

PUBLIC INQUIRY

APPLICATION BY NETWORK RAIL UNDER TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992

PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION) ORDER 200X

OBJ/12-CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

ANNA BAILEY

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Anna Bailey. I have lived in and around the Ely area my entire life, with the exception of 3 years away at University from 1990-1993. I grew up in Little Downham and lived there for 24 years (including coming home during the holidays and weekends during my time at university). I then lived in Little Thetford from 1995-2001. Since then I have lived in Ely at my current address, 40 Cambridge Road, Ely, Cambs, CB7 4HL.
2. I have been the Cambridgeshire County Councillor for Ely South since May 2013. I have been a District Councillor at East Cambridgeshire District Council since May 2007 representing the Downham Villages, and I am currently the Deputy Leader.
3. In addition, I am the Chairman of the Adults Committee which focuses on the health and well-being of adults across the County.
4. Prior to, and overlapping with, my time as an elected Member of the Council I was a self-employed Business Consultant in the field of Adult Social Care, working with Local Authorities all over the UK from 2010-2015. Before that I was employed in similar roles at OLM Group Ltd from 2001-2010.

5. As a keen horse-rider from the age of 9 and owner of a horse from the age of 14 onwards I have ridden the routes in and around Little Downham many times, including those affected by the proposals. I am also a keen walker and so I know the local walking routes well too.

GENERAL POINTS

6. Ely is England's second smallest city with a population of around 20,000, and is famous for its magnificent Norman cathedral known locally as "The Ship of the Fens". Ely is internationally recognised for its special characteristics as a small, low-rise, historic city dominated by Ely Cathedral which towers over the built area.
7. Ely is naturally constrained by floodplain, and the road and rail network, meaning that the growth area is largely to the north. The emerging Local Plan was accepted by Full Council on 5th October 2017 and now goes for its final round of consultation before submission to the national inspectorate. As it is accepted, the District Council can use its policies. North Ely will include 3,000 new dwellings, a range of local services and facilities including employment areas, schools, green space, and expansion of the Country Park. Appendix 1 is a map from the Local Plan showing the growth areas of Ely.
8. The path networks were included in the growth plans for North Ely as an important local amenity.
9. Considering its small size, Ely has remarkably few green walking routes or areas where dogs can be safely let off the lead. Walking in Ely is already constrained by the rail infrastructure, so further erosion of this is undesirable. Appendix 2 is a photograph showing this. Efforts have been made with the Country Park (set for further expansion in the new Local Plan) to provide new green areas and green links to the existing, more rural, footpath network. It is vital that links to the open countryside are attractive, well maintained and easily accessible - access to the countryside is important for physical and mental health and wellbeing.
10. Walking routes are also an important part of the local economy throughout the District, and have a key part to play in attracting tourists to the area. The District Council agreed

at its Full Council meeting on 5th October 2017 to develop a new District-wide tourism strategy to maximise the benefits of tourism to the local economy; walking routes will form an important part of this.

11. Ely and Little Downham are part of the old Fenland area, still an old fashioned farming community. Farmers and rural people are not used to dealing with bureaucracy and technology and it is often difficult to engage with them on this level with consultations.
12. The crossings concerned may not be used heavily relative to more densely populated areas, but they are still important to the people who use them. The area scores badly on issues like obesity and other health concerns. The public rights of way (PRoW) network is important in combatting this.

North Ely Junction Upgrade

13. Network Rail has recently announced that the North Ely Junction upgrade in Queen Adelaide is to be included in its next control period of 2019 to 2024, casting further uncertainty and doubt about the footpath network in this area. Network Rail has yet to provide any details of their proposed scheme and detailed plans for the rail, road and footpath infrastructure for this upgrade are therefore not yet available.
14. To erode the footpath infrastructure in any way, whilst this level of uncertainty hangs over the area is wrong and it would be much wiser to reconsider the proposals for the crossings in this area alongside the upgrade plans when the new rail infrastructure is proposed.

CROSSING SPECIFIC CONCERNS

C08 Ely North Junction, FP 11 Ely

15. The proposal is better than the previous version (which sent people walking through an industrial estate). I am in favour of the section which allows people to walk away from the railway sidings in the field-edge, subject to acceptable works to ensure it is brought up to an adoptable standard.

16. Closure of the footpath to the south eastern side of the crossing will stop people being able to access the valued nature conservation area to the south. I am worried about the maintenance liability that would fall on CCC of the northern section that is proposed on the Network Rail land bordering 29 Ely Road. CCC should not agree to maintenance liability of the chain-link fence.
17. The 1.5m width footpath does not give enough room to carry out the necessary maintenance of the footpath between the boundary of 29 Ely Road and the fence next to the railway; CCC requires a minimum of 2m width in accordance with its diversions policy.
18. Closure of this junction should be rejected if the above issue over path width cannot be overcome.
19. Failing that, a commuted sum should be provided to CCC to facilitate maintenance of the new section of footpath.

C21 Newmarket Bridge (FP23 Ely) and C22 Wells Engine (FP24 Ely)

20. On the west bank, FP23 is included in two long distance walking routes, the Fen Rivers Way and the Ouse Valley Way.
21. Locally, it is used for people to walk from Cambridge to Ely where people can then get the train.
22. The proposals divert the paths to a high risk flood zone making the scenario worse for these routes.
23. The Environment Agency's suggestion of warning signs for users is not realistic as people may have walked from three or more hours away to find the route impassable. CCC does not have a system of warning users of flood and does not have the means to implement such a system.

CO9 Second Drove (FP49) and C24 Cross Keys (FP50)

24. Both these proposals had high levels of opposition by users.
25. The crossings form part of the important network of routes in north Ely, which will see greater use in the future arising from the expansion of north Ely with 3,000 new homes.
26. The improved proposals are welcomed, but there should be a commuted sum for the additional maintenance of the third bridge and additional length of network.
27. The closure of the crossings diverts users to BR25 Ely in order to complete a circular route. This requires people to use the bridleway crossing, which is difficult for equestrians in particular to use; work should be carried out to improve the gate and visibility. Given the likely increased usage from the diversions and new housing, it would seem sensible to provide warning lights.
28. I object to the closure of the footpath west of CO9, (for the reasons given below) and therefore, unless and until additional proposals are made by Network Rail to keep the footpath open and include a new footpath to link it to the existing footpath network (by placing a new footpath from the CO9 crossing point west of the railway to the Clayway crossing point north) CO9 should not be closed.
29. Please see the photographs at Appendix 1 of the footpath west of CO9. It is a path of high ecological value with rare elm trees bordering the route and offers people a welcome and "secret" alternative to the larger bridleways and more open footpaths nearby.
30. Also at Appendix 2 is an annotated Google map which shows the location of this footpath and the CO9 crossing in relation to the new North Ely development. Part of the planning application for North Ely showed how people would have access to the open countryside and footpath network on this side of Ely - the development deliberately proposes open green space on the eastern side (where it will join into the footpath network) because of the topography of the land and as a natural way of

getting people into the open countryside. When planning new developments, we are always looking to try to build in infrastructure; the Network Rail proposals seek to erode the infrastructure that is already there and was very much a material consideration in the planning and design processes of North Ely.

C11 Furlong Drove (BOAT 33 Little Downham)

31. A Furlong has to be viewed in person to appreciate the importance of this drove to past populations and to those wishing to “read” the Fen landscape. When standing at the northern end of A Furlong there is a truly breathtaking view of Ely Cathedral (photographs at Appendix 3) standing squarely and directly at the end of this utterly straight drove, evidence of its past use as a droving route. It is an astonishing view.
32. A Furlong is a byway open to all traffic (BOAT) and the railway crossing is shown on OS maps as being a full vehicular crossing. However, NR has not maintained it as such and today it is not possible to cross with a motorised vehicle with the exception of motorbikes.
33. The drove was in existence long before the railway came. The railway interfered with the drove and access across the railway should therefore take precedence.
34. The proposed closure of the southern section of the drove will unacceptably erase the history of this area forever.
35. This proposed closure had high levels of opposition by users during the consultation period.
36. The existing route is well-used by horse riders and is an attractive, well-maintained, unspoilt section where horses can be allowed to gallop safely over some distance (see photograph at Appendix 4). This is a rare amenity in the area.
37. The proposed diversion route is unacceptably long, narrow, unattractive and is used by HGVs which do not mix well with equestrian use.
38. The crossing and right of way should be retained and the crossing improved to make it easier and quicker to cross

39. I rode this route a number of times when I lived in Little Downham village. When on a long hack out I would sometimes use this route for a good gallop.

Signed:

Date: