

Rachel Tibbetts

From: Nicholas Rowe [REDACTED]
Sent: 23 June 2020 12:14
To: Planning
Subject: Somerton Crossing - 18/00825/HYBRID SPC

FAO Mr. Andrew Lewis

I write with reference to the above planning application and specifically the related proposal to close Somerton crossing.

I hereby give my notice of objection to this closure. This objection may be outside of the relevant window but, as only very limited time has been given to object to aspects of a vast overall development at (somewhat cynically) such difficult and demanding times, I would be grateful if it could be accepted and placed on your file.

The report from Network Rail relating to Somerton Crossing as forms part of the application documents is highly technical and largely inaccessible to the layman. The lack of any easily comprehended conclusion is particularly unsatisfactory and borders on the obfuscatory; indeed (to continue the cynical theme) I suspect that the Heyford Park expansion is being used opportunistically by Network Rail to close a crossing they would rather not maintain. The gist of the rationale for closure, however, appears to be that population growth in the Heyford area significantly increases the risks associated with this crossing and that costs of mitigating this perceived risk cannot be justified. In this regard I wish to make a number of points.

1) In order to correctly analyse the position the only correct starting point must be to identify the number of Heyford Park residents who currently make use of Somerton crossing. From this it might reasonably be possible to predict how footfall may increase following the development. As far as I can see no such exercise has been carried out.

2) I am a resident of Somerton and make use of Somerton crossing on an almost daily basis; I may be running, walking with my wife or bird watching at various times of the day. As such I am well aware of those that use the crossing and I know the large majority. I know of only one individual from Heyford Park who uses the crossing; residents of Heyford use the canal pathway for recreational purposes and have no logical reason to divert to Somerton. It follows that the expansion of Heyford Park is highly unlikely to result in any material increase in footfall. This may appear anecdotal, but is based on real local knowledge and, in the absence of correct analysis, is highly relevant.

3) The overwhelming majority of footfall at the crossing emanates from a good number residents of Somerton taking exercise by way of the canal with return via Somerton crossing. Closure of the crossing therefore brings a substantial loss of amenity for the Somerton community.

4) There are two residential properties to the west of Somerton crossing. The great difficulties associated with loss of access for these residents is obvious. Loss of emergency access should also be of material concern.

5) As noted above there appears to be no correctly made case that expansion of Heyford is likely to bring material additional footfall to Somerton Crossing and, as also noted, experience suggests that it is likely to be highly minimal. This coupled with the existing crossing being fully gated and alarmed (contrast please with un-gated and un-alarmed crossings elsewhere) means that increase in footfall related safety risk is also likely to be highly minimal. Whilst it would be quite wrong, reality is that closure may result in a small number (most likely children) attempting to make an illegal crossing at Somerton. In other words the likelihood is that overall safety risk will increase rather than fall.

In summary there is no real case that expansion at Heyford Park will result in any material increase in footfall at Somerton Crossing; real experience and local knowledge supports that view. It follows that there is no real increase in safety risk; indeed as noted overall safety risk is more likely to increase rather than fall. The loss of amenity for

Somerton residents (including the residents of properties mentioned above) will be material and will serve no good general purpose.

Thank you for considering these views.

Yours Faithfully

Nicholas Rowe

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