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Sent: 12 May 2017 15:15
To: TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT; stationhouse_newport@hotmail.co.uk; newportparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk
Subject: Network Rail Anglia Level Crossing Reductions TWA Order
Attachments: Footpath 14 b.jpg; P1000894.JPG; Footpath 14.jpg; IMAG1881.jpg; IMAG1879.jpg; IMAG1882.jpg; Bury Water Lane from Cambridge Rd with car comp.jpg; Bury Water Lane from NFGS 2 compressed.jpg

This concerns crossings in Newport Essex - 'Elephant' and 'Dixies'

I object to the closure of these crossings

Background

The village has about 2000 inhabitants and has planning permissions, applications and houses under construction which will add another 900 people (list available). Constrained in a valley with the M11, the old A11 (B1383) and the railway it has few footpaths compared with other settlements in the area and the developments will add none.

In the interest of public well being we need to encourage people to walk.

The line speed here is 70 mph. All trains stop at the nearby Audley End station, a third of them at Newport and through Newport the line is reverse curves in cuttings and viaducts. So NR's claim to be able to materially increase line speed appears weak, and in any case would not result in significantly faster services. Apart from one freight limited to 60mph there are no scheduled through trains. The issues on this commuter line are capacity south of Stansted Airport and at the London end. There is a much faster line from Kings Cross to Cambridge and our line is only ever going to be a stopping train service.

The proposed alternative routes involve walking on roads with no footways, including one visibly dangerous one. All accidents here in the last 25 years have been on the road through the village (including three pedestrians killed in separate incidents). There have been no railway accidents in that time and as far as I know no fatalities on these crossings in the whole existence of the railway.

In the consultation some residents wanted the crossings closed. Evidence from postings on the village facebook is that these were not users of the paths but those wanting the whistling stopped. My view is that if you choose to live by an obvious source of noise (I am on the main road) then you accept it. I saw no safety concerns being raised or satisfaction expressed with the alternatives.

Nothing on the railway has changed since 1991; service frequency, stopping pattern or speed. No explanation is offered as to why these crossings have now been deemed unsafe. The fatalities at Elsenham were the result of entirely different circumstances and have no relevance here - users of these crossings are not rushing to get trains.

Elephant

This was heavily used and was the most attractive path in the area - photo attached. It has been temporarily closed for some time so NR have no usage figures. The alternative proposed is dangerous as it involves a road with no footway across two narrow bridges. The road is a high vehicle diversion route to avoid the low railway bridge in the village. One of the bridges is very narrow and visibility is poor. In order to see/be seen pedestrians also need to cross and recross the road - photos attached.

(The other 'alternative' going a very long way round via the station should be dismissed as ludicrous - no-one would do that)

No safety assessment seems to have been done and there is no comparison provided of the comparative risk between the alternative and the railway crossing. It is not in the public interest for NR to reduce their risk by creating a greater risk elsewhere.

An automatic locking gate is provided at nearby Elsenham and warning light crossings are installed elsewhere. NR have not shown why they have not considered these - their alternative would involve significant cost as land must be purchased including some across a site with housing permission and thus greater cost than agricultural value.

Such crossings would also resolve the noise issue

Dixies

Around 240 of the new houses will be in the 'catchment' of the path leading to this crossing - Whiteditch and Bury Water Lanes. It takes you to the bus stops on the main road and the main village pub. It connects what is effectively a whole new village to the older part of the village and also makes a good circular route. The alternative is to walk along the road, part of which by the school is narrow with no footway and along the main road under the railway bridge which is not exactly pleasurable, or cross the main road twice. See photo of T junction and Bury Water Lane through the school. The main road had 89127 vehicles a week (Essex Highways survey 2016) with the majority breaking the speed limit

Although the crossing is currently lightly used no consideration has been given of the expansion of the village.

So the objection here is the same. Closure is not in the public interest because it creates a greater risk elsewhere and dissuades people from walking, the benefits of which far outweigh any risk on the railway, and is a loss of amenity

Windmill

This is not much used, but being on a straight track within sight of Audley End a few hundred yards away where every train stops its closure will have no effect on train speed or safety. At the presentation NR staff were able to give no reason for closure

Closing this one is box ticking. However as it is rarely used I can't reasonably object, so these comments are just for the record

I understand the parish council is making similar objections

District Cllr Neil Hargreaves



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