

For the consideration by the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State in relation to Railway Crossing Extinguishment and Definitive Map and Statement Modification Order CW80 / CWX40

Submitted by Diane Waterson

█ Glebe Way, Whitstable

Homeowner

Email: █

I am a resident of Glebe Way and have resided there since 1993; I have also had relatives (now deceased) living at 18 Glebe Way and 49 Glebe Way since 1967 respectively with whom I had close contact in the years prior to 1993.

footpath
CW80

Glebe Way
Property
Company
Ltd
driveway



Footpath
CWX40

The above photograph shows the foot-crossing from Glebe Way to Portway, the driveway which is privately owned by Glebe W ay Property Company and the footpath CWX40

I have read the documents provided by Network Rail, the Gorrell Ward Councillors, Mr Clark, KCC, Mr Parsons, the Green Party and the Whitstable Society; and may refer to the same.



The above photograph shows the footpath CWX40 (with vegetation) to the right and the concrete driveway belonging to Glebe Way Property Company Ltd in the middle - the access to the railway crossing through the kissing gate in the distance – taken on the 7th July 2020.

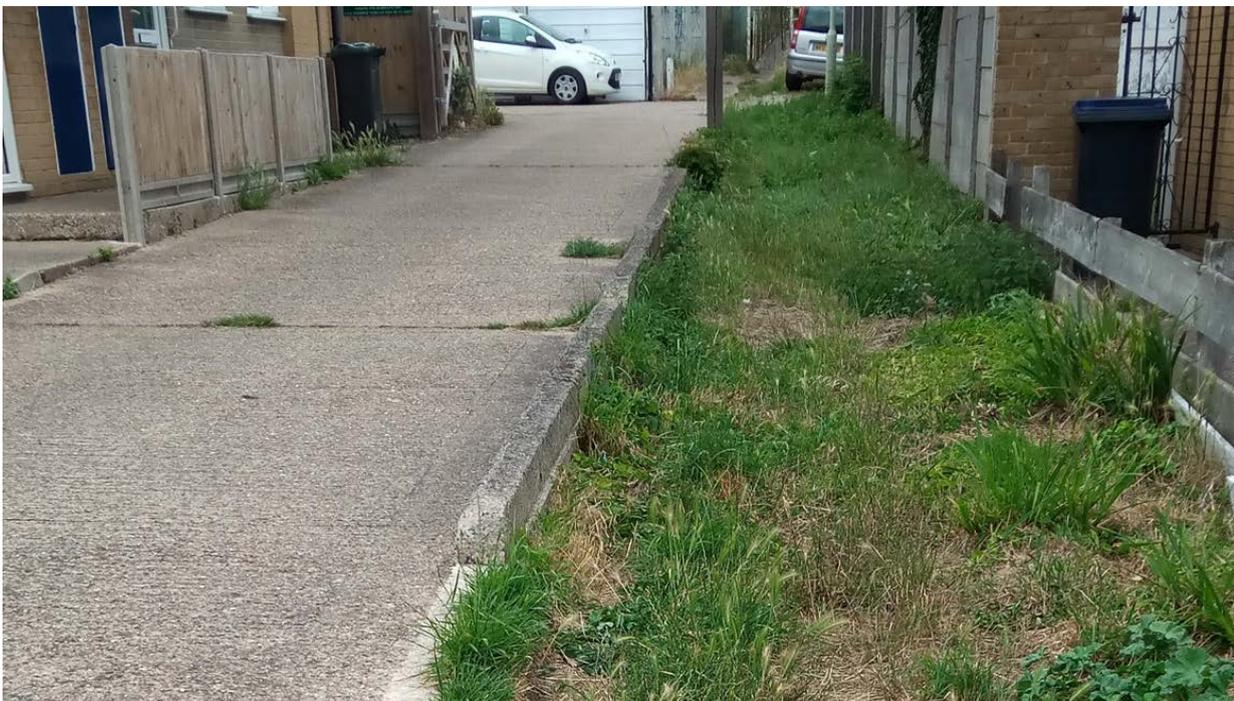
The provenance of the history of this railway crossing is not in issue; as stated by Network Rail the crossing was provided under the Herne Bay and Faversham Railway Act 1857 at a time when steam trains which were noisier and slower ran. An awareness of the attendant dangers of the crossing were acknowledged as early as 1966 in response to new residential development and the ensuing increase in the use by vulnerable users. I would suggest that this involved the building of the Glebe Way Property Company Ltd maisonettes, garages and 4 houses by Bennett and Baxter in 1967.

Alternative Routes:

I have in my possession a letter from Kent County Council dated 10th June 2009 (ref: PROW/CC/C299) stating that CW80 was first recorded as a Public Footpath in 1952 with CWX40 only joining it as a route recognised as a footpath in 2009 under S53(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Therefore, whilst I would accept that there were tracks over the pasture land that existed here 200 years ago but the Footpath itself has not been recognised for quite as long as the Whitstable Society would assert.



The photograph above was taken in April 2017 showing a vehicle parked on CWX40 and the height of the vegetation – which did not enable anyone to use it.



The footpath on the 7th July 2020

In addition the alleyway from Canterbury Road to Glebe Way is not registered to any owner; it has not been adopted by the Highways agency as a footpath and it is maintained by the goodwill of the residents who have houses 1 – 5 up its length. Therefore I cannot see how the Gorrell Ward Councillors can quote this as an ancient route; or the Green Party claim that it is a vital walking route from the beach to the town when half of the route is neither owned nor maintained.



Glebe Way Alley towards Canterbury Road taken 7th July 2020

Assuming that most people would prefer to avoid an overgrown, dirty alleyway then the routes to the foot crossing become limited from Canterbury Road, to turning down Norfolk or Suffolk Street and along Glebe Way to get to the crossing. That time in traversing the side roads would be better spent walking straight down Canterbury Road to Clifton Road or in the alternative direction to Alexander Road and over the footbridge which already exists.

Crossing Incidents:

A British Transport Police Freedom of Information Enquiry 403-12 indicates that since the 1st May 2005 there have been four deaths on the Glebe Way crossing – 3 of which were suicides and one of which was ruled as an accident. There may be those who consider that this statistical loss of life of 0.6% over 15 years as an acceptable risk but this is not all that occurs on this crossing.

I am perhaps in the unenviable position of having a kitchen window that directly overlooks the crossing; my husband has already attended 2 of the Inquests to give evidence since 1993 because he happened to be looking out of the same window and witnessed horrific incidents or the direct aftermath of that which he was powerless to stop.

In the last 5 years we have had to ring the police on at least 4 occasions because of either bikes, shopping trollies or the like being thrown on the railway line; on at least 2 occasions we have phoned because young people appeared to want to congregate on the crossing. The Police have always attended because the incidents are taken so seriously even though most of the time the culprits have left. Drugs are regularly exchanged between the kissing gates and there is an increase in stupidity over the summer holidays every year as a new group of young people are allowed to stay out later or come of age to drink alcohol.



Photographs taken on the 28th April 2019 at 17:05:28 – 17:07:29 showing three teenage girls loitering – they were on the crossing far longer than the photographs indicate as I had to find the camera and take the photos.

Modifications and Education:

Whilst there appears to be little education as to the use of these crossings and an enviable belief that “nothing will ever happen” it invariably will. I was of that age where I saw both *The Finishing Line* in 1977 and *Robbie* in 1979 which although not Public Information films certainly were horrific enough to educate the dangers of the railway; all of which have been amplified by the increase in faster technology.

I appreciate that there are modifications that could be made to the crossing; we have a sound board and there could be a light warning system in place; public money could also be spent on adding and maintaining electronic gates but all these systems can develop faults; the only failsafe in relation to this particular crossing is to close it. The crossing as I understand the evidence has a line of sight for 14 seconds for a train travelling at 50 mph. It is my understanding that in fact to comply with the safety standards the line of sight need only be for 8 – 9 seconds for an audio alarm to ring and in fact this line

sounds an alarm at 10 seconds. Ten seconds is quite a long time for someone who is fit, agile and unencumbered to react but that is not the majority of people using the crossing.

I can also appreciate the content of Mr Parsons statement submitted in relation to a Disability Impact Assessment highlighting the need for a footpath access to the footbridge that exists rather than the steps as currently in situ and I note that Network Rail (paragraph 8/6) have stated that the kissing gates on the foot crossing are not accessible to pushchairs or bicycles and also that Kath Gill on behalf of The Ramblers has stated that she would be comfortable taking a group of 30 – 40 people through the kissing gates on an organised walk having already done her own risk assessment. If all the above is correct why is it that the crossing remaining open will improve the mobility of those with disability – the gates themselves require some strength and agility to manoeuvre; why can I watch people lifting pushchairs, prams, scooters, bikes and shopping trolleys over the kissing gate or squeezing through the gap on a daily basis and why in the last 28 years have I only seen one group of walkers of any sizeable number attempt to use the crossing as part of their route.



Photograph taken 9th July 2020 of male, child and dog.

Deaths:

We should never forget the number of people for whatever reason lost their lives at this crossing and the effect that has had not only upon their relatives, but also the train drivers, the emergency crews, the railtrack operatives and those that live in this community.

In 1980 local hairdresser Audrey Randall lost her father in a terrible accident on the crossing – because he was elderly and for whatever reason either not seeing or hearing the train he was not quick enough to make it across the line.

I am aware there were deaths in October 1994 and January 1995 which I also believe were accidents.

When it was discovered on Monday 27th December 2011 that Jan Graham had taken her life my son and nephew were playing outside during the school Christmas holidays. They had to be brought in because of the attendance of the investigation and clean-up crews. They were told it was because the lady did not cross the railway safely; I certainly was not going to explain to them that she had used outside their homes to commit suicide.

Only three weeks later, Anne Nacci took her life; and then a month later Anthony Sait.

For some months we had the attendance of the Land Sheriffs and it appeared to be safer and people were acting as if they were more aware of the potential dangers.

Then on the 8th February 2015 Sacha Wheeler lost her life.

Footpath CWX40

The closure of the footpath is of secondary concern to the closure of the rail crossing but it is of interest to note that the footpath itself is not marked; it is usually overgrown with vegetation as noted above in relation to “alternative routes” and most people do not seem to know it is there. Myself and my husband had a conversation with Chris Cornell (Gorrell Ward Councillors) and two others when they visited the site and they appeared surprised to learn that the footpath was in fact the vegetated path and not the private driveway which is marked as such and in fact gated.

The closure of the rail crossing will bring with it some much awaited privacy to the owners of Glebe Way Property Company Ltd who appear to be paying maintenance for members of the public to utilise their grounds.

Photographs below taken of persons using the private driveway owned by Glebe Way Property Company Ltd on 9th July 2020 between 08:48 and 10:09 – none of the persons are resident in Glebe Way.





Concluding Statement:

I can agree with those that comment that it should be remembered that the majority of the deaths on this crossing have been suicides and that people, if determined enough, will take their own lives. However, I don't agree with being complicit in assisting them and enabling the mechanics of death.

I do petition for the closure of this crossing but in the event that this is not achieved after the Inspector has viewed the same then I would request that as many safety measures are put in place as possible to warn Network Rail, Railtrack and the Station that there is someone on the line and to warn pedestrians that a train is imminent whether or not they can see or hear it.

If I am required to give evidence in any way as part of this enquiry I am willing to do so.

Diane Waterson

9/7/2020