

From: Jonnie Godfrey
Sent: 16 June 2020 22:16
To: Planning
Cc: Somerton Parish Council
Subject: Master Plan 18/00825/HYBRID SPC For the Attention of Andrew Lewis

Sir/Madam,

With reference to the suggestion that it *could* be considered “necessary” to close the Somerton crossing - because of perceived risk to a hypothetical number of new residents at Upper Heyford - I feel it is important to state an opposing perspective.

It would appear from the report, in 2018, by Natalie Stretton (Network Rail Crossing Manager), that there have not been any fatalities, or accidents, to people, dogs, horses or cars, at the crossing in years of use. Indeed she stated: 'Therefore the risk at this crossing can be considered to be as low as is reasonably practicable and no further action, other than routine inspection and monitoring is required until the next risk review, or changes in the risk profile are identified.' I cannot imagine that new residents from the development are any less capable of managing to traverse the crossing safely than other locals have been to date, which is what could be implied by Rhys Evans in his recent report. As a new-to-the-immediate-area dog walker I have found the crossing refreshingly clear, sensible, adequately protective and completely understandable.

In addition, as a recently arrived resident in Somerton, I have found that particular walk, crossing the railway in either direction, (one of the all too few circular walks locally) a veritable natural blessing. I find it depressing and disheartening that the council or the railways should act against what we are told more and more, i.e. that exercise, nature and the great outdoors all have huge benefits for our health and wellbeing. Surely it would be best to find a way to continue to make this asset as safe as possible for any or all users? It already works perfectly well, albeit there is a perceived issue regarding gates being left open from time to time and infrequently since 2008. Perhaps the weight on the gates, or the angle of them, could be changed slightly?

I have not addressed the issues of residential access as I am sure the home owners/farmer will be doing that. Suffice it to say, from their perspective alone, doing away with the crossing seems totally unacceptable.

Hopefully life can be lived here in calm enjoyment of the countryside, being responsible for our selves, our children, dogs, horses etc, rather than in fear of Risk Assessment and all the things that could *possibly* go wrong.

J. Godfrey

Isabella
Fritwell Road
Somerton
OX25 6NJ

No mention is made of any concern re locks that can be crossed without any protection, such as the one at Upper Heyford