



Arun District Bridleways Group

Please reply to:
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Content below entered direct as a Response & Objection on the Arun Online Consultation Portal:

Re: Consultation on Ford Airfield Development F/4/20/OUT

1. Introduction

1.1 The Arun District Bridleways Group was invited by Arun District Council to make a consultation response on the above. The Group represents those non-motorised users who are legally entitled to use public rights of way designated as bridleways namely pedestrians, horse riders, cyclists and the disabled. The West Sussex coastal plain is recognised as being particularly poorly provided with rights of way which allow use by other than walkers, a situation which opportunities such as the redevelopment of a large greenfield site such as this should be looking to redress. The Ford site is situated between the coastal plain villages of Yapton, Ford and Climping and is surrounded on three sides by land characterised by Arun District Council as “countryside”.

2. Scheme as Proposed

2.1 Whilst the Group welcomes that the applicant, via Transport Consultants iTransport, are making a number of improvements for walkers and cyclists, it is somewhat disappointing to note that at the present time, despite requests noted on the planning portal from West Sussex County Council Highways and the Rights of Way Department and comments from ourselves and the CPRE, the applicant is only saying they are “willing to consider” routes for equestrians, and are trying to defer this to detailed application stage.

2.2 The Group has not had a good experience with this approach with developers on other sites; where unless such routes have been obligated at outline stage, the developer usually proves resistant to making later changes. Additionally, the Group would make the point that the lives of horse riders and their horses should matter as much as those of the other user groups, and it is therefore to be hoped that the developer applicant will agree to adopt a more inclusive approach at this stage, since the site is ideally situated to just by itself make an enormous improvement to the network of bridleway routes available on the coastal plain, and to enable or encourage wider connections when further opportunity permits.

2.3 The applicant developers' Transport Consultants iTransport comment at paragraph 3.8.3 of the Sustainable Accessibility Addendum Note (Aug. 2020) document on Arun's Planning Portal, as justification for their non-inclusion of routes for equestrians to date, that an audit had not "witnessed any equestrian users entering the site in its current form". This is hardly surprising since the site is private land, crossed only by footpaths. They also comment that the site does not "include any specific equestrian generating uses". However, we would comment that it would be reasonable to assume that amongst the occupants of the proposed new 1500 homes, will be those who either already own horses - or are moving to the country in the expectation that they or their children can take up riding, which the BHS approved Riding School located at Arundel is well placed to accommodate. One of the affects of the Covid 19 crisis is the movement of many people from urban areas to places like West Sussex, where they hope to enjoy a better work/life balance, including more and better access to the coast and countryside.

2.4 Various equestrian premises are located near to the site and in nearby villages, but it should also be borne in mind that, In making up a 1 hour ride, equestrians and cyclists can cover several miles using bridleways and suitable local roads & lanes, which makes any new bridleway network useful to the wider community, not just those situated in the immediate proximity.

3. Policy

3.1 The Group can support it's position by drawing the developer applicants and Arun District Council's attention to:

3.2 The adopted **Arun Local Plan 2011-2031**, especially Transport policy 15.1.1. (6th bullet point), paragraphs 15.2.5 and 15.2.8, Policy TDM1 especially bullet point d. , paragraph 15.2.11 and policy T SP2.

3.3 The **West Sussex Rights of Way Management Plan 2018-2028**. Pages 6-7 talk about the issues on the coastal plain. Under "Improvement Schemes" the final paragraph on page 13 mentions the aim to achieve at least bridleway status and be as inclusive as possible and the Action Plan on page 17 says at point 8 it will seek to positively influence the planning process proactively looking for public rights of way gains for all non-motorised users (links and upgrades) affected by development.

3.4 The **West Sussex Transport Plan 2011-2026** – para. 1.4.5 concerns Equestrianism in West Sussex and talks about the importance of equestrianism to the County's economy. It says horse riders form a significant but vulnerable road user group which "we will support and seek to protect". The second and third bullet points concern taking opportunities to

improve facilities and “ensuring that equestrian needs are considered wherever possible in highway and maintenance schemes”. The Arun District Bridleways Group would comment that a good bridleway network is vital to a thriving equestrian sector.

3.5 The **Arun Design Guide SPD** (Jan. 2021) – current proposals both within and outside the scheme which exclude equestrians do not correspond to the spirit of the guidance – see especially page 45, bullet points 4 and 5 under “Developing a Design Rationale, Make Sure That the Scheme”; paragraph 1 on page 50 under “Movement Framework”; page 51, paragraphs 2 and 3 and bullet points 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8 under “Make Sure That the Scheme”.

3.6 The lack of a current bridleway network outside the site to connect with should not prevent bridleways being designed into the scheme. The site is adjacent to five public highways, Ford Lane, Rollaston Park, Horsemere Green Lane, Yapton Road, and Church Lane/Ford Road, therefore there is every ability to connect bridleway routes through the site to other highways of a higher status. In addition, even where the applicant does not control a public right of way route which continues over land in the control of another, this does not prevent the Highways Authority from obligating the applicant to upgrade the route over the land which he does control. For nearby precedent on this see the Section 106 Agreement for strategic site SD7 in Yapton.

4. Desire Lines

4.1 Greenway along route of old Portsmouth & Arundel Canal

4.1.1 The developer applicant has the ability to give back a significant portion of the line of this route, which was diverted in 1963, and to help fulfil local aspirations to make this into an east/west Greenway along the coastal plain at bridleway status. The line of the old canal and its remaining features are a protected heritage asset in the Arun Local Plan. Arun’s Conservation Officer recently stated that he supports the Greenway project (Drove Lane reserved matters application comments). The Ford site developers’ current intention, however, does not seem, from the illustrative layout, to be doing anything except “reflect the line” which could mean anything, but certainly doesn’t seem to be attempting to reinstate the route so far as is possible and incorporate the Greenway. Any agreed route should have the potential to continue on to Yapton where Yapton Parish Council are supportive of the Greenway. The potential importance and utility of this route should not be underestimated and it should be incorporated for all users.

4.2 North/South

4.2.1 As per the various quoted policies, there is a desire for equestrians to be able to both safely access the coast and reach the extensive bridleway network in the South Downs National Park (SDNP).

4.2.2 **It is very disappointing, therefore, that there is no mention of inclusion of equestrians on routes agreed with West Sussex County Council and Arun District Council designed to safely get other users to a) Byway 197 at Climping in order to access the beach when this byway is regularly also used by horse riders; b) to and over the railway line at Ford, necessary to get northwards; and c) a proposed new link to path 206 (Arun’s proposed route as a “green link for sustainable transport and leisure between Arundel and Littlehampton” as per policy T SP2) which, in accordance with policy 15.1.1 should**

include equestrians. Clearly a holistic approach to the various options between the developer applicants, Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council is required, including consideration of the consented development south of Horsemere Green Lane and associated proposed highway improvements. The inclusion of equestrians on suitably designed routes which include safe road & rail crossings should be addressed.

4.2.3 A safe north/south route to access the SDNP has become even more attractive in this locality since Highways England announced Route Grey as the preferred offline option for the Arundel A27 bypass. This will enable easy access to bridleways west of Arundel from Tortington and Binsted which have long been truncated by the current road, as the old section is downgraded to a local road. **A safe route northwards for equestrians as well as other users to enable access to Tortington Lane & Arundel should be provided by Arun's Green Link – policy T SP2.**

5. Conclusion

5.1 We are pleased to note that the developers Transport Consultants iTransport indicate a willingness to engage over requests to include routes for equestrians, but would comment that a suitably well designed scheme for a large Greenfield site set within countryside should easily be able to accommodate equestrians alongside other users in a fashion which feels comfortable for equestrians, other path users and residents of the site. Equestrians are used to sharing routes with pedestrians and cyclists and can be included on routes which are designed for all non-motorised users.

5.2 In addition to the north/south route between the coast and the SDNP as noted in various policies, we would also highlight how potentially useful the proposed Greenway along the old canal route could be in providing a safe traffic free route for all non-motorised users along the coastal plain, which no other proposal could so effectively provide, and would urge that this be accommodated within this scheme.

5.3 We would also ask that as a matter of urgency, the points under 4.2 of this consultation response are addressed in order that equestrian needs can also be accommodated on schemes outside the immediate site area in a way that is inclusive and non-discriminatory.

5.4 We feel that a commitment to provide bridleway routes should ideally be obtained at outline stage, since often developers sell sites on and the new developer unwilling to make good on previously stated intentions which are not binding.

5.5 The writer would be pleased to provide any further assistance if required.

Yours faithfully

Julie Robinson (Mrs)
Chair – Arun District Bridleways Group

