

BY Email - hinckleynrfi@lexcomm.co.uk

Further to our comments in August to Charlotte Leach, the Leicestershire Local Access Forum (LLAF) wishes to make further observations about this development. As an independent statutory body, set up as a result of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000, we represent the interests of everyone concerned with access to the countryside and the public rights of way network including footpaths, bridleways and byways, cycleways and areas of open access. Access includes the provision of satisfactory means of travel to, from and through locations. We are therefore concerned with local travel by public transport.

Section 94 of the CROW act makes it a statutory function of the Forum to give advice to a range of bodies, including local authorities, on access issues in respect of land use planning matters. Ministers have advised that in particular forums were asked to focus on the impact and options for minimising possible adverse effects, of planning policies and development proposals in respect of future public access to land and identifying and expressing support for opportunities to improve public access, or associated infrastructure, which might be delivered through planning policies or new development.

No matter how desirable such a freight interchange may be there can be no doubt that it will have a number of adverse outcomes and we can anticipate a number of objections when it reaches planning stage.

We see our role as highlighting these issues in advance and suggesting where possible solutions or mitigations might assist you to present a package that might be acceptable.

You will have a substantial work force and need to assess where these are likely to come from. Off-road cycleways to work and adequate public transport must be a major priority. We understand that they are likely to be working three eight-hour shifts which inevitably mean times which don't fit in with public transport so we will be interested in the Travel Plan for the site in due course.

The actual road network and access does not seem adequate and some major updating and widening is a must and where any stretch will involve pedestrians and cyclists a dedicated lane and pavement is needed. We can envisage that when fully operational this site will see between 80 and 150 lorries an hour during busy periods and we fail to see how the road network could handle this. The B4669 to Sapcote and Hinckley generally has narrow road boundaries and a proper off road track is needed for both recreation and commuter routes, preferably 'the hedge'

Turning to leisure travel and recreation, at one of your presentations one of your team described Burbage Common as insignificant which is somewhat irrelevant. It is legally land open to all and being near an urban area affords opportunities for recreation, relaxation and the watching of wild life. You talk of the state of the existing paths being 'poor' but where you may think that and the hindrance of over hanging vegetation and a less than perfect surface can be a nuisance many would consider this a natural route through the countryside where the wildlife does not like manicured and sanitised tracks and neither do many leisure walkers etc.

Some of the diversions etc you are contemplating seem reasonable if trying to traverse the area but without much more information about the landscaping and masking within the site it is hard to make a judgement on the probable loss of visual amenity and the natural surroundings of these rural routes. If the cycleways, bridleways, footpaths are within broad green corridors then they could have some merit as recreational routes but if going between giant sheds accompanied by the noise of dozens of lorries they would not be welcome and we can only imagine numerous objections. Some more information on the type and density of traffic on the internal roads in daylight hours would be helpful if rights of way are to be routed beside them. If you would like to meet with our representatives to discuss these routes or even attend one of our meetings at county hall and explain and discuss them with the full Forum we would be happy to arrange this.

There is talk of upgrading some paths to bridleways in which case, where this solves the disruption to that network, the surface must be suitable and be maintained as such, as in inclement weather a heavy horse can chew up a footpath surface making it unusable by pedestrians and cyclists. Where new provision is contemplated, we would of course be

pleased and rather than upgrading paths consideration should be given to providing new surfacing alongside the path for other users of the route. Ideally a separate horse track should run alongside a footpath rather than be shared space. Certainly the current footpath section of U52 could be formally upgraded to bridleway to provide a direct multi-user link to Smithy Lane – the southern access route to Burbage Common. This would greatly improve circuits for riders including the Common and its extra riding tracks. As for the actual line of this route there are options

Looking at individual proposals we will await with interest the final suggestions following the various observations made in the pre-planning informal consultations. U50, U52 and V23 being diverted alongside a railtrack is not a welcome option. If for the purposes of the site design there is to be no route close to the original line, then we recommend that V23 be moved to run alongside U52 bridleway and that U50 be diverted round the fish pond and then out to join U52 and V23 where they cross each other. Some correction of the line of U50 in Elmsthorpe is also required which could be dealt with under the same diversion order.

When contemplating surfacing for any multi-user route we would offer some technical advice. There are reports from various user sources that recycled tyres with a polyurethane bond provide a surface that is flexible, durable and free draining and we would recommend that this is considered for the paths within the site. It often incorporates small stones so that different colours can be used for different users where separation is advisable as unfortunately many do not appear to read notices

Turning to the roundabout to cross the M69, walkers, cyclists and riders use it. It is a long way off the direct route to use bridleway V29. As such with dramatically increasing traffic, the roundabout needs to have provision for them with wide verges on the two bridges. That must mean that all roads entering the roundabout need crossings with traffic lights.

Overall it is encouraging to see so much thought had gone into the recreational provision on and around the site. We look forward to eventually studying more detailed plans which we trust will incorporate our suggestions

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