

Adam Brookes

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Interested Party ref no. 20035951

Examiner's First Written Questions ExQ1 - Question Q1.0.19

The Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (APP-210) lacks detail about the permissive path design.

The design of the permissive paths is important because it will influence the ability of the paths to mitigate the impact of the development, particularly during construction.

The plan does not provide details of the design of the proposed permissive paths, nor indicate the categories of user which will be permitted which would guide their design. These matters are left to be approved by the relevant planning authority via requirement 7(h) of the draft DCO.

I would like to see greater detail in the Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan to better guide the local planning authorities on what they should consider to be acceptable. This would also help to reduce the risk of inconsistencies in the approach of the planning authorities.

It would be helpful if the plan included items such as:

Surface treatments

Widths

Design of gates/stiles

Waymarking

The preference would always be for the proposed permissive paths to be open to the most categories of users, including cyclists and equestrians. There are no technical challenges apparent that would prevent this.

Providing paths suitable for cyclists and equestrians will help to mitigate some of the impact of the construction phase.

The route between the primary construction compound and the A6121 is particularly constrained and likely to see significant construction traffic. Therefore, there would be a significant benefit for the proposed permissive paths on both sides of the East Coast Mainline are suitable for cyclists. This would enable more users to avoid potential conflicts with construction vehicles.

It would be helpful therefore for these routes to be surfaced with MOT Type 1 or similar, to provide a surface that will be suitable for a wide range of bikes and in all weathers.

I note that question Q1.0.8 seeks greater clarity from the applicant on the proposed permissive paths. I welcome this and would encourage the examining authority to give regard to my comments here when assessing the applicant's response.