

Paul Gyton (Obj/16) – Written Submission

I am objecting to the closure of three foot crossings in Essex, namely E26 Barbara Close, E31 Brickyard Farm and E33 Motorbike. My objection was given reference TWA/17/APP/05/OBJ/16 by the Department for Transport and OBJ/16 by Network Rail.

Network Rail's response states that *'there is a proposal in the Greater Anglia franchise to increase the frequency of services on the Southend Victoria branch to 4 per hour in each direction (from the current 3), which would affect E26 Barbara Close, and lead to an increased risk score'*. The increased frequency is irrelevant; the safety of any crossing is a function of the line speed and how good the visibility is. Increased frequency would only increase the risk if users crossed without looking, which is an absurd assumption.

Network Rail states that *'...E26 Barbara Close has sufficient sighting of approaching trains... Even where sighting is measured to be sufficient, visibility of approaching trains can still be adversely affected by external factors such as vegetation on private land, weather conditions, and heat haze'*. The track at Barbara Close is dead straight. Vegetation on private land cannot possibly affect visibility in such a situation (because any such vegetation has to be kept cut back in order for trains to pass and therefore visibility for crossing users is also maintained). Weather conditions and heat haze have limited effect. Do people stop crossing roads due to these factors?

For E26 Barbara Close, Network Rail disagrees with my assertion that the proposed diversion is lengthy. At 700m, I maintain that it *is* lengthy compared to the few metres it now takes simply to cross the track. It is also *unnecessary*, because Network Rail concede that at this crossing there is sufficient sighting of approaching trains. Note that the proposed diversion here is an existing route, so anyone who doesn't want to use the crossing already has the option of taking that diversion.

For E31 Brickyard Farm and E33 Motorbike, Network Rail quote sighting distances and claim that these are insufficient. However, they do not state how long they have assumed it takes to cross the railway, so there is no way to verify if these claims are correct. They also state that the 'decision point' for deciding whether or not to cross is 2m from the running rail. This makes no sense. It is reasonable to take 2m as the distance from the running rail at which the decision to *approach* the running rail is made, but the decision on whether or not to *cross* will not be taken until one is standing right by the rail. This gives the best visibility, just as when one is about to cross a road one stands on the kerb, not 2m back from the edge of the road. By making the assumption that the 'decision point' is further from the running rail than it really is, Network Rail have artificially increased the required sighting distances.

Paul Gyton,

