

Supp/85

Shenaz Choudhary

From: RSClymo
Sent: 25 May 2018 15:18
To: POCorrespondence
Subject: Proposed Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge) Order
Attachments: RVR_MPs_Bat_Obs.pdf; RVR_RSC_Bat_Obs.pdf

Dear Minister,

There have been a lot of wild assertions locally about the delays and congestion that may be caused by a level crossing over the A21.

Amongst these mistaken asserters is your colleague, Amber Rudd, who is reported in the local paper (Battle Observer, see attachment RVR_MPs) today: "I have already written to the Rt Hon Chris Grayling ... to raise my concerns and opposition ...", "Not only can these crossings be dangerous, there are also a number of damaging environmental effects which result from the traffic congestion the crossing would cause. I believe it would cause significant congestion, limit tourist' accessibility and limit our opportunity to achieve economic growth".

Ms Rudd has not done her homework. The effects would be similar to those at a pedestrian crossing a few hundred yards further north: short queues, short delays (barely 2 minutes). Details in the other attachment (RVR_RSC, from the same paper). The RVR will increase, not limit, tourists' accessibility, and increase, not limit, economic growth.

I do hope you will ignore Ms Rudd's communication to you.

In the same attachment you can see Huw Merriman's well informed view of the same and much wider matters. He is, of course, the MP for the directly affected area.

The other attachment, from the same paper (RVR_RSC) is my own contribution toward establishing the likely delays and queues, but more importantly trying to get discussion away from such peripheral matters to the central issues of the RVR Order: is the public good more or less than the private detriment to the farmers.

In hope.

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RS Clvmo

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Battle Observer - 25 May 2018

Amber Rudd MP calls for other options to be considered as part of railway extension plans

Observer reporter

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The MP for Hastings and Rye has spoken out against Rother Valley Railway's plans for a level crossing on the A21.

Amber Rudd MP says there are safer and more effective ways to re-establish a transport link between Robertsbridge and Bodiam which should be explored.

She said: "I have already written to the Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, to raise my concerns and opposition regarding building further level crossings on the A21.

"Not only can these level crossings be dangerous, there are also a number of damaging environmental effects which result from the traffic congestion the crossing would cause. I believe it will cause significant congestion, limit tourists' accessibility and limit our opportunity to achieve economic growth. Furthermore, Network Rail's

work to close level crossings shows just how dangerous they can be.

"I have been working hard to lobby both Government Ministers and industry experts to campaign for the dualling of the A21. Improving our transport links is essential to regenerating our local economy and encouraging businesses to invest in our towns. That is why I am delighted £1 million of funding for Transport for the South East has been announced by the Secretary of State."

Huw Merriman, MP for Bexhill and Battle, also voiced his views on the proposal.

He said: "I have visited the Rother Valley Railway team for updates on the progress of this project on at least three occasions since I was elected to Parliament to find out more about the benefits and implications for the local area. I have also spoken to parish representatives, local residents and landowners to understand their views. "I believe this project has the



Amber Rudd, MP for Hastings and Rye. Photo by Derek Canty.

potential to bring increased tourism to the constituency, boost the revenues of the few local shops and services as well as open up new employment opportunities for Robertsbridge village and the surrounding area. It also means that visitors from

London can join the heritage railway at Robertsbridge stopping off at villages all the way to Tenterden without having to come by car. This has certainly been the case for the Bluebell Railway in West Sussex which now directly links to the mainline railway

station at East Grinstead.

"However, I do appreciate that this project also brings some valid concerns for local residents about increased flood risks in Robertsbridge, the impact of a new level crossing on the A21 and parking issues for the village.

"As a result of hearing these concerns, I have been in direct and regular contact with Highways England, the Environment Agency, the RVR project organisers and Rother District Council to seek assurances that all these risks have been fully considered and can be mitigated.

"With regards to the A21, I am satisfied that, following a technical report commissioned by RVR following consultation with East Sussex County Council, their contractors, Mott MacDonald, concluded that the impact of a level crossing on the A21 at Robertsbridge for the RVR would be minimal.

"When Rother District Council approved the planning application for the RVR they

also put in place conditions regarding the A21 which included no trains to run at peak times between 7am to 9am and 5pm and 7pm Monday to Friday including bank holidays. The maximum amount of services crossing the A21 would be around 10 per day between April and October.

"I am also aware that in order to complete this railway line, two local landowners need to reach agreement with RVR about the purchase of their land. I understand that at this stage agreement is unlikely to be reached.

"I would very much like to see positive negotiations on this continue with the landowners as the proposition of a compulsory purchase order is unpalatable for many including the parish council and local residents.

"I have offered to help both parties ensure that their cases are fully represented and I have already stated will not be taking sides on this issue."

Visit <http://www.rvr.org.uk/> for more information.

Battle Observer 25 May 2018

The lights there cycle red-green, each phase roughly two minutes (the same as the proposed level crossing).

Suppose, for illustration, that in one cycle 20 cars join on red, and when the lights go green, only 16 get through before the next red and a further 20 cars are added i.e. the queue has grown to 20 + 4 cars. This continues at each red-green cycle, the queue growing at each cycle.

But the level crossing has only one cycle, and in this example two minutes and a few (24) seconds after the cars get green, all the queue has gone. Until the next train.

Comparison with the lights for pedestrians to cross, just north of the roundabout, are a much closer surrogate: short queues for short times.

Other features of the plans can be debated: economic benefits (size and place); car parking (the mainline car park in Robertsbridge usually has a lot of unused space,

and some arrangement for those buying railway tickets at Robertsbridge should be reachable); increased flood risk (modelling may seem a fair raft, but is the only available way of assessing risk). All these must, unavoidably, be less than certain, but the details of what RVR plans are known, so they can be discussed.

We also see too many empty buildings in Robertsbridge, and observe, with anxiety, that the importance of farming to the local economy has reduced while tourism has increased.

The use of compulsory purchase (CP) that has driven the current discussions is repugnant. Why is it being sought? At three public meetings I have heard RVR report a pile of correspondence arising from their attempts to get discussions with the landowners, but the landowners saying that there

have been no discussion.

This is why RVR say, after several years, that they have no option but to seek CP.

The other issues above seem to me to be mainly peripheral. The central issue is this. The farmers point out that in the 1960s they used to work their fields when the old railway embankments were in use. But nowadays farm machinery is much bigger than it was then, and if embankments were to be reinstated then there would be additional obstructions to efficient farming (which is already seriously difficult), and increased risk of flooding. What we do not know is whether these would be minor problems or major ones. Are there any details available by which one might judge that?

There would also be detrimental effects, real but not quantifiable, to ecology in one of the farms. The farmers agreed to the passage of the

A21 Robertsbridge bypass over their land because that was for the public good.

This time, is the proposed public good greater or less than the private detriment? This is a complex matter. Wild assertions about side issues do not help.

RS CLYMK
High Street
Robertsbridge

No need to fear crossing delays

Rother Valley Railway (RVR) want a new level crossing of the A21. Would it cause long queues and delays, such as those that happen at busy times at the Flimwell traffic lights? This is a false fear.

From: RSClymo
Sent: 28 May 2018 09:40
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order
Attachments: Comment.odt

To whom it concerns: greeting

In response to your invitation I make some comments below. I have no idea whether they will be of any use.

My name and address are at the end of this email.

A copy of what is on this email is supplied as an attachment (which may be easier to read than the email).

Comments on Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

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- (8) Relative increase in tourism
- (9) Public good, private detriment

Comments

(1) A few years ago Salehurst & Robertsbridge Parish Council sent out a questionnaire to help make a Village Plan. The village had about 1080 households, of which 380 replied. Of those, 75 % were in favour of the Rother Valley Railway (RVR) completing the missing link to Bodiam, and agreed that they would use the railway themselves.

As is to be expected, objectors have recently been vigorous: those in favour will mostly see no need to write to you in support.

(2) The focus of recent objections has been the level-crossing of the A21. The most alarmist makes comparison with the traffic light controlled crossroads in the A21 at Flimwell, a few miles north. Long (1 km+?) queues develop there at busy times. But this comparison with a level-crossing is false. Suppose for illustration that 20 vehicles join during a 2-minute red/green cycle, but that only 16 manage to cross before the lights go red, and another 20 join, increasing the queue to 24. This process continues, increasing the queue by 4 at every cycle. Only when joiners decrease to fewer than passers does the queue decrease.

But the level-crossing has only a single cycle of 2 minutes; the queue

disappears after a few seconds more than 2 minutes. This is, in fact, what happens at the traffic-light controlled pedestrian crossing just north of the roundabout (itself a few hundred yards north of the level-crossing site). Short queues for short times.

(3) Objections are made to other features of the RVR plan, which includes travellers arriving at Robertsbridge by mainline railway and transferring to RVR. There is no public transport link between Robertsbridge and Bodiam village and Bodiam Castle: the main tourist site in the area. The RVR would provide that link. But the RVR plan did not include problems created by those arriving at Robertsbridge by car. The streets are already linear car parks reduced to uncontrolled one-way working. Part of the problem is the car park charge (£4.50 / day) which many commuters are unwilling to pay, so they park free along every road in the village.. This fee is set by the company to whom the franchise is let, to maximise income. But that fee is when the car park is only half full. It should be possible to reach agreement that RVR tickets bought at Robertsbridge can have an optional addition of, say, £1, for car parking. In short, if a problem does develop it should be soluble.

(4) There is widespread distrust of the flood predictions especially downstream (east) of the A21. The embankments of the old railway still exist over parts of the route, and some parts flood fairly often already. I can understand the fear but hydraulic modelling is the best that can be done..

(5) There is also suspicion about the scale and locations of the postulated economic benefits. Robertsbridge has too many empty buildings. A bit more local activity, suitable to the centre of this medieval village, would be welcome.

(6) I was chairman of the Parish Council Planning Committee that considered the RVR application to reinstate the link. The committee recorded their repugnance at the idea of using Compulsory Purchase (CP) to acquire the land, and that is a widespread view. So why is RVR taking that route? At three public meetings I have attended RVR have pointed to correspondence in which they have tried to get discussions with the farmers. But supporters of the farmers say there have been no discussions. That explains why RVR, after several years, are now applying for a CP Order.

(7) The RVR plans are sufficiently detailed that it is possible to have discussions and reach conclusions. What of the farmers' case? They say that in the 1950s, when the old railway was still working, it was possible to work the fields satisfactorily. But nowadays, farm machinery is much bigger, and must be worked harder to justify its cost. The RVR plan would make that much more difficult or impossible. There may be some truth in that; at least it is plausible. But I have not seen any attempt to quantify the difficulties. Would it be a minor nuisance or a major disruption? Perhaps the farmers will supply this missing evidence.

(8) Farming is a traditional land use. But (regrettably) the trends are that the local economy depends less than it used to on farming, and more than is sensible on tourism. By the time that UK has left the EU, farming may be even more difficult than it is now.

(9) The central question is: 'Is the public good of the RVR greater or less than the private detriment to two farms?'. On balance I am in favour of the RVR case.

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RS Clymo

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