

From: Ian Nicholls
Sent: 03 August 2018 13:19
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Network Rail London To Corby (Land Acquisition, Level Crossing & Bridge Works)
TWA Order (Bromham Rd Bridge, Bedford)

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing to express concern about the proposals to raise the Bromham Road rail bridge, Bedford.

Firstly, Network Rail has failed to consult properly. Two signs in Spenser Road and a further sign in Bromham Road state that the supporting documents for the project will be available in Bedford Central Library. I have visited the library on three different occasions including on 1st August and the plans have not been there. I have a response dated 20th July from the Network Rail helpline where this concern is acknowledged and yet no action was taken. On 1st August I spoke to Tony Belshaw the Communications Manager for the Eastern Mainline Project about this oversight. In addition, no public notices are displayed to the north of Bromham Road nor to the west of the railway. This minimal provision means that many people, who do not walk along a short section of road, will not be informed.

Network Rail makes great emphasis of leaflets being delivered and notices being placed in the local newspaper. At the information event held in the Harpur Suite in April, representatives were made aware that the paper is not delivered in many areas including Sidney Road which runs adjacent to the railway.

The result of this is that residents are reliant upon leaflet drops. As a local resident I have no recollection of having received a leaflet about the details of the work and this is supported by an admission from Network Rail that a technical difficulty meant that many residents were not informed of heavy piling work on the 8th July. I do have a leaflet about the scheme at Ford End Bridge!

This leads to a further concern as contact with the Network Rail helpline (03457 11 41 11) has proven frustrating and at times appeared deliberately obstructive. Responses frequently consist of broad statements about the improvements or even the following,

"The railway is a 24-hour a day, 365 days a year operation and involves a very large network with over 20,000 miles of track, 40,000 bridges & tunnels and 9,000 level crossings. Network Rail is legally obliged to maintain the infrastructure throughout the year in order to provide a safe and reliable rail network for passengers."

A suggestion to Francis Paonessa, Managing Director Infrastructure that there should be a dedicated helpline with a named official able to respond to concerns about the work on Bromham Road Bridge was merely met with a reiteration of the current Helpline which in reality is a filtering system which cannot provide fast and accurate information.

Network Rail also makes great play about having a subsequent consultation on 24th May following the one held in the Harpur Suite. The first event was held during working hours and in a place that entailed many residents having to leave work early and then either walk into town or use costly parking. The notice for this event was delivered within a leaflet for a local convenience store and

the event was eventually promoted by word of mouth between residents who had come across the information. Whilst the second event was at a more convenient time, though finishing too early for many commuters, its location was again problematic and would need considerable effort from residents to attend. It should be noted that there are several buildings located nearer the areas which will be directly affected, and which could have been used.

In terms of the engineering and transport aspects of the scheme there are concerns. The proposed bridge will not resolve problems encountered by pedestrians and cyclists moving east / west as the new structure will not be wide enough for segregation of cyclists. Currently, despite being a footway, the 'pavement' is used by cyclists to avoid the roadway. This causes conflict with pedestrians. The limited new width of the bridge will not correct this.

The proposal for a temporary pedestrian access via a footbridge does not include enough protection to prevent nuisance from 'pavement cyclists' and this is likely to increase as the road closure will promote alternatives to car use.

The new structure will also limit improvements to the station in terms of platform development and the use of new types of railway stock which are being developed.

Finally, the Spenser Road link (Spenser Court to Chaucer Road) will be subject to temporary roadworks. In the past a partial closure of this section of road (allowing utility and emergency service access) was rejected as limiting urgent access. I can see no reason why this has changed. The mature trees in the area which are a key feature of the community must be protected from removal and accidental damage.

Due to its importance the scheme is likely to progress even with its deficits. I would therefore propose that at a minimum, residents are helped by the establishment of a dedicated helpline (separate to the 03457 11 41 11) which is staffed by named personnel. In addition, the Network Rail website should contain specific easily found information about the work being undertaken in a chronological form and its projected impact upon residents.

Yours,

Ian Nicholls

Bedford,

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