

Braintree Local Plan – Statement from Essex Bridleways Association

Main Matter 13 – Policy LPP54 Equestrian Facilities

We would like to draw the Inspectors' attention to the potential unfairness of some of the criteria of this Policy. They have raised the question already with regard to '*new accesses being consistent with national policy*' and whether this and other policies listed give clear direction to the decision maker.

In the reasoned justification, paragraph 7.25, it states that the availability of suitable off-road routes will need to be considered '*providing a safe and traffic free route for horse riders to use*'. This statement does not give the decision maker clear direction – for example does this mean that the development will need to have immediate access onto bridleways/byways? Half a mile away? One mile away? Immediately opposite but with a need to cross a dual carriageway? Who decides whether a particular road is safe or not for horse riders to use?

It is also unfair if development for equestrian facilities, especially in the case of private householder facilities, are dependent upon the provision of access to the off-road network. It has been a significant issue for many years that the bridleway network is sporadic and unconnected in areas and our association, along with others, work hard to try and improve off-road access for equestrians when the emphasis is always on walking and cycling. It is a shame that this Plan does not aspire to improve matters for equestrians by embedding the principle of such access provision within the document from the top down, rather than attempting to penalise them by restrictive policy criteria. Because of the lack of off-road provision all over Essex, most horse riders who wish to hack out have their own transport and drive to locations to ride. This negates the need for access to be available; also, there are many people who engage in other equestrian disciplines that have no need to venture out into the outside world – dressage or show jumping for example with all exercise being carried out on site.

We would therefore suggest that point c of Policy LPP54 is removed (it appears not to make grammatical sense anyway) and the reasoned justification amended.

The desperate need for a more cohesive and joined up network accessible by ALL vulnerable road users – walkers, cyclists and equestrians – and for this to be embedded within the Plan has already been the subject of our original representation and will hopefully be considered.

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