

Summary of position of Badbury Hill Group in relation to Trust proposals for Badbury Hill

[10 February 2016]

These arguments were agreed by attendees of the meeting of the Badbury Hill Group held on Saturday 23rd January 2016. Present were: Sue and Ian Homersham, Nicky Roeber, Conrad Roeber, Rob Hampel, Leon Whyburd, Helen Andrews, Rosamund Webster and Annabelle Zinovieff.

We agree that there are some problems that need rectifying:

- Badbury Hill car park is in need of improvement
- There needs to be clearer separation between the walkers and the local cyclists – to protect both walkers, dogs and the environment (not least from damage caused by digging trails etc.)
- There is a need for dog waste bins
- Possible overflow needed for the car park during Easter/bluebell season when visitor numbers increase dramatically

The NT's proposal does not deliver a safe separation of walkers and cyclists and will encourage significantly greater visitor numbers so does not resolve these problems:

- The plan implies significantly increased visitor numbers:
 - Car park size - The increase in car park capacity to 100 cars – almost double the current amount - appears beyond requirement. It will over-provision for existing users and is likely to encourage greater traffic. This implies capacity for 600 cars per weekend – up to 1,800 visitors, close to the 100,000 capacity mentioned in the planning documents
 - The possible provision in 2018 of a kiosk, toilets and cycle hire (for which there is no proven demand) will encourage visitors to the site
 - National events – at eight per year (one every six weeks), this will bring vast numbers to the site both for the events themselves and for practice runs in the weeks leading up to the events
 - The competitions and events will lead to a significant promotional impact (on social media and elsewhere) that will inevitably spread the Hill's reputation far and wide, encouraging more cyclists to visit on non-event weekends
- The plan does not deliver the much-needed separation of walkers and riders:
 - The plan allows for eight junctions between rights of way and cycle tracks – and a total of 24 junctions between cycle tracks and paths currently used by walkers. But the areas are intertwined (compared to situation today in which most riders keep to the area below the fire road)

Accordingly we have some major objections to the plan as proposed:

- The local road network around Badbury Hill struggles to cope with the current levels of traffic on B4019. The National Trust villages of Coleshill and Great Coxwell will be adversely and **dangerously affected by any increase**.
- Access to Badbury Hill is already dangerous – the turning is on the top of a steep hill, the road is narrow and the turn is sharp. Increasing the usage is a **safety hazard**.
- The **peace and tranquillity** of Badbury Hill – beloved by locals, walkers and local cyclists – will be seriously damaged by the change of usage into a cycle trail centre
- The vast majority of people who use Badbury hill are dog walkers, families and ramblers. There are two Rights of Way in Badbury Hill – the initial plans given to the VOWH crossed them *eight* times with cycle trails. Even where speed ‘calming’ devices are deployed, this presents a **major accident risk**.
- Integrating and crossing the cycle trails throughout the woodland creates serious **safety concerns**. It’s worth expanding on this:
 - There is no plan to ‘police’ usage of either cycle trails or walking path usage (nor would this be practical or affordable)
 - As a result, cyclists would be free to use green or blue trails at high speed
 - Children and dogs will continue to wander freely through the woods – they do not (and will not) just keep to paths. This means that they could wander into the path of high-speed cyclists, causing an obvious safety concern. An accident of this nature could be fatal.
 - The only way to avoid this would be to close the woods to the peaceful, free use that walkers currently enjoy – enforcing this would be extremely unpopular and probably impossible
- Badbury Hill Woodland surrounds an Iron Age Hill fort – a Scheduled Ancient Monument - by placing cycle lanes so close to the earth works, **the setting** of this heritage site **will be severely compromised**
- The **archaeological evidence** of previous settlements that are scattered and unrecorded throughout the woods will be **compromised, if not destroyed**.
- Conservationists are extremely concerned that the creation of tracks will **disturb the fragile ecology** of the area – especially the northern section of the wood – near to Eaton Wood. Badbury Hill is important for breeding crossbills and red kites and a new breed of butterfly was discovered nearby.
- **Local cyclists are opposed** to these plans and don’t want Badbury Hill to become a national cycling destination. They are concerned that it will be unmanageable, their trails will be overrun and possibly destroyed and they will not be able to run the tactics area as they do now.
- As previously stated, effecting the proposed changes will bring more visitors to Badbury Hill which will in turn increase traffic flows through neighbouring villages – this is in **direct contravention of planning guidelines** for these villages.
- The Ramblers’ Association has expressed its **forthright objections** to the plans

Our alternative solution would be to keep cyclists and walkers apart, ensure the site meets the needs of current (mainly local) users (cyclists and walkers alike) and not encourage significantly increase visitor numbers

- The car park to be resurfaced with an all-weather surface
- There is no need for a significant increase in car park capacity (except overflow parking for bluebell season)
- Clear signage for bikers and walkers alike should be installed, to indicate: that bikers are to keep to the area below fire track and should not roam through the woods and, that to be safe, walkers must keep away from the bikers' area etc.
- Dog waste bins and regular collection should be introduced
- The area should remain safe for small children (and dogs) to be free to roam at will, free from the risk of colliding with speeding bicycles. This therefore precludes *any* cycle tracks that pass through the general areas of the woods.
- Badbury Hill is particularly special because of its peace and tranquility. This must be preserved at all costs. Any plan that encourages hundreds of new visitors each week threatens this most valuable quality.
- Wildlife and flora must be protected.
- The many presumed archeological sites on Badbury Hill that lie outside the area of the scheduled monument must be protected – this precludes the building of all-weather tracks on the Hill.