

South Downs

Local Access Forum

Winchester City Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The attention of the South Downs Local Access Forum (SDLAF) has been drawn to this current consultation exercise and this letter constitutes formal advice from the Forum. As a body listed under Section 94(4), local authorities are required, in accordance with Section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to advice from Local Access Forums in carrying out their functions.

It will also be important for the County Council to take account of the enhanced Protected Landscapes duty placed on all local authorities by Section 245 of the 2023 Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (LURA):

In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in any National Park in England, a relevant authority must seek to further National Park purposes and if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, must attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area comprised in the National Park.

The comments of the Local Access Forum are as follows:

- there seems to be relatively little regard to (or mention of) the existence of a National Park in the document: either in the text or an maps
- the South Downs National Park can offer much for the residents of (and visitors to) Winchester and there is the potential for government support and funding for collaborative initiatives
- allied to the enhanced 'Protected Landscapes Duty' (referred to above) the Forum feels that the LCWIP should be looking to improve access (by walking and cycling) into, from and within the National Park – as well as seeking modal changes from motorised modes
- attention should be paid to this matter before the LCWIP is finalised to ensure that opportunities are not lost

- Figure 10 illustrates the barriers that the highway network around the eastern side of the city present. Whilst the document acknowledges that that there are links for people walking from the city out onto the South Downs Way National Trail, we feel that improved connectivity for walkers and cyclists between the city and the National Park should be prioritised. The idea of a 'green bridge' across the motorway which was mooted a few years ago to establish a proper gateway route should not be forgotten. If a 'green bridge' cannot be provided, a more conventional, but suitably designed and engineered bridge for walkers,

cyclists and equestrian users should be explored thoroughly and jointly by Hampshire County Council, Winchester City Council, National Highways and the National Park Authority

- there are other designated long-distance walking and cycling routes passing through the area (including the Itchen Way, St Swithun's Way and King's Way) and opportunities to improve each one should be considered as part of the LCWIP (if only to ensure that increases in road traffic do not hamper vulnerable users on these long distance routes)
- walking and cycling access to / from railway stations should also be enhanced and it is felt that the Winchester City LCWIP should do more to define such routes and their connections to the Rights of Way network (including the South Downs National Trail and the other designated long-distance routes) and to other public transport facilities
- whilst this LCWIP is, perhaps inevitably, rather urban orientated it is felt that recreational users / opportunities should get more consideration throughout. Such opportunities would assist many of the County Council's priority aims, include climate action, active travel and health & wellbeing
- two parts of the National Park extend westwards beyond the A34/M3 corridor: the Winnal Moors Nature Reserve area in the north and the St Catherine's Hill area in the south. It is perhaps unfortunate that one of these areas has been included within this LCWIP area whilst the other has been excluded. Safe walking and cycling routes should be explored and protected / enhanced for both these areas if possible.

Yours Sincerely,
Ben Marsh

On behalf of
Doug Jones
Chair of the South Downs Local Access Forum

Please reply to:

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For more information about the South Downs Local Access Forum: www.southdowns.gov.uk/laf