

Souldrop Level Crossing Consultation
Brunel House, RTC Business Park London
Road, Derby
DE24 8UP

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5th March 2018

Dear Sir / Madam,

PROPOSALS FOR A DIVERSION OF THE FOOTPATH AT SOULDROP LEVEL CROSSING

Network Rail Infrastructure Limited ("Network Rail"), are writing to you in order to consult you on the proposals for a diversion of the footpath at Souldrop Level Crossing ('Proposed Scheme').

You may have already received information about the Proposed Scheme from Bedford Borough Council as part of informal consultation under Section 119A of the Highways Act 1980. This consultation is part of a separate process to secure land rights for the purposes of creating a new footpath under the Transport and Works Act 1992, as explained further in this letter.

The Proposed Scheme would stop up a section of the existing footpath (Public Footpath No. 2 Knotting and Souldrop) over the crossing and create a new section of public footpath that diverts pedestrians to Back Lane, and would facilitate the closure of Souldrop Level Crossing over the Midland Main Line railway line at Souldrop (postcode MK44 1EX).

Scheme Background:

Network Rail is planning to divert the existing footpath at Souldrop Level Crossing in order to provide residents and other users with a safer passage over the railway.

The Proposed Scheme would permanently close Souldrop Level Crossing for reasons of safety. The crossing spans two high speed lines and one lower speed line and traverses steep terrain. Additionally, a further rail line is being constructed between Bedford and Kettering to enable future capacity growth and the Midland Main Line railway line is being electrified from Bedford to Kettering and Corby – posing a further potential risk at this location.

This means that there is a greater risk to users at Souldrop Level Crossing than at other crossings on the network and hence why it has been identified for closure.

Current usage of the crossing is low, with census data from 2016 indicating that the crossing is used by an average of 2 pedestrians per day.

Improving Level Crossing Safety

In 2010 Network Rail embarked on a landmark level crossing risk reduction programme. The objective of this programme is to close and upgrade crossings across the network, which will improve safety for everyone and reduce the risk that level crossings present to the national rail network.

Level crossings were part of a network developed in the nineteenth century, when there were slower trains, few cars and the pace of life was much slower. If you were to build a railway today it would not have any level crossings, other than in exceptional circumstances (for example, HS1 does not have any level crossings).

The most effective way of reducing risk is to eliminate a crossing completely by closing it. Since the start of the programme Network Rail has closed more than 1,000 crossings and many more have been improved or are being upgraded.

Our Plans

Network Rail proposes to stop up a section of the existing footpath (Public Footpath No. 2 Knotting and Souldrop) over the crossing and create a new section of public footpath that diverts pedestrians to Back Lane, and would facilitate the closure of Souldrop Level Crossing over the Midland Main Line railway line at Souldrop (postcode MK44 1EX).



KEY

- Current unaffected Public Footpaths
- Current unaffected Bridleways
- Alternative route
- Proposed route to be "stopped up" via Order

Figure 1: Proposed scheme in geographical context

Stakeholder Consultation

As it has not been possible thus far to secure all the necessary land rights by negotiation, Network Rail intends to submit an application for an order under the Transport and Works Act 1992 (TWAO) to secure land rights for the purposes of creating the new footpath. However, Network Rail will continue to seek to engage with relevant landowners to secure the requirements for the proposed scheme by consent.

Network Rail expects to apply to the Secretary of State for Transport for this TWAO in June 2018 as part of Network Rail's London to Corby Project, which includes the electrification of the line from Bedford to Corby, installation of a fourth track between Bedford and Kettering, and lengthened platforms to enable longer trains.

An application has already been made to Bedford Borough Council for a Rail Crossing Diversion Order under Section 119A of the Highways Act 1980 to create the new footpath connecting to Back Lane and extinguish the existing footpath over the railway (Public Footpath No. 2 Knotting & Souldrop). Informal consultation by the Borough Council concluded in November 2017.

If the Order is made under the Highways Act, following this consultation, it will be subject to a 28 day formal objection period prior to being confirmed by the Borough Council (if unopposed) or the Council may refer it to the Secretary of State for public inquiry (if there are objections to it). If you wish to object to the extinguishment and proposed diversion of the existing right of way, you will have an opportunity to do so under the formal 28 day Highways Act consultation.

Both the Highways Act and Transport and Works Act applications can be run in parallel until the level of objections to the Highways Act application is known, at which point Network Rail will take whatever steps are most appropriate to avoid the possibility of two public inquiries relating to the same scheme being held (under the Highways Act and Transport and Works Act processes) whilst ensuring that objectors to its proposals are treated fairly and given the opportunity to present their objections in whichever forum is taken forward.

Programme for Submission and Further Information:

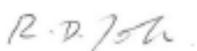
As set out above, the application for Transport and Works Act Order is expected to be submitted in June 2018. We are writing to you at this stage because you are a statutory consultee under the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 and we would very much like to receive your feedback on our Proposed Scheme. As a statutory consultee under the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006, you will receive a formal notice of the application in due course.

In the meantime, Network Rail is holding a consultation event for statutory stakeholders and members of the public on Friday 23rd March 2018 from 10:00 – 18:00 at The Exchange, Colworth Science Park, Sharnbrook, MK44 1LQ.

If you wish to attend the event, please confirm your attendance by email to:

SouldropConsultation@networkrail.co.uk

Yours faithfully,



Richard John
Head of Consents & Environment
Infrastructure Projects East Midlands, Network Rail

