

Response to Brentwood Borough Council's Draft Local Plan Consultation

The British Horse Society wishes to make the following comments on the above consultation document:

Strategic Objectives

SO11: we note that the Council wishes to protect recreational assets such as the Borough's Country Parks to promote '*social inclusion, health and wellbeing*'. We would like to see an emphasis on these assets being made available to all users – pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

Policy 6.4 – Effective Site Planning

We note in the narrative that the Council wishes to effectively plan for the nature and function of other spaces within developments and that it agrees that sites should be well connected. It would be helpful to be more specific within the Policy wording itself to emphasise the need for connectivity for ALL users by providing as far as practical multi-user paths within such developments.

Policy 6.6 – Strategic Sites

Dunton Hills Garden Village – we note that the Council wishes to establish green links from this new development to the rest of Brentwood Borough. We request therefore that these green links are accessible to all – pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians – rather than just pedestrians and cyclists.

Brentwood Enterprise Park (Policies 101A and 101B) – we note the proposal to regularise and expand the employment-led development at the junction of the M25/A127 and request that this park is planned appropriately so that the existing bridleway network in this vicinity is protected; the current enforcement issues with regard to the bridleways in this area are regularised, and a safe crossing of both the M25 and A127 is provided as part of this development, linking the bridleway networks either side of the M25.

Policy 9.8 – Green Belt

We note in paragraph 9.50 that the Council acknowledges the importance of the Green Belt and that it provides an important network of public rights of way; however, no mention is made within this document that these rights of way will be extended or enhanced or protected from development, even if it is development deemed to be allowed in 'exceptional circumstances'.

Policy 9.9 – Green Belt

Again, as per the above comment, we note that the Council wishes to encourage the beneficial use of the Green Belt to improve outdoor recreation, although no mention is made of rights of way or that the Council will be pro-active in enhancing the rights of way network – something that would be a beneficial use of the Green Belt.

Policy 10.1 – Sustainable Transport

We note in paragraph 10.6 that this policy aims to ensure that development reduces the need to travel, and to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists to reach facilities including recreational facilities and open space. We request that equestrians are included within this policy to ensure that this vulnerable user group is not ignored. We would also like to make the comment that there appear to be no plans within this document to incorporate any strategic trunk road or railway crossings as part of new developments. Just recently a young boy was killed on the A127 where the bridleway is severed by this extremely busy road and this sad episode brings to the fore the need to plan ahead how residents are going to access jobs, schools and other facilities if they lie across either of these barriers. We therefore request that at the Masterplan planning stage of new developments that multi-user crossings for the A127/A12 and the railway line are incorporated into the scheme at an early stage and developer contribution is obtained to enable this to happen. It seems ludicrous to encourage walking and cycling, reducing dependence on the use of cars, when people are unable to safely access those areas across what are effectively major barriers, unless they are travelling in a car.

Policy 10.5 – Public Realm

We note that in paragraph 10.34 that it is intended that the public realm will encourage walking and cycling. We request that, where practical, the inclusion of equestrians is specified within new developments rather than ignoring this specific user group. It should be noted that Bridleways are the best-value multi-user path that can be created as they can be legally used by pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists. By only creating cycle paths, a large user group (which contributes considerably to the local economy) is ignored, and equestrians are the most un-provided for when it comes to safe off-road riding. Many riders do not venture onto the ever-busy roads because of the volume and speed of traffic – after all over 3000 accidents occur within the UK with horse riders and motor vehicles

Policy 10.7 – Infrastructure and Community Facilities

We note in paragraph 10.40 that the various types of green infrastructure are specified and the list includes footpaths only; no mention of any other type of right of way is made. We request that this is amended to include all designations of public rights of way. We note that in paragraph 10.43 that *‘appropriate access to, and linkages between, these assets need to be maximised’*. This we agree with but we would like to see the inclusion of bridleway access made within this Policy.

Policy 10.10 – Green Infrastructure

We note that this policy aims to *‘maximise opportunities for the creation, restoration, enhancement, expansion and connection of Green Infrastructure and ... major development proposals should seek to include elements of Green Infrastructure and Ecological Networks’*. We request that the enhancement of the public rights of way network is included in this Policy and that the connectivity of the bridleway network is promoted.