



Objection

by

Woburn Sands Town Council

to

**A provision in the Application for an Order
to be made under the Transport and Works Act 1992**

by

Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd

in relation to

East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements

Submitted by Mrs L J Stapleton

Clerk

Woburn Sands Town Council

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1. This Objection relates to the proposal by Network Rail to close the pedestrian level crossing known as School Crossing Footpath 003 in Woburn Sands and require pedestrians to cross the railway via the adjacent vehicular road crossing. The proposal is set out on Page 65 of the draft Order, and the accompanying Sheet 46.
2. Woburn Sands Town Council supports the proposal to close the existing at grade crossing on grounds of safety; however the Council is not satisfied with the alternative proposed by Network Rail.
3. As reflected by the title of the crossing the principal use of the crossing is by pupils crossing the railway from the houses to the North of the line to the two schools to the South of the line.
4. In previous discussions with Network Rail it was agreed between the Town Council and Network Rail that a pedestrian bridge would replace the existing crossing. Network Rail duly applied for Planning Permission and this was granted by Milton Keynes Council in November 2016 under reference 16/01639/FUL. The permission is for a pedestrian bridge with ramps for wheeled vehicles such as pushchairs and invalid scooters. It is therefore a fairly large structure with a considerable land take requirement.
5. Network Rail subsequently decided not to proceed with this bridge; it is understood that this decision was taken on the grounds that the structure was visually intrusive and would impact unreasonably on the residents of Deethe Close in Cranfield Road.
6. The Application for an Order under the TWA proposes that pedestrians should be required to walk along Cranfield Road to the junction of Newport Road and then cross the railway line alongside the vehicular traffic using the railway crossing. A new footpath would then join the vehicular crossing to the existing footpath, running along the edge of the Recreation Ground (between points P9 and P7 on Sheet 46).
7. This proposal would mean that pupils would intermingle with vehicular traffic using the crossing, particularly at key commuting times. It is the view of the Town Council that this is inherently unsafe regardless of whatever signage and directions are posted on the crossing. Pupils going to school tend to do so in groups and do not necessarily behave in an orderly fashion; at the same time commuters in cars will not necessarily adhere strictly to directions. It would be a recipe for potentially fatal accidents.
8. The Town Council appreciate Network Rail's reluctance to construct a major pedestrian bridge to replace School Crossing. The Council suggests that Network Rail construct a more modest stepped bridge without the ramps approved in the current planning permission. This would be used by pedestrians only; wheeled vehicles such as push chairs etc, which are controlled by adults, would be required to cross at the main vehicular crossing as proposed by Network Rail. While this would be an inconvenience for some it would be a much safer solution.
9. Under this solution it would be unnecessary to construct a new footpath between Points P9 and P7 as suggested in the draft Order since there is already a pavement running from the vehicular crossing alongside Station Road which meets the existing footpath through the Recreation Ground at the pedestrian crossing lights on Station Road.

10. Notwithstanding the provisions of the draft Order the Town Council wishes to point out that heavy construction traffic cannot be permitted to enter the Recreation Ground.
11. A matter which is not proposed in the draft Order is the possibility of installing a middle right turn lane northbound on Station Road immediately prior to the crossing. This would permit traffic to queue for Cranfield Road with through traffic passing on the inside lane. At present, after the reopening of the crossing gates, northbound traffic frequently cannot move because a Cranfield bound car cannot turn right due to southbound traffic. This situation will worsen considerably when the frequency of trains is doubled.
12. This suggestion may require a re-design of the crossing which could reasonably be undertaken as part of the improvements to the line.

8 August 2018