

please reply to:

Network Rail Ltd
167-169 Westbourne Terrace
London
W2 6JX

70 Dynevor Road
Stoke Newington
London
N16 0DX

ElyAreaCapacityEnhancements@networkrail.co.uk

roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Ely Area Capacity Enhancement – round 2 part 2

Railfuture is Britain's leading, longest-established, national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities.

We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in transport and development planning.

We welcome this latest consultation by Network Rail as a further opportunity to develop our engagement in the sequence of public consultations which began a year ago. We first responded on 1st November 2020 <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2495> and to the second consultation on 4th July 2021 <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2728>.

We note that this third consultation focusses on the options for remodelling the track at Ely North junction, Queen Adelaide level crossings options, and options for upgrading or closing other level crossings across the wider Ely area, and that it is due to be followed by a final round of consultation in 2022 on preferred options within the EACE programme before proceeding to an application for an Order under the Transport and Works Act.

Introduction

1 In general, we support the proposals to upgrade the railway in the Ely area?

Strongly agree.

Please provide reasons for your answer:

It is in our considered opinion essential that more capacity is provided on our local railway network to enable more people and goods to transfer from road transport to railway trains. More passenger trains are needed particularly to get more people transferring from roads leading into Cambridge. Additional trains are needed from Norwich, King's Lynn, Ipswich, Peterborough, and a completely new service from Wisbech. At the same time, more freight trains need to operate through Ely to help decarbonise this and neighbouring regions, to make the A14 and A47 and A10 roads safer, and to improve air quality. Ely junctions must in our view be made future-proof and have much more capacity than is currently being proposed.

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

2 Do you have any comments on the proposals to potentially upgrade the following level crossings to full barrier crossings: Badgeney Road, Black Bank, Bottisham Road, Burnt House, Downham Market Bypass, Eastrea, Horsemoor, Littleport Bypass, Norwood Road, Ramsey Road, Sandhills Littleport, Three Horseshoes No.1, No.2 and No.3 and Welney Road level crossings?

We agree with all your proposals. They will make rail passengers safer. At the same time, pedestrians, cyclists and other road vehicle users will be safer by making it unlikely that users will inadvertently stray onto the railway.

3 For Burgess Drove is your preference:

Option 2 - Close Burgess Drove Level crossing. Upgrade the surface of Burgess Drove Road for vehicle access. Upgrade the Public Footpath to Waterbeach for alternative pedestrian access.

Please explain why:

This proposed solution will be safer for railway users and those who seek to cross the railway.

4 Stonea Level Crossing:

Do you have any comments on our proposals to upgrade the barriers at the level crossing and close the underpass to vehicular traffic?

The underpass is a danger to rail users because the over-bridge is frequently hit by carelessly driven vehicles dislodging the bridge beams. Careless / distracted road vehicle drivers will be protected from their driving errors. There are clear benefits to all users if it is closed to all vehicles and reconfigured for pedestrians and cyclists.

5 Wells Engine footpath crossing:

Do you have any comments on our proposals to divert the footpath and close the footpath level crossing?

The alternative walking route already is used by most people so closing it is sensible.

6 Queen Adelaide / Ely North Junction:

For the Queen Adelaide options 1 – 5, is your preference:

Option 5 – Alternative option (explanation of your proposed alternative option)

Please explain why, including any comments on other options:

The junction is the core of the problem that is to be solved. The focus must be on why it is the core. We believe it is essential that:

~ freight should move uninterrupted through the junctions from all directions, so capacity must be built in to allow at least 4 freight trains an hour to operate towards March throughout the day.

~ passenger services must move uninterrupted through the junctions, so capacity must be built into it to allow crucial connectivity to be provided each hour for at least 1tph from Norwich, Ipswich and Stansted Airport to Peterborough (and beyond as necessary). The need to improve connectivity to and through the south Cambridgeshire economy must be recognised, so provision of two paths per hour must be provided from Norwich, King's Lynn and Wisbech to Cambridge (and beyond to London King's Cross, East West Rail as necessary.)

Ely Area Capacity Enhancement – round 2 part 2

These junctions are thus of crucial significance nationally as well as regionally. Solving the problem should not be by making the local road network work better (it should be safer) but should concentrate on making the national / regional railway network future-proofed. It is essential that, combined with re-signalling of the railway between Ely - March - Peterborough and careful timetable adjustments, the junction is able to take more than the limited number of extra train services which the scheme under consideration suggests.

We note that the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined authority has provided much of the money to formulate the plan. The plan must therefore reflect the needs of the Cambridgeshire economy as well as the wider East Anglian economy and of course, as pointed out above, the United Kingdom economy. Resources must be devoted to solving the railway problem which in turn will resolve the road traffic safety problems of the hamlet. (The major traffic road traffic flows must be kept to the east side of the River Ouse to connect with the recently constructed Ely Southern Bypass. Road traffic for Ely city centre needs to be discouraged from using the minor road through the hamlet as a short cut.)

We believe that to build a high-level road and all proposed measures for a relatively unimportant part of the road network to be a missed opportunity to invest instead in a rail-based solution. The railway must be future-proofed and the only way to do that is grade separation of the March - Ely railway to put it on the east side of the Norwich / King's Lynn lines into Ely station. We believe that this plan will enable all foreseeable future traffic to flow freely through Ely onto Peterborough, Wisbech, King's Lynn, Norwich, Ipswich / Felixstowe Port, Cambridge / London / East West Rail.

We refer to our comments made on 1st November 2020 and 4th July 2021 in previous phases of this consultation, where Railfuture has proposed extra tracks between Ely Station and Ely North Junction including a grade-separated junction.

Click on this link <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2729> for our detailed, illustrated 8-page proposal for remodelling the railway in the Ely area: "*Enhancements rising in the East – Capacity enhancement with grade separation.*"

7 Do you have any comments on our proposals to divert the Ely North Junction Footpath Crossing?

None.

8 Do you have any other feedback you wish to provide on the consultation document?

The railway will become more and more important into the future so this project needs to ensure that the problems being addressed here do not have to be revisited.

9-11 Name / Postcode / Email

12 I confirm that I on behalf of Railfuture do wish to be contacted by Network Rail with further information or to discuss the feedback provided on the Ely Area capacity Enhancements Programme.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS
Railfuture
Director for Infrastructure & Networks, national Board

Ely Area Capacity Enhancement – round 2 part 2