

on this single track railway would necessarily be relatively infrequent and there is a lack of evidence before me to support assertions that the operation of the railway would destroy the peace or tranquillity of the valley or that the previous extension to Bodiam had such an effect. The low embankments and suitably-designed river bridges would have a limited visual impact on what is a large scale open landscape.

- 9.55 However it is more difficult to predict the visual impact of the works that would be necessary to cross the various roads since these crossings have not been designed. If, as appears likely (see below), the relevant authorities would only sanction a bridge crossing of the A21 and B2244, that would require considerable engineering structures to take the road over the railway or vice versa. These works would include the bridge itself and necessary associated cuttings or embankments. Embankments appear to be the more likely given the location of the crossings within the river flood plain where cuttings could take the road or railway below the level of the water table. To achieve the necessary clearance, embankments would probably be significantly taller and wider than the original railway embankments with a greater landscape impact. However the actual impact on the AONB cannot be predicted without a designed scheme.

*Impact on farming operations and on the living conditions of adjoining occupiers*

- 9.56 Subject to detailed consideration at the planning application stage, I consider that the proposed route is likely to be sufficiently remote from residential property that the noise or other emissions from the railway would not be unacceptably harmful to the living conditions of the occupiers.
- 9.57 Sections of the original railway embankment were removed by the farmer who now owns much of the route in order to improve access and drainage on the farm. The restoration of the embankments and the other necessary new works could have disadvantages in this respect. The present landowner opposes the scheme, as apparently do some other current landowners. However these landowning interests are a matter primarily for negotiation and have little bearing on the planning considerations. Were the landowners to remain opposed to the scheme, the Council could consider whether it wished to seek the use of compulsory purchase powers and would have to weigh up the planning issues and other relevant considerations. Landowners could pursue any objections through the formal statutory processes.

*The safety and flow of road traffic*

- 9.58 Whilst a modest level crossing is likely to be acceptable to cross the now lightly-trafficked Northbridge Street, the Council has proposed a Pre-Inquiry Change which highlights the County Highway Authority’s opposition on safety grounds to such a crossing of what is a busy, fast and straight section of the B2244. Neither is the Highways Agency likely to sanction a level crossing of the A21 trunk road bypass. The Agency is actively preparing proposals to realign and improve the A21 north of Robertsbridge to improve access to the coast with enhanced safety and reduced congestion and is unlikely to support a level crossing that would have a contrary effect. Indeed the Agency is currently proposing to remove a level crossing of the A27 trunk road elsewhere in East Sussex for similar reasons and at substantial cost.
- 9.59 Neither body has opposed the extension of the railway in principle, but for these reasons the crossing of these roads is likely to require works that are both costly and of uncertain visual impact.