

## **PUBLIC INQUIRY**

### **APPLICATION BY NETWORK RAIL UNDER TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992**

### **PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION ORDER**

---

#### **OBJ/12-CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

#### **JENNY THORNTON LOCAL USER OF C07 NO NAME NO.37, HARSTON**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. I work for the Internet Watch Foundation, a children's right charity, where I have been International Development Manager since August 2017. My role involves liaising with international governments and the agencies of the United Nations of issues pertaining to cybersecurity, child protection and safeguarding against exploitation and abuse.
2. My address is 2 Queen's Close, Harston, Cambridge, CB22 7QL. I have lived there since 2013, a continuous uninterrupted period of 4 years.
3. I am submitting my Proof of Evidence as a Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) witness as a local user of the crossing C07 No Name no.37, Harston and of the footpath that runs along the B1368 London Road.

#### **GENERAL CONCERNS**

4. I lodged a Freedom of Information (FoI) request with Network Rail (NR) on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017 to ask for information on their proposed plans for the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Network concerning C07, however I have not received a response.

### **USE OF CROSSING C07 NO NAME NO.37, HARSTON**

5. I have used the northern part of the route running from the B1368 London Road onto which it is proposed this path should be diverted under NR's Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo) Application, which runs south-west from the road along the field edge, twice a week since 2013. NR propose that this diversion should be recorded on the Definitive Map as a Public Right of Way, however, I submit to the Inquiry that the route is already well used by the public.
6. In addition, I also use the footpath as it turns to run in a south-easterly direction onto the route that is part of the proposed closure by NR and towards level crossing C07 No name no.32 twice per week. This area is a particularly popular part of the route as it is an attractive and peaceful woodland area.
7. Once a week I will also continue over the level crossing as it continues due south-east and then continues in a north-easterly direction along the remainder of the footpath towards the B1386 London Road and the hoggin path that runs alongside the road to Newton.
8. Once a week I used to follow the route as it continues from the hoggin path due north along the footpath (which then turns into only grass verge) adjacent to the B 1368 back along the London Road toward my home in Harston as part of a circular walking route.
9. Sometimes I will walk this route in a clockwise direction, as the route appears on a map. I use parts of this circular route at different times and do not always complete the full circle.

### **OBJECTIONS TO NR'S PROPOSALS**

10. My use of the B1368 London Road route ended in June as, while walking my dog along the route adjacent to the B1368 southbound. My dog was hit by a car and killed at the point where the road meets the Byway known as Donkey Lane to the East. The car did not stop. I submit to the inquiry that the B1368 is a notably dangerous road and that the current footpaths, and replacement footpaths proposed by NR, are not a suitable or safe substitute for pedestrians to use instead of the off-road PRow Network.
11. The B1368 is a busy road that has no local speed limit. Therefore, there are a lot of cars travelling up to at least the national speed limit, 60mph, along the route. The route generally has poor sight-lines, which is of particular concern to pedestrians. This is most

notable at the points just before and after the bridge as it crosses over the railway line. The bridge itself is narrow and in order to get from one side of said bridge to the other, pedestrians have to cross the road at its most dangerous point, at the summit of the bridge.

12. Visibility is a big issue along the B1368 as it approaches Harston. In particular, the curved portion of the route running from the northern end of the Bridge heading north-west towards Harston has especially poor sight-lines. In addition, there is a lack of street lighting, meaning that the visibility issue will be compounded at night and in the darker winter months.
13. I am also concerned that the necessity for the installation of steps with NR's proposed diversion will lead to elderly and disabled users having difficulty traversing, or being put off using, the route. In particular, there is a Respite Care Centre at the top of London Road, and I am concerned that NR's proposals will negatively impact on the residents' mobility in particular. NR's solution should be designed for everyone and so these concerns should be taken into account.
14. NR's proposals do not allow for a wide enough pavement. This concerns me particularly with regards to users with prams and wheelchairs, for whom the alternative route would be unusable with its current widths.
15. I believe that there would need to be work done to mitigate the speed of traffic along the B1368, were the adjacent footpath to be improved to a standard to accommodate pedestrians. There would need to be a speed limit imposed on the route in order for some of the risks associated with the blind spots to be mitigated. In addition, I think there needs to be work done on traffic calming. Alongside other residents of Harston, I have been campaigning for chevrons to be put into place. The increased number of pedestrian users on the B1368 means that making the road safer is more important than ever, part of this is ensuring that vehicles travel at slower, safer speeds.
16. In addition, NR's proposals divert users onto the verge to the South of the bridge on the B1368. The verge is too overgrown and uneven to be walked on safely. Their proposals on this South side are for a gravel path. I do not think this would work as vegetation grows up very quickly around that side of the verge and therefore this gravel footpath is likely to

become overgrown quickly. In addition, the overgrowth of hedges is a sight obstruction and limits visibility when walking along the route.

17. I am aware that NR are concerned about the financial burden of having to contribute to improvements to the infrastructure on their diversion routes. However, NR propose that their TWAO will result in them saving money through their closure of level crossings. I believe NR should be using these savings to contribute to the parts of the PRoW and road Network that they are proposing to burden with additional users.

### **BENEFITS OF CURRENT ROUTE**

18. The current route, which is subject to closure, is well used and popular with the surrounding villages, in particular with Harston residents travelling southbound. Lots of local users regularly use the route; it is particularly popular with dog walkers.
19. The current route is step free and therefore does not deter elderly or disabled users from using the route. It is very important to me that any diversion takes into account the needs of less mobile users of the PRoW Network.
20. Were the current route to be closed, I would miss it as it is a much safer and more aesthetically pleasing walk than NR's proposition.

### **CONCERNS OVER PROVISION OF INFORMATION AND NOTICE BY NR**

21. The notices provided by NR to draw attention to their TWAO Application, which have been placed at either side of crossing C07, are non-engaging and do not sufficiently draw the attention of users of the level crossing. I only became aware of the notices after my dog was killed in the accident and this was because I was actively looking for them.
22. I believe that the lack of prominence of these notices may mean that some users have not been made aware of the TWAO Application and that, were proper notice to have been given, more objectors to the Application would have come forward.

Signed J. Thornton

Dated 30-10-17