



BY EMAIL ONLY

Camilla Rhodes
Cambridgeshire County Council
Asset Information
Box No. STA2101
Highways Service
Stanton Way Highway Depot
Huntingdon, PE29 6PY

Network Rail
James Forbes House
27 Great Suffolk St
London
SE1 0NS

09 February 2018

Ref: Obj/61/SUFF/R002

Dear Mrs Rhodes

The Network Rail (Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction Order) ("the Suffolk Order")

Thank you for your email of 29 January in response to Network Rail's letter dated 15 December 2017 responding to Cambridgeshire County Council's (CCC) objection to the Suffolk Order, and in particular, to the closure of the Weatherby crossing S22.

We note that the Council does not accept Network Rail's arguments put forward in the December letter and that it does not withdraw its objection to the S22 Weatherby proposal. We also note that the Council's "*representation is in support of Suffolk County Council's objection*" and that CCC it is not making a separate representation to the Suffolk Inquiry.

You have copied in your email extracts from several CCC's policies in support of the objection, including policies from:

- CCC's Business Plan 2017-18 which "sets out the Authority's strategic vision in support for the county of Cambridgeshire";
- CCC's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) "which sets out in more detail how CCC will manage and improve the public rights of way network" and which forms part of CCC's Local Transport Plan (3);
- CCC's Local Transport Plan (3) (LTP);
- CCC's Cambridgeshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2016-17

You set out the interdependencies between the above policy documents and highlight CCC's strategic priorities and strategic outcomes. You conclude that Network Rail's proposal to close the crossing conflicts with the national and CCC's local policies.

Network Rail does not agree with that view. The local policies which you have quoted and copied are not relevant considerations to Network Rail's proposals at the Weatherby crossing.

You state that *"The communities of Cheveley and Woodditton in Cambridgeshire have made representation to the County Council that residents will be adversely affected by the proposed closure because it is used as an important off-road link on pedestrian routes into and out of Newmarket"*.

A Google map search shows that Cheveley and Woodditton are located in East Cambridgeshire, approximately 4.4 miles (Cheveley) and 4.3 miles (Woodditton) from Newmarket. You do not elaborate how these communities will be adversely affected by the closure of the Weatherby crossing.

You say that *"The County Council remains of the view that the proposed alternative on-road route is both inconvenient and less accessible for pedestrians. We consider that the change would significantly discourage existing users to walk between their current destinations, encouraging them to drive instead or not to get out at all. This is contrary to County Council and government policy to encourage healthy lifestyles, strong communities and sustainable transport, reducing the burden on the NHS and thus on the public purse"*.

Given the distances between Cheveley and Woodditton from Newmarket it is not clear how the above statement relates to the communities of Cheveley and Woodditton, whose members would need to drive to reach Newmarket. As regards the impact on the residents of Newmarket, we have commented on the acceptability of the diversion route in the letter of 15 December.

It is also not clear how Network Rail's proposal *"works against the cohesion of the local community by severing this very popular pedestrian connection (contrary to the Cambridgeshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy Priorities 4 and 5; Business Plan)*. It appears that Cheveley, Woodditton and Newmarket are distinct communities some distance away from each other. They do not appear to be connected by a network of public rights of way, which would be affected by the closure of the Weatherby crossing. With regards to the impact on the residents of Newmarket, the proposed diversion directs users to an existing underpass with wide footways and railings. The route is longer and therefore it is likely to result in increased walking activity in accordance with national and local policies. The underpass provides connectivity between the north and south part of the town.

You say that Network Rail's proposal *"reduces sustainable transport links (Priority 5), and discourages people from walking for physical and mental well-being, whether for short utility walks or for leisure and fitness (Priorities 4 and 5; ROWIP SOA 1, 2 and 8). People deliberately choose to use an off-road route such as this because it is*

direct. They do not like going a disproportionate way out of their way”.

As stated above, Network Rail's proposal diverts existing users to the nearby underpass thus ensuring safe crossing of the railway. We set out the details of the diversion and the anticipated impact on existing users in the letter of 15 December.

You refer to CCC's ROWIP and the LTP. In this context it is important to note that there are no public rights of way over Weatherby crossing. Network Rail has the right to close permissive routes over the railways (such as the route over the Wetherby level crossing), without pursuing any of the formal statutory processes which might be used to close a public right of way. However, the crossing has been included in the Order taking a precautionary view to put the extinguishment of any claimed private (or for that matter public) rights beyond doubt. For that reason, and the fact that the crossing is located in Suffolk, it does not fall within the scope of CCC's ROWIP.

With reference to the other policies and strategic objectives quoted in your email, although not directly relevant to this crossing, they appear to broadly support Network Rail's proposals.

Network Rail does not accept that the Council's representation by reference to Cambridgeshire policies is relevant or justified.

If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me on the address above or by email to AngliaLevelCrossings@networkrail.co.uk, quoting the reference number provided.

Yours sincerely



Bridgit Choo-Bennett
Anglia Level Crossing Reduction Team
Network Rail