have no alternative but to use the existing infrastructure of busy and unsafe roads, which will be a deterrent to many potential users. To the north, the new road crosses FP 318 (which exits on to Eastergate Lane), and consideration should be given to upgrading this to bridleway, and providing a Pegasus crossing, to link the new road north to the SDNP (via the Fontwell underpass), ideally through the creation of a new off-road route north to Wandleys Lane. The southern end of FP 318 exits onto Barnham Road, and the safety of NMUs here needs to be addressed. To the south, a link to an upgraded Chichester & Arundel Canal (FP 200/00_1) would provide safer access for NMUs. The creation of safer routes will encourage sustainable journeys and improve access, as referenced in WSCC's Walking & Cycling Strategy 2016-2026.

Another point of potential conflict for users are the roundabouts, where users will have to cross the busy roads. Again reference should be made to the Walking & Cycling Strategy 2016-2026. The design of roundabouts should 'design out' risk to NMUs. An example of a good junction/roundabout design is contained within the Shoreham Sustainable Transport Package Study and 'Dutch' style roundabouts reduce risk to users.

The proposed route crosses a number of existing Public Rights of Way (PRoW). In the northern section it is stated that there will be a 'pedestrian and cyclist bridge' yet in the southern section there will be 'improved connections to PRoWs'. There needs to be a consistency of provision and nomenclature here. The Forum considers that these bridge connections should be suitable for all NMU use to maximise the benefits of the scheme.

The rights of way crossed by the proposed new road are all footpaths and there would be no legal access for cyclists. This ability for proposed users of the new road to access existing PRoW requires clarification. Consideration should therefore be given to upgrading routes, as mentioned above, to provide an integrated network. For example a link between Westergate and the school in Eastergate would provide a safe sustainable route.

The new development will provide a further opportunity for multi-users paths both within and around developments, which can link to the wider network. The West Sussex Rights of Way Management Plan 2018-2028, Vision and Objectives, includes objectives "to improve path links to provide circular routes and links between communities and to improve the PRoW network to create safe routes for both leisure and utility journeys, by minimising the need to cross busy roads."

During the construction stage of the scheme it is important that access is maintained to existing PRoWs as much as possible. Information both on site and on-line should be readily available to advise users of temporary closures and diversions.

At this time WSLAF would welcome the opportunity to be involved in a more detailed design of the route, so that all possible improvements to NMU facilities can be highlighted.

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.

Yours sincerely

Jane Noble

Jane Noble, Forum Officer
West Sussex Local Access Forum

Copy for information to: All WSLAF members