

## Rother Valley Railway (Bodiam to Robertsbridge Junction) Order

Summary Proof of Evidence: Philip Hamshaw MSc  
MCIHT CMILT

RVR/W3/3 – HIGHWAYS

i-Transport Ref: PH/JN/ITL14477-022

Date: 04 June 2021

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## 1.1 Summary

### Introduction

1.1.1 My name is Philip Hamshaw. I am a Chartered Member of the Institute of Logistics and Transport and a Member of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation. I have a Masters Degree in Transportation Planning & Engineering. My evidence relates to the objections raised by Highways England (HE) in respect of the level crossing on the A21, although I also consider the two level crossings on Northbridge Street and Junction Road. I was instructed RVR in January 2019 and since then have been working on resolving matters raised by HE in their Statement of Case. My evidence covers paragraphs 3(a), 3(e), 5 and 6 of the Statement of Matters.

1.1.2 Overall, I conclude that the proposed level crossings:

- would not have an unacceptable impact on road safety;
- would not adversely impact on the free flow of A21 road users with the impact being less than severe; and
- would be designed and constructed in accordance with applicable design standards and guidance (including departures).

1.1.3 The evidence that I provide for this Inquiry is true and has been prepared, and is given, in accordance with the guidance of my professional institutions. I confirm the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

### Overview & Background

1.1.4 The HA did not object to the planning application subject to nine conditions and noted that ***“we do appreciate that the limited nature of a level crossing for a heritage railway, will have less of an impact than a crossing for a mainline railway.”***

1.1.5 ESCC as highway authority for B2244 Junction Road and Northbridge Street did not object to the proposed level crossings subject to conditions relating to road safety. The Decision Notice includes the proposed conditions (numbers 25 and 26).

1.1.6 In September 2018 HE issued their Statement of Case in respect of the Order which raised objection for a number of reasons. Discussions have continued with HE and at the time of writing a working draft SOCG is in development with HE.

1.1.7 RVR and HE agree that for the purposes of assessment the type of level crossing proposed is an 'Automatic Full Barrier Controlled Locally' level crossing (AFBCL) and that the barrier downtime is 72 seconds. On operational days (c180 per year) there would be up to 10 closures of the crossing, which would amount to no more than 12 minutes of highway closure.

### **Policy & Guidance**

1.1.8 At both a national and local level there is policy support for the railway. Alongside which it is clear any proposal should demonstrate it would not have unacceptable impacts upon the operation of the road network (capacity and congestion) or upon road safety. In respect of the SRN there is a presumption in favour of new connections with a requirement for any physical modifications to meet the design standards of HE.

### **Effect on Traffic Flow**

1.1.9 The effect of the RVR scheme on traffic flow on the A21 has been assessed through the completion of various reports, with the latest progressed in discussion with HE on an agreed basis. In summary, it has been demonstrated to HE that the predicted queues arising from the proposed level crossing on the A21 would:

- not adversely affect the free flow of traffic on the A21.
- not adversely impact upon the operation of the Robertsbridge roundabout; and
- not adversely interact with the existing A21 pedestrian crossing (north of Robertsbridge roundabout).

1.1.10 The planning permission includes conditions included at the request of HE to mitigate impacts on traffic flow. Condition 21 restricts use during the typical weekday peak hour periods and Condition 18 provides for advance warning signage should queueing exceed those predicted on a regular basis.

### Road Safety

- 1.1.11 Reportable incidents for the heritage sector show there were 12 collisions between trains and vehicles between 2011 and October 2019. The safety record of level crossings on heritage reflects the lower speed and lower frequency of train operations.
- 1.1.12 In respect of level crossings, HE have no policy. The proposed level crossing could be construed as a new connection and in accordance with their licence HE should consider proposals on the basis there is a presumption in favour of connection except where a clear case can be made to prohibit connection on the basis of safety or economic impacts.
- 1.1.13 The proposed A21 Level Crossing would provide an increased risk compared to the existing situation. It has been estimated its introduction would increase the annual risk of a fatality from 0.041 to 0.055.
- 1.1.14 The ability of the A21 to safely accommodate maximum queues has been reviewed and forward visibility in accordance with the requirements of DMRB is provided both directions. Accordingly, the maximum queues arising from the level crossing operation would be accommodated safely within the A21 carriageway.
- 1.1.15 In respect of the A21 Level Crossing ORR are satisfied that their test of exceptional circumstances has been met and that a tolerably safe level crossing could be created. The ORR considered the practicable alternatives to a level crossing and determined that there is a degree of gross disproportion between the costs of a level crossing and the cheapest form of grade separation.
- 1.1.16 A SRA has been submitted to HE which assesses all the foreseeable risks of the proposed level crossing for road users (and road workers) and shows that the operation of an at-grade level crossing on the A21(T) would meet the objective of the SRA of being acceptable in terms of safety risk for all populations.

### Highway Design & Departures

- 1.1.17 A preliminary design of the changes required to the A21 to construct the A21 Level Crossing has been prepared by Arup as Lead Designer. Where design elements are covered by existing requirements in DMRB then the design accords with those requirements.

- 1.1.18 HE requires any scheme on its network which includes a design requirement not covered by DMRB to be the subject of a Departure. A Departure has been submitted to HE and to be approved shall demonstrate that the benefits outweigh the adverse impacts.
- 1.1.19 The only likely negative impact is in relation to safety. The SRA has considered the safety risks associated with the proposed level crossing and identified that with appropriate mitigation all risks are as low as reasonably practicable.
- 1.1.20 An assessment of the valuation of accident savings, construction costs and wider economic benefits of the level crossing compared to the least cost alternative of a road bridge has been undertaken, which shows the scheme would deliver considerable wider economic benefits which substantially outweigh the likely increased safety risk monetised as a valuation of accident prevention.
- 1.1.21 On balance therefore comparing the proposed departure with the alternative the overall benefits demonstrably outweigh the estimated safety disbenefits.

### **ESCC**

- 1.1.22 ESCC raised no objection to the planning application for the proposed level crossings on either Junction Road or Northbridge Street subject to two conditions. ESCC have not objected to the TWAO application.
- 1.1.23 The first condition requires the implementation of appropriate traffic calming measures and a review of speed limits at each location. The second requires a Travel Plan to manage movement patterns associated with the heritage railway services to and from Robertsbridge station including on street parking.

## **1.2 Conclusion**

- 1.2.1 The A21 crossing would not adversely impact the free flow of A21 road users and therefore in accordance with NPPF the impact in terms of capacity and congestion would not be severe.
- 1.2.2 I have considered the road safety implications of a new level crossing on the A21 around Robertsbridge and have shown:

- The A21 in the location of the level crossing has experienced no personal injury accidents;
- HE should apply a presumption in favour of new connections to the A21 in this location;
- The design of the level crossing approaches accords with HE requirements (DMRB) and safely provides for queueing vehicles;
- The proposed level crossing would incorporate the safest standard of equipment available;
- Separate risk assessments by the designers of the railway and A21 show that risks would be as low as reasonably practicable; and
- The ORR has concluded a tolerably safe crossing can be provided.

1.2.3 Therefore I conclude that there would not be unacceptable impact of highway safety arising from the proposed A21 level crossing.

1.2.4 In respect of highway design the proposed A21 level crossing is compliant with DMRB where it includes applicable requirements. Where DMRB doesn't include requirements a Departure submission has demonstrated that on balance comparing the proposed departure with the alternative the overall benefits demonstrably outweigh the estimated safety disbenefits.

1.2.5 Accordingly, I respectfully ask the Inspector to find that there is no transport or highways reason for preventing the making of the TWAO.

