

BHS Bedfordshire comments on the Virtual Site Inspection Videos

I have reviewed the videos uploaded to the East Park Energy website notwithstanding the warning in REP4-114 not to rely on the versions on the Applicant's website, since I could not find them in the NSIP Examination Documents Library.

I would also note that I have been unable to download these videos so only have access to them whilst still on the website. I ask that downloadable versions are made available before the end of the Examination.

Digital survey 9a (Drone survey)

"The drone was be flown at a height of approximately 15m at a speed of approximately 10mph, following the route of the bridleway in the direction of L1 to L2. The camera would be angled down at approximately 30° from the horizontal in order to capture the features along the alignment of the bridleway."

This video shows an ariel view of Pertenhall BW26 close to Manor Farm, a farm track that would also be used as access to Site A with all vehicles entering or leaving the site via the joining track from the B660.

The video clearly shows the two pinch points that create safety concerns for equestrian users of the bridleway. These points were mentioned in both the BHS Beds RR and WR and were more fully described in our submission of suggested locations for the Inspector's site visit (PDA-026).

At 02:56 of the video, the junction of the track from the B660 with the BW can be seen. Note the width of the vehicle track marks and the way that the gravel has been swept onto the verge opposite the access track. All traffic will pass this point and it is intended that a banksman will be in position here. Some traffic may be directed to the left towards the construction up the hill to the west of the site. But the majority will turn right and head, presumably, to the main construction depot for Site A.

A banksman at this point will be able to see traffic approaching from the B660 quite easily, traffic approaching from either direction on the bridleway will only be visible from about 140m away. The safety measures proposed by the Applicant require that HGVs stop 100m away from a horse. Is this feasible?

At 3.16, the narrow width of the left-hand grass verge adjacent to the BW can be seen, and the deep ditch alongside can be identified by the darker vegetation colour at the base of the hedge. Most of the traffic will pass this point.

Should a horse be required to squeeze between a stopped (or indeed moving) HGV at this point there is, in my view, a high risk of an accident. Especially as HGV air brakes can go off at any time, even when stopped.

As I noted in my post ISH3 submission, the impact of this development and the proposed 'safety' arrangements is effectively to close the bridleway to equestrian users throughout the construction phase of Site A. This is contrary to the Applicant's stated intentions and in our view unacceptable, given that a safe diversion could be provided with cooperation from a benefitting landowner.

Digital survey 9b (360 walkover)

“Digital Survey 9b utilises the 360° video walkover methodology between the points marked as L2 and L3 on Figure 1.

This enables views from the bridleway in each direction to be considered. The camera was mounted at approximately 2.5m above ground level, to give an indication of the height of an equestrian user along this bridleway.”

The Society asked that the Inspector visited this bridleway (Bolnhurst & Keysoe BW37) for two reasons:

- To understand the visual impact of the development along a long stretch of BW; and
- To see that the lines of sight available to the proposed banksman at the crossing of BW37 with BW40 will not be sufficient for the proposed ‘safety’ arrangements to be effective

Visual impact

I would encourage the Inspector to view the video from about 1:40 to the end (5:50) with the view to the right of the track visible – this is the view that will be lost behind the most westerly arrays of Site A and, eventually, behind the trees being planted as screening. This will be permanent loss. The operator takes over 12 minutes to walk that stretch of bridleway (the video is at 3 times speed – see 3.2.1 of REP4-114) so the loss is not just a fleeting impact but a sustained one.

The Inspector heard at the ISH how valued this open view from the ridgeline is by local walkers as well as by equestrians.

The Society considers that this video supports our view that the impact of this development on this bridleway is very significant adverse and has been understated by the Applicant and its advisers.

Banksman line of sight

It is proposed that a banksman may (NB not will) be positioned at the point where BW37 and BW40 cross and that his role, no doubt amongst other things, will be to warn of equestrian users so that instructions can be given to cease non-essential noisy activity when horses are passing.

This point is at about 1:39 on the video. By revolving the video around through 360 degrees, it can be seen that

- A banksman at that point would have a reasonable view of horses arriving up BW40 from Brook End but limited views in the other three directions.
- A horse on BW37 from Pertenhall will have passed the access road banksman so fore warning in that direction might be achievable but
- Horses on BW37 from the west will not be visible until they are well along the bridleway. Indeed, at the very end of the video, the inspector will see the bridleway emerging out of the

spinney at the end of Site A – there is no possibility that a horse will be noticed by anyone before it emerges from this woodland area – even workers in that far corner of the site.

- Horses on BW40 from Swineshead will not be seen by any banksman before they have already been alongside the works from some time.

And if, human nature being what it is, the banksman should choose to position himself on the bench just before the crossing (1:29 in the video), the sight lines are even worse, particularly for BW37 to the west and BW40 to the north.

Additional spotters would be required both to the west and the north if this system of instructing work to cease is to have any possible hope of success, but the Society remains highly sceptical.

Once again, the impact is to close the bridleway to equestrian users throughout the construction phase of Site A. This is contrary to the Applicant's stated intentions and in our view unacceptable, given that a safe diversion could be provided.

Digital survey 10 (360 walkover)

"Digital Survey 10 utilises the 360° video walkover methodology between the points marked as M1 and M2 on Figure 1."

As I noted in my comments on the VSI plan, I see the value in this 360 walkover to show the Inspector what a PRoW within a relatively narrow corridor looks and feels like – this will be the long-term experience of many of the PRoW within the site, including Hail Weston bridleway 112/7 (Route A1 to A2) and the promised bridleway across site B. He will be able to compare this with the current open experience on Route 9b (and indeed many of the other videos).

The speed of this video has also been increased to 3 times for technical reasons.