

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 31 May 2018 16:29  
**To:** TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT  
**Subject:** Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) order  
**Attachments:** RVR.txt

Please find attached text file containing a duplicate of the text below.

Name and address:  
Giles Stokoe

Subject: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to robertsbridge Junction) order.

Reasons for objection:

1) Distruption to the village centre.

- a) With an existing population density in excess of 380/sq mile, enclosed by Silver Hill to the North, Darvell Down to the West, the Darvell Community to the South and the A21 to the east, and with the existing road to rail connection at its centre, the village is already very busy and at times congested. This is set to increase further with the requirement to build 155 new homes.
- b) With many buildings in the village dating to the 14th and 15th centuries and with a correspondingly antiquated layout, there is just not the capacity for increased vehicular traffic, nor is there capacity for increased parking in the village (indeed existing commuter parking reduces both main thoroughfares to alternate flow).
- c) There is no continuous footpath from the High Street to the existing railway station and pedestrians are required to cross Station Road at least once to get from the high street to the station if they are not to walk on the busy Station Road itself.
- d) Despite claims by RVR, I do not believe that increased tourism will benefit the village economically, with the majority of railway visitors spending their money within the RVR. It will of course be part of the RVR business plan to maximise the customer spend within their attraction.

2) Disruption to the wider community.

- a) Access to the village is already reduced to single file alternate flow traffic at three key points: George Hill, the High Street below One Stop, and Northbridge Street. A level crossing on Northbridge Street will concentrate traffic in bi-directional bursts, incompatible with the pinch-points already mentioned. This is evidenced on Station Road; when the current level crossing barrier rises, traffic down Station Road comes to a standstill as far as the High Street as car jostle to get past each other. With a level crossing on Northbridge Street this experience would be repeated on the High Street itself. There is no existing off-street parking for residents of the High Street, and making the High Street and Northbridge Street one-way would be enormously disruptive for access to the village by residents and local people making use of current businesses and the existing commuter railway connection. Furthermore, the planned residential development of the Mill site on Northbridge Street will exacerbate this problem. Anything that increases traffic

movements across the A21 at the top of George Hill will significantly negatively impact safety on an already notoriously dangerous stretch of road.

b) If the RVR were to build a raised car park (as apparently is their plan) north of their existing track at Northbridge Street, it would not solve the issues of access via Northbridge Street itself, and would have significant negative impact on the flood plain of the adjacent River Rother (see below).

c) Robertsbridge has seen a significant and extensive series of bunds and flood defences built since early this millennium after significant flooding. A raised car park at adjacent to the Mill and a raised trackway north of the River Rother between Northbridge Street and the A21 would both effectively deny access of this stretch of the river to part of the flood plain, increasing the height and speed of floodwaters and threatening the sewage pumping station, Ripleys forge, the Cricket club, Grey Nichols, the electrical substation and the planned housing behind Grey Nichols, to say nothing of other parts of the village that are currently protected by flood defences conceived with the flood plain in its current state.

d) A level crossing on the A21 south of the current roundabout would have significant implications for traffic along the A21 and also around the roundabout (and hence access to Robertsbridge and Salehurst villages). At various times of the day and all day during peak holiday times, this section of the A21 is very busy, and any interruption to southbound flow will cause traffic to back up around the aforementioned roundabout. Apart from disrupting traffic flow, this has implications for emergency vehicle access northwards up the A21 and into Salehurst village itself. A level crossing will impact flow much more than the current pedestrian crossing at the roundabout because of the duration of the barrier to traffic. Indeed, when southbound traffic is at a standstill currently, pedestrians do not even have to trigger the traffic lights in order to cross the road. When a level crossing of the A21 was originally conceived, traffic levels were very much less than they are today.

### 3) Compulsory Purchase of land.

a) It seems inconceivable that one business can be given the right to compulsorily purchase land used by 2 other businesses. This would appear to be morally corrupt, even if the land was to be used for the common good, which is patently not the case in this instance.

b) There are currently public rights of way between Robertsbridge and Salehurst, which would be closed by RVR and the building of a railway across land between the two villages. The villages of Salehurst and Robertsbridge have been linked for centuries (Robertsbridge owes its existence to the ancient Salehurst Abbey), the local church for Robertsbridge is in Salehurst and the primary school in Robertsbridge village is Salehurst Primary. Not only do the current footpaths serve as an amenity and access to the High Weald AONB for the residents of both villages and for visitors from further afield (who do bring income to both villages), but they enhance the rural aspect of both villages. The argument that the proposed railway replaces a previous track is null since it has been closed for over 50 years, during which time attitudes to rural amenity have changed significantly, and along most of the proposed route no vestige of the original railway remains.

### 4) The attitude of RVR

It is clear from their attitude that RVR do not have the interests of the village at heart. Clearly any business must have its own business agenda, but in this case it appears that RVR is determined to make Robertsbridge an RVR theme park irrespective of a constructive dialogue with residents of Robertsbridge and Salehurst villages, to the detriment of existing long-standing local businesses, and with a negative impact to the wider community.

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