

Patron His Majesty The King

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.

Planning Inspectorate

21 Nov. 24

Dear PINS

Oaklands Solar Farm proposal

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

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.

NATIONAL STATISTICS: 2023

- 3,345 road incidents involving horses have been reported to The British Horse Society
- Of these, 50 horses have died and 77 have been injured
- 3 people have died, and 94 people have been injured because of road incidents
- 23% of riders were victims to road rage or abuse
- 82% of incidents occurred because a vehicle passed by too closely to the horse
- 79% of incidents occurred because a vehicle passed by too quickly

This illustrates the importance of protecting, improving and extending safe off-road provision will help to prevent these numbers from increasing in the future. The NPPF para 104 states: *Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks.*

The equestrian industry generates over £5 billion of consumer spending, £6,887 per horse (BETA, 2023) is contributed to the economy benefitting local economies where equestrian activities thrive. DEFRA has recorded 940 horses in the immediate DE12 postcode area (2021), making a total of £6,473,780 contribution to the economy. There are livery yards in the area creating employment and using equine services (vet, farrier, feed, instructors, etc).

New development plans present threats and opportunities for vulnerable road users equestrians, cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair users and mobility scooter users. The bridleway network in this area is fragmented, therefore leaving limited access for equestrians unless they ride/lead/drive on the main roads.

- The 16 month construction period with an estimated 13 HGV return journeys per day at the height of the construction period will impact on the volume of traffic on the road network locally. Already mainly 60mph roads with some sections of 30mph and 50mph, the additional traffic and the added complication

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of vehicles regularly turning into the access road will make the road higher risk for vulnerable road users in the absence of speed restrictions or other traffic calming measures. Movement of the construction traffic may well coincide with times that equestrians are active on the bridleways and local highways network to reach the off-road routes. Notification of this to allow equestrians to choose to avoid the area on that day would be helpful.

- HGV's are generally 2.5m wide and 4.5m high (some vehicles for component transportation significantly larger) which, on the road network local to the site, would sandwich a horse and rider between the vehicle and the hedgerow or ditch along the route with little room for refuge which may cause panic. Appropriate information for development workers and signage giving priority to users of the PRow would be welcome and there should be additional signage during construction to warn traffic of equestrians and other vulnerable road users in the area, and ensure they are considerate in terms of vehicles stopping if necessary and allowing PRow users to pass safely.
- An abnormal load is mentioned. Local riders are concerned that the abnormal load route would pass both Grangewood livery and Sealbrook livery yards. How will this be managed for safety?
- The position of the inverters should ensure they are installed away from the highway. Sudden noise *and* continuous levels of noise can be a hazard for equestrians as horses are flight animals, therefore the further these elements can be located from the highway, not just the houses, the better it will be for safety.
- The access locations to/from the site are opportunities to mitigate impact by improving the safety on the road network with signage, refuge spaces and speed limits. Where is the assessment of the impact on vulnerable road users been considered in the application?
- It was discussed with the Project Lead in 2022, that equestrian access to the proposed permissive routes and permissive bridleways using existing footpaths (Walton Upon Trent FP9, Drakelow FP 5) for the life of the project would contribute to the community and provide off-road access for all vulnerable road users. However, the feedback from consultation does not appear to include any other vulnerable road users other than pedestrians. The dimensions proposed to buffer permissive and public rights of way would provide ample space for shared use.
- Research in the area of under-recorded or unrecorded rights of way have resulted in at least one Definitive Map Modification order application for bridleway being submitted in a neighbouring parish, which, if successful, would link well to the proposed permissive routes.

The BHS provided links to further information for reference: <https://www.bhs.org.uk/advice-and-information/free-leaflets-and-advice> including advice for developers
<https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/voahntza/developers-planners-0524.pdf>

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