

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

The British Horse Society

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The logo for The British Horse Society, featuring the text "The British Horse Society" in white serif font on a dark red square background.

Bringing Horses and People Together

Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan
Rutland County Council
Oakham
Rutland, LE15 6HP

3 November 2023

Dear Rutland County Council

Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan

The response below is from the British Horse Society however our volunteers in the county may also respond at a local level.

Overall

The British Horse Society is the UK's largest equestrian Charity, representing the UK's 3 million horse riders. Nationally equestrians have just 22% of the rights of way network and are increasingly forced to use busy roads to access them.

Between 1/1/22 and 31/12/22

- 3,552 road incidents involving horses have been reported to The British Horse Society
- 69 horses have died
- 125 horses have been injured
- 139 people have been injured
- 26% of riders were victims to road rage or abuse
- 82% of incidents occurred because a vehicle passed by too closely to the horse
- 78% of incidents occurred because a vehicle passed by too quickly

This illustrates the importance of neighbourhood plans being committed to protect, improve and extend on and off-road access for vulnerable road users including equestrians to prevent these numbers from increasing in the future. ***'Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users'*** (NPPF, s100).

DEFRA has recorded a population of 1,846 horses in the LE15 postcode area (2021). The contribution per horse to the economy, according to BETA (2019), is £5,548, therefore in this case a significant contribution of **£10,241,608** per annum. The equine industry provides diverse employment (vets, farriers, feed outlets, saddlers, instructors, venues, liveries, etc) and equestrian tourism is on the rise with establishments offering day rides and 'bring your horse on holiday' experiences. Promoting, nurturing and enabling equestrian access would support the equestrian industry.

The Neighbourhood Plan vision states that 'Above all [the NP] should enable all sections of the community to enjoy a sustainable way of life' (p4) and the objectives include the aim to 'Enhance the visitor offer and attract the

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next generation of tourists'. These are commitments which would be promoted by the protection and enhancement of PRoW and multi-user routes.

The Active Travel policy TR2 limits the agenda to walkers and cyclists. There is no mention of equestrian access or opportunities to connect new infrastructure as multi-user routes to improve the network. Such provisions would futureproof the routes and engage a wider range of users in active travel and leisure which in turn will impact positively on health and wellbeing and road safety statistics. Many horses are kept on the urban fringe, so it is important that equestrians are not excluded from routes that exit the urban areas into the surrounding environs. Active Travel routes should not, in any way, compromise the use of existing public rights of way by making them less amenable to existing lawful users of the right of way. The road crossings referred to should also be inclusive of equestrians. Excluding equestrians in the language used and therefore the commitment made in the plan does not only place them at higher risk on roads but also could be construed as discriminatory as the majority of horse riders 'hacking out' are women.

Equestrian activity contributes to health targets. Research undertaken found that 68% of respondents participated in horse riding and associated activities for 30 minutes or more at least three times a week (University of Brighton and Plumpton College on behalf of The British Horse Society). Sport England estimate that such a level of sporting activity will help an individual achieve or exceed the government's recommended minimum level of physical activity. According to BETA two-thirds of equestrians are women and Church et al (2010) found 37% of women who are horse riders are over 45 years of age and over a third would pursue no other physical activity.

All vulnerable road users should be included otherwise the scenario is horses become sandwiched between MPV traffic on one side and cyclists on the other. Active travel/utility travel does include equestrians. Jesse Norman in House of Commons debate on Road Safety, 5 November 2018: "We should be clear that the cycling and walking strategy may have that name but is absolutely targeted at vulnerable road users, including horse-riders".

The BHS would welcome further dialogue. Information is available from <https://www.bhs.org.uk/go-riding/leaflets-and-downloads/>

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