



Yvonne Oddy
The Planning Inspectorate

By email
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Dear Ms Oddy

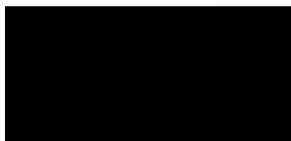
I write with reference to the Order dated 24 November 2020 by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs relating to Network Rail's application to divert Kent County Council (KCC) PROW SR49 and to replace the current crossing of the railway line by Otford Station with a 62-step footbridge. I write as the Kent County Councillor for the area, and do so as an elected representative of local residents rather than expressing a position on behalf of Kent County Council.

I wrote to the Planning Inspectorate on 19 December 2019 expressing my objections to Network Rail's proposal to revisit this issue. As I set out in my letter, KCC had rejected an earlier application, most recently in a unanimous vote of Members of the Council's Regulation Committee on 1 March 2017.

In particular, I emphasised in my letter the strong concerns of members of the local community over this proposal, as well as the fallacious claim by Network Rail that there was a safety issue involved. I set out then, and repeat now that the existing crossing has been used for many years without any safety concerns whatsoever. These points remain valid, and I wish to also express my agreement with the detailed analysis of Network Rail's Statement of Case submitted by local residents Philip Clucas, Barry Davies and Martin Williamson.

I note that you will also have received a communication from Cllr Clucas expressing concerns about the format of the Inquiry and the concern that a virtual Inquiry will act to disenfranchise a number of local residents because of poor connections and, in the case of some residents, less familiarity with the use of this technology. I understand and agree with the concerns expressed and believe that this issue would be better resolved through a locally held open Public Inquiry. In any case, I wish to be present and to speak and have registered to speak at the Inquiry commencing on 4 May and reiterate here my wish to do so.

Yours sincerely



Roger Gough
Leader of Kent County Council
Member for Sevenoaks North and Darent Valley