



Andrew Smith
Acting Chairman
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Langford Village Community Hall
8 Nightingale Place
Bicester
OX26 6XX

Sophie Moeng
Consultation Manager
Network Rail
One Victoria Square
Birmingham
B1 1BD

4 December 2018

Ref: OBJ/142

Dear Mr Smith,

I write in response to your objection (ref: OBJ/142) dated 5 September 2018 in respect of the proposed Network Rail (East West Rail Bicester to Bedford Improvements) Order (the Order).

Electrification

The East West Rail Western Section Phase 2 (EWR Phase 2) project to which the Order relates was originally planned to be electrified as part of the Government's "Electric Spine" programme, which was intended to create a new electric rail corridor between Southampton and Sheffield, via East West Rail. When the Electric Spine programme was deferred in autumn 2015, the electrification of the EWR Phase 2 project section was reduced to cover the route between Oxford and the West Coast Mainline at Bletchley only.

Subsequently, in October 2016, the Department for Transport announced that plans to electrify the route between Oxford and West Coast Mainline were also to be removed from the scope of the Order. The Department for Transport made the decision to defer the electrification of EWR indefinitely to allow project resources to be focused on opening the EWR Phase 2 section of the railway at the earliest opportunity. Following this decision, development of proposals to electrify the line ceased and it is now proposed EWR Phase 2 will be a wholly non-electrified line of route. However, any proposed new structures being built as part of the EWR Phase 2 project (such as road and foot bridges) will allow sufficient clearance to accommodate electrification, should it be pursued in the future.

Network Rail is not in a position to offer comment on commitments given by the government in respect of diesel trains.

London Road Level Crossing

Network Rail recognises that the successful introduction of EWR Phase 2 services will result in the increased barrier down time at London Road Level Crossing. The extended crossing closure times are comparable to other busy level crossings around the UK which are considered to operate safely. Nevertheless, Network Rail has a duty to minimise the risk to as low as is reasonably practicable.

Whilst London Road Level Crossing is not within the Order, Network Rail has identified a signalling alteration which will reduce the time between the start of each crossing operation and first train arriving at the crossing. These changes will slightly reduce the time for trains to

arrive at the crossing for all approaches reducing the closure time by around 10 seconds for each operation. In addition to this, additional signals will be provided which will reduce the time taken for Oxford-bound trains to arrive at the crossing once the barriers have closed by between 15 and 25 seconds depending on type of train and approach route. Depending on train type and timetable the cumulative barrier down time will reduce between 25 – 40 minutes per 24 hour period.

These works would be implemented as part of the EWR Phase 2 project, which is scheduled for delivery by 2023 should the Order be granted. However, work is ongoing to accelerate the specific signalling intervention affecting London Road Level Crossing within the overall project schedule, with a view to altering the signalling in 2021/2022.

Network Rail regularly assess and monitors the safe operation and risk at each of its level crossings, currently London Road Level Crossing is a full barrier CCTV which is one of the safest types of highway crossings available to Network Rail. As a result of this we believe that it is very unlikely that the risk would rise to such an extent that the crossing would have to be closed on safety grounds.

Finally, Network Rail is committed to continue working with Oxfordshire County Council (as the responsible highway authority) to secure a permanent road solution (overbridge or underpass) for London Road Level Crossing.

To date an initial feasibility has been undertaken that examined the possible solutions and costs to close London Road Level Crossing; these were presented to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) for consideration and further development. It has now been agreed that Network Rail and OCC will jointly fund a report that will recommend one option to be taken forward for delivery. It will then be for all parties to agree on funding and timescales of this preferred option. However, any closure of London Road Level Crossing remains outside of the scope of the Order.

You can contact John Emery, Network Rail Sponsor (john.emery@networkrail.co.uk), to arrange a meeting to discuss this with Langford Village Community Association, then, if you are satisfied the concerns in your objection have been addressed, please would you withdraw your objection to EWR2 by writing to the Transport and Works Act Unit, quoting ref OBJ/142. The Unit's contact details are below:

Post

Transport and Works Act Orders Unit
General Counsel's Office
Department for Transport
Zone 1/18, Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London, SW1P 4DR

Email

transportandworksact@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Moeng

For and on behalf of Network Rail