

# Natural England - DAS2438 Anglia Level Crossing Reduction Strategy – consultation ref 191588

Briefing note

## ESSEX

### Thurrock

No impact on any Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

### Essex (exc Thurrock & Hertfordshire)

No impact on any Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) **with the exception of the following proposed level crossing closures:**

#### *E02 – Camps & E03 – Sadlers*

Proposed closures would affect access for agricultural vehicles to Hunsdon Mead SSSI & affect ability of owner/occupier to effectively manage land and livestock. The SSSI meadows and adjacent meadows are rare old lammas meadows managed in accordance with longstanding traditional Lammas Meadow management.

Site supports a nationally rare grassland plant community classified as MG4 which are reliant on management that is more targeted and time-consuming than non-designated agricultural grassland. Land been in Agricultural Stewardship (currently Higher Level Stewardship) for many years in recognition of their rarity and quality and the need to sustain management in accordance with traditional lammas practice.

Additional challenges are posed by the periodic flooding of these fields, which makes timing the hay cut and movement of livestock challenging, and weather dependent.

Compounded by problems associated with poor water quality from the Canons Brook, due to input of litter, discharges and pollutants from upstream areas including Harlow. Proposed new 2 m wide footpath north of the railway will be adjacent to the brook and therefore increase the risk of localised litter entering the brook and subsequently downstream to the SSSI.

Need to look at closure options again as Natural England objects to the current proposals.

#### *E30 - Ferry*

Section of proposed new footpath runs through part of Benfleet & Southend Marshes SSSI (outside of the Special Protection Area (SPA)). No objection subject to the proposed new footpath avoiding impacting on suitable habitat of the SSSI listed (nationally scarce) Bithynian Vetch that has been recorded from the railway bank at SSSI notification. The impact may occur through direct routing/surfacing/construction activities etc. Undertake ecological surveys at appropriate time of year to establish suitable route for footpath & ensure footpath is constructed sympathetically.

## Hertfordshire

### *H05 – Pattens*

Both options (H05A & H05B) include a proposed new footpath which would run through a large part of Thorley Flood Pound SSSI. The site is a rare surviving example of tall wash grassland (a wet fen habitat) which is poorly drained permanent grassland. The proposed footpath would likely be subject to waterlogging for many months of the year and any drainage work or construction of a surfaced track would not be permitted as it could disrupt the hydrology of the SSSI.

Proposal would open up previously undisturbed habitat and may affect grazing livestock that are present. Note water vole have been re-introduced successfully to the site recently & any proposed footpath route should not lead to disturbance to, or loss of, their habitat.

Understand that there has been dialogue with the owners/occupiers (Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust) over the proposed route of any new footpath but it is unclear if the Trust support the current proposal for the footpath through the SSSI.

Need to look at closure options again as Natural England objects to the current proposals.

#### *H06 – Gilston*

No impact on its own as new footpath lies outside Thorley Flood Pound SSSI. However, footpath proposal may need to be re-visited in light of comments made in relation to H05, above, in relation to new footpath proposals for H05. Otherwise new footpaths may not join up.

#### *H09 – Fowlers*

This is a private user crossing and there would be no issue provided that it is not used as access for agricultural vehicles in relation to the management of Thorley Flood Pound SSSI. This needs to be confirmed with the owners/occupiers (Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust).

Natural England would object to the current proposals if it adversely impacted the management of the SSSI.

### **CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

No impact on any Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

No impact on any National Nature Reserves (NNRs)

### **SUFFOLK**

No impact on any Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

No impact on any National Nature Reserves (NNRs)

No impact on Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

No impact on the English Coastal Path (ECP) route

Louise Oliver  
Natural England  
Norfolk & Suffolk Team

15.11.2016