

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

31st May 2024

Dear Edith Weston Parish Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Edith Weston Neighbourhood Plan 2023 – 2041. I am responding on behalf of the BHS in my role as a Bridleways Access Volunteer. We have comments about Policy EW – TM01 and about priorities for Infrastructure spending.

The BHS has recently submitted comments about the revised Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan. These draw attention to the needs of horse riders for safer, off-road routes, due to increasing road safety problems, and outlines the large contribution made by equestrians to the Rutland economy. It requests that horse riders are included alongside pedestrians and cyclists when considering protection of existing rights of way and planning of new rights of way. It should be noted that routes designated as Bridleways and Restricted Byways, offer multiuser routes for all three types of non-motorized transport. The full text can be seen below. *

Regarding the EW Neighbourhood Plan, we would like 'horse riders' to be added to the text alongside pedestrians and cyclists. Edith Weston has 2 bridleways that are relatively short and are dead ends so currently they offer little benefit for local equestrians.

Bridleway E350/1 is a short stretch called Gibbet Lane, leading from Weston Rd, running behind the Sailing Club but quickly becomes a recreational cycle route rather than a bridle way.

Bridleway E199/2 runs from Manton Rd north towards Rutland Water but again finishes when it meets the recreational cycle route. The Manton Rd is a busy B class road and due to the speed of traffic, quite unsuitable for horse riders. In the future, it would be of considerable benefit for horse riders to be allowed access to the cycle route (even though it would not be a circular route and riders would have to retrace their steps). We believe that the land in question is owned by Anglian Water so they would have to give permission and make adjustments to gates, but it would send a very positive message to see this listed as an aspiration in the Infrastructure spending section. Another aspiration for the future would be for new Bridleway/ Restricted Byway to be created alongside the B road for a short way to link up with Bridle way E201/1 which leads to quiet roads of Lyndon. This was done, nearer to Manton about 20 years ago, to create a cycle track that enables cyclists to circumnavigate Rutland Water. A speed limit would also have to be imposed on this new section. Bridle ways are shown in pink on the map below.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if any points require further clarification.

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Your sincerely,

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*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 a total of 3,552 road incidents involving horses were reported to The British Horse Society: 69 horses have died; 125 horses have been injured; 139 people have been injured. Furthermore, 26% of riders were victims to road rage or abuse, 82% of incidents occurred because a vehicle passed by too closely to the horse and 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 is 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.

