

From: Edward Flint
Sent: 13 May 2018 11:49
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Objection to the Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

EDWARD FLINT

13/05/2018

Dear Mr Grayling

Re: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

I am writing as a long time resident of the parish of to object to the application by Rother Valley Railway to extend their line.

My objections are as follows:

1. FLOODING

I feel that the general prescription against developments in flood plains ought to rule out any project that so clearly compromises the integrity of the effective floodplain. Floods are not prevented, the water is merely moved to somewhere else, preferably less troublesome, these fields are very effective buffers soaking up and holding vast amounts of water every winter, this I have seen frequently.

I believe that any material decrease in the flood plain here, a natural "pinch-point" in the valley effectively girdling development either above or below the village of Robertsbridge having long term repercussions elsewhere. Given the recent intensification in housebuilding and development up and down the valley, all draining into this river basin I strongly believe that this land ought to be left to perform its natural function. Interestingly no other development of this or similar type would be countenanced here. The arguments that it is merely restoring what was are invalid given the changed circumstances of the area, and are certainly insufficient to threaten homes and business with flooding. This NON ESSENTIAL scheme should not threaten the millennial old flood plain function of this land.

As Vice Chairman and a long standing member of the thriving Robertsbridge Cricket Club, I am concerned that the Rother Valley Railway clearly includes our ground, The Clappers to be one of those that will be subject to more frequent and severe flooding incidents. This will damage our nets and artificial wicket, may result in more games cancelled through a slowing in the drainage and will most importantly render our pavilion uninsurable.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Railway passes through a designated Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a designation that serves to protect countryside from unnecessary development. Though the railway and the trains that use it might be deemed to be beautiful and an enhancement to the area, the extensive destruction of really a good species-

rich area of secondary woodland, ditches and ponds at Moat Farm is a major concern. The more so since the anticipated compensation and mitigation works, for which no land has thus far been allocated, required once a full ecological survey is undertaken will require the planting of trees into an important and nationally rare habitat, namely long standing, possibly ancient permanent pasture.

I am also concerned at the loss of important islands of scrubby, secondary woodland on the more productive Parsonage Farm land. These remnant copses are an important part of the landscape and are reservoirs, or corridors, of habitat, just the type of habitat frequented by many of the farmland bird and butterfly species that are known to be in national decline. Though perhaps not exciting, these habitats and the species they harbour need to be valued and protected before they become rare. We need to value the common place and wherever possible protect them from NON ESSENTIAL infrastructure projects.

I am also concerned at the possibility of diesel leakages and spillages from trains passing within meters of the River Rother itself. As an angler I am concerned to protect the Sea Trout and Eels to name two notable species that are found here.

3. THREAT TO VILLAGE

I am extremely sceptical about the possibility of significant economic benefits to the Parish of Salehurst and whilst I am happy to see neighbouring communities possibly gain some marginal benefit, this should not be at the cost of those who live and work in Robertsbridge. To propose a scheme of this nature in a village of narrow streets, with on-street parking common and not provide additional parking is laughable. I believe that the railway has done very little for those communities it already reaches and will do less for a dormitory, commuter village with no tourist infrastructure and little scope for development of one. It also needs to be recognised that the Rother Valley Railway will seek to keep their visitors spending their money at their own volunteer run outlets. It is not in the interests of the railway to encourage visitors to explore the locality. Given the recent history of expensive, unfortunate, tourist white elephants in the area, Hastings Pier being the best, most recent example, I find it hard to make a plausible business case for this project and feel that it poses a real threat to the very effective and cohesive village in which I live. This is a productive, economically viable village and landscape that should not be threatened by NON ESSENTIAL development.

4. LEVEL CROSSINGS

It is widely recognised and understood that level crossings are a bad idea unless absolutely necessary. The proposal to create an unnecessary obstruction on a major trunk route such as the A21 is surely untenable, and will ultimately have detrimental impact on the economic regeneration of Hastings, through discouraging trade. The Rother Valley Railway have been disingenuous in not publicising the increase in closure times from significantly under a minute at the time of Planning Consent to a much more plausible 2 minutes now. I believe that this material change in the proposal renders the initial granting of provisional consent invalid. This NON ESSENTIAL development should not be allowed to threaten the economic development of the region.

I am particularly concerned that the narrow access into the village at Northbridge Street, shortly to have an additional 150 dwellings dependant on it, will become at times impassable. There is little or no off street parking here and with the two level crossings closed simultaneously traffic will be trapped, backing up on to the A21 roundabout. The current traffic flows through the village are at times paralysed and gridlocked, the addition of 2 level crossings into the local road network will not improve an already poor situation.

Finally though not admissible as an objection please note that I am deeply concerned that Compulsory Purchase Powers should be used for a private, if not charitable enterprise, and do not believe that legislators envisaged such powers being used for this purpose. It is immoral and wrong.

Yours sincerely

Edward Flint

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