

**Shenaz Choudhary**

OBJ/92A.

**From:** Cllr Sally-Ann Hart <Cllr.Sally-Ann.Hart@rother.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 21 May 2018 14:45  
**To:** TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT  
**Subject:** Re: RVR (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

Dear Ms Choudhary,

I refer to your letter dated 15th May 2018 enclosing guide to TWA Orders.

Should the application necessitate a public inquiry or hearing, I confirm that I would wish to speak.

Kind regards,

Cllr. Mrs Sally-Ann Hart

Tel: 07988 692000

Email: [cllr.sally-ann.hart@rother.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.sally-ann.hart@rother.gov.uk)

On 15 May 2018, at 11:46, TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT  
<[TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT@dft.gov.uk](mailto:TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT@dft.gov.uk)> wrote:

Dear Mrs Ann-Hart,

Thank you for your e-mail, in order to register your objection we require a postal address.

Many thanks  
Shenaz Choudhary

<image001.png>

Ms Shenaz Choudhary  
Transport and Works Act Order  
1/14, Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 4DR  
020 7944 6848  
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**From:** Cllr Sally-Ann Hart [<mailto:Cllr.Sally-Ann.Hart@rother.gov.uk>]  
**Sent:** 12 May 2018 14:24  
**To:** TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT <[TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT@dft.gov.uk](mailto:TRANSPORTANDWORKSACT@dft.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** RVR (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

**FAO** Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport

Dear Secretary of State,

It is with increasing alarm that I write to you following news that Rother Valley Railway (RVR) has now made an application to your Department for a Transport and Works

Act order to 'construct, operate and maintain' a new railway line from Bodiam to Robertsbridge. The fact that RVR has also served Compulsory Purchase Orders on farmers, who for many years have consistently said that they do not want to, nor will not, sell their land to RVR, is very disquieting. Local planning was granted this year despite major concerns from local residents and businesses about level crossings and excessive parking in a local village, Robertsbridge. My concerns are not only that local people are being bull-dozed by big hitters, but that this project is not a major infrastructure project benefitting thousands of residents for the purpose of economic generation, nor is it a major tourism attraction that will materially benefit our district; it is merely a hobby project for a group of privately funded railway enthusiasts who clearly have not thought about the far reaching consequences of their quest for a giant model railway cutting across our beautiful countryside and, more pertinently, the main road to Hastings and Rother District, the A21.

My overwhelming concern is the negative impact one of the three proposed level crossings, the one on the main road to Hastings (A21), will have on the economic growth of Hastings and Rother District as regards tourism and other business activity and generation. Hastings and Rother District are already at a disadvantage in this regard because of the single lane north and south for much of the A21, south of Tunbridge Wells; the tailbacks particularly during the summer months are a nightmare and already deter some visitors from making the often arduous journey to our glorious towns and villages. The A21 begs for dualling, rather than being made even worse by a level crossing which will disrupt traffic, reportedly 8 return journeys per day - that is twice per hour during a typical day. What a nonsense and what a tragedy for Hastings and Rother towns and villages - and their visitor attractions. It will kill any hope we have of continuing to build tourism and economic growth, absolutely vital for jobs and economic activity in this region.

Research shows that 'well-designed infrastructure investments have long-term economic benefits; they can raise economic growth, productivity and land values' (LSE Growth Commission - Infrastructure and Growth). Research by Henry Overman et al (see What Works Centre for local growth) found that road related accessibility improvements between 1998 and 2007 increased local employment. Road projects specifically, can increase business entry either by new businesses starting up or existing businesses re-locating. Transport improvements can stimulate the economy by not only raising the productivity of existing businesses and workers, but also by attracting new firms and private sector investment. This is precisely why the MP for Hastings & Rye, Amber Rudd, is not only working to ensure a fast train service on the Ashford/Hastings/Rye line, but also lobbying for the dualling of the A21.

A major upgrade to the A21 north of Tunbridge Wells was recently completed. This was embarked upon because for decades the single carriageway, such as currently exists for most of the road south of Tunbridge Wells to Hastings, was a source of daily congestion, causing delay to drivers and frustrating businesses that depend on the road. The aim of the improvements was to speed up journeys, improve safety, reduce congestion and boost the economy. This has already proved successful and is precisely the sort of upgrade that Hastings and Rother are crying out for; not adding further impediments to economic growth by having to wait for steam engines to cross the main road.

RVR claims that the extension from Bodiam to Robertsbridge will boost local tourism is disingenuous; for starters, the likelihood is that Robertsbridge will become an even bigger car park. I am sure Robertsbridge residents and businesses will not be too thrilled about this, even though they have been told the project will benefit them. There is no doubt that Tenterden in Kent might benefit, but the socio-economic cost to Hastings and Rother District far outweighs any small benefit to tourism - especially if it is in another county. As Rother District Council's portfolio holder for tourism, I am therefore extremely concerned about the impact the proposed A21 level crossing will have not only on current tourism, but also on its potential - and necessity - for growth in the region. Hastings and Rother has some of the worst pockets of deprivation in the country. We need investment in infrastructure that will encourage economic growth, not kill it.

Finally, level crossings are dangerous for pedestrians and road vehicles. The risk of accidents at level crossings is considered high - 'the use of level crossings contributes the greatest potential for catastrophic risk on the railways' (Director of UK Railway Inspectorate 2004). Safety concerns are relevant; Network Rail has been pursuing a policy of closing level crossings at the rate of over 100 per year and the creation of new level crossings is banned (the exception being the re-opening of unavoidable crossings on new/re-opening railway - and on heritage railway).

We really do need to protect the livelihoods and outcomes of thousands of residents in Hastings and Rother District against the might of one or a few more powerful and wealthy individuals.

I would strongly urge you to please give thought to the points I have raised above when you consider and examine RVR's application for the Transport and Works Act order.

Yours sincerely,

Kind regards,

Cllr. Mrs Sally-Ann Hart

District Councillor for Eastern Rother Ward, Rother District Council, Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Culture and Public Realm

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Email: [cllr.sally-ann.hart@rother.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.sally-ann.hart@rother.gov.uk)

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