Neighbour comments

Land between Cody Road and railway, north of Waterbeach, Cambs

Comments

Further to our previous submitted comment we (Waterbeach and District Bridleways Group) wish to add some additional information regarding the timings and safety of crossing the nearby level crossings on horseback.

Specifically, we are referring to crossings at Bannold Road, Long Drove, Cross Drove, Burgess Drove and Station Road. All of which will be impacted by the proposals of RLW Estates to increase length of trains, frequency of trains and relocation to a highly dense built area.

Network Rail have informed us that the treadle (trigger that the train passes to activate the barriers) is some 3/4 mile away in both directions of each crossing. The treadle automates a yellow warning light at the corresponding road crossing for 7 seconds and at the end of this time the barriers start to descend, at which point the alternating double reds are activated. 15 seconds later the train passes, and gates start to ascend and then the double reds stop. In all cases the trains work the gates - not a person. The average time for the crossings mentioned is 26 seconds. Arrangements and timings are different for full barriers at busier crossings.

RLW Estates’ plans do not as far as we can tell, include designs for upgrading barriers and crossing timings at the aforementioned crossings that will see more trains, longer trains and much busier traffic crossing the lines as the area becomes much more populated and commuters are attracted to the area. We also understand from the head of the new Communities Section of the Planning Department (via our British Horse Society governing body) that there are going to be lots of connections across Bannold Drove at the site of the proposed new station, including all manner of vehicular ones given that this will change from agricultural greenfield to an extremely high traffic and densely built area.

We are concerned that relocating the station triggers a series of material changes to nearby crossings as well as the planned new station that could increase risks to horse riders when navigating these areas (which they do frequently to enjoy the local circular and linked bridleways). By default, equestrian access could be compromised, and other users access prioritised over equine access.

We understand that the head of the new Communities Section of the Planning Department is looking at how the greenways and equestrian access can be achieved in the area whilst retaining
access for us – which is very positive. The same consideration has seemingly not been applied by RLW Estates in their station relocation plans.

Necessary adjustments for RLW to make in their plans for equestrian access at the new station and nearby impacted level crossings (in addition to those comments previously submitted by our group before):

- Ensure protection of continued access for horse riders between Bannold Drove and Cross Drove (an ancient and established bridleway of importance to maintain a circular route with Long Drove)

- If this is not possible, provide a perimeter bridleway and multi-user bridge at the junction with Cross Drove.

- Ensure all routes traversing the railway line at Waterbeach and RLW’s new town and linking other communities need to be named multi user routes (NMU’s).

- Ensure the upgrading of all nearby crossings mentioned to reflect the increase in rail traffic that RLW’s plans will infer: specifically, improved gate systems and crossings that promote and protect equine access as well as other users.