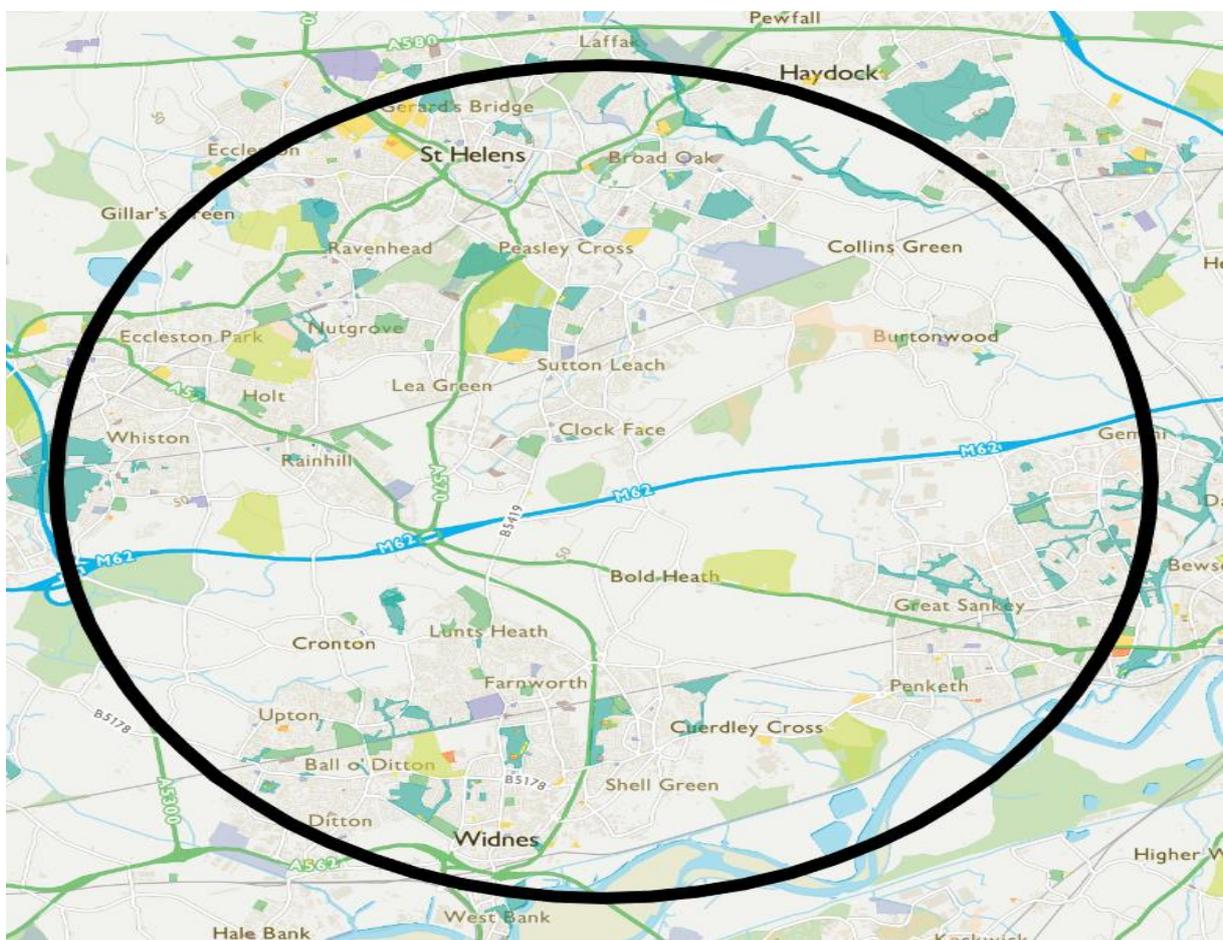


# A report on the value of the equestrian sector to St. Helens & wider region and justification for expansion of the network

## Bold & Clock Face Action Group

This report has been written in conjunction with regional British Horse Society officers and with the help of members of the local equestrian sector. The figures contained within this report have been gathered by volunteers from within the local equestrian sector and compiled by Bold & Clock Face Action Group. The costs associated with horse ownership have been taken from the North Lancashire Bridleways Society report from 2009 titled 'A survey on the cost of horse ownership'.

In order to calculate an accurate GVA figure for the equestrian sector it was important to gather accurate horse ownership figures. As the 'Dream' site in Bold Ward is heavily used by horse owners, this was taken as the centre point and a five-mile radius drawn on a map. Volunteers were then asked to compile a list of the number of horses contained within the radius. The radius of five miles has been used as this is the guidance for minimum exercise per day per horse.



Yard	No. of horses	Yard	No. of horses
[REDACTED]	6	[REDACTED]	40
[REDACTED]	14	[REDACTED]	6
[REDACTED]	15	[REDACTED]	12
[REDACTED]	6	[REDACTED]	14
[REDACTED]	45	[REDACTED]	2
[REDACTED]	16	[REDACTED]	23
[REDACTED]	20	[REDACTED]	35
[REDACTED]	60	[REDACTED]	7
[REDACTED]	2	[REDACTED]	3
[REDACTED]	17	[REDACTED]	4
[REDACTED]	6	[REDACTED]	2
[REDACTED]	18	[REDACTED]	1
[REDACTED]	6	[REDACTED]	3
[REDACTED]	120	[REDACTED]	15
[REDACTED]	40	[REDACTED]	6
[REDACTED]	40	[REDACTED]	2
[REDACTED]	60	[REDACTED]	3
[REDACTED]	2	[REDACTED]	5
[REDACTED]	45	[REDACTED]	5
[REDACTED]	15	[REDACTED]	22
[REDACTED]	12	[REDACTED]	2
[REDACTED]	25	[REDACTED]	50
[REDACTED]	2	[REDACTED]	30
[REDACTED]	12	[REDACTED]	4
[REDACTED]	15	[REDACTED]	4
[REDACTED]	8	[REDACTED]	30
[REDACTED]	10	<b>Total</b>	<b>967</b>

The figure of 967 horses situated within the five-mile radius of the dream site should be taken as a minimum figure as some owners did not come forward with figures when asked by the volunteers.

## 1. GVA

The GVA to the local & wider economy has been calculated using the average cost of horse ownership from the North Lancashire Bridleways Society report from 2009 titled 'A survey on the cost of horse ownership'. The costs contained within have been converted to 2021 figures using the Hargreaves Lansdown inflation calculator (<https://www.hl.co.uk/tools/calculators/inflation-calculator>).

Costs	£ -2009	£ - 2021
Ownership	4805	6781
Transport	3536	4990
	£8,341	£11,771

The average cost of ownership in 2021 is £11,771 per horse. This figure multiplied by 967 horses within the highlighted radius gives a minimum GVA figure of **£11,382,557**. The beneficiaries of this annual spend are wide ranging...

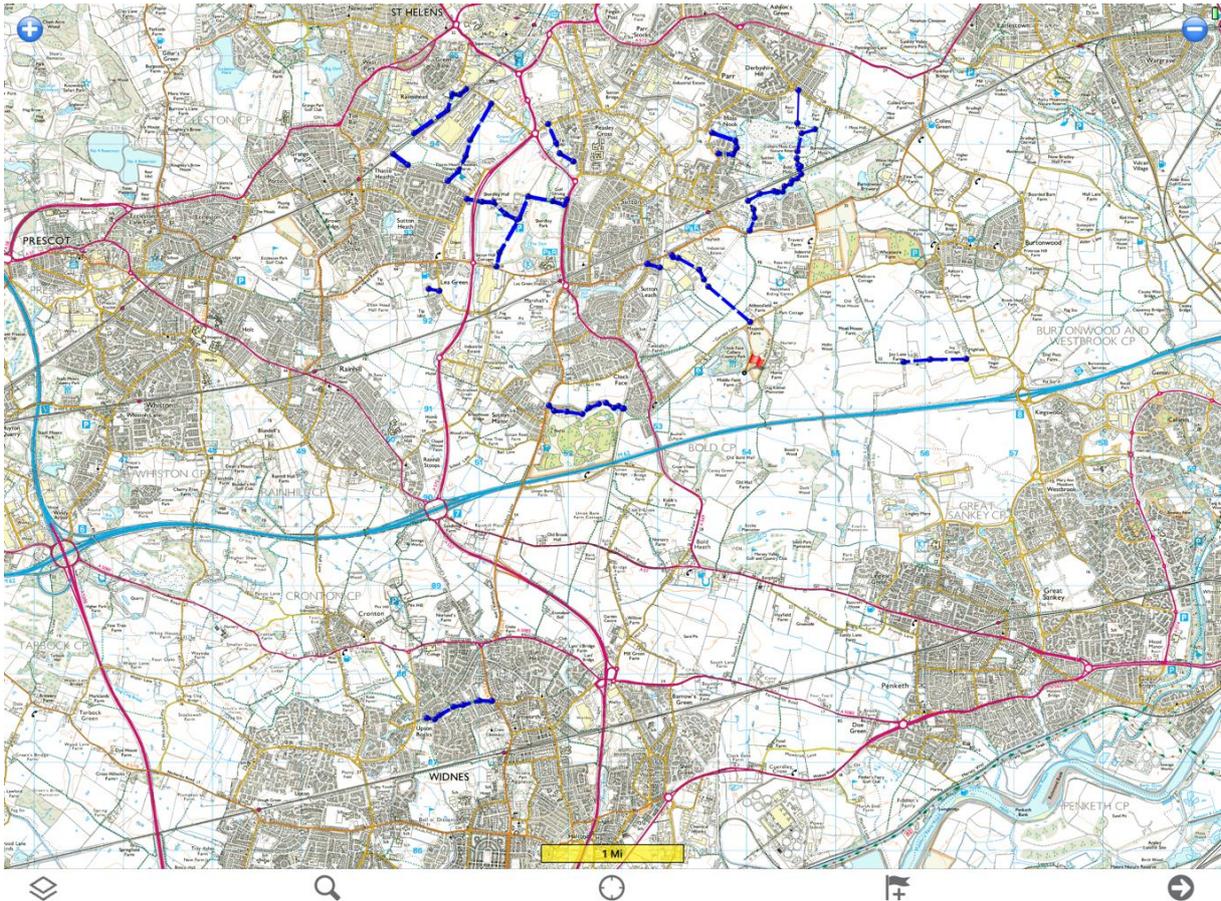
- Yard owners
- Landowners
- Farmers
- Veterinary practices
- Specialist veterinarians
- Farriers
- Apprentices
- Work riders
- Equipment suppliers
- Insurance companies
- Tutors
- Event organisers
- Clothing/equipment manufacturers
- Clubs/societies gathering subscriptions

It is important to note the 'local' benefits from the report...

- 80% of owners source their feed locally
- 100% of owners keep their horses locally (within 20 miles)
- 100% of owners use a local veterinary practice
- 100% of owners use a local tutor
- 60% of owners source their rugs locally

The majority of the GVA will therefore stay within the local area. There would also be a significant secondary beneficiary gain that has not been evaluated including the local hospitality and travel sector.

## 2. Current bridleway network



The current network within the five-mile radius consists of just 6.95 miles of bridleways (highlighted in blue on the above map). A total of 967 horses exercising a minimum of 5 miles per day equates to 1,820,000 miles per year with only 6.95 miles of bridleway available. It is for this reason that a large proportion of the local owners travel outside of the area to work their horses, this is to the detriment of the owners as they must incur large transportation costs to exercise their horses vastly increasing the cost of ownership and increasing the carbon footprint of the sector.

The majority of stables in the area are at capacity restricting further ownership by local residents. Owners who wish to increase their numbers have to look outside of the area to house their horses therefore restricting the expansion of the equestrian sector in the area.

### 3. Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan 2017

The BFPAAP is an adopted statutory policy that St Helens council spent £147,000 to produce. The Bold Forest Area Action Plan was adopted by St. Helens council in 2017 and therefore must be considered in any future planning applications. It sets out a vision for the Bold Forest park to transform it into an economically diverse, prosperous and high-quality environment. The vision states...

*“The vision for the Forest Park is to provide a high-quality setting to stimulate tourism and provide a platform for local businesses to grow and develop and for the establishment of new businesses. The area will also provide opportunity for a diverse range of outdoor activities to create a critical mass of activity that the local economy will thrive upon.*

*The Area Action Plan has been developed through a partnership making use of neighbourhood planning principles but in the context of a formal development plan. It is therefore breaking new ground on how areas should be planned in the future. This has been to such an extent, that it has drawn particular interest at the European level and is one exemplar project as part of the Pure Hubs Programme funded by European Union programme Interreg IVB.”*

*“By 2030 Bold Forest Park will be at the heart of a thriving diverse economy, providing a hub for family leisure and adventure sport. The natural environment and cultural environment will be rich and diverse. A network of open spaces and routes accessible to all connects the Forest park to the wider countryside and links to our local communities.”*

Page 18 of the BFPAAP paragraph 6.5.2 states...

*“A feasibility study undertaken by Groundwork St Helens in 2014 investigated the need for the development of the bridleway network across the area now covered by the Bold Forest Park. 99% of respondents supported the development of a bridleway network over the open spaces in and around the forest park suggesting that horse riding is as much an anchor activity in the forest park as walking, cycling and running.”*

Page 20 of the BFPAAP paragraphs 6.6.11, 6.6.12 & 6.6.13 state...

*There is a pressing need for an extensive bridleway network to provide good quality recreational riding which will underpin the development of equestrian businesses in and around the forest park.*

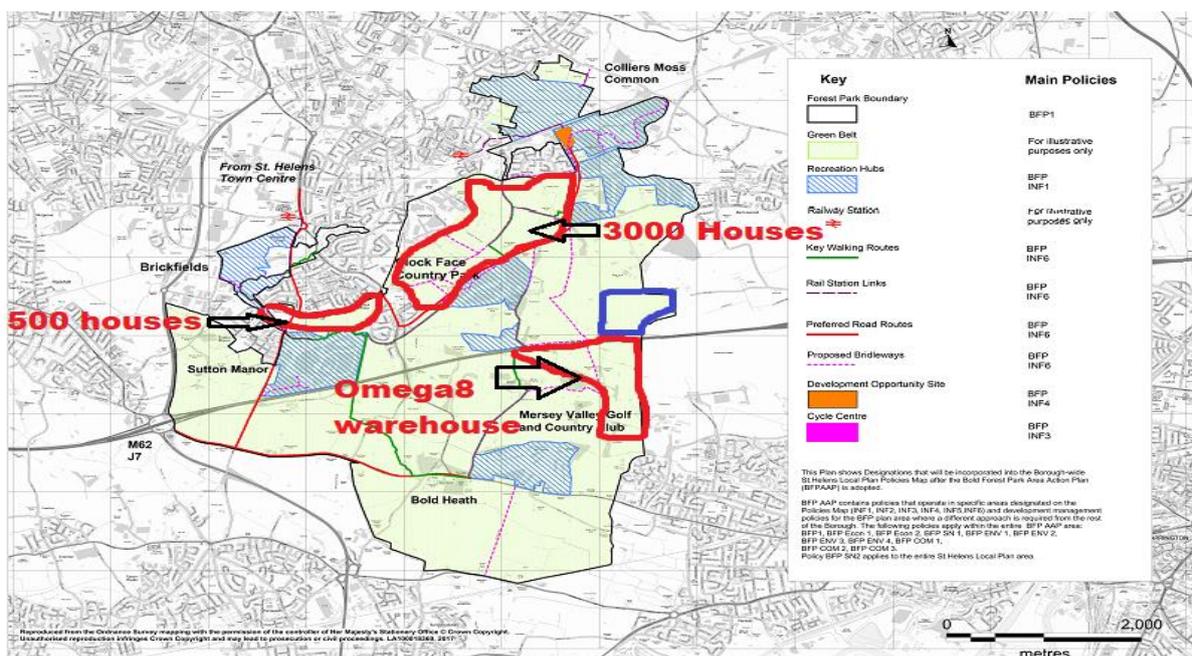
*The bridleway network will need to provide a spine, into which local yards can develop links to. Where necessary, rural funding via the Mersey Leader Programme, may be able to assist with funding towards developing such linkages.*

*Parking for people arriving with horse boxes who wish to ride in the area will need to be accommodated. An equestrian “hub”, possibly coupled with the cycling “hub”, defined within*

the routes network(s) will allow user information to be provided and facilities to be developed via franchises such as mobile catering.

Page 41 of the BFPAAP sets out how the expansion of the bridleway network will be achieved...

- The Council will work with partners such as landowners, equestrian businesses and the British Horse Society, to improve and expand the network of bridleways within the Forest Park with the aims of:
  - (i) Linking the Forest Park Recreation Hubs;
  - (ii) Linking to local equestrian businesses;
  - (iii) Creating a circular route within the Forest Park; and
  - (iv) Linking to bridleways outside the Forest Park to contribute to a wider city region facility.
- Figure 14 illustrates the Council’s proposed bridleway network, including existing and proposed bridleways, and the Proposed Bridleways are shown on the Policies Map.
- The Council will encourage and work with landowners and other partners to create new permissive bridleways, assessing and addressing risks and benefits to users and landowners, including any potential conflicts between multiple different users and antisocial behaviour.
- Where negotiations with landowners for a permissive route have been exhausted and there is no reasonable alternative, the Council will consider the use of statutory creation orders.



#### 4. Conclusions

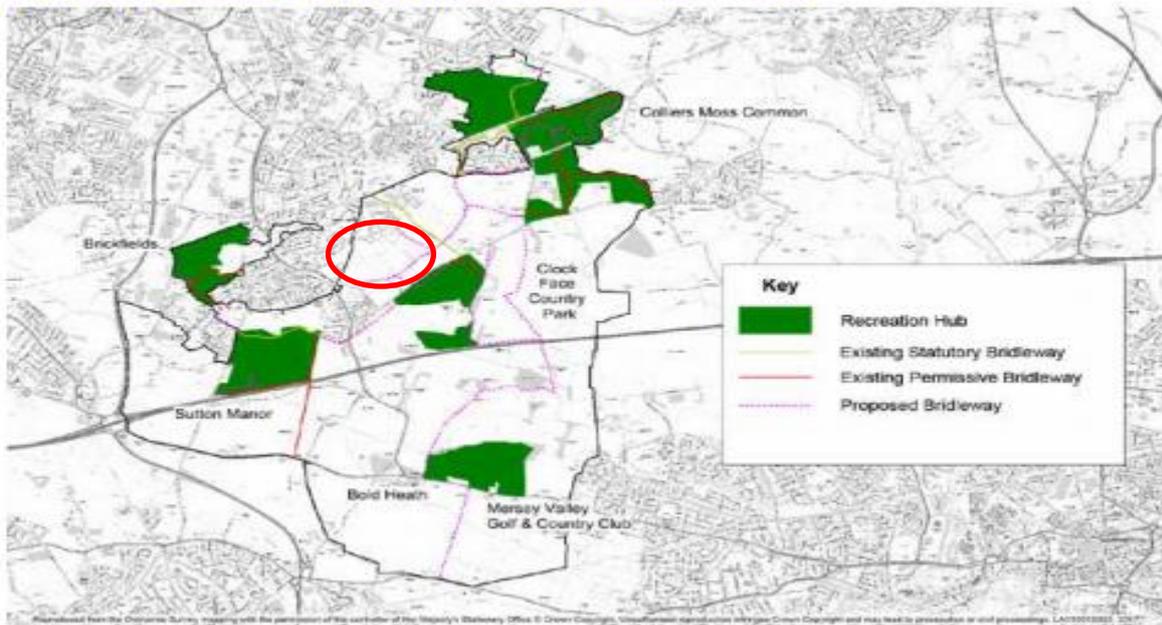
The Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan is unique and a true opportunity to build a thriving rural economy that has benefits not only for the local community, but the town as a whole, health and well-being.

Any development that impacts negatively on the success of the Forest Park Action Plan, must be resisted. The burden is on the applicant to demonstrate that any development will not have a negative impact. The application fails to address this. The Group have shown on numerous occasions where they believe this to be the case.

The Group accept some development may be necessary within the Forest Park, however, this must be appropriate in terms of size and scale so as not to negatively impact on the aims, objectives and policies of the Forest Park Action Plan.

This proposed development can in no way be seen as having a positive impact on the forest park or its aims. The proposed development of allocation 4HA will erode an existing statutory bridleway and sections of proposed bridleways as shown in figure 14 below...

**Figure 14: Existing and Proposed Bridleway Network**



The 4HA development also prevents the adoption of strategic routes between Mersey Valley golf club, Clock Face country park and the dream site.

The 4HA development would have a negative impact on local jobs by forcing the closure of Marlestons livery stables (highlighted with red circle). Sixty horses and ponies reside at the stables providing riding opportunities to local people including young children and school trips for children with special needs. These sixty horses would be forced out of the area due to the majority of yards having waiting lists,

most owners would be forced to give up their horses due to the extra costs of keeping them outside of the area.

This paper has clearly demonstrated the absolute need for the expansion and extension of the bridleway network. The majority of the stables are at capacity indicating that the delivery of future equestrian facilities is essential to growing business through the green economy. With owners having to travel out of the area to exercise their horses there is justification for the extension of the bridleway network, parking facilities and multi-use hubs. Given the sector already contributes over £11m per year to the local economy it should be a high on the list for investment from the council backed up by their own economic recovery plan and highlighted green recovery policy that states...

*"Our work will link to available funding regionally as well as nationally to promote a sustainable recovery through the development of local supply chain that create social value, while also developing a flourishing green economy, all delivered through the targeted use of local spending power, the attraction of key national and global partners, and stimulation of entrepreneurship and small business growth."*

The group believe that the variety of highly skilled jobs based in the green economy that would come as part of the network expansion would benefit local people. The network expansion would provide prospects for young people, provide a vast range of health benefits, inclusion across all sectors and an opportunity to provide a positive contribution to the challenge of climate change and safeguarding of diminishing habitats.

Considering the reasons set out above Bold & Clock Face Action Group recommend the Secretary of State refuses this application due to the negative impacts on the equestrian sector and its expansion.