



Lizzie Barnicoat
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Network Rail
Fourth Floor
One Victoria Square
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By e-mail

1 February 2019

Ref: OBJ/215

Dear Ms Barnicoat,

Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order

I write in response to your objection (ref: OBJ/215) dated October 2018 in respect of the proposed Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order (the Order).

East West Rail Western Section Phase 2, against which this Order is being made, will reinstate and upgrade railway lines to enable new train services to run between Oxford and Milton Keynes, Oxford and Bedford and Milton Keynes and Aylesbury.

As part of the Government's wider investment in the Cambridge – Milton Keynes - Oxford Arc (Arc), EWR2 will improve public transport connectivity and journey times, reduce car journeys and improve productivity, economic growth and housing in the region through agglomeration. This vital infrastructure will help enable the Arc to realise its potential as a globally competitive, knowledge intensive economic cluster.

Rail patronage has more than doubled in the UK over the last 20 years to 1.71 billion in 2017/18, reflecting the essential role the railway plays in supporting economic growth by enabling the safe, fast and efficient movement of passengers and goods between economic centers.

At present, the Arc corridor, in contrast to strong north-south radial links extending from London, is not served by high-quality east-west transport links. Journeys between key economic centers along this corridor are often long and impractical. Journey time savings between newly connected towns has the potential to be considerable and in some cases halved¹. Additionally, with traffic growth in the region forecast to grow significantly, EWR2 will help alleviate some congestion and traffic between towns where people do not currently have convenient rail options.

For further information about EWR2 and EWR2's strategic aims, please see below a

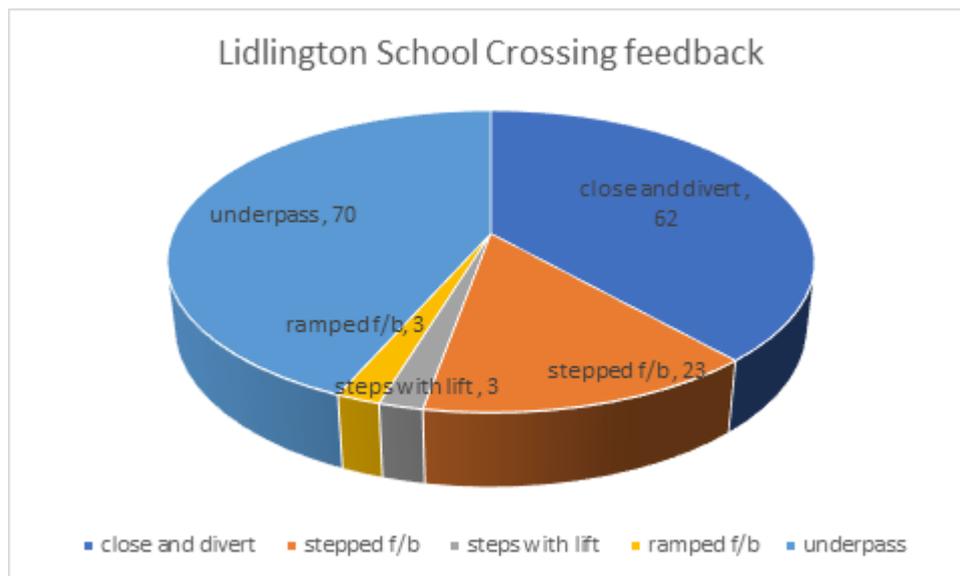
¹ Oxford – Milton Keynes current journey time: 1h19m EWR journey time: 42m
Oxford -Bedford current journey time: 2h 22m EWR journey time: 1h6m

link to 'The case for East West Rail, Western Section Phase 2', which can be found on the Department for Transport website at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-case-for-east-west-rail-western-section-phase-2>

Turning to the points you raise in your objection:

School Crossing

As per your request to Peter Winters, Network Rail Senior Sponsor, please see the chart below showing the responses from the 2016 consultation event held in Lidlington.



You say in your objection that if the school crossing closure is to go ahead as part of the Order then more mitigation is required as discussed at a meeting between Network Rail and yourselves in July 2018:

Network Rail's proposed diversion of School Crossing represents the most suitable and convenient option owing to the route primarily taking place on level ground, with no steep gradient involved. Station Road crossing provides a safe and controlled method to traverse the railway as it is covered by signaller observation using CCTV and gives advanced warning of approaching trains and therefore users have time to stop and / or clear the crossing prior to closure and the arrival of a train. Station Road also provides a physical barrier from a passing train and therefore reduces the risk of trespass on the track.

Network Rail proposes the following permanent improvement to the existing Station Road level crossing in order to mitigate the potential safety concerns associated with the increased use of this crossing. On Bye Road, Network Rail proposes an additional new length of footway alongside the existing railway fence on the north side of the road linking in with the existing section of footway at the junction with Station Road. We will also provide an enhanced waiting area and new bollard protection at the corner of Bye Road. Replacement of the current low height kerbs where necessary with standard raised kerbs around the corner between Bye Road and Station Road will also ensure that the waiting area has additional protection from oncoming traffic. To the

north of the level crossing, Network Rail will provide an enhanced waiting area adjacent to the existing level crossing and a wider section of footway to enhance the capacity and condition of the existing pedestrian route on Hurst Grove.

You state that not including the improvements to the pedestrian route in the Order puts the Council at a disadvantage as any commitments EWR 2 make would be less enforceable.

Note that these improvements to the diversionary route were agreed immediately before the submission of the order, informed by the discussions held with Lidlington Parish Council in July 2018.

The land required for the improvements to the diversionary route are in the land ownership of either Network Rail or Central Bedfordshire Council, and as such Network Rail will not need an Order to acquire the land associated with these improvements.

Network Rail will enter into a formal undertaking with Central Bedfordshire Council for the implementation of the pedestrian improvement measures as described in this letter prior to the diversionary route being brought into use; subject to the Order scheme is approved and that Central Bedfordshire Council approve the package of highways improvements.

See below diagrams of improvements to the Station Crossing:

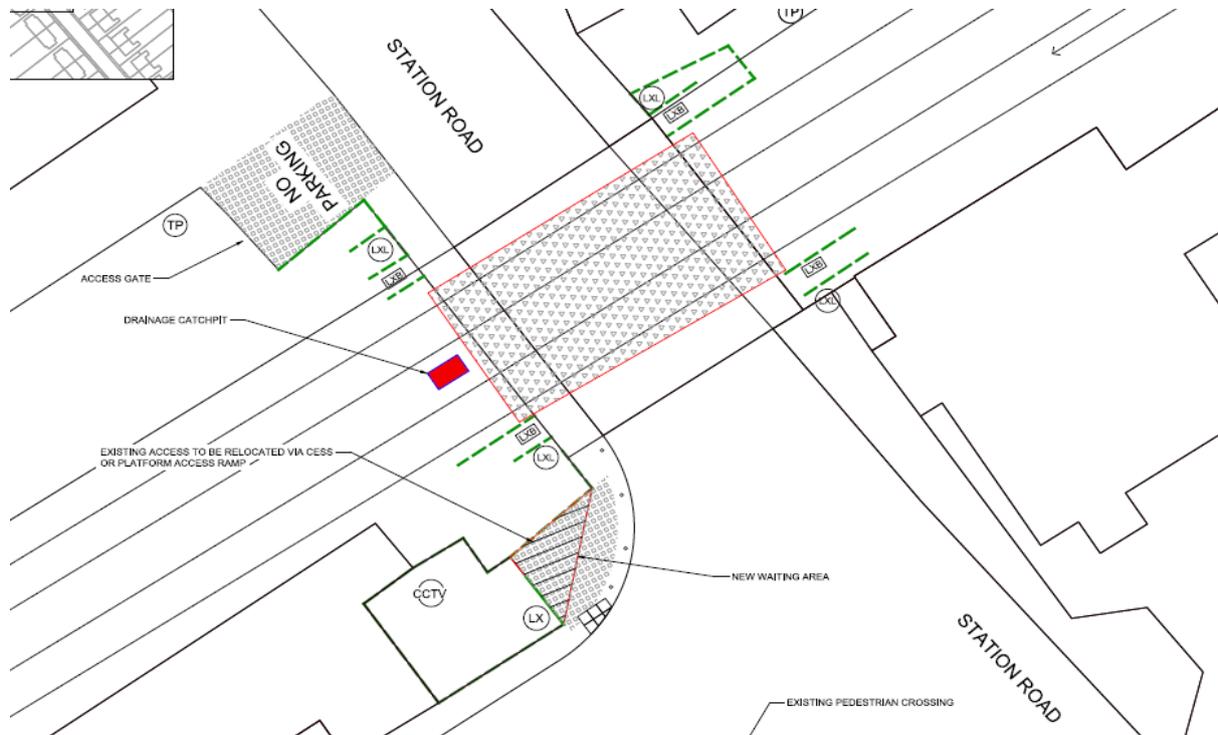
Walking route Bye Road

- Additional new footpath to Station Road level crossing
Alongside the railway fence
Directly linked to the station entrance & existing path
- New waiting area
- 3 new pairs of dropped kerbs



Walking route Station Road level crossing

- Enhanced waiting areas
- Enlarged area at Bye Road junction
- Kerbside bollards
- Vehicle 'No Parking' marking on Hurst Grove side



Walking route – Hurst Grove

- Enhanced footpath to the school entrance
- Widened pathway that is better suited for users
- New kerb stones
- Road width unchanged

Underpass Option

You raise the possibility of constructing an underpass or footbridge over the railway as an alternative diversion for the closure of School Crossing.

Among other issues, the engineering challenges and costs associated with constructing a new underpass are considerable. Topography investigations at the site of the existing crossing indicate that it is not suitable as it is flat, and would require major excavation. Any new underpass would need to be located further to the east where the topography is more suitable, which would result in a net increase in the distance that users would have to walk to use the underpass. Construction of an underpass would result in major disruption to existing train services due to line

closures and there would be a risk of flooding and closure during winter when icy, leading to a potential closure of the crossing route for some users.

If EWR2 were to consider provision of a footbridge, then this would either require additional powers than those sought in the Order and would require EWR2 to acquire additional land and rights by negotiation with affected landowners. This would likely lead to significant additional cost and would result in delays to delivery of EWR2. Any footbridge provided would need to comply with Network Rail's Public Sector Equality Duty, meaning that provision of ramps might be required, which past consultation activities have indicated some local resistance to. In addition, the costs associated with the provision of a new footbridge are considered not to be the best use of public money given that an alternative, viable safe and cheaper option exists to close and divert.

Marston Road Bridge

In your Statement of Case, you raise the need for more suitable accessibility of Marston Road Bridge.

Network Rail can confirm that the current design of the new over-bridge which will replace the Marston Road level crossing makes provision for its shared use by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrian users. The current design of the bridge includes a 2m wide shared use footway on both sides of the bridge. The design also includes the provision of a new shared use segregated footway on the approach embankments to the new bridge as part of the proposed works. Currently, cyclists and horses use either the existing footpath, (which is less than 2.0m wide) or stay on the existing carriageway. On this basis, it has been assumed as part of the design development that horses will travel on the eastern side of the new crossing where the existing footway is located.

In addition, Network Rail is also looking at a future opportunity to increase the width of the footway on the east side to 3m where possible by slewing the proposed new horizontal road alignment further to the west, and reducing the footway width on the west side to a 1m verge only to gain as much width as possible for the footway on the east side

If agreed with the local highway authority, this change would be implemented providing that it remains within the limits of the Order and can be implemented without altering the design of the proposed new bridge structure / width. The new shared footway would then extend northwards from the new bridge to the point where it will connect back in to the existing permissive bridleway. Network Rail is providing a new link path through to the existing bridleway on the north side, which has a relatively steep gradient, but is within acceptable design parameters. It also has a flat section as recommended by equestrian guidance.

EWR2 has already provided a wider footway on the southern side of the bridge, on the eastern side of the new crossing, to allow a horse to turn and stand sideways so that the rider can see in both directions for a gap in the traffic to cross without overhanging the kerb. It is also providing a new PRoW access route between the existing footpath through Granary Wood and the new highway via a diversion of the existing PRoW along the western edge of Granary Wood to the bottom of the new southern approach embankment. It will then link in to a new-shared use (pedestrian, cyclist and

equestrian) crossing point over Marston Road at the bottom of the southern embankment.

Diversion

Lidlington Parish Council has also requested provision of a stepped access along the side of the Marston Road bridge approach as the proposed diversion is too long.

Network Rail does not believe that the provision of a set of steps at this location is appropriate in this instance.

The diversion route of the existing permissive PRow along the southern side of Granary Wood ties in to the proposed new shared crossing at the bottom of the new approach embankment. The length of this diversion for pedestrians compared to using the existing route over the crossing was not considered to be excessive (a maximum of approx. 200m) and hence it was not deemed appropriate to provide a set of steps.

Additionally, the provision of a set of steps on the south-west side of the new bridge is not deemed to be safe from a highways design perspective as Network Rail would be required to provide new vehicle restraint barriers along both sides of the road on the new embankments. Design standards require a minimum uninterrupted / continuous length coming off the bridge of at least 50m. If a new stepped access were provided, it would have to exit on to the new embankment at least 50-60m south of the new bridge. This may still not be far enough down the new embankment to provide an adequate vertical sightline for cars coming over the bridge from the north and as a result, it may need to be located even further south.

Diversion route during construction of Marston Road Bridge.

Central Bedford Council (CBC) has removed its objection related to the Bury Ware diversion on the basis of a new planning condition addressing highways, which has allayed its concerns. As CBC is satisfied with this approach, we would be grateful for the removal of your objection on this matter.

If you are satisfied the concerns in your objection have been addressed please would you notify the Transport and Works Act Orders Unit that you wish to withdraw your objection and quote ref OBJ/215 The Unit's contact details are below:

Post Email

Email

transportandworksact@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Post

Transport and Works Act Orders Unit

General Counsel's Office

Department for Transport

Zone 1/18

Great Minister House

33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Moeng', written in a cursive style.

Sophie Moeng
Consultation Manager