



Registered Address:
13 Keats Avenue
Braintree
CM7 1HB

✉ info@flitchwayfriends.org.uk
f Flitch Way Friends

Maria Shoesmith
Uttlesford District Council
Council Offices
Saffron Walden
Essex
CB11 4ER

29 September 2017

Dear Ms Shoesmith

CONSULTATION RESPONSE - UTT/17/2607/OP

Land To The South Of B1256 Little Canfield

I am writing on behalf of the Friends of the Flitch Way & Associated Woodlands. Our volunteers work for the benefit of the community to conserve, protect and improve the physical and natural environment of the Flitch Way and other sites throughout Essex under the guidance of Essex County Council (ECC) Park Rangers and Public Right of Way teams.

The Flitch Way is a linear wildlife-rich trail comprising a range of habitats of around 25 km length following the former Braintree to Bishops Stortford Railway Line with a small gap at Great Dunmow. It forms a vital long wildlife corridor covering approximately a third of the breadth of Essex. It connects the four Essex Wildlife Trust Living Landscape Areas of Hatfield Forest, Pincey Valley, Upper Chelmer and Pods Brook Valley and the nature reserves and open spaces of Hatfield Forest, David Cock Community Woodland (Great Dunmow), Oak Meadow (Rayne), Great Notley Country Park and Hoppit Mead and John Ray Park (Braintree). The Flitch Way provides an easily accessible resource, with a well surfaced 2m wide granite dust path running along most of its length, giving people the freedom of access to learn about wildlife and industrial heritage. The Flitch Way Country Park is already designated a Local Wildlife Site reference Ufd196 and we are working with ECC Park Rangers to declare it a Local Nature Reserve.

We are disappointed to see the development proposal as this stretch of the Flitch Way has a particularly strong rural feel which will be lost. The Flitch Way is under increasing pressure from development and proposals like this will change its character forever.

We are concerned about the current configuration of the site, narrowness of the buffer zone, increased access and restriction of light. If planning is approved we ask that the site be re-configured to address the concerns.

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and countryside for the community*
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Buffer zone alongside the Flitch Way

The preferred buffer zone between the Flitch Way and proposed development should be at least 20 metres wide and ideally be 100 metres wide. The buffer zone should be landscaped sensitively and be attuned to the specific habitat of that part of the Flitch Way. Having a wide buffer zone next to the Flitch Way boundary along with the installation of secure boundary fencing would help to mitigate habitat damage. It is essential to maintain good light access to maintain as diverse a range of wildlife as possible. One way of achieving this would be to install open metal rail fencing or similar between the Flitch Way and the buffer zone.

Access points on to the Flitch Way

We are concerned that two new access points are being proposed as this could lead to habitat damage from increased usage around the access points. This part of the Flitch Way already has very good access from High Cross Lane West and High Cross Lane East and we do not believe extra access is required.

If one access point was permitted and agreed with the Flitch Way owners, it would need to be done sensitively to reduce habitat damage when in use. It should also have a barrier able to restrict vehicle traffic whilst allowing pedestrian, wheelchair and cycle access.

S106 funding to improve Flitch Way path surface

There is an opportunity to use S106 funding to improve and maintain the surface of the Flitch Way path to help mitigate the expected increase in usage. Another suggestion would be to allow the general public to park their cars when visiting the Flitch Way as there are only a few car parking spaces on the section between Great Dunmow and Start Hill.

We hope these concerns can be addressed and the suggestions included if planning is agreed.

Kind Regards

Sandra Reynolds
Secretary

Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands

Website: www.friends-of-the-flitch-way.org.uk

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