

Construction of public footbridge over railway line to replace existing level crossing**AT Land At School Crossing, Cranfield Road, Woburn Sands****FOR Network Rail****Target:** 18th October 2016**Ward:** Danesborough And Walton**Parish:** Woburn Sands Town Council**Report Author/Case Officer:** Jeremy Lee**Contact Details:** 01908 252316 jeremy.lee@milton-keynes.gov.uk**Team Leader:** Debbie Kirk, Development Management Manager – South East Team**Contact Details:** 01908 252335 Debbie.Kirk@milton-keynes.gov.uk**1.0 INTRODUCTION***(A brief explanation of what the application is about)*

- 1.1 The main section of the report set out below draws together the core issues in relation to the application including policy and other key material considerations. This is supplemented by an appendix which brings together, planning history, additional matters and summaries of consultees' responses and public representations. Full details of the application, including plans, supplementary documents, consultee responses and public representations are available on the Council's Public Access system www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/publicaccess . All matters have been taken into account in writing this report and recommendation.
- 1.2 This application has been brought to Development Control Panel because more than 2 local residents have objected to the proposal and, on that basis, the Local Ward Members do not wish for the application to be considered under officer Delegated Powers.
- 1.3 **The Site**

The application site covers a large area of land to the east of Woburn Sands Station and the Newport Road/Station Road level crossing, north and south of the railway line. To the north of the railway line, beyond the track bed the site largely contains tall trees which help screen the railway line from Cranfield Road. To the south of the railway line the land is currently used for a car wash and for the storage of vehicles, although both uses are currently unauthorised.
- 1.4 At the eastern end of the site is an existing pedestrian level crossing which connects a footpath from Cranfield Road to a footpath that runs through the

playing fields to the south of the application site.

1.4 The Proposal

The proposal seeks planning permission to replace the existing pedestrian level crossing with a footbridge. On the western side of the existing pedestrian crossing, from the points where it crosses the railway tracks, steps would climb up to the footbridge which would cross the tracks 6.3 metres above the ground level of the surrounding land.

1.5 In addition to the steps, ramps would lead up to the footbridge, in stages. To minimize the gradient of the ramps they would extend 64 metres to the west of the footbridge before doubling back to connect to the footbridge. The bridge would be constructed in green steelwork. The application drawings show some areas, particularly to the south of the proposed footbridge, identified for planting with trees and shrubs to mitigate the visual impact of the proposal.

1.6 The proposal has been brought forward in preparation for the implementation of the East West Rail Scheme. The applicants state that whilst the existing crossing is not unsafe, the increase in the frequency and speed of trains following the implementation of the East West Rail Scheme would increase the risk faced by pedestrians using the crossing.

2.0 RELEVANT POLICIES

(The most important policy considerations relating to this application)

2.1 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework, 2012

Paragraph 14 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Paragraph 58 Requiring good design

2.2 Local Policy

Core Strategy, 2013

CSA Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CS11 A well connected Milton Keynes

CS13 Design

2.3 Adopted Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011

D1 Impact of development proposals upon locality

T2 Access for those with impaired mobility

D2 Design of Buildings

2.4 Neighbourhood Plans

Woburn Sands, 2014

3.0 MAIN ISSUES

(The issues which have the greatest bearing on the decision)

- 3.1 The main issues are the principle of development; the impact of the proposal upon the appearance of the area and upon the amenities of nearby residents.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

(The decision that officers recommend to the Committee)

- 4.1 It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in Section 6 below.

5.0 CONSIDERATIONS

(An explanation of the main issues that have led to the officer Recommendation)

5.1 Principle of Development

Saved policy T3 (i) of Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001 – 2011 seeks to ensure that the layout of the environment, including links to adjoining areas should provide safe convenient, direct, safe, secure and understandable pedestrian and cycle routes that are not isolated from other transport routes. The principle of constructing a public footbridge over railway line to replace existing level crossing is considered to be acceptable subject to the design and appearance, impact on the amenities of local residents and meeting the needs of the users of the crossing these issues are outlined in more detail below.

5.2 Impact upon the appearance of the area

Saved policy D2 (ii) and (v) states *“Development proposals for buildings will be refused unless they...relate well to and enhance the surrounding environment... include landscaping and boundary treatments that integrate with those of the surrounding area”*. With saved policy D1 (iii) stating *“planning permission will be refused for development that would be harmful for any of the following reasons...an unacceptable visual intrusion or loss of privacy, sunlight and daylight”*.

The proposed footbridge would be one of the largest structures in the area, both in terms of height and length and it would be visible from a number of locations. The most significant visual impact would be on the view from Cranfield Road where the proposal would result in the loss of a significant amount of the existing planting along the northern side of the railway. Nevertheless a line of tall trees, beyond the application site, would be retained along the Cranfield Road verge and these would soften the visual impact on Cranfield Road.

5.3 The views from the south of the railway line are currently more open, although an existing line of trees in the playing field provides some screening for this area. However, the proposal includes provision for strengthening the planting on this side of the footbridge which would provide additional mitigation for the impact on this side of the footbridge.

5.4 The proposed footbridge would clearly have a greater visual impact upon the area than the existing pedestrian level crossing. However, it is considered that the existing trees and proposed additional planting would sufficiently mitigate this impact that it would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the appearance of the area contrary to Local Plan Saved Policy D1 (iii), D2 (ii) & (v) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011.

5.5 Impact upon the amenities of local residents

Saved policy D1 (iii) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001 – 2011 states: *“Planning permission will be refused for development that would be harmful and result in unacceptable visual intrusion, loss of privacy, sunlight and daylight”.*

5.6 Overlooking

The residential properties that would be most impacted by the proposal would be the occupiers of a group of dwellings on Cranfield Road which directly face, across Cranfield Road towards the footbridge and ramps. There would be potential for people using the footbridge, and in particular the ramps on the north side of the railway line to look across to the houses in Cranfield Road. However at their closest point the houses would be 26 metres from the ramp and 34 metres from the highest point (the footbridge) and there would be a line of tall trees between the footbridge ramps and the houses. Houses in Vandyke Close would be further from the footbridge and would be better screened by trees.

5.7 Although there would be some potential for the overlooking of houses in Cranfield Road, particularly in the winter when there is less foliage on the trees, given the distances involved and the screening of the trees it is not considered that this would result in a significant loss of amenity for residents. The development would comply with saved policy D1 (iii) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011.

5.8 Noise

Saved policy D1 (iv) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001 – 2011 states *“planning permission will be refused for development that would be harmful for any of the following reasons... unacceptable pollution by noise, smell, light or other emission to air, water or land”.*

There are two potential causes of an increase in noise from users of the crossing resulting from the proposal. There is the increase noise from people walking across the metal bridge compared with the current level crossing and

the ability of the noise from people talking as they cross the bridge carrying further because of the additional elevation and the reduced landscaping screen. However, it is not considered that the increase in sound levels would be significant and the nearest residential properties are far enough away from the proposed bridge that it is not considered that the noise levels generated would result in an unacceptable loss of amenity for local residents. The development would comply with saved policy D1 (iv) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011.

5.9 Loss of Light

The proposed development would be too far away from any residential property to have any impact on the levels of light enjoyed by their occupiers.

5.10 Other Issues

Impact on users of the crossing

Saved policy T2 (ii) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011 states *“development proposals must be designed to meet the access needs of those with impaired mobility. In particular ... the layout of the external environment, including links to adjoining areas, must provide convenient, direct and safe access”*.

The proposed footbridge has been designed to ensure that it is accessible to all potential users. Nevertheless, the length of the proposed ramps would present a significant challenge for people with impaired mobility – either wheel chair users or people with other medical conditions. However, the existing, pedestrian crossing presents significant challenges of its own for people with impaired mobility with gaps between the track and the crossing surface and the need to be aware of oncoming trains. A traffic census carried out, 24 hours per day between 27th June and 5th July 2015 found no wheelchair/mobility chair users of the existing crossing.

5.11 The census referred to in para 5.8 above counted the existing crossing being used 2,843 times during the 9 day period. The vast majority of these crossings (1865) were by adult pedestrians, but there were also 781 accompanied children (116 of them in pushchairs) and 275 unaccompanied children. The remainder of the users were cyclists or railway personnel. The census also observed 5 incidents of dangerous behaviour on the crossing. Most of these involved children playing on the track/crossing, but included a man chasing his hat, which had blown off in the wind, down the track.

5.12 The proposal would increase the distance users of the crossing have to travel and would be more arduous than the existing crossing. However, it would be significantly safer than the existing crossing and this would become more significant when the line is upgraded. It is also considered that the proposal makes adequate provision for people with impaired mobility. The development would comply Saved Policy T2 (ii) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011.

5.13 Graffiti/Anti-social behaviour

Clearly any public space can attract graffiti and anti-social behaviour. However, there is nothing inherent in the design of the proposal that would attract graffiti or anti-social behaviour that would be contrary to the Council's planning policies.

5.12 Conclusions

The proposal would clearly have a greater visual impact than the existing pedestrian level crossing. However, it is not considered that that impact would be so significantly detrimental to the appearance of the area or be detrimental to the amenities of local residents that it would be contrary to saved policy D1 (iii) and (iv) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011. Moreover, it is considered that the proposal would improve the safety of the users of the crossing, particularly once the East West Rail Scheme is implemented. It is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in Section 6 below.

6.0 **CONDITIONS**

(The conditions that need to be imposed on any planning permission for this development to ensure that the development is satisfactory. To meet legal requirements all conditions must be Necessary, Relevant, Enforceable, Precise and Reasonable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To prevent the accumulation of planning permissions; to enable the Local Planning Authority to review the suitability of the development in the light of altered circumstances; and to comply with section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. (D11)

2. Within 3 months of the erection of the footbridge hereby permitted a landscaping scheme, which shall include provision for the planting of trees and shrubs, shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall show the numbers, types and sizes of trees and shrubs to be planted and their location in relation to proposed buildings, roads, footpaths and drains. All planting in accordance with the scheme shall be carried out within twelve months of the approval of those details. Any trees or shrubs removed, dying, severely damaged or diseased within five years of planting shall be replaced in the next planting season with trees or shrubs of such size and species as may be agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the appearance and character of the area and to minimise the effect of development on the area, and to accord with saved policy D2 (v) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011.

Legend

1. DEVELOPMENT AREAS
2. LAND CURRENTLY OWNED BY DEVELOPERS

FEASIBILITY

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF REVISION	BY	CHK	APP

NetworkRail

NetworkRail

Infrastructure Planning
 Railways & Civil Design Group
 NetworkRail
 11000 4271
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 11000 4300

**EAST WEST RAIL
 PHASE 2**

**SCHOOL CROSSING WOBURN SANDS
 LOCATION PLAN
 SHEET 1 OF 5**

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF REVISION	BY	CHK	APP

Project No: LNW1133735E01/DRG/WB011-010
 Date: 11/01/2011
 Scale: 1:1000
 Drawing No: WB011-010
 Drawing Title: SCHOOL CROSSING WOBURN SANDS LOCATION PLAN SHEET 1 OF 5
 Drawing Status: FOR INFORMATION
 Drawing Author: [Name]
 Drawing Checker: [Name]
 Drawing Approver: [Name]
 Drawing Date: 11/01/2011
 Drawing Scale: 1:1000
 Drawing No: LNW1133735E01/DRG/WB011-010
 Drawing Title: SCHOOL CROSSING WOBURN SANDS LOCATION PLAN SHEET 1 OF 5
 Drawing Status: FOR INFORMATION
 Drawing Author: [Name]
 Drawing Checker: [Name]
 Drawing Approver: [Name]
 Drawing Date: 11/01/2011
 Drawing Scale: 1:1000



LOCATION PLAN
 11/01/2011

Appendix to 16/01639/FUL

A1.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

(A brief outline of previous planning decisions affecting the site – this may not include every planning application relating to this site, only those that have a bearing on this particular case)

A1.1 None.

A2.0 ADDITIONAL MATTERS

(Matters which were also considered in producing the Recommendation)

A2.1 None.

A3.0 CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

(Who has been consulted on the application and the responses received. The following are a brief description of the comments made. The full comments can be read via the Council's web site)

Comments

Officer Response

A3.1 Cranfield Airport

No comments received.

A3.2 Environmental Health Manager

No comments.

A3.3 Ramblers Association

No comments received

A3.4 Footpath Officer

No comments received

A3.5 Parish - Woburn Sands

No objection to this application which will improve pedestrian safety for such times as the rail traffic increases. We would, however, ask that as much visual screening as possible be provided and that, as far as is possible, the works be carried out during school holidays as it is a crossing used by many schoolchildren.

A condition requiring details of additional planting is included. The issue of when the work is carried out is not a material planning issue.

A3.6

Ward - Danesborough And Walton - Cllr D Hopkins

Ward - Danesborough And Walton - Cllr Jenkins

Ward - Danesborough And Walton - Cllr V Hopkins

No comments received

A3.8 **Local Residents**

The occupiers of the following properties were notified of the application:

Flat At The Station Hotel 146 Station Road

The Station Hotel 146 Station Road Woburn Sands

Station House 150 Station Road Woburn Sands

10, 12 and 29 Turnpike Court Woburn Sands

1 – 25 (odds) Cranfield Road Woburn Sands

Two objections have been received from a resident of Cranfield Road and a resident of Vandyke Close on the following grounds:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. The proposal would be expensive and there are cheaper solutions available. | This is not a material planning consideration. |
| 2. The proposal would be an eyesore and would be a magnet for graffiti and anti-social behaviour. | See paragraphs 5.1 – 5.3 and 5.11 above |
| 3. The ramps are too long and steep for elderly or disabled people to use. | See paragraphs 5.8 – 5.10 above |

4. The development would reduce house prices.
5. Noise disturbance from users of the footbridge.
6. Overlooking by users of the footbridge
7. Loss of light resulting from the footbridge

This is not a material planning consideration
See paragraph 5.6 above
See paragraphs 5.4 & 5.5 above
See paragraph 5.7 above

An objection has also been received from the operator of the car wash/car storage business on the south side of the railway. He states that he owns the land in question.

The applicants have served the requisite notice upon the objector as an owner/leaseholder of the site/part of the site.