



Martin Salter MP,
413 Oxford Road
Reading

25 October 2007

Dear Mr Salter,

Cow Lane Bridges

I write regarding Network Rail's plans for upgrading the railway west of Reading Station, which involve closing the road under the northern-most of the two Cow Lane bridges, and constructing a new road north of the railway line leading to a new crossing of the rail line at Scours Lane.

Whilst the removal of the infamous Cow Lane bottleneck will be a good thing for cars, complete closure of the existing route will seriously impact cyclists living in the West Reading area. Currently Cow Lane provides an important route for cyclists (and pedestrians) travelling from West Reading to Caversham, the River Thames, the Rivermead Leisure Centre and the Richfield Avenue industrial area.

The proposed replacement cycle and pedestrian crossing of the railway at Wigmore lane is almost as far west as the Scours Lane crossing and is no mitigation for the closure of Cow Lane. Residents in West Reading who want to cycle (or walk) will need to take a detour of over 2km to cross the rail line at Wigmore Lane; the only alternative being a detour east to brave the IDR, a route that would be a significant deterrent to all but the traffic-hardened cyclist.

The total closure of Cow Lane at the rail bridges will be a massive blow for those residents of West Reading who, whether for environmental, health or economic reasons, choose to walk or cycle rather than drive. The rail lines through the centre of Reading are a serious impediment to accessibility across the town. In an age when we are supposed to be encouraging walking and cycling for short journeys it beggars belief that this scheme can go ahead with no apparent regard for these forms of transport.

I assume that providing an underpass or overbridge for pedestrians and cyclists at Cow Lane was considered too costly for this £560 million scheme. Whilst the station upgrade may be good news for rail commuters it comes at the expense of the people of West Reading, who will have to live with this shortsighted decision for many decades.

The Reading Cycle Campaign therefore urges you to protect the interests of your constituents and press for the inclusion of a crossing of the rail line for pedestrians and cyclists in the vicinity of Cow Lane.

Yours sincerely
For Reading Cycle Campaign

Keith Elliott
Campaign Officer