

The Kent County Council CW80 & CWX40 Rail Crossing Extinguishment and Definitive Map and
Statement Modification Order 2018
Public Inquiry 22nd September 2020
Proof of Evidence

Kath Gill - Ramblers Local Footpath Officer Canterbury East Parishes including Whitstable

1. I am speaking on behalf of The Ramblers as a voluntary Footpath Officer of over 25 years and also on behalf of myself as a walk leader to **object to the extinguishment of the above public footpaths**. I have worked together with the Ramblers Footpath co-ordinator For East Kent in producing this evidence.
2. **NB: I must also declare that I am a committee member of the Whitstable Society and have been involved in their submission**

2 We object to the proposal to close FPs CW80 and CW40x because of the adverse effect this will have on the local footpath network, especially as this is in an urban setting and is well used, by local people who will be greatly inconvenienced by the closure. This is not a diversion and therefore there is no alternative other than lengthy routes either along an unlit private road and a footbridge or via Whitstable High street and under a railway bridge. This is an exceptionally busy and polluted road. the footway under the bridge is narrow and on a bend. The curb is often clipped by lorries.

3 **Our aim is to prove that the crossing is no less safe than other footpath crossings in the area**

4 I have been a walk leader for over 40 years and have been trained by both the Ramblers and East Kent Health Authority. My risk assessment is for groups of walkers who may only use it occasionally when on guided walks, and differs from that of network rail because I can only judge a crossing by what I can see at the time when we use it .Guided walks are always pre walked by the leader and for East Kent Health Walks there is one qualified leader for every 10 persons. People are always told beforehand of any risks and that they must not follow any person, but individually check for oncoming trains prior to crossing.

5 **Criteria for risk assessment**

- a Barriers
- b Approach
- c Signage
- d Sightline
- e Surface
- f Audible Warnings

6. See Appendix 1 The table is a comparison of footpath crossings in Kent local to Glebe Way crossing and one other namely Pebble Lane Crossing near Maidstone.

In conclusion and in consideration of the above, we submit that the Glebe way crossing is no less safe than the other six crossings apart from the two which have miniature warning lights, and it is arguably safer than some of the others.

7 Network rail propose to extinguish this pedestrian rail crossing, necessitating alternative routes along either a heavily polluted and congested road with a narrow pavement, and passing underneath a railway bridge, or along an unlit private road and using a stepped footbridge over the railway line, which is not accessible to people with mobility problems. There is an element of risk in nearly everything that we do and I have more concern in using some footpaths which cross over highways than using the Glebe Way rail crossing.

8 The link for many town dwellers is part of a particular route to work and school and also from town to beach or beach to town, This link will be broken and the alternatives are substantially further and less convenient and are unpleasant to walk.

9 Some with mobility issues will be forced to use cars whilst the government recognises, through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 2000, the value of Public Rights of Way. Local Authorities are producing Rights of Way Improvement Plans to improve provision for walkers and those with mobility problems, and especially to increase walking and cycling for regular local journeys.

10 Glebe Way crossing is a necessary and well used crossing for many Whitstable inhabitants. (on two Sunday mornings in August at approx. 11.00am, I counted six and eight people crossing over it).

Kath Gill



25th August 2020

Appendix 1 Glebe Way CW80 and CWX40 Public Inquiry 22 September 2020. A comparison of footpath crossings in Kent local to Glebe Way crossing and one other, Pebble Lane Crossing near Maidstone

| CROSSINGS | BARRIERS | APPROACH | SIGNAGE | SIGHTLINES | CROSSING SURFACE | AUDIBLE SIGNAL |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| | | | | | | Y= heard |
| A Glebe Way CW80 Footpath | Strong metal kissing gates | Even surface- slight rise | Good Speed 60mph | E Bend W Slight curve | Level Non slip Solar lights | E =Y W =Y Whistleboard Laser beam |
| B Ham Shades Lane Footpath | Stiles strong but not to specification | Even surface -Level | Good Speed 60mph | E good W Good | Wooden gapped | E = Y W =Y |
| C Whitehall Minor road | Strong self closing gates | Even Surface- Level | Excellent Speed 80mph | E Curve W Curve | Level Non Slip | Not always heard |
| D Dog Kennel Footpath | Stiles | Angled then steps up to line | Good Speed 60mph | E Bend W Bend | Wooden gapped | Not always heard |
| E Tonford Footpath | Stiles | Uneven rough steps , last few concrete with a handrail | Good Speed 60mph | E Bend W Bend | Level non slip Solar lights highlighted | Not always heard |
| F Thannington Footpath | Strong self closing gates | Even surface level | Good No speed indicated | E Curve W Curve | Level non slip | Not always heard |
| G Pebble Lane, Cuxton Footpath | Not visited, but included because of miniature lights and a approx. 20 second audible warning | https://youtu.be/rRHg3clbmR0 Link for Pebble Lane Cuxton | | | | |

- A Glebe Way** No hesitation to use for a guided walk
- B Ham Shades Lane** Would include, but caution regarding stiles
- C Whitehall** Separate vehicular crossing with manually operated gates. Miniature lights at this crossing, therefore no hesitation in including it in a guided walk. Close proximity of a second railway line makes audible warnings confusing.
- D Dog Kennel** Concerned to use this crossing because of steps up to line, poor sightlines due to East and West bends and unreliability of audible warnings .
- E Tonford** Concern over sporadic audible warnings as sightlines are not good Did hear one warning although rather faint. Crossing itself very nice, lovely highlighted surface and with solar lights, but could not use at night because of rural situation and no lighting on approach.
- F Thannington** Concerns over sporadic audible warnings as sightlines are not too good. Over a period of one hour four trains passed of which one audible sound was heard. A second audible sound was heard after the train had rounded the bend and was within 4 seconds of arrival at the crossing

In conclusion and in consideration of the above, we submit that the Glebe way crossing is no less safe than the other six crossings apart from the two which have miniature warning lights, and it is arguably safer than some of the others. .



F. Thannington



D. Dog Kennel



D. Dog Kennel



C. Whitehall



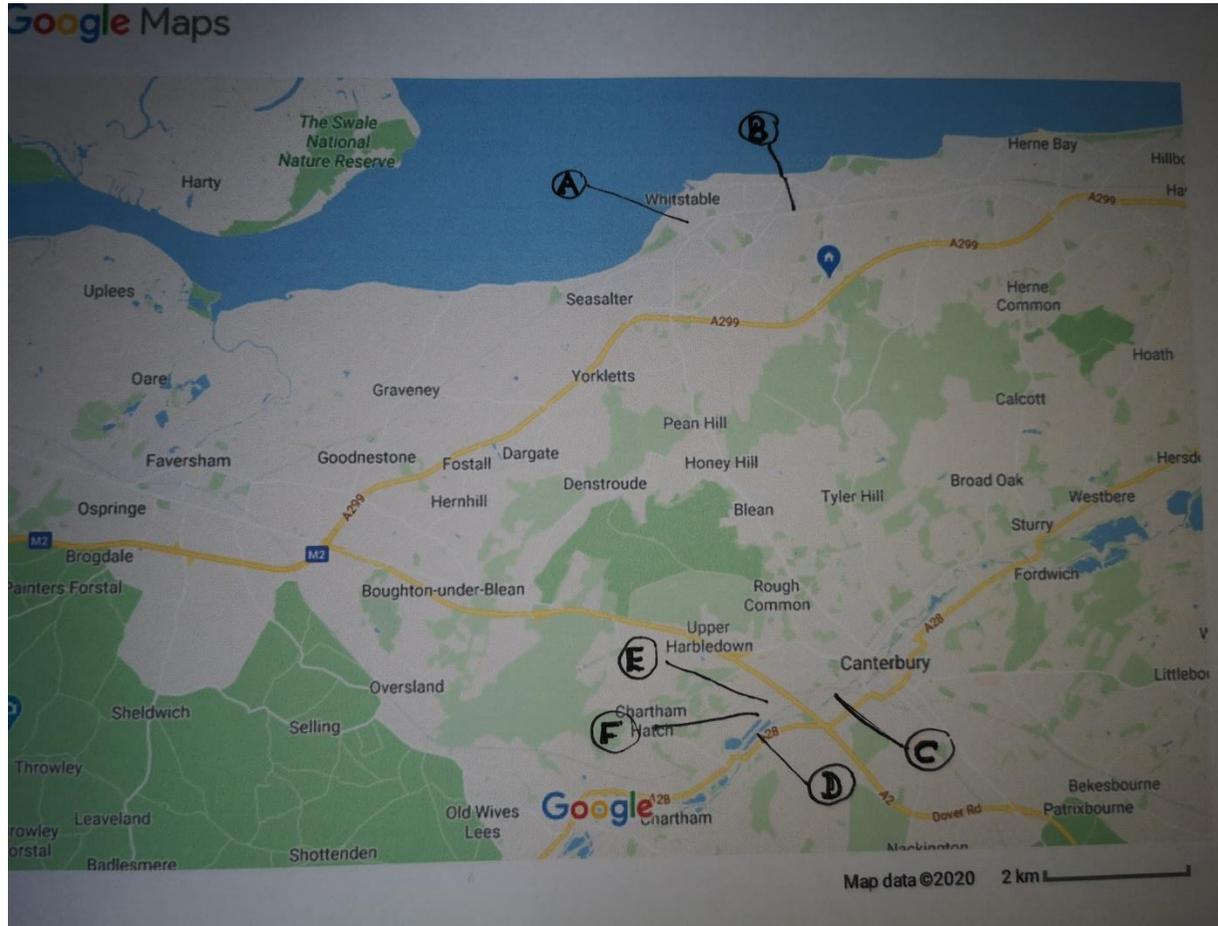
E. Tonford



A. Glebe Way

<https://youtu.be/rRHq3clbmR0> Link for Pebble Lane Cuxton

Map of crossing locations



Kath Gill



26 08 2020