

OBJ/51

**Caroline O'Neill**

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**From:** Luke Palmer  
**Sent:** 24 April 2017 07:31  
**To:** TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT  
**Cc:** 'Hannah Padfield'  
**Subject:** F.C Palmer & Sons Level Crossing Closures.  
**Attachments:** Letter to Secretary of State Railway Crossings.docx

Dear Sirs,

Please see my objections to the level crossing closure on F.C Palmer & Sons Attached in a word document I have also sent hard copy in the post recorded delivery.

Kind Regards

Luke Palmer

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Stowbridge Farm

Green End

Stretham, Ely

Cambs, CB63LF

20 April 2017

Secretary of State for Transport c/o Transport and Works Act Orders Unit

General Counsel's Office

Department for Transport,

Zone 1/18, Great Minster House

33 Horseferry Road

London SW1P 4DR

Dear Sirs,

I farm in partnership with my Father, uncle and both brother and brother in law on a family farm called F.C Palmer & Sons and refer to the four level crossings that Network Rail are proposing to close: These are **C01**: Chittering, **C02** Nairns, **C33** Jack O'tells, and **C34** Fysons. All these crossings effect our farming business as I hopefully will detail below.

F.C Palmer and Sons farm 3150 acres within a ring fence (the purple shaded area within on the main farm map) of this total area there is 146 acres on a five year Farmed Business Tenancy (little farm, Green dots on main farm map) and 716 acres under a contract farming arrangement with T.W Reynolds and sons (grey shaded area). Of this total area 1753 acres are on the eastern side of the main Kings Lynn to London railway line, there are currently three user worked level crossings on the farm and one footpath.

Crops grown within the farm include: Wheat, Barley, Beans, Oilseed Rape, Potatoes, Sugar beet, Celery, Lettuce, Beetroot, Leeks, Turf, Carrots. All of these have differing amounts of management required and differing amounts of crop to harvest in terms of physical weight or for the instance of Lettuce Packed trays. All crops harvested go back to the central stores in the middle of the farm at chittering farm, where specialised storage and handling facilities exist.

We estimate roughly each year depending on our rotation 12-15,000 tonnes of produce is moved across the two main user worked level crossings, Nairns (co2) and Jack O'tells (C33) this would equate to 1000 full movements across the crossing and obviously a return journey, using our 12 tonne trailers to transport produce. Also there are vehicle movements over the crossing to allow the planting of the land, preparation and continued agronomy during the growing season in regards to irrigation, spraying, hoeing, etc. At harvest time staff move across the railways arriving at the rigs to cut produce, weed the intensive crops i.e lettuce and celery.

on our own estimates alone we believe the crossings to be used at least 20 – 30 times per day in off peak and at least 50 times per day during peak times.

What is incredibly frustrating is at no point within the consultation has any census data been used on frequency of use or how many accidents have happened on crossings in the last 10 years, Network rail have admitted to us that they never undertook any data collection even though it has been included on their proposals and continued to be after we challenged them on this. I have also put on the main farm map a label showing the Bannold level crossing, if the whole

extent of these crossing closures is for passenger safety and to speed lines up and stop incidents this crossing would be the first to close as it has had at least 4 suicides within the last three years. I have argued at length with network rail that this crossing needs CCTV and monitoring as not only does this stop trains moving but also stops house owners being able to get to their cottages if the crossing is closed because of this.

Network rail have in the past been very good at listening to us and we have worked with them in writing our safe working procedures, allowing access onto the farm at all hours and explaining when our peak periods of work are. From this we have just had new phones installed at Nairns (C02) as the previous ones were over 20 years old and very quiet, when using Jack O'tells having a member of staff trained by network rail and having a phone number for the signal man to allow as safe as possible passage across the railway. Sadly the proposals have not listened to us and we are now facing these current issues.

In the pack of information we have been sent, the only crossing that has been given an identified diversion is Nairns, as detailed on the picture Nairns Diversion, it is a diversion of 2.5 miles putting us onto the A1123. We are concerned by this as there has been three serious Road Traffic Accidents on this road by members of the public hitting our tractors or cars turning into the farm road straight after the level crossing.

To try and put this into perspective please look at M123 access 1 this shows the current distance to the field that we have enjoyed to date (2.6 Miles), we aren't going near any public roads and all produce is safely moved to the main farm site. If you look on this map too you can see at present as we farm the little farm we have access through there but there is no legal right of way.

If Nairns was closed and Jack O'tells Crossing open (Map M123 Access 2) the total distance to the field would be 3.1 miles, again no vehicle movements on a public highway and still not an unacceptable distance to base.

If both crossings were closed and our access was still allowed through Little farm, we would have to use the dangerous access onto the A1123 and have to nearly travel two extra miles than in the existing arrangements (M123 Access 3)

Sadly my Biggest concern is us losing little farm or because the owners now know we have got to use their access they can legally stop us doing so or charge us an access fee which is a fee that is unknown to us at present and as these closures are forever we cannot guarantee we will have the tenancy of little farm. This brings us onto the only logical access to the field if all crossings are closed, please see map M123 Access 4. We would have no choice but to drive down the A10 into Waterbeach and down the country roads to the fields, this would be a total distance of **10.3 Miles** of that 4 of them would be on the A10 which doesn't have any passing spaces slow greatly slowing traffic and more than likely leading to more accidents.

In none of network rails packs have they suggested the possible diversion of Jack O'tells, we have reminded them of this each time we have corresponded to them and still in the compulsory purchase act there is no mention where they expect us to travel, I have therefore included two maps for you to see where we would have to run, Jack O'tells diversion 1 which is using little farm again so should be discounted from discussion but would be a 5 mile diversion. Or Jack o'tells diversion 2 which is a diversion of 9.3 miles, again on the A10. I believe they have deliberately avoided putting this on as it shows quite easily the major economic impact it will have on our farm for generations to come.

We have asked on numerous occasions that Jack O'tells crossing be Automated, we would gladly allow all other crossings to close as we ourselves want the country to prosper and see train travel as a key way of doing this. I believe the principles of compulsory purchase is to allow us to have an opportunity to be remunerated as if the crossings stayed open. I cannot see why Network rail will not allow us an opportunity to either leave the crossings open and save thousands of hours of wasted time through ridiculous diversions or at least leaving one safe crossing such as Jack Otells.

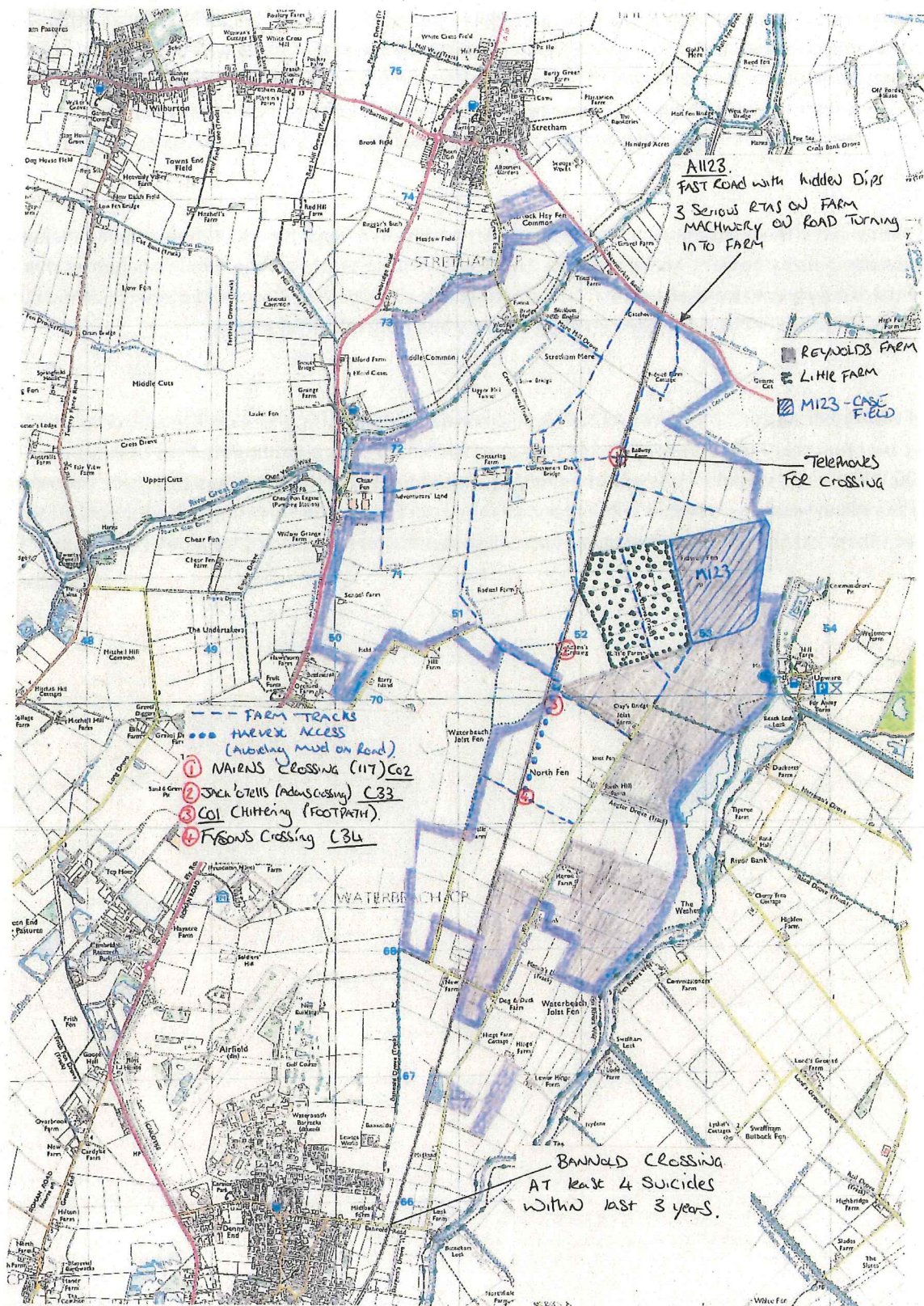
I would urge you to reconsider these proposals and please ask Network Rail to engage with us a meaningful dialogue before granting these compulsory powers. I have contacted our local MP Lucy Frazer on the family's behalf as this whole situation is causing the family great stress and worry. If all crossings were to close the farm would effectively be cut in two leading to us having to make serious decisions on what to grow and how to staff the farm.

One Last point that I will labour again, if Network Rail are so desperate to stop traffic going over level crossings why propose sending us over two other level crossings? If as they have explained to us an automated set of gates is approximately £1,000,000 pounds would a bridge not be more beneficial to us on the farm thus completely removing the risk of crossing the railways and as is stated in the proposals they are keeping one crossing open for public foot traffic which as I have shown at the Bannold Crossing has actually been the main reason of train delays via suicide in the last few years.

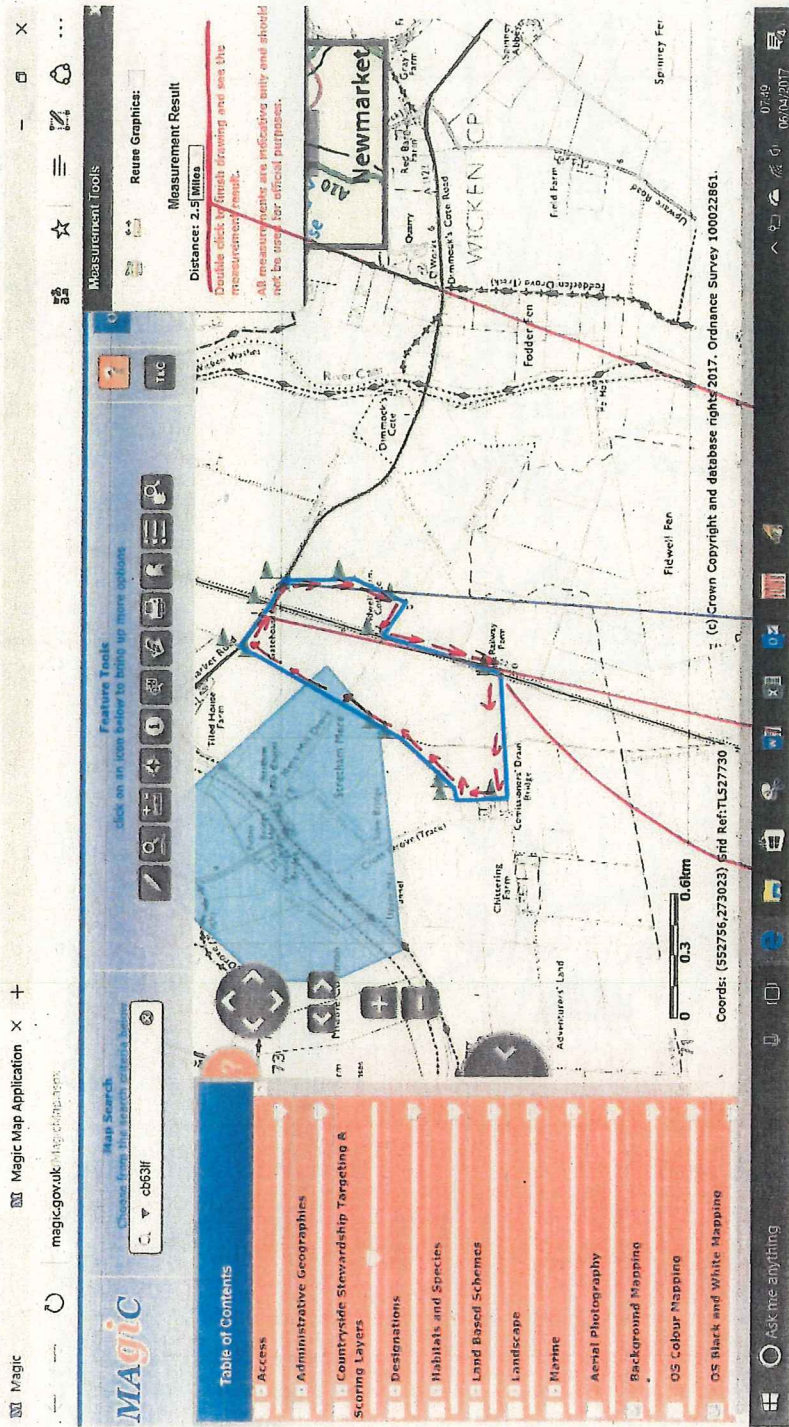
Yours Faithfully

Luke Palmer











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Map Search  
Choose from the search settings below  
Q ▼ cb63lf

Feature Tools  
click on an icon below to bring up more options

Measurement Tools  
Reuse Graphics:

Measurement Result  
Distance: 5.1 Miles  
Double click to finish drawing and see the measurement result.  
All measurements are indicative only and should not be used for official purposes.

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- OS Colour Mapping
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Map of Wicken Fen area showing various features and a blue highlighted area. A red line indicates a diversion path. A scale bar shows 0, 0.5, 1km. Coordinates: (554106, 273584) Grid Ref: TL541735 in Fm. (c) Crown Copyright and database rights 2017. Ordnance Survey 100023651.

04/32 06/04/2017

DIVERSION  
Distance.

A1123  
3 SECTIONS RTA IN 3 years

LITTLE FARM 5 year FBT.  
NO legal Right of way.

Start

MAP

JACK O'TELLS CROSSING DIVERSION 1.



Magic Map Application X +

magic.gov.uk/magic-map.aspx

Map Search  
Choose from the search criteria below

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Distance: 9.3 Miles

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Coordinates: (552249, 270642) Grid Ref: TL523706

Waterbead

0 0.5 1km

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Ask me anything

0726 06/04/2017

Distance

Start

A10 ACCESS  
ONTO A10 POOL.

MAP  
JACK O' TELLS CROSSING DIVERSION 2.







Magic Magic Map Application X + magic.gov.uk/magic/MapApp.aspx

Map Search  
  
 Click on an icon below to bring up more options

Feature Tools

Measurement Tools  
  
 Measurement Result  
 Distance: 3.1 Miles  
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Map of Wicken Fen area showing various features and a measurement line.

Top Moor (remains of)  
 Coords: (554453, 271346) Grid Ref: TL544713  
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0 0.5 1km

Ask me anything

Distance

MAN Fen SIK

MAP  
 M123.2



Magic Map Application

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Map Search

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Feature Tools

Measurement Tools

Reuse Graphics:

Measurement Result

Distance: 4.3 Miles

Double click to finish drawing and see the measurement result.

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Map

Map Farm Site

Distance

Little Fen

no legal right of way

5 year FBT

A1123

3 Serious RTA's in 3 years

M123.3

OS Black and White Mapping

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Measurement Result

Distance: 4.3 Miles

Double click to finish drawing and see the measurement result.

All measurements are indicative only and should not be used for official purposes.

Map Farm Site

Distance

Little Fen

no legal right of way

5 year FBT

A1123

3 Serious RTA's in 3 years

M123.3

OS Black and White Mapping

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