

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make this statement.

I am submitting this opposition to the closure of the crossing at Bures in my capacity as the Parish Councillor responsible for the monitoring of all PROWs (Public Right of Way) in both Bures St Mary and Bures Hamlet and as the volunteer co-ordinator for the Community SpeedWatch team.

Firstly, as the CSW co-ordinator I receive regular anecdotal reports of excessive speeding through the narrow medieval roads in the village. This is backed up by the growing number of motorists recorded driving at speeds well in excess of the 30mph limit on every SpeedWatch shift I have overseen in the past two years.

Currently, both Parish Councils are working jointly to meet the criteria required to hopefully be awarded the 'Walkers Welcome' status. This will encourage visitors to our lovely village and beautiful countryside whilst bringing potential business to the pubs and retail outlets.

As the PROW Parish Councillor I walk all the public footpaths on a regular basis to report any damage to the signage, flooding and obstructions. I consider it my responsibility to ensure that we safeguard the public's access to our quintessentially English countryside; to be able to freely enjoy the gently undulating landscape, the woodlands, open fields, the river valley and the adjacent flood meadows. The village is already fighting a proposed development which will have a devastating impact upon the village landscape forever. We simply cannot set the precedent that PROWs can be extinguished by any authority at a time when our countryside is under threat by unscrupulous landowners and development consortiums.

And so to the matter of safety. Walkers use the PROW crossing at Bures as a link to several PROWs taking them out into the countryside to the parish boundaries and beyond. Network Rail have suggested an alternative route through a housing estate which is not at all the rural environment we are trying to promote. Walkers are then expected to negotiate blind bends in both directions without any pedestrian pavement under the railway bridge itself where traffic is known to speed without any regard for the unsuspecting Rambler.

The crossing over the rail track provides predictability for the walker and clear visibility for both the train driver and the walker. The approaching or departing trains are also travelling at a speed considerably slower than that of the vehicles hurtling under the railway bridge!

Finally, families living on Colne Road and in Parsonage Grove are able to use the rail crossing to walk to school along a virtually traffic-free route to the local primary school. Their safety is further enhanced by the CSW team who regularly provide some traffic-calming measures at the only point at which they actually encounter heavy traffic. This is where they cross the Colchester Road to continue along the PROW across River Stour via the Millennium Bridge. To close the PROW rail crossing will inevitably mean that these families will have no other option than to take the far more hazardous route under the railway bridge or regrettably revert to using the car.

Mrs Janet Aries