

From: Judith Rogers [REDACTED]
Sent: 31 May 2018 16:32
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT
Subject: Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge) Order

Dear Sir/Madam,

I strongly object to the reinstatement of this railway line on the following grounds:

- 1) Both Robertsbridge and Salehurst are historic settlements. Robertsbridge will soon celebrate 800 years and Salehurst is mentioned in the doomsday book. As such, their heritage and survival has not been connected with the railway in any way. There is nothing in their histories to form a tangible link to the railway. Their roots are firmly based in agriculture.
- 2) Robertsbridge is already a village with a severe car parking problem. The historic centre has no parking except on the roadside, and as many of the shops have now become houses, this is already a problem. Parking and road congestion is already made worse by commuters entering the village from surrounding villages to use the mainline station, and choosing to park on our roads instead of paying fees. The roads in the village and estates have now effectively become one way. The Rother Valley Railway (RVR) will only make this problem worse, especially as they have no proposals for car parking of their own.
- 3) Salehurst is only accessible via a country lane and has no parking what so ever. Salehurst is the home of our parish church, and it must not be allowed to stop parishioners attending church services due to no places to park when the parking has been taken by RVR customers. Likewise, it must not be allowed for funerals and weddings not to have access to the church.
- 4) The railway is planning 3 crossings, one of which is across the already dangerous A21. As a user of this stretch of road from Poppinghole Lane to Robertsbridge village at least 6 times a day, it is not unusual for us to have to wait 4 to 5 minutes to access the A21. This would indicate that the tailbacks caused by such a crossing would be incredibly long. There have been plans to dual carriage the A21, how would this work with a railway crossing?
- 5) It cannot be seen how this will bring additional 'proper' jobs to the village. My definition of 'proper' would be full time employment, on a wage where the employee would stand a chance of becoming a home owner. The railway itself is only offering 1-2 jobs with the rest being volunteers. Any work connected to the tourist trade is renowned for being seasonal and poorly paid, thus ensuring that local people never having the chance to aspire to home ownership. As a business space, the RVR site would offer much more potential to the village for proper employment. This is against Rother District Council (RDC) policy RA2 (v) which states 'support rural employment opportunities in keeping with the character and compatible with maintaining farming capacity'. As mentioned in 1), the history of these settlements is not dependant on the railway.
- 6) Robertsbridge is a village with a severe flooding problem and is currently partially surrounded by flood defences. It would appear that the reinstatement of this line will breach and damage these defences making people and their homes vulnerable to flooding once again. As further work on the defences would be required, then this should be wholly paid for by RVR and not by public money or funds. Current plans regarding the flood defences show that this is not being treated with the respect it deserves. Part of the line will traverse land in flood zone 3. If building houses, you have to apply sequential and exceptions tests. Part of the line will go through the local flood plains which are in use every year. Again, if housing were proposed, the NPPF paragraph 100 would apply i.e. 'safeguarding land from development that is required for current and future flood management' etc. and 103 'ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere.....'

7) Having worked for many years on our family farm that was split when the Robertsbridge bypass was built, I would like to emphasise the additional workload placed on the farming families when land is divided by roads and railways. Farming is now much more individually based i.e. one person with machinery. Division of the land makes this more difficult with the constant getting out of a tractor to open a gate, driving through, closing the gate, driving to the other side and doing the same procedure again. 4 times just to get to the other side. Moving animals is an even bigger issue relying on the use of tailers and lorries when previously you only had to open a gate. All of this takes extra time and money and may result in the requirement of additional equipment, an expense through no fault of your own. RDC has a policy RA2 which states (i) to maintain the farming capacity of the district, and support the agricultural industry.....', (ii) 'Encourage agricultural practices, land-based economic activities and woodland management, and related agri-environmental schemes that reinforce the local distinctiveness, landscape character and ecology' and (v) (wording shown above in 5) above.

8) The reintroduction of this line is not based locally and is being thrust upon our village by a few wealthy individuals. RVR does not gain any of its funds locally and therefore the question needs to be raised as to whether it is a viable concern. What would happen if one of the benefactors died and the funds dried up? Would this become a large white elephant in our landscape?

9) The issue if the reintroduction of this line is tearing the village communities apart rather than bringing people together. There has developed a culture where people feel that they are unable to discuss their views without being bullied or abused (certainly online). One person who displayed an anti railway poster had dog mess spread on his doorstep and put through his letterbox.

10) I understand that the correct ecology studies have not been completed. How can a decision on something as big as this be decided until this is known. This is against RDC policy RA4 (iv) which states 'ensure proper protection of existing wildlife and habitats' and policy RA2 (viii) which states 'generally conserve the intrinsic value, locally distinctive rural character, landscape features, built heritage, and the natural and ecological resources of the countryside', and section 11 of the NPPF 'conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

I trust that these objections will be given your due consideration.

Yours faithfully

Judith Rogers



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