

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Regeneration Scrutiny & Performance Panel

DATE: 3rd July, 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 was originally due to finish in May, but has been delayed. The road re-opened with temporary traffic signals on 22nd June. At the time of writing, work was ongoing to complete the vehicle safety barriers, landscaping and other works. The scheme is expected to be complete later this month.

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 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.

Stakeholder consultation is currently being planned and it is hoped some events can take place later this month, with others to follow after the summer holiday period. This will

enable Network Rail and the Council to identify and address the specific concerns of local residents and businesses.

The Council's Employment Growth Team has been engaged to help coordinate a business support package tailored to the needs of those businesses affected in the local area.

Central Drive, Bloxwich

As above, a full reconstruction of the overbridge is required and will commence at Christmas 2014. The bridge will be widened and the footway improved as part of the traffic mitigation package. A prior approval notice is expected imminently.

Park Street (Town Centre)

Town centre businesses have been engaged to inform them that Network Rail will have to partially reconstruct the rail bridge in Park Street in the town centre. A programme of utilities diversions will commence in autumn 2014, followed by a temporary cessation of works in the Christmas shopping period and then the main bridge works from January 2015. Pedestrian access will be kept open at all times, but vehicle access for loading will be restricted with alternative traffic management/loading arrangements in place whilst works are undertaken on two of the four bridge quadrants. A prior approval notice is expected imminently.

North Street, The Butts

A full reconstruction of the overbridge is required and will commence in autumn 2014. A prior approval notice is expected imminently.

Recommendations (if required)

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

Author

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