

Essex Local Access Forum (ELAF) deadline 3 submission (9 March 2023)

Interested Party ref 2033138

1) ELAF echo the comments made by Essex County Council (ECC), the Highway Authority, especially as regards stakeholder engagement. There has been a lack of stakeholder engagement during and since lock-down and, as noted in ECC's Local Impact Report paragraph 8.2.13 [LIR REP2-056] there has been a lack of written records and no submission of a WCHR review report.

2) Whilst there is much to like in DCO scheme's WCH proposal, mitigation of past & current practical severances and the proposed improvements to the WCH network is considered to fall short of that required by NPPF paragraph 100 – ELAF bold:

*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 including National Trails**.*

3) re: severed Witham FP 25 (121_95)

ELAF welcome the provision of a WCH bridge over the A12 to mitigate the severance of Witham FP 25. ELAF and other respondents including ECC have suggested some modifications to the precise location and configuration of the bridge with the suggestion of either a direct connection Howbridge Hall Lane, a truncated public road, or a connection through the edge of the National Highways attenuation pond area, potentially along the proposed track [AS-008 2.7 Streets, Rights of Way & Access Plans revP02 sheet8]. At the site visit I was told by a member of the National Highways' team that there will also be a connection from Witham PROW 25 on the south side of the A12 north-west to Maldon Road across what will be BDC public mitigation land. This is very welcome and will provide another circular route for Witham residents and well as restoring a largely off-road connection south to Olivers Farm Nurseries, Witham FP 96 (121_+96) and James Cook Wood (publicly owned). In the interests of Access for All, the connections should be WCH routes to enable Access for all non-motorised users

4) re severed Witham FP 103 (121_103)

The accompanied site visit included Stop G at the Fisheries off Little Braxted Lane. The west end of Witham FP 103 is effectively impassable as it requires navigating bunds, crossing the dual carriageway Witham by-pass and the central crash barrier. The DCO proposal is to loop the footpath back north to rejoin Little Braxted Lane partly along an existing fisheries track, at the base of the A12 bund, and partly through an attenuation pond area [AS-008 2.7 Streets, Rights of Way & Access Plans revP02 sheets 10 & 9]. The fisheries owners are not enthused. ELAF suggest that an alternative mitigation would be to continue the public right of way south inside the red line Order Plan limits to the Witham Whet Mead Nature Reserve (public) and Witham FP 101 (121_101). Witham FP 101 & the track connect under the Brain Bridge back into Witham town or continues on to Blue Mills and the public right of way network. The ELAF proposal would provide a circular route for people from Witham as well as filling a network gap as there are no PROW /WCH routes between Little Braxted Lane and the Whet Mead Nature Reserve (open public access) so meeting the NPPF paragraph 100 criteria and ECC's ROWIP.

5) re: Ashman's Bridge and Kelvedon FP 30 / Great Braxted FP 19 and the new Ewell Hall WCH bridge

The request by Shirley Anglin at the Land Use ISH1 that Ashman's bridge and the connecting PROWs should be an inclusive WCH route is welcomed. The existing footbridge over the river Blackwater is due to be rebuilt and the line of most of the PROW is having to be moved, inside the red line Order Limits, to accommodate the changes in the A12 at the west end of Kelvedon [AS-008 2.7 Streets, Rights of Way & Access Plans revP02 sheets 12 &13].

The termination of this PROW on Kelvdon Road is close to the proposed new path between Highfields Lane and the relocated Ewell Hall WCH bridge. This was stop D on the Accompanied Site Visit when the significant stabling at Ewell Hall was amongst the features noted.

In ELAF's deadline 2 submission an extension east/ north-east was requested as a WCH route, on National Highways land, preferably not immediately adjacent to the A12, to Inworth Road. [AS-008 2.7 Streets, Rights of Way & Access Plans revP02 sheets 13 & 14]. This would provide a circular accessible route for the expanding population of Kelvedon and Feering.

7) The severance of Prested Hall drive and the nearby Feering FP 15 by the new A12 was noted in ELAF's deadline 2 submission. The mitigation requested is a WCH bridge. This will enable an active travel connection between the facilities at Prested Hall, the bus stops, ECC's proposed sustainable transport paths, cycle & bridleways on the de-trunked A12 section from the to-be-demolished Nursery Bridge at the north end of Feering, into the housing in Feering and also south to Messing and the local East Anglian Farm Rides network

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