

Patron Her Majesty The Queen

The British Horse Society

Email enquiry@bhs.org.uk

Abbey Park,

Website www.bhs.org.uk

Stareton,

Tel 02476 840500

Kenilworth,

Fax 02476 840501

Bringing Horses and People Together

Warwickshire CV8 2XZ

The logo for The British Horse Society, featuring the text "The British Horse Society" in white serif font on a dark red square background.

29 July 2020

Planning and Development Department  
Cherwell District Council  
Bodicote House  
Bodicote  
Banbury  
Oxfordshire  
OX15 4AA

**By email**

**FAO Andrew Lewis**

Dear Mr Lewis,

**Planning Ref 18/00825/HYBRID – Application re-consultation, Heyford Park**

Thank you for consulting the British Horse Society (BHS) again on this application. There are two specific aspects of this latest consultation on which we wish to comment:

1. The Heyford Park Walking and Cycling Strategy
2. Proposal by Network Rail for the closure of Somerton level crossing should permission be granted for this development.

**1. Walking and Cycling Strategy (Figure 5.1/Rev C dated 25/06/20)**

The BHS welcomes the inclusion in this latest Plan of a Pegasus crossing of Camp Road between Upper Heyford Bridleway 7 on the south side and the new bridleway link alongside Chilgrove Drive to the north, in line with our earlier comments of 12 February 2020.

We ask that our other recommendations regarding both the Aves Ditch and Portway bridleways are included as Planning Conditions, should permission for this development be granted. We also ask that the Society be consulted on the detailed specifications for both these paths prior to implementation.

**2. Proposals to close Somerton level crossing**

The BHS is extremely concerned by the response from Network Rail dated 21 May proposing that the level crossing at Somerton Mill should be closed if this development goes ahead.

Network Rail refer in their response to the 'footpath' over the crossing. The path is in fact a Bridleway (OCC ref 349/5) which provides an essential link in the local off-road network for local horse riders, as well as for pedestrians. Whilst the number of riders using the crossing is relatively low, for this minority of users the closure of the crossing would have a major adverse effect on their ability to ride out safely, cutting them off from the wider network of bridleways either side of the

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railway and requiring them instead to ride along roads through North Aston and Somerton. This would involve a substantial diversion, with the associated hazard of having to ride along rural roads that are not designed to support the increased traffic flow that can be anticipated from this development.

To put this into context, over the past 10 years the BHS has received increasing numbers of reports of road incidents involving horses each year. Over that period 4,645 such incidents have been reported, with 1,080 horse injured, 395 killed and 44 human fatalities. The preservation of the off-road riding network of bridleways and byways is therefore critical – in every sense – if equestrians are to be able to continue exercising their horses safely.

It is the Society's view therefore that the existing level crossing at Somerton Mill should be retained for vehicles, horse riders and cyclists, with the alternative provision of a footbridge to address any issues of pedestrian safety at the crossing, should this development proceed.

If there is any aspect of our comments that you or the Applicant wish to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Petronella Natrass MSc, MIPROW  
Access Field Officer (BHS South Region)

[petronella.natrass@bhs.org.uk](mailto:petronella.natrass@bhs.org.uk) / [access@bhs.org.uk](mailto:access@bhs.org.uk)