



TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992

Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006

The Proposed Network Rail (Felixstowe Branch Line Improvements- Level Crossings Closure) Order

Statement of Aims

Rule 10(2)(c)

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RULES 2006**

**THE NETWORK RAIL (FELIXSTOWE BRANCH LINE IMPROVEMENTS – LEVEL CROSSINGS CLOSURE)
ORDER**

STATEMENT OF AIMS

Required by Rule 10(2)(C)

Introduction

1. An application has been made to the Secretary of State in accordance with the Transport and Works (Applications and Objections Procedure) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 for an Order under sections 1 and 5 of the Transport and Works Act 1992.
2. This statement is intended to provide a brief overview of the above application, the purpose of which would be to provide Network Rail with powers to stop up and discontinue six level crossings on the Felixstowe Branch Line, make changes to rights of way in the area, construct a bridleway bridge over the railway, and acquire the land needed for that purpose.
3. The Order is sought to authorise matters ancillary to the operation of the railway for the purposes of safety, efficiency and reliability.

Background

4. The Felixstowe Branch Line serves the Port of Felixstowe, which is the largest container port in the UK and handles more than 4 million 'Twenty-foot Equivalent Units' and 3,000 ships each year. There are plans to increase the capacity of the Port which will in turn help support UK economic growth.
5. To accommodate this growth, and reduce pressure on the already-congested A14 road, Network Rail is proposing to carry out works to the Felixstowe Branch Line, involving the doubling of the current single track for a length of 1.4km, with a new line of rails on the southern side of the alignment. These works will increase capacity from 33 freight trains per day to 47, and provide additional operational flexibility. Ancillary to these works, in the present Order, Network Rail is seeking powers to close four pedestrian level crossings, one public bridleway crossing, and one restricted byway level crossing. The byway and bridleway crossings are also subject to private rights of way and are usable by farm vehicles. It is also seeking powers to construct and maintain a bridleway bridge and carry

out associated works, including changes to the public rights of way network in the area and provision of associated environmental mitigation.

6. The proposed works are 2.5km to the north-west of Felixstowe and 0.5km west of Trimley, within the Parishes of Trimley St. Martin and Trimley St. Mary, in Suffolk Coastal District.
7. Authorisation to construct the additional track, and to acquire or take temporary possession of the necessary land, was secured by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company in 2008 and renewed in 2014 (by way of the Felixstowe Branch Line and Ipswich Yard Improvement Order 2008 and the Felixstowe Branch Line (Land Acquisition) Order 2014 respectively).
8. Network Rail has submitted a separate Transport and Works Act Order application to enable the relevant land powers to be transferred from the Port of Felixstowe to Network Rail. This application was submitted on 28 September 2016 and is currently being considered by the Secretary of State.
9. The existing powers authorise the dualling of approximately 7km of the Felixstowe Branch Line and associated works. Network Rail can meet the forecast demand for the line through exercising the existing powers in part: it intends to dual 1.4km of track near to Trimley and to carry out works to the public road level crossings at Westerfield, Levington, Morston Hall, and Thorpe Lane.
10. The works which are the subject of this application relate only to the closure of the specified level crossings and not the wider scheme. However, they complement the wider scheme and to reduce disruption to the surrounding area, are intended to be carried out at the same time.

Aims of the Proposal

11. The proposals have been developed with regard to the following objectives:
 - Improving safety and efficiency
 - Compatibility with future operations and increased capacity of the railway
 - Maintaining connectivity for non-motorised users
 - Provision of a suitable crossing over the Felixstowe Branch Line
 - Mitigating environmental impact
12. The proposals have also been developed with regard to pre-application consultation, details of which are available in the Report Summarising Consultations Undertaken, which has been submitted in support of the application.
13. Each of the objectives is discussed in this statement.

Improving Safety and Efficiency

14. Being in the path of a train is an inherently dangerous location in which to find oneself. Accordingly, where people are entitled to cross a railway on the level, Network Rail provides equipment to facilitate safe passage. Network Rail carries out regular risk assessments and maintenance to ensure that the risk at a level crossing is as low as reasonably practical. However, no level crossing can ever be completely safe, so on new infrastructure they would only be considered in exceptional circumstances.
15. The level crossings which would be closed by the proposed Order are passive crossings, meaning that it is incumbent on the user to decide whether to cross the railway. The risk at passive level crossings is therefore in part dependent on the willingness and ability of users to use the crossings correctly, and is a risk that the railway cannot control.
16. At the footpath level crossings (Thorpe Grove, Grimston Lane, Trimley Footpath, and St Martin), users are instructed by signage to "*Stop, Look, Listen; Beware of Trains*". Network Rail regularly inspects the level crossings and cuts back vegetation where necessary to ensure that approaching trains can be seen from the decision point, being a point 2m away from the nearest running rail. A deck is also provided to facilitate quick passage across the railway.
17. At Gun Lane and Keepers Lane level crossings, pedestrians use the same method as above to cross the railway. Telephones connected to the signalbox are also provided, and users with vehicles or animals (including equestrians) are instructed by signage to call to check that a train is not approaching before they start to cross.
18. The presence of a second line of rails would increase the time taken to traverse the railway. This would necessitate users being able to see trains further away before they start to cross and the risk to the users would be increased.
19. Network Rail measures the risk of a fatality or a serious injury at each level crossing using the All Level Crossing Risk Model. All other factors being equal, running more trains increases the risk at level crossings. The double tracking of the line is driven by the need to allow more trains to run.
20. In 2016, there were two fatalities at Grimston Lane level crossing, which is proposed to be closed as part of this application. The fatalities occurred in February and September. Some improvements were suggested, including reconfiguring the decision point so that users approached the railway at right angles, but only closure of this level crossing can ensure that a fatality does not happen again.

21. Increases in population in the Trimley area through planned residential developments will lead to more people using the rights of way network. Additionally there are ongoing campaigns to promote greater use of the network for reasons of health and wellbeing.
22. By closing the passive level crossings, and providing a grade-separated alternative and connecting routes, all points where a user is expected to make the correct decision whether it is safe to cross the line can be eliminated.

Maintaining Connectivity

23. Network Rail recognises that the existing PRoW network is a valuable asset to the local and wider community and is used predominantly for leisure purposes by walkers and equestrians.
24. A key objective has been to minimise the length of proposed diversions. It is therefore proposed to locate the bridleway bridge in a central location (at Gun Lane) relative to the level crossings which Network Rail is proposing to close. This point is close to an existing right of way and other rights of way will be reconfigured to facilitate access to the bridge. This reconfiguration includes upgrading of an existing footpath to bridleway, and creation of a new bridleway on the southern side of the Branch Line.
25. The public road level crossings, Thorpe Lane and Cordy's Lane, will continue to provide connectivity across the line, but this will be via controlled rather than passive level crossings.

Provision of a Bridleway Bridge

26. Network Rail is proposing to construct a bridleway bridge across the Felixstowe Branch Line. Options such as an underpass and vehicular bridge were also considered and have been discounted. The bridleway bridge is proposed for the following reasons
 - It caters for a number of different users that most frequently cross the level crossings including equestrians, cyclists and walkers
 - Of the options considered, the land take is lowest
 - Of the options considered, this option has the least impact on the environment including ecology
 - There is an efficient construction method and programme
 - It is the most cost effective solution
 - The bridge will incorporate an accessible gradient of 1:15

Environmental Mitigation

27. Network Rail is committed to ensuring that its developments enhance the environment. Its Company Sustainability Strategy states that it is committed to managing land sustainably, enhancing ecological diversity and increasing its economic and social value. In

carrying out developments, it aims to make a measurable net positive contribution to biodiversity in Great Britain.

28. Network Rail recognises that the development is proposed in a rural area, on the fringe of Trimley and close to Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The landscape impact will be mitigated by screening the bridge through planting of trees. The planting will also serve as ecological mitigation. In addition, it is proposed to plant a hedgerow along a field boundary near the bridge site. This provides additional ecological connectivity as well as screening of the bridge from a proposed residential development in Trimley.

Summary

29. The proposed scheme seeks to improve safety and efficiency in the area through the closure of six level crossings. The proposed scheme complements the wider proposals in the area to improve the Felixstowe Branch Line. To maintain connectivity, a replacement bridleway bridge and changes to the existing PRow network are proposed. Environmental mitigation has been developed to screen the bridge and also provide ecological enhancement.