

‘Risky crossing’

Report raises level crossing to ‘high risk’ level as user numbers rise

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A Network Rail report has found the Mortlake level crossing in Sheen Lane is now a “high risk” to pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle users.

The risk scale is measured from 1 (high) and 13 (low) and Network Rail has assigned the crossing a rating of two, which makes it the fourth “riskiest CCTV crossing on the Wessex Route”.

The Wessex route covers the major commuter area of south-west London as well as from London Waterloo to the south and south-west of England.

More than 3,800 vehicles and nearly 2,400 pedestrians pass through the crossing daily and Network Rail said a high proportion of its users are “vulnerable”.

Each weekday, 349 trains pass over the crossing, with barrier down times of more than 46 minutes per hour during peak times.

The crossing had an increase in users after Thomas House School opened in 2013, and concerns have now been raised in Network Rail’s report about the potential impact of the upcoming Mortlake Brewery Development just 200 metres from the rail line.

The report states: “With associated congestion and by virtue of the development’s proximity to the crossing, pedestrians are likely to be forced into the path of vehicles on either side of the crossing when the barriers are lifted.”

The risk Network Rail identifies is not associated with the safety of the barriers but with pedestrians “as a result of error on their part” because if there is congestion people may attempt to cross when the barriers are down.



Mortlake crossing in Sheen Lane

Network Rail said deliberate misuse of the crossing is “prolific” and on average there are one to two near-misses every year.

In the report, Network Rail suggested closing the crossing as a solution, but said the “best” proposal was to build a foot bridge over the line. However, neither are judged to be feasible or cost effective.

The Mortlake Brewery Community Group (MBCG), a local community group, has called on the developer, Reselton Properties, “to think again about the high number of residential units they are planning for the site” along with the size of the site’s proposed 1,200 capacity secondary school.

The MBCG has also called on Reselton to “integrate sustainable and safe transport solutions” in their formal planning application to the council.

Francine Bates of MBCG said: “Risk levels at the crossing are already unacceptable and will only get worse if current plans for the Mortlake Brewery site go ahead.”

Reselton plans to build about 730 new homes, 200 of which are

assigned ‘affordable’.

In its most recent exhibition, the developer included a section on residents’ concerns and how it was going to address them.

It stated 267 people thought the density was “too high”.

Reselton, who bought the site in 2015 for £158 million, responded that “density has reduced” but a “higher density is needed to provide affordable housing and a generous public realm scheme”.

Also proposed for the site is a “care village” consisting of 126 assisted living units and the school will include a full-sized youth football pitch.

MBCG will also be calling on the council to “reject plans that cause greater backlogs of traffic putting users of the crossing at even more risk”.

Reselton Properties was due to put in a formal planning application in “Summer 2017” but it has yet to do so.

A spokesman for Richmond Council said: “When an application is received the applicant will be expected to address travel and access as part of the proposal, and

the impact of the proposal on the local area – particularly the road network and pedestrian environment.

“The local planning authority, in consultation with statutory consultees, will consider this as part of the planning application process.

“The council has already met with Network Rail to discuss its report and look at what options there are for improvements, including looking at the existing underutilised footbridge.”

A spokesman for the Stag Brewery project team, part of Reselton Properties, said: “As part of the planning process extensive discussions are being conducted with all statutory consultees, including Network Rail and other transport authorities.

“Members of the project team have discussed the report with representatives of Network Rail and its findings will be taking in to consideration ahead of any planning submission.

“Safety must be of paramount importance for all residents, current and future, of Mortlake.”