

TACKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Medcroft Road, Tackley, OX5 3AH

Secretary of State for Transport
C/o Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit
Department for Transport
Gret Minister House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

25th January 2024

Sent via email to: transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk

Re: Network Rail (Tackley Level Crossing): Transport and Works Act order.

- 1. Application for approval to acquire land and close Tackley level crossing as part of the Oxford Phase 2A enhancement works TWA application.**

We are writing to formally object to the above application.

We were told in 2019 at a meeting in Tackley Village Hall that the village could have an underpass which would accommodate both horses and pedestrians. The finances were available and this option was welcomed by all residents at the meeting as well as Network Rail's Mike Gallop, who went on record in April 2020 with a press release saying "We thank the community in Tackley for their support and look forward to working with them on the permanent subway."

Since then, the crossing has closed by way of a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order and a temporary bridge has been installed. There is no provision for horse riders. The residents were not happy about it but were assured that it was temporary only and permission was granted by the highway authorities on the understanding that it was temporary. At this point, the village was still under the impression that an underpass would be built, however a potential alternative option was available to Network Rail further north, the "Barwood Bridge" option. To facilitate this option, a portion of land was kept back by the landowner rather than being developed for housing. The portion of land would accommodate a small car park and a bridge over the rail cutting which could connect to both the station and the public right of way via a new bridleway on the east side of the line. The landowner on the east side of the line- Tackley Estate- has recently reconfirmed their preference for this option to us.

In 2021 Network Rail informed us that a new study would be done to assess the different options and were told that the underpass was no longer viable. While we were told that this was due to flooding issues, this seemed odd as in 2001/2 Network Rail had planning permission to build an underpass and flooding was not flagged up as a problem. The new study also did not include the Barwood bridge option.

During the whole consultation period over the last two years, not only have we had numerous changes in Network Rail employees to deal with, but it has also never felt like a consultation. No matter what is discussed, Network Rail come back with the same foot bridge option behind the houses on Nethercote Road and a re-route of the bridleway.

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The proposed bridleway introduces significant safety concerns, and these issues are being ignored.

Local riders, the British Horse Society and the landowner of the field – Tackley Estate- all say that this proposal is dangerous. Given its length, the frequency and speed of trains and the popularity of horse-riding in the local area, there would be a significant risk of a horse bolting and injuring or killing multiple pedestrians. The risk has been moved from crossing the railway to riding alongside it – therefore no better. It is possibly even more dangerous than the original level crossing that it is intended to address. A resident was told at the consultation in the village hall by Network Rail staff that any accidents which happened on the bridleway would be the liability of the rider. We are now aware that this is not true and Network Rail, as the landowner, would be liable.

This route has been used by residents for centuries, if not millennia and is part of a very popular circular route from the village, particularly during winter when other paths are not accessible. It is also a key right of way to access the station from Kirtlington.

The NR07 consultation report mentions the subway and developers bridge, but there has been no consultation on an infield or northern route, therefore Network Rail have not reasonably considered other options. The local landowners are open to alternative routes on their land.

According to Networks Rail's published documents there has been no consultation with OCC public rights of way, and whilst they say that the bridge will remain open for permissive footpath access, hidden in the small print is a note saying that access remains until ticker machines are installed or that network rail decides to withdraw it.

As a village we must live with what is built forever and we must have what most suits the village, not just the cheapest option for Network Rail. In the grand scheme of your spending, it is a small price for Network Rail to pay.

At no point has Network Rail effectively consulted with, listened, and take on board what the residents, the Parish Council and the British Horse Society's concerns or alternative suggestions.

Regards,

Cherie Carruthers
Clerk to the Parish Council
Tackley Parish Council