

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

The British Horse Society

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Bringing Horses and People Together

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The logo for The British Horse Society, featuring the text "The British Horse Society" in white serif font on a dark red square background.

Local Plans
South Staffordshire Council
Community Hub
Codsall
Staffordshire

23 December 2022

Dear South Staffordshire Council

Local Plan Review Publication Plan Regulation 19 Response

The response below is from the British Horse Society however our volunteers in the county may also respond at a local level.

Overall

The British Horse Society is the UK's largest equestrian Charity, representing the UK's 3 million horse riders. Nationally equestrians have just 22% of the rights of way network and are increasingly forced to use busy roads to access them.

Between 29.02.2020 – 28.02.2021

- 1,010 road incidents involving horses have been reported to The British Horse Society
- 46 horses have died
- 118 horses have been injured
- 130 people have been injured
- 45% of riders were victims to road rage or abuse
- 80% of incidents occurred because a vehicle passed by too closely to the horse
- 43% of incidents occurred because a vehicle passed by too quickly

This illustrates the importance of new developments being designed to protect, improve and extend provision will help to prevent these numbers from increasing in the future. 'Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users' (NPPF, s100).

DEFRA has recorded a population of 6,092 horses in the postcode areas DY3, DY7, ST17, ST19, TF11, WS6, WS12, WV4, WV5, WV6, WV8, WV9, WV10, WV11, (2021). The contribution per horse to the economy, according to BETA (2019), is £5,548, therefore in this case a significant contribution of £33,798,416 per annum. Rodbaston College provides educational programmes related to the equine industry. Equestrian activities (bring your horse on holiday, pleasure rides, competitions) are increasingly popular in addition to established activities such as schooling and hacking. The equine industry provides diverse employment (vets, farriers, feed outlets, saddlers, instructors, venues, etc). Promoting, nurturing and enabling equestrian access would support the equestrian industry.

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Plans for cycle lanes or walking and cycling paths, should include equestrians to make these multi-user routes otherwise the scenario is horses become sandwiched between MPV traffic on one side and cyclists on the other. Active travel does include equestrians. Jesse Norman in House of Commons debate on Road Safety, 5 November 2018: “We should be clear that the cycling and walking strategy may have that name but is absolutely targeted at vulnerable road users, including horse-riders”.

Where there are opportunities identified to make existing footpaths useable for cyclists or new paths connecting the network, these should be multi-user routes for all vulnerable road users, including equestrians. Crossings/bridges/underpasses should be designed to include equestrians (eg 'pegasus crossings'). Several categories of public rights of way (bridleways, restricted byways and byways) and minor public roads are already shared by cyclists and other user groups. Thus, as a general principle, we believe that, for maximum public benefit and fairness, the reciprocal approach should be implemented, i.e. that new cycle paths should be shared with other user groups unless there is a specific, unresolvable reason not to do so. The provisions will futureproof the routes and engage a wider range of users in active travel and leisure which in turn will impact positively on health and wellbeing and road safety statistics.

Equestrian activity contributes to health targets. Research undertaken found that 68% of respondents participated in horse riding and associated activities for 30 minutes or more at least three times a week (University of Brighton and Plumpton College on behalf of The British Horse Society). Sport England estimate that such a level of sporting activity will help an individual achieve or exceed the government’s recommended minimum level of physical activity. According to BETA two-thirds of equestrians are women and Church et al (2010) found 37% of women who are horse riders are over 45 years of age and over a third would pursue no other physical activity.

Bilbrook

Walking and cycling routes are included with no mention of equestrian access. New developments and infrastructure design should provide opportunities to improve and extend the bridleway and byway network for the shared enjoyment of equestrians, cyclists and pedestrians. ‘Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users’ (NPPF, s100). Sustrans have a Paths for Everyone commitment therefore the NCN81 should also be accessible for equestrians and therefore the connecting routes should also include equestrians to avoid dead-end routes.

Cross Green

Active travel routes are included with no mention of equestrian access. New developments and infrastructure design should provide opportunities to improve and extend the bridleway and byway network for the shared enjoyment of all vulnerable road users. ‘Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users’ (NPPF, s100). Active travel does include equestrians therefore the NCN should also be accessible for equestrians and the connecting routes should also include equestrians to avoid dead-end routes.

Land north of Linthouse Lane

Active travel developments in this area could take the opportunity to upgrade public footpath Essington 3W to bridleway to be inclusive of cyclists and equestrians. ‘Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users’ (NPPF, s100). Active travel does include equestrians therefore the NCN should also be accessible for equestrians and the connecting routes should also include equestrians to avoid dead-end routes.

Land north of Penkrigde

Again, active travel is referred to in terms of walkers and cyclists and is therefore not ‘inclusive’ as it purports to be. New developments and infrastructure design should provide opportunities to improve and extend the bridleway and byway network for the shared enjoyment of all vulnerable road users. ‘Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users’ (NPPF, s100). Active travel does include equestrians therefore the NCN should also be

accessible for equestrians and the connecting routes should also include equestrians to avoid dead-end routes. Crossings/bridges/underpasses should be designed to include equestrians (eg 'pegasus crossings').

Design and space standards

All vulnerable road users should be included on multi-user routes; equestrians are identified as equal to cyclists in the Highway Code hierarchy of road users. Any newly constructed paths should be integrated/physically linked with the existing public rights of way network where possible and needed, clearly waymarked and recorded on either the definitive map or another publicly accessible map as appropriate. Natural surfaces, appropriate specified crushed stone or alternatives such as bound rock rubber crumb are suitable for all user groups. Dimensions and surfacing guidance is available here <https://www.bhs.org.uk/go-riding/leaflets-and-downloads/>

Green infrastructure

Cycling and walking are mentioned in this policy although equestrians are omitted. Excluding horse riders where connections are made for walkers and cyclists will further fragment the network and disadvantage this group. Infrastructure design should seek to be inclusive to comply with the ethos of the Equality Act 2010. For maximum public benefit and fairness, new green infrastructure should be for all vulnerable road users unless there is a specific, unresolvable reason not to do so. Any newly constructed paths should be integrated/physically linked with the existing public rights of way network where possible and needed, clearly waymarked and recorded on either the definitive map or another publicly accessible map as appropriate. The provisions will futureproof the routes and engage a wider range of users in active travel and leisure which in turn will impact positively on health and wellbeing and road safety statistics. Equestrian activity contributes to health targets. Research undertaken by the University of Brighton and Plumpton College on behalf of The British Horse Society, found that 68% of respondents participated in horse riding and associated activities for 30 minutes or more at least three times a week Sport England estimate that such a level of sporting activity will help an individual achieve or exceed the government's recommended minimum level of physical activity. According to BETA two-thirds of equestrians are women and Church *et al* (2010) found 37% of women who are horse riders are over 45 years of age and over a third would pursue no other physical activity.

Rural Economy/Tourist accommodation

Equestrian activities (bring your horse on holiday, pleasure rides, competitions) are increasingly popular in addition to established activities such as schooling and hacking. The equine industry generates £4.7 billion nationally and provides diverse employment (vets, farriers, feed outlets, saddlers, instructors, venues, etc). Promoting, nurturing and enabling equestrian access would support the equestrian industry including tourism.

Equine related development

It is encouraging that South Staffordshire has recognised the importance of providing for equine related development, particularly the need to consider 'suitable off-road routes'. The previous comments on other policies highlight the benefits of multi-user routes to extend and enhance the network for all vulnerable road users.

Sustainable transport

Active travel does include equestrians. Jesse Norman in House of Commons debate on Road Safety, 5 November 2018: "We should be clear that the cycling and walking strategy may have that name but is absolutely targeted at vulnerable road users, including horse-riders". Shared routes will futureproof the routes and engage a wider range of users in active travel and leisure which in turn will impact positively on health and wellbeing and road safety statistics. Equestrian activity contributes to health targets. Research undertaken by the University of Brighton and Plumpton College on behalf of The British Horse Society, found that 68% of respondents participated in horse riding and associated activities for 30 minutes or more at least three times a week Sport England estimate that such a level of sporting activity will help an individual achieve or exceed the government's recommended minimum level of physical activity. According to BETA two-thirds of equestrians are women and Church *et al* (2010) found 37% of women who are horse riders are over 45 years of age and over a third would pursue no other physical activity.

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