

From: Jonathon Diss
Sent: 30 May 2018 00:19
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order"

Dear sir,

I am writing to contest the application for Rother Valley Railway to acquire land that will allow them to join the line from Bodiam to Robertsbridge. There are several issues I wish to bring to your attention, all of which I believe raise questions that should make this proposal untenable.

My initial concern is that the project does not constitute essential infrastructure. It is essentially a tourist line and a cherished love of a few benefactors. It seems somewhat un-democratic, therefore, to sanction the forced removal of land from the existing owners who farm the land to benefit what will essentially be a private railway. If a settlement can be agreed amicably, I would be much more comfortable with the arrangement. However, in the event that an agreement is not achievable, I would argue that it is very much against the liberal democratic principles of our country to allow wealth to be the determining factor in land use and I would expect the rights of ownership and the farmers in question to be upheld.

I am aware that the economic benefits of this enterprise to the region at large have been stressed by RVR. I do however, feel that this is something that needs further investigation. I have concerns that Robertsbridge will actually suffer the brunt of the cost in terms of parking, flood risk and road safety in order to achieve the projected benefits. I would argue that the economic argument is, in reality, a convenient veneer for what is essentially a rail enthusiasts aspiration.

The crossing on the A21 is of considerable concern. A few miles to the North, at Tonbridge, on the same road, over £70 million has been spent improving the flow of traffic. It seems inconceivable that the exact opposite action will be taken on the Robertsbridge bypass. I am at a loss as to how Rother district council came to pass this. Amber Rudd has also rightfully expressed her concerns over this issue. The section of road in question is

fast, with a long and obscured bend from the South. I would be extremely concerned that this would see an increase in RTA occurrences. I also believe there is a general consensus in policy that level crossings should be reduced, in general, given their safety records.

As a side issue to this, is it not government policy to reduce the use of fossil fuelled transportation and increase air quality? I would suggest that this project certainly stands in conflict with both of those aspirations. Either we are serious about reducing carbon emissions or we are not.

The risks of building embankments across the flood plain are considerable. RVR's own survey suggests as much as 5% increase in flood water levels in some places. I would like an independent survey to be commissioned to drill down further into this detail. Given that my property is on Northbridge Street, I am naturally concerned; any action that disrupts the natural processes of the flood plain (current Wealden flood policy) and places further pressures on the flood defences, cannot be welcomed. I would argue that the potential costs of this action would outweigh the projected benefits, at least, where local residents are concerned.

Robertsbridge has existing parking issues given that it is used by commuters outside of the village who park here. RVR have attempted to mitigate this by using a business model based on most new 'traffic' arriving by mainline train, given the connection to South Eastern. However, this seems nothing more than a guesstimate given that the Bluebell railway has a 60%-40% split in favour of car arrivals following its joining to the mainline.

Robertsbridge is a beautiful medieval village in an area of outstanding natural beauty; the bypass has seen the transformation of this place from the grim days of congestion when the A21 went through the high street. The infrastructure simply doesn't exist for a large influx of cars, moreover, it may significantly damage the quality of life that we currently enjoy.

I hope you will consider the costs to the community and support the words of the PM in a PM questions speech she gave a few weeks ago when she stated that Conservatives local councils were standing up for local people. The railway, whilst lovely in its own right, will simply inflict too many risks and costs onto the immediate community for what amounts to dubious economic benefits.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathon Diss and Karen Cruttenden,

Sent from my iPhone

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