

Mortlake Brewery Community Group
9th January 2018

Zac Goldsmith MP

House of Commons

Westminster

London SW1

Dear Mr Goldsmith,

RE : Sheen Lane Level Crossing and Chalker's Corner

We have received copies of both Network Rail's (NR) letter to you of 26th October and Dartmouth Capital Advisors' (DCA) letter of the 8th December both on the subject of the Sheen Lane level crossing.

Our group (Mortlake Brewery Community Group - MBCG) considers that the arguments expressed in DCA's letter seriously understate the likely impact of the latest Stag Brewery proposals on the level crossing.

Network Rail control this level crossing along with 5 others in the area from its base in Wimbledon we understand it is down to just one controller to monitor all these sites and that this system of control cannot always spot hazards on the tracks once the barriers are down. Our own video surveillance demonstrates the disturbingly high frequency of near miss incidents occurring at the crossing, some of which may not and could not have been spotted by NR. Our video evidence also shows just how the near miss incidents occur when vehicular and pedestrian congestion builds up.

With more demand for vehicles and an increase in vulnerable road users (pedestrians, school children and cyclists) it follows logically that the frequency of these incidents will increase and the risks of greater numbers of reportable accidents will rise broadly in proportion.

With regard to the pedestrian capacity across the railway, the nature of the problem is clear from our video evidence. At quiet times, the marked width for pedestrians over the tracks is barely adequate for passing other pedestrians with or without pushchairs being present. At times of congestion, both in peak periods and during the long barrier closure times, the steep footbridge is the choice of last resort for all but the fit, unencumbered and most impatient pedestrians and cyclists. In theory, the footbridge capacity itself is there but, as provided, it barely contributes to the pressures at the crossing other than for some station users.

Pedestrian Demand

Our own estimates of increased movement demand due to the current Stag brewery proposals are shown below. The range in overall demand stems from the case studies of similar developments elsewhere in London. The actual demand over the crossing depends on the origins and destinations of the users of the development. On this point we note that there are two other footbridges over the railway within 500 metres of Sheen Lane, however, research into schools transport in London and elsewhere shows that secondary age pupils prefer to walk in social groups where possible and are content with taking even longer routes to stay with their friends and pass by shops. For pupils needing to cross the railway, Sheen Lane is likely to be the predominant choice particularly as a surface crossing is still available.

Current and Future Movement Demand at the Level Crossing – MBCG Provisional Forecasts

Our forecast of overall vehicle generation is, higher than that revealed by the developer's advisors as is the proportion of total traffic likely to use Sheen Lane. The "headline" increases in demand above the 2017 measured flows around the level crossing between 8am and 9am are forecast as follows:

- Pedestrians crossing the tracks at ground level and via the station footbridge – over 50% increase
- Cyclists crossing the tracks at ground level and via the station footbridge - over 65% increase
- Vehicles crossing the tracks – over 33% increase

It can be seen that the potential order of increased movement demand around the level crossing is highly significant and hence concerning. This level of demand is dictated by the proposed combination of the high residential content and the large secondary school. Reversion to the original development brief for the Stag site with the local primary school located there would mitigate this problem.

We appreciate DCA's offer to support Network Rail in finding a solution. Our view is that the responsibility for funding any solution here should rest jointly with the Stag site developer (for the housing and commercial development impacts), LBRuT/ESFA (given the large school's impact), any other developer of the station environs and Network Rail. A contribution may also be sought from the private consortium preparing the Heathrow Southern Railway Ltd. proposal.

A number of potential solutions may be envisaged but controversial or very costly interventions such as road closures, rail or road bridges are unlikely candidates. The provision of a ramped footbridge parallel to Sheen Lane, for example, may turn out to be both affordable, attractive and accessible than the current bridge but still subject to development and design challenges.

Traffic Flows and Speeds

We note that traffic modelling tests are still on-going with PBA (Transport advisers) and TfL after many, many months. Our Group has been promised a further meeting with PBA but this has yet to take place. We have been advised by TfL that a meeting would be appropriate with themselves, the developer, the Council and our Group.

More capacity provided at the Lower Richmond Road approach to the strategic junction of Chalker's Corner as is currently proposed, rather than on the main radial route (the A 316), will inevitably attract additional extraneous traffic in both peak and non-peak time periods on to the secondary/local road network (Mortlake High Street, Barnes Terrace, Sheen Lane and White Hart Lane. Without this intervention, the new traffic generated in the peak periods by the Stag proposals would actually serve as a deterrent to extraneous traffic using these local roads.

The high-level policy objectives enshrined into local planning here and in Richmond and London as a whole include the encouragement of sustainable transport solutions when development occurs. This suggests strongly that a partial "improvement" of local road traffic capacity to and from Chalker's Corner runs counter to these policy objectives. Any highways mitigation monies collectable to address this should be directed towards providing a strategic solution focusing on the A316 and possibly the A 205 routes. The opportunity to improve overall accessibility in the area should be taken by focusing entirely on increasing public transport services and improving conditions for cyclists and pedestrians.

I hope that you will see the need for an urgent discussion with the Council, the developer, TfL and Network Rail to seek to resolve the emerging problems here.

Yours sincerely,

Howard Potter Transport Planning Advisor, MBCG

and

Robert Orr Ewing, Chairman, MBCG

Copies to:

Aeneas Tole, Network Rail (for Stewart Firth)