



Devon Countryside Access Forum
c/o Public Rights of Way team
Great Moor House
Bittern Road
Sowton
EXETER EX2 7NL

Tel: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
www.devon.gov.uk/dcaf

POSITION STATEMENT ON PLANNING POLICY AND PLANNING DEVELOPMENTS

Revised 2022

The Devon Countryside Access Forum (DCAF) is a local access forum under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Its remit is to give independent advice “as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area...” The Forum currently has nineteen members, appointed by Devon County Council, who represent the interests of land managers, access users and other interests such as tourism and conservation.

The Devon Countryside Access Forum recognises that not all these points will necessarily fall within the remit of the authority in all instances. However, where the authority is exercising its function as a planning authority, or is developing strategic principles and policies, the DCAF advises that these considerations are taken into account.

Reducing car use and improving health through the provision of access

Thinking about the creation or improvement of access routes in conjunction with a major planning application, or as part of strategic policy, provides an ideal opportunity to re-assess current provision. The DCAF advises that there are a number of essential stages in the process which will assist in maximising potential outcomes.

The DCAF advises that the council should:

- encourage developers to create plans incorporating best practise and innovation in the provision of access routes;
- ensure liaison and consultation takes place with any affected landowners and land managers at the earliest opportunity when new routes are being explored, and prior to any routes being included in policy documents;
- consult with any affected landowners and land managers where there are proposals to promote existing routes or designate them for particular purposes;
- consult the local community;
- seek opportunities to expand provision through relevant grants and other funding mechanisms;

The DCAF advises that the council should;

- maximise opportunities for walking and cycling within villages and towns. This would accord with the Government health agenda and sustainability proposals embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework;

The Devon Countryside Access Forum is a local access forum. It is required, in accordance with Sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, to provide advice as to the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open-air recreation and enjoyment.

supported by
Devon
County Council

- identify strategic walking and cycling routes within settlements and ensure these link to surrounding rural areas and the rights of way network. Wherever possible routes should be multi-use, allowing access for all users, in accordance with Devon County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. (Multi-use means use by all users: walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and those using wheelchairs, mobility scooters or buggies);
- ensure new development proposals include safe and high-quality provision for cycling and walking routes linking housing to schools, shops, employment areas and recreational and sports facilities;
- seek to develop circular multi-use routes within settlements to encourage healthier lifestyles and minimise car use;
- encourage opportunities to develop, facilitate and promote the National Cycle Network and its integration with other forms of transport;
- give adequate consideration to the requirements of those with mobility needs in the design of new walking, cycling and multi-use routes, and in the improvement of existing routes.
- explore opportunities for locally important or strategic routes along former railway lines and canals.

Existing Rights of Way and other access opportunities

The DCAF advises that the council should;

- recognise the rights of way network and its contribution to health, tourism and sustainability;
- protect the rights of way network from development proposals;
- ensure new housing developments link to the rights of way network, where possible;
- seek to improve the safety for rights of way users where routes meet or run along roads;
- design and improvement work on roads to encourage non-motorised users and sustainable travel should reflect the hierarchy in the Highway Code, rule 204. This acknowledges that road users most at risk in order of vulnerability are pedestrians, in particular children, older adults and disabled people, cyclists, horse riders and motorcyclists;
- explore integration of transport links with rights of way, particularly strategic long distance routes;
- recognise other routes, such as unsurfaced Unclassified County Roads, and their contribution to recreational opportunities.

Other recreational space

The DCAF advises that the council should;

- identify access land (open country and registered Common Land) and highlight the opportunities this affords for recreation;
- draw attention to permissive access opportunities, for example on farmland, in Forestry Commission woodlands and elsewhere;
- recognise the importance of green space, green linkages, playing fields and other similar areas and protect these from development;
- map and indicate legal uses of green space areas within the plan area;
- seek to develop green recreational areas within new housing and employment sites.

Up-to-date statistical information on a range of issues to support these statements is available.