

Rachel Tibbetts

From: DC.Consults
Sent: 23 June 2020 21:20
To: DC Support
Subject: FW: Closure of Somerton Level Crossing and Bridleway, Oxfordshire. FAO Petronella Natrass & Mark Weston

Carolyn Mangnall
Development Support Supervisor

Cherwell District Council
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From: Andrew Lewis <Andrew.Lewis@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Sent: 22 June 2020 15:04
To: North Aston [REDACTED]
Cc: DC.Consults <DC.Consults@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Closure of Somerton Level Crossing and Bridleway, Oxfordshire. FAO Petronella Natrass & Mark Weston

Thank you for the clarification Marcus.

I have copied in my colleagues who register your comments on our system.

And yes, I have the comments of "the Meeting".

Regards

Andrew Lewis

Andrew Lewis
Principal Planning Officer – Major Projects Planning Team
Development Management
Place and Growth Directorate
Cherwell District Council
Telephone (direct line): 01295 221813
Andrew.Lewis@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
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My usual office days are Monday to Thursday

Online planning register: <https://planningregister.cherwell.gov.uk/>

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From: North Aston [REDACTED]

Sent: 22 June 2020 14:24

To: Andrew Lewis <Andrew.Lewis@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>

Subject: Re: Closure of Somerton Level Crossing and Bridleway, Oxfordshire. FAO Petronella Natrass & Mark Weston

Good afternoon Andrew,

Thank you for your swift response, and my apologies for omitting my address - included below.

In this instance, I am writing as an individual. I passed on the messages of concern that had been sent to me by other residents to the Officers of our Village Meeting, who I believe have already responded on behalf of the community.

Kind regards,
Marcus Potts

School Cottages
North Aston
Bicester
OX25 6HT

On 22/06/2020 14:05, Andrew Lewis wrote:

Mr Potts

I acknowledge receipt of your letter but for clarity can you confirm your address and whether your representation is personal or on behalf of a wider representation

Thank you

Andrew Lewis

Andrew Lewis
Principal Planning Officer – Major Projects Planning Team
Development Management

Place and Growth Directorate
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From: North Aston [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 June 2020 13:56
To: Andrew Lewis <Andrew.Lewis@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Closure of Somerton Level Crossing and Bridleway, Oxfordshire. FAO Petronella Nattrass & Mark Weston

Dear Mr Lewis,

**Planning Ref 18/00825/HYBRID – Application re-consultation, Heyford Park
Closure of Somerton Crossing**

I am responding as a concerned resident of North Aston, following the notification received recently regarding the proposal by Network Rail to consider the permanent closure of Somerton Crossing.

In my capacity as Editor of North Aston's parish magazine, I have been contacted by several members of the community who are worried that this level crossing is part of a popular walking route, linking North and Middle Aston with Somerton. It is also a bridleway (ref 296/7), and while the number of riders using it as such is relatively modest, we do have horse owners in the village who have used the bridleway, and would like to continue doing so.

The bridleway itself is known to date back to medieval times, and is known locally as The Causeway. It certainly pre-dates both the railway and the adjacent Oxford Canal, and is a vital element of the popular Cherwell Valley walks, which are actively promoted by Cherwell District Council's own Leisure Services Department. The path also constitutes an essential Right of Way, with access to properties that would otherwise be isolated from their neighbours and communities.

My principal concern is that realistic alternatives do not appear to have been fully investigated. Network Rail has considered four possible solutions. The construction either of a new vehicle bridge over the line, or the creation of an underpass, both of which have been rejected on cost grounds (estimated at £5 million each), while the underpass would also appear impractical because of the low-lying nature of the land and inevitable flooding. They have also considered, but rejected, the upgrading of the bridleway west of the crossing to that of a road for vehicle access to The Mill, although this would still lead to the closure of the crossing itself. For technical reasons, they also reject upgrading the crossing to a fully-automated system.

It would seem logical to me that Network Rail looks to retaining the existing crossing for vehicles and horse riders only, perhaps with a keycode 'lock', and supplements this with a footbridge for pedestrians. While they do not consider the crossing's use as part of the bridleway to be hugely significant, with so few riders using it, they do appear to acknowledge that nearly all the additional use they have identified will be pedestrian. Currently they suggest that usage is limited to approximately 5 car crossings per day, plus one van, one farm vehicle, and 12 pedestrians. They have now suggested, perhaps on somewhat dubious statistical grounds, that this could increase to as many as 100 pedestrians per day, once the development on Heyford Park has been completed.

On behalf of walkers, horse owners and riders within our community, I would appeal to you to safeguard the crossing by rejecting Network Rail's proposal to close the crossing, which would sever the bridleway and render a long-standing Right of Way inaccessible.

Kind regards,
Marcus Potts
01869 347356



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