

10 Frenchay Road
Oxford
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4 12 2010

Chiltern Railway Inquiry
For the attention of the Inspector

Re: ARISTOTLE LANE LEVEL CROSSING

Dear Sir,

We were present throughout the public sitting of the enquiry and feel the need to offer some amplification to the evidence given by Mrs. Stella Boswell and Dr. Joseph Lee.

We are also members of the Trap Grounds Allotment Association, in our case of twenty seven years standing. Although they both spoke with great personal conviction we feel that they may have been portrayed simply as a pair of individuals and not necessarily representative of the majority of Association members.

The two are respectively a retired lady of mature years and a fit and energetic young doctor. They both agreed that the Chiltern Railways offer of mitigation i.e. an improved access over the present pedestrian bridge would be unacceptably difficult and arduous for any plot holder carrying any sort of load or in any way physically impaired.

We have currently 149 actively cultivated plots. Of these 60 are held by women and a further 20 held in the names of couples. So at least 80 women are engaged in cultivation. By and large women are less physically powerful than men. Of our overall membership at least 50 plot holders are over 60 years of age.

By definition anyone cultivating a plot must have a minimum level of physical fitness, and, indeed, keeping fit is one of the obvious benefits of horticulture. But the proposed solution of forcing members to take a half mile return detour up and down the equivalent of a two story building at a steep gradient and encumbered by heavy loads would demand a physical stamina which most of our membership would find excessive. And most such deliveries would necessitate multiple trips. Even otherwise hale and hearty men are subject to the minor afflictions of age such as backache, arthritic wrists and creaking joints. So long as a level access is available these inconveniences can be accommodated. Our oldest active member achieved the age of 92 and had managed to cross the railway without mishap for nearly seventy years.

Were Chiltern Railways, at the behest of Network Rail, to close the level crossing access there is no doubt that a number of plot holders would be forced to give up. Once a critical number of plots have gone out of cultivation there would follow a steep decline in the viability of a site as a whole. This has happened elsewhere and led to the loss of allotment sites across the country. The Chiltern Railways plan could presage the end to a well-loved and irreplaceable community resource.

The closing of the current level crossing and a refusal to allow its extension over a new line, even with the provision of a refuge and other additional safety measures, would be to ignore the truly exceptional nature of the site and jeopardise the needs and wellbeing of a significant section of our local population.

Yours sincerely,

Peter and Carol Jarvis