

Stoke Park Farm Public Consultation

Response from Bishopstoke, Fair Oak and Horton Heath Local Area Committee

Context

- 1.1 BIFOHH LAC expressed its preference for the farm to become a Local Nature Reserve on 9 March 2022 at a Committee Meeting.
- 1.1.1 This is congruent with EBC's intention to use the land for supporting nitrate offset and also providing opportunities for other offsets including biodiversity, phosphates and carbon.
- 1.1.2 Bishopstoke Parish Council has also expressed its preference for a Local Nature Reserve on the site on 27th October 2022 at a parish council meeting.
- 1.1.3 The Local Nature reserve could be established gradually as offset funding comes in from nutrient credits.

- 1.2 Considerations BIFOHH LAC would like to highlight:
 - 1.2.1 Current use of the site by local residents:
 - 1.2.1.1 The site is accessed by residents from both the Bishopstoke side and Fair Oak side.
 - 1.2.1.2 The public footpaths and bridleways are used by local residents for:
 - 1.2.1.2.1 Exercise, including cycling, running and walking.
 - 1.2.1.2.2 Walking or cycling to access the Fox & Hounds pub on Winchester Road.
 - 1.2.1.2.3 Accessing rights of way to reach Colden Common and Fair Oak.
 - 1.2.1.2.4 Dog walking.
 - 1.2.1.2.5 Bird watching.
 - 1.2.1.2.6 Accessing Upper Barn Copse, Crowdhill Copse and Stoke Park Woods.
 - 1.2.1.3 Increasing numbers of visitors are now walking in the fields on the open land, not keeping to the rights of way.
 - 1.2.2 Traffic and access for vehicles:
 - 1.2.2.1 Vehicular access to the site through Sewall Drive should be regarded as very limited:
 - 1.2.2.2 The housing estate does not have a through route designed for traffic. The design and surface of the road appears to be based on a presumption of very limited through traffic.
 - 1.2.2.3 The level of vehicle movements that took place when Stoke Park Farm operated as a dairy farm should be considered as the maximum that the route can support safely.
 - 1.2.2.4 Access is unsuitable for HGVs – the milk tanker used to find access difficult on the access track.
 - 1.2.2.5 Surrounding roads are already struggling to support increased traffic movements that have arisen from housing increases from 2015 onwards:
 - 1.2.2.6 Surrounding roads are not wide and there is already pressure on parking for residents.
 - 1.2.2.7 Stoke Common Road has many potholes.

- 1.2.2.8 The milk tanker regularly struggled to navigate the junction between Rogers Road and Stoke Park Road (the only route deemed suitable for larger vehicles).
- 1.2.2.9 There is no vehicular access from the Fair Oak side of the site.
- 1.2.3 Public transport links:
 - 1.2.3.1 There is no bus route close to the Sewall Drive entrance.
- 1.2.4 Parking:
 - 1.2.4.1 Bishopstoke Parish Council could be approached to discuss possible parking at the cemeteries and allotment (the allotment and cemetery extension have not been transferred yet to BPC so remain unavailable for the local community).
- 1.2.5 There is a risk of anti-social behaviour:
 - 1.2.5.1 The farm had to take measures to stop vehicles using the bridleway between the farm yard area and Upper Barn Copse.
 - 1.2.5.2 There has been an ongoing issue with drugs in the unused cemetery extension car park (ref feedback from local police).
 - 1.2.5.3 There have been several incidents of fly tipping at the car park for Stoke Park Woods.
 - 1.2.5.4 There is a risk of illegal encampments (including “fly camping”) if vehicles can access the site.

2.0 Objectives

- 2.1 BIFOHH LAC feel that objectives for Stoke Park Farm should be based on:
 - 2.1.1 A clear aim to progressively transform the farmland to a Local Nature Reserve:
 - 2.1.1.1 This should start with the fields between Upper Barn Copse and Crowdhill Copse (both Sites of Ancient Natural Woodland) in consultation with the copses’ landowner (The Woodland Trust).
 - 2.1.1.2 Establish a consultative body to help ensure that the site develops in a way that is congruent with the Local Nature Reserve ambition:
 - 2.1.1.2.1 Invite expert stakeholders to include The Woodland Trust, Forestry England, HIWWT as well as EBC’s ecologists.
 - 2.1.1.2.2 Involve both parish councils.
 - 2.1.1.3 Make full use of grants available for the transformation as well as credits from developers. Examples include Countryside Stewardship, woodland creation and setting up a SANG.
 - 2.1.1.4 Set up a timetable for the transformation as part of the plan.
 - 2.1.2 To add amenities that would:
 - 2.1.2.1 Support the local communities in Fair Oak and Bishopstoke:

- 2.1.2.1.1 Enabling healthier lifestyles/wellbeing through access to a space where connection to nature is prioritised.
- 2.1.2.1.2 Developing green infrastructure, safeguarding wildlife.
- 2.1.2.2 Be congruent with the Local Nature Reserve ambition.
- 2.1.2.2.1 It would not be acceptable to add amenities that would eventually be removed.
- 2.1.2.3 Maintain tranquillity.
- 2.1.2.4 Be designed for access without motor vehicles.

- 2.1.3 To enable limited economic use:
 - 2.1.3.1 Address current pollution & other environmental negative impacts from current activities on the site.
 - 2.1.3.2 Support use of the farmhouse as a residence, either rented privately or to be for a live-in site manager.
 - 2.1.3.3 Enable economic activity that:
 - 2.1.3.3.1 Has no or very limited pollution risk.
 - 2.1.3.3.2 Does not increase vehicle movements above the level that the site had when operational as a dairy farm.

3.0 Response to Proposals in the Consultation Document

- 3.1 The published proposed plans would be broadly congruent with the Local Nature Reserve longer term objective.
 - 3.1.1 Developing educational facilities could work well:
 - 3.1.1.1 Courses would mean vehicle movements only at the start and end of the day. Minibuses could be used to bring students onto site.
 - 3.1.1.2 Consider approaching Sparsholt or another college locally to see if courses could be run from the farm covering practical conservation, crafts, rewilding, wildlife gardening or sustainable land management.
 - 3.1.1.3 Working with local schools could also be explored.
 - 3.1.2 Exploring a maker space or craft business operation could also be explored – e.g. a similar facility to The Sorting Office, working with Incuhive or a similar body that promotes start ups.
 - 3.1.2.1 Many craft and art based businesses increasingly rely on running small scale courses for income (ref 3.1.1.1)
 - 3.1.3 If the Fish Farm is to remain, work should be done to ensure no nitrate or phosphate pollution going into the Itchen (ref 2.1.3.1).
 - 3.1.3.1 It should also be noted that the fish farm experienced problems with children and young people entering their site when the housing was completed at Sewall Drive. This represented a significant safety issue as well as causing problems for the business.
 - 3.1.4 Open access space
 - 3.1.4.1 The trail idea would work well.
 - 3.1.4.2 Could also consider an orienteering course.

- 3.1.4.3 Designated routes as being suitable for dog walkers could help to limit any potential negative impact on the wildlife in the area by loose dogs.
- 3.1.4.4 Waste bins will be needed, especially for dog waste.
- 3.1.4.5 Seating would be very welcome, especially if positioned to appreciate views.

3.2 The following features would be less welcome:

- 3.2.1 Increased car parking.
 - 3.2.1.1 If traffic movements are to be no more than that when the site was a farm (ref 2.1.2.4), parking should be restricted on site to no more than the number of spaces available at present (approx. 8-10).
- 3.2.2 Tearoom and walled garden – although these would be good amenities, the tearoom would require a high footfall (and therefore high levels of vehicle movements) to be economically viable. (Ref 2.1.2.4)

4.0 Suggested Development Ideas

- 4.1 Consider a locked gate across the bridleway at the entrance to the site from Sewall Drive, leaving an opening section wide enough for a horse, wheelchair or mobility scooter.
 - 4.1.1 Residents of the farmhouse and those working on the site could have a key or combination. Consideration of access in case of emergency should be factored in.
 - 4.1.2 A gate will help to reduce the risk of fly tipping and of other anti social behaviour.
 - 4.1.3 Combine with CCTV at the farmhouse (aimed at recording any anti social behaviour, especially motor bikes).
- 4.2 Consider adding more footpaths and bridleways, especially using the tracks that are not currently rights of way.
 - 4.2.1 These could be permissive in order to maintain flexibility.
 - 4.2.2 Establish routes suitable for dog walkers.
- 4.3 Consider improving the bridleway (especially the surface) from the junction of Sewall Drive & Stoke Common Road through to the Fox & Hounds pub and Crowdhill estate as a Sustainable Transport initiative.
 - 4.3.1 Aim to make it usable by cyclists as a commuting route, not restricted to mountain bikes.
 - 4.3.2 Ensure that the design is centred on cyclists, walkers, horse riders and users of mobility scooters and wheelchairs all being able to use the bridleway safely.
 - 4.3.3 Useful route for leisure cyclists, including families and children.
 - 4.3.3.1 Could combine with limited parking using the unused new cemetery car park (if agreement with BPC can be sought).
 - 4.3.4 Could develop a circular route