

DOCUMENT NUMBER KCC23 – LEAFLET DISTRIBUTED BY THE WHITSTABLE SOCIETY

The Highways Act 1980 – Section 118A

**The Kent County Council (Public Footpaths CW80 & CWX40, Whitstable)
Rail Crossing Extinguishment and Definitive Map and Statement Modification
Order 2018**

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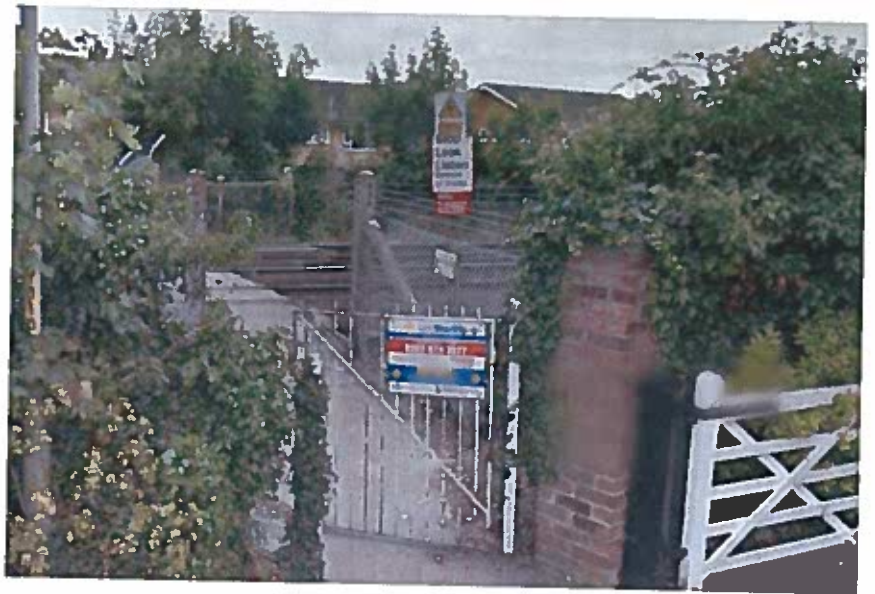
STOP THE CLOSURE OF GLEBE WAY RAIL CROSSING!

After pressure from Network Rail, Kent County Council has issued a permanent closure notice for the popular and much-used footway across the railway line between Glebe Way and Clifton Road/Portway in Whitstable.

Many Whitstable people and visitors use this crossing and have done for approximately 150 years. It provides easy access to the beach and the town centre without going via a dangerous, busy main road.

Network Rail cites safety concerns despite the fact that it complies with its own safety specifications. NR has also failed to put in additional safety measures such as lights or automatic crossing gates - as they have elsewhere (including in Kent).

Instead they want to force everyone, including the less mobile, to use lengthy alternative routes via Alexandra Road or the busy Canterbury Road. These are less safe than the rail crossing.



KCC are ignoring wishes of the vast majority of those of us who use the crossing. Of the 362 who responded to Network Rail's 2015 consultation on the crossing only seven wanted to close the crossing without replacing it with anything else.

YOU CAN HELP STOP THIS - but you only have until 7th December to object!

HOW TO OBJECT:

- Email your objection to maria.mclauchlan@kent.gov.uk or post to Maria McLauchlan, PROW and Access Service, Kent County Council, Invicta House, Maidstone, ME14 1XX.
- Make sure you mention how often you and your family use the crossing.
- You can find a list of the different reasons to object here: <https://tinyurl.com/GlebeCrossingInfo>
- Tell your friends and neighbours that they can object too if they want to keep the crossing open.
- For more information or to be kept up to date with this campaign, forward your objection and/or email to us at planning@whitstablesociety.info

Advice for Glebe Way Crossing Closure Notice Objectors

Note that these pages are being added-to as new information arises - so please do look again. 26/11. New information after this date will be added in blue. You can send your objection now and send an additional response before the Dec 7th deadline. KCC may be able to consider response after the deadline.

Information is organised as follows:

1. Advice on how to write your objections.
2. Points to consider (from objections already submitted)
3. Alternative routes' information and safety concerns
4. Photos.
5. Key briefing information from research.

The following may be a helpful starting point for objections:

KCC wants to know who objects, why they object, and views on the reasons for closure. The background papers are voluminous and the public rights of way (PROW) issues complicated because Network Rail (NR) is involved.

* Give a brief personal background: where you live, why/how often you use the crossing, your route etc. Add any personal experiences.

* NR want the foot crossing closed as they claim it's unsafe. This needs to be challenged.

* Closure forces us all to use alternative routes to the town centre or the beach. These via Canterbury Road to the town under the railway bridge or Alexandra Road with secluded paths/bridge. Are these convenient for you and safe?

* There are alternatives to closure: enhanced safety measures (warning/traffic lights, lockable gates etc, all provided elsewhere by NR, or an underpass.

* You may prefer a bridge (albeit unpopular with some).

* All of these were rejected by NR even though they originally proposed a footbridge. The money is available.

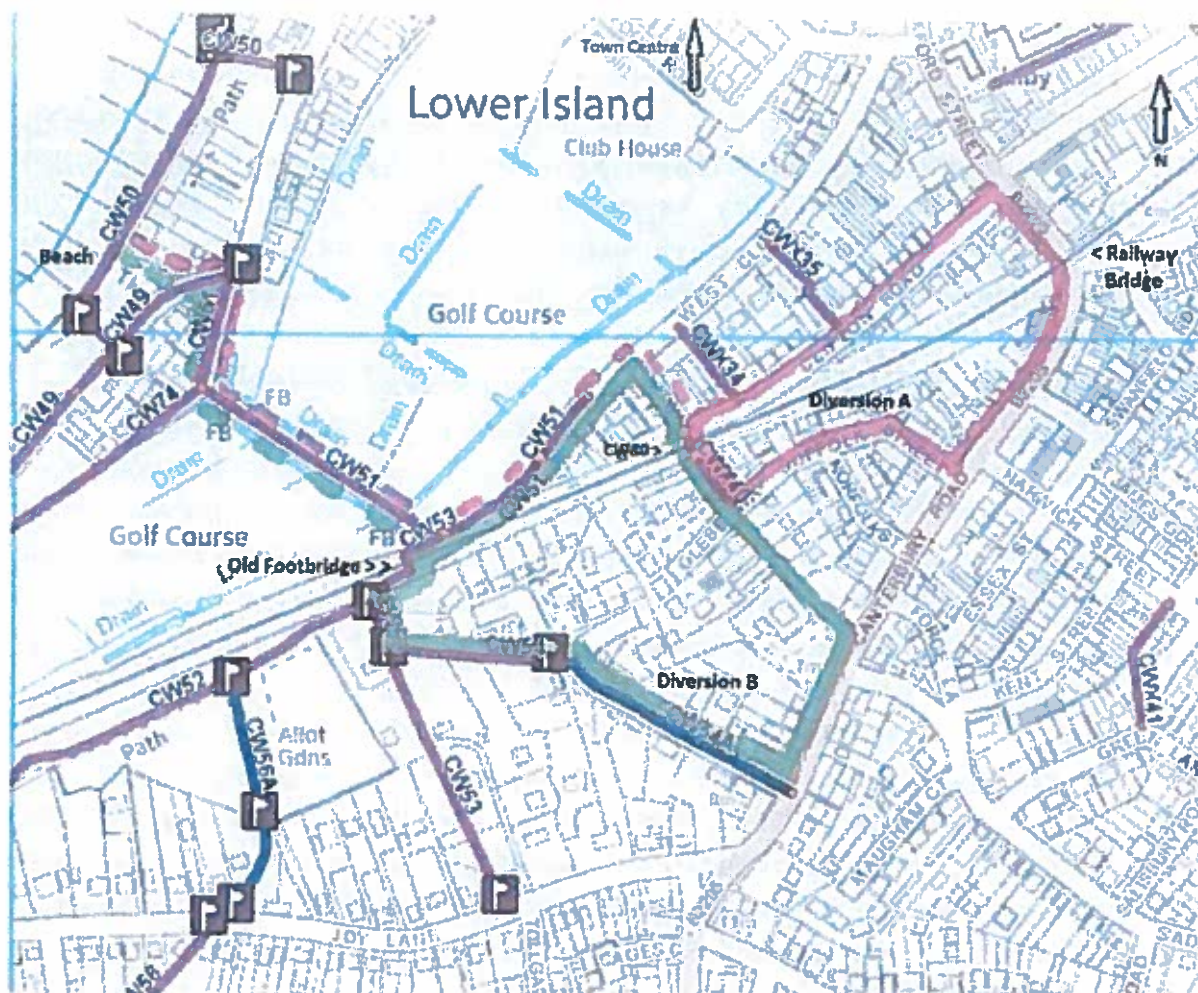
* Make the objection your own. Dozens of similarly worded letters carry less weight than a smaller number of personally considered objections.

Points to consider:

1. Closure, with lengthy alternative routes, will inconvenience hundreds of nearby residents and others, particularly the physically challenged, and each alternative route has safety issues. The route under Oxford Street railway bridge is particularly hazardous. (See the Diversions map, details, and photos below) and those who can't use a footbridge will be forced under the railway bridge.
2. Glebe Crossing already has good safety record (NR's Incident Summary for 18 year period (1998-2016) equates to 1 million or so crossings and shows just 33 incidents of which only 7 are pedestrian-related (1 fatal, 1 injury & 5 near-misses reported). Others are for stone-throwing and suchlike. (Three suicides in the period discounted as, sadly, deliberate and so not influenced by inherent crossing safety).
3. In fact, the crossing already meets NR's own safety requirements (though this is certainly not grounds to neglect safety improvements).
4. NR has for years failed to improve crossing to mitigate shortcomings identified in own risk assessments and as stipulated by coroners.
5. NR has, since the last fatality, installed an audible warning system. (She was wearing headphones and a hood). But why is NR refusing to add warning lights as they've done up the line at Cuxton (photo below) and elsewhere?
6. NR's continued failure to replace the current 150-year old iron 'kissing gates' with safer crossing arrangements is nothing short of scandalous
7. **The smart way forward, surely, is not to close the crossing** and so impose approximately half-mile, inconvenient and hazardous diversions, **but instead to install modern safe automatic access gates and associated visual/flashing warnings, CCTV etc.**
8. **Alternatively install short underpass at site of previously proposed footbridge.** Note that the track is already on a raised embankment at this location. This would be entirely safe and accessible by all. Antisocial behaviour concerns can be mitigated by lighting, CCTV connected to extensive CCC system etc. However, **the similar long-standing underpass at Stream Walk 1/3 mile east has no significant problems!** (See photos).
9. **NR holds significant funds granted by the government specifically for safety improvement to track pedestrian crossings, i.e. no direct cost to NR).**

Diversions Map

Diversion A (alternative route to the East) marked pink
Diversion B (alternative route to the West) marked green
(Dashed Lines indicate routes to beach)



Diversion Distances

Worst case (for residents nearby) are:

A. To the east = 790 metres

From the Glebe Way access gate via Suffolk Street, Canterbury Road, Oxford Street and Clifton Road to Clifton Road/Portway access gate is 790m, (plus 260m to causeway = 1050m)

B. To the west = 980 metres:

From the Glebe Way access gate via Glebe Way, Canterbury Road, Alexandra Road, footpaths to concrete footbridge, Westcliffe and Portway to Clifton Road/Portway access gate is 980m, (minus 260m to causeway = 720m).

Distances may be much less depending on individual start point and destination.

Diversions Details

The proposed diversions are lengthy, inconvenient and arguably more hazardous than the current crossing.

A. Via Suffolk Street, Canterbury Road, Oxford Street and Clifton Road

This easterly diversion is approximately 790m gate-to-gate (and adds the same to beaches' access distance). Suffolk Street is a narrow side-street leading to busy B2205 Canterbury Road. This is the primary traffic access to Whitstable, frequently very congested with associated pollution and

traffic risks. The pavement under the railway bridge into Oxford Street is barely 1 metre width at the dangerous blind corner and has adverse cambers towards Canterbury Road. Longer passing vehicles frequently overhang and/or mount the pavement (see photos below). Passage under the bridge is particularly hazardous for the physically-challenged, and wheelchair and pram users. Clifton Road is narrow with a single poorly-maintained pavement frequently compromised by parked vehicles.

B. Via Glebe Way, Canterbury Road, Alexandra Road, footpaths CW54A, CW54, CW53 and CW51, railway footbridge, Westcliff and Portway

This westerly diversion adds approximately 980m gate-to-gate (or adds 720m to the beaches' access distance). The Glebe Way access to Canterbury Road narrows to an uneven, unlit track. The B2205 Canterbury Road is the primary traffic access to Whitstable, frequently very congested with associated pollution and traffic risks. Alexandra Road (Restricted Byway CW54A) is a private thoroughfare with no pavement and poorly lit. This connects to footpaths CW54 & CW53 and the railway footbridge, all poorly lit, and CW51. The concrete footbridge is old, dilapidated, unlit, and subject to frequent antisocial behaviour. The stepped footbridge obviously renders this diversion impassable for wheelchair disabled, and for many other physically challenged who can manage the current crossing. The CW51, Westcliff and Portway elements are currently used in conjunction with CW80 and are adequate. Overall, many consider this to be an unacceptably inconvenient and dangerous route, particularly during late evening and/or darkness.

Photos.

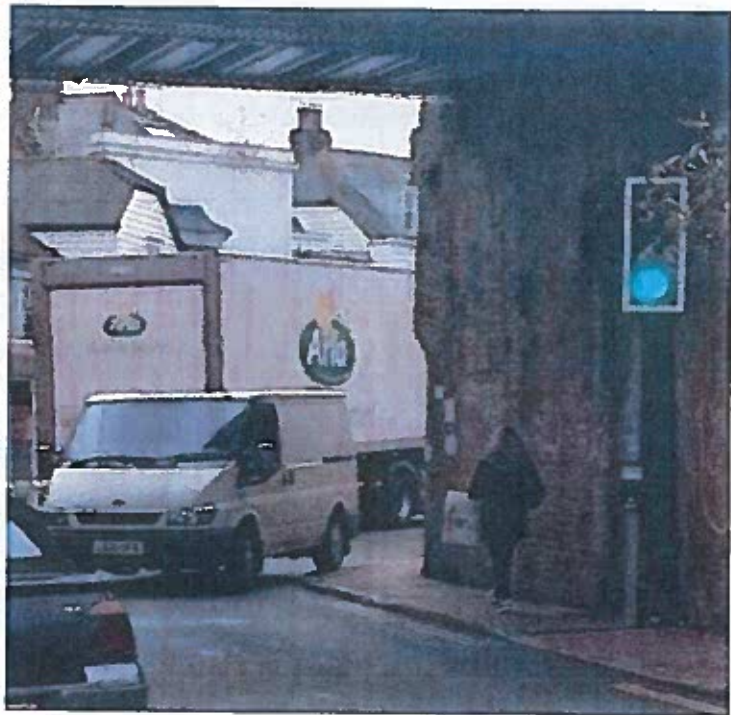
These photos illustrate the pedestrian danger at the Oxford Street railway bridge:



Canterbury-bound longer vehicles cross the centre-line so oncoming vehicles often forced to mount and damage the narrow and uneven pavement on this blind corner for pedestrians!

Like this!

And this is just a van, not two large vehicles squeezing through.



Is this safer than Glebe Way crossing?

The road itself is dangerous. Here is the 19 year record.



View this in more detail at <https://www.crashmap.co.uk/Search>
(then enter CT5 4HJ in Location box and select all years)

The Stream Walk Underpass just 1/3 mile east

Daytime



And at Night (street lights beyond)



Well used and no significant incidents

This shows the NR warning lights at the Cuxton pedestrian crossing further up our line - just 35 miles west:



And this another NR pedestrian crossing in Wiltshire!



What's so difficult NR?

Given the Glebe Way crossing location and usage, we should press for more secure gates. And preferably automated ones controlled by NR trackside systems.

Another example of that which network Rail could and should have installed:

Oct 3rd 2018 www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12135970

In April last year 16-year-old Keenan Matthes accidentally crossed railway tracks in front of a train at the Metcalfe Rd level crossing in Rānui, West Auckland.

Since his death his parents Presley and Karama Matthes have been campaigning for all level crossings to be fitted with automatic gates throughout New Zealand. A swing gate was installed at the Rānui station where Keenan was hit in April.



Karamea Matthes, at the level crossing in Ranui, west Auckland where her son Keenan Matthes was killed after he was hit by a train last year. He was listening to music with headphones on at the time.

