

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda Item no. 7

TO: Regeneration Scrutiny & Performance Panel

DATE: 6th March, 2014

RE: Chase Line Electrification and Bloxwich Level Crossing

Purpose

To provide an update to the Panel on Network Rail's proposals to electrify the Chase Line Railway (Walsall – Rugeley Trent Valley) which has been included in Network Rail's Strategic Business Plan for 2014-19. Associated with this is the proposed closure of the level crossing at Reeves Street, Bloxwich. Electrification works are expected to be complete by December 2017.

Broad Lane Bridge

Works are ongoing to reconstruct the overbridge at Broad Lane, adjacent to Bloxwich North Station. Work commenced in November 2013 and the old bridge was demolished at Christmas. Work to strengthen and widen the abutments has been taking place, and the new bridge beams are now in place. The road is expected to reopen in early-May 2014. All works will be complete in early-June 2014.

Network Rail held a Public Consultation Event (drop-in session) at their site offices on Monday 24th February between 13:00 – 18:00hrs. The purpose was to update residents/interested parties with details of the works being carried out on the structure, and to provide progress updates.

There were a small number of complaints in February about noise and the removal of vegetation screening. Network Rail has responded to these complaints and their officers have confirmed that replanting will occur on the highway embankment where vegetation has been removed.

Bloxwich Level Crossing

Network Rail has proposed permanently closing the level crossing on safety grounds and in line with the electrification works. With increased train paths and a higher line speed on the electrified route, the level crossing barriers will be down for a significantly larger amount of time – typically 40 minutes per hour at peak times, as opposed to 20 minutes per hour currently.

The proposed closure would be detrimental to local vehicular access and will obviously force some traffic to re-route in the area. Network Rail has therefore acknowledged the need to fund mitigation works and work is ongoing with Council officers to identify and design improvements that will keep heavy goods traffic away from residential areas.

The following principal mitigation works have been identified: -

- Fully accessible 'footbridge' (pedestrian, wheelchair, pushchair and cycle-friendly) across the railway at the current level crossing location;

- Reconstruction of Central Drive rail bridge to remove the weight restriction and introduce an integral footway;
- Changed highway priority at Central Drive/Croxstalls Road junction to encourage traffic away from the Dudley Fields Estate;
- Improvements at the Croxdene Avenue/Elmore Green Road junction;
- Package of measures to further discourage re-routing traffic away from residential areas and encourage use of 'main road' routes.

Detailed proposals will be reported to a future meeting of the Panel. Stakeholder consultation is likely to take place in late-spring/early-summer 2014. This will enable Network Rail and the Council to identify and address the specific concerns of local residents and businesses.

Other Works

When details of further bridge works in the Borough are known from Network Rail, these will be reported to the Panel.

Recommendations (if required)

Note the contents of the report, especially the progress of works at Broad Lane Bridge.

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