

The Rt Hon Chris Grayling
Secretary of State for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

10th May 2017

Dear Mr Grayling

Network Rail Level Crossing Closure Orders Essex

Network Rail are proposing to downgrade or close 130 level crossings across Essex, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. This includes footpath crossings. The line between Harlow and Roydon runs through our farm and there are three footpath crossings, one of which is at the point where we have a vehicle crossing that is our only vehicle access to approximately half the farm.

I wish to comment on the way in which the process has been conducted, as well as object to the proposals. Network Rail have contracted the consultation process and proposals to various consultants. We were first contacted by consultants who wrote to my deceased father and mother; admittedly land is still registered in their names as their estates are in the process of being distributed but I wrote and explained and have been completely ignored. I also tried to phone but only got answering services and no one returned my calls. The consultants continue to write to my deceased parents and notices are in the wrong names.

One consultant did visit and spend time listening to our alternative proposals and reasons why they were better than the ones being put forward. However, the official response dismissed our proposals out of hand and the reasons were banal and ignored the facts.

The notices that have been put up around the farm are inaccurate and incomplete, lacking the correct maps and other details.

Perhaps most worryingly the Network Rail proposals are reducing safety - only one foot crossing is being closed, pushing foot traffic to the other two crossings which are not as safe. The foot crossing that is being closed is at the point of our vehicle crossing so it is not that the crossing point disappears. Presumably line speed will not be improved by the proposed change.

The cost of compromised safety can be huge; two girls died on the crossing at Elsenham and one died at a crossing in Bishops Stortford. In both cases footbridges have been erected to improve safe crossing, reputedly at a cost of £1 million each. Our proposal that the underpass close to the least safe crossing be improved and used to replace that crossing would cost a fraction of this amount.

Generally the consultation has been anything but, with Network Rail's ideas being the only ones considered. I attach a list of our objections to the proposals.

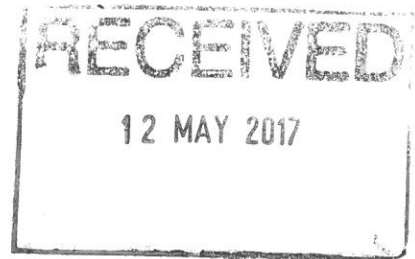
Yours sincerely



Paul Camp

CC:

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Mr Mark Carne
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Objections to the proposed changes at Wildes, Camps and Sadlers.

1. Sadlers is the most unsafe crossing of the three - visibility is poor and the noise from the brook water running under the railway makes hearing trains harder. To push foot traffic towards this crossing increases risk.
2. Just to the east of Sadlers there is an existing underpass - with small improvements to lower the floor and clean the ditch that removes any water this could be used to cross the line instead of Sadlers.
3. Most people using the footpaths that cross at Camps and Sadlers are trying to get from the River Stort to Harlow - the underpass route with a path connecting to the existing path directly to the south would offer a more direct route.
4. Arguments that the underpass would flood are spurious - when the valley floods none of the paths north of the railway are passable, so as long as the underpass drained at the same rate as the rest of the valley it would be as walkable as the paths.
5. If the path that crosses at Camps instead ran along the north side of Cannons Brook to the underpass mentioned above the foot traffic could be stopped at both Camps and Sadlers.
6. The proposed new path along the southern boundary of the farm is not acceptable - it is a longer and less convenient route for walkers; it is in contravention of our HLS agreement with Natural England so if proceeded with the compensation claim will be considerable; it invades privacy of the farmhouse and cottage; it crosses our drive and will create a hazard for walkers and traffic; and the cost to create and maintain it will be considerable.
7. Re-routing of the paths that run from Camps and Sadlers south to the point where Cannons Brook leaves the golf course and enters our land, using the proposed new path to the north of Cannons Brook, would greatly reduce walker's exposure to fields containing cattle so improving safety. It would also remove a length of path that runs on the golf course along the side of the fairway and so reducing walker's chance of being hit by a golf ball.