



Andy Jackson
Leicestershire County Council
Glenfield
Leicester

16th September 2020

Dear Mr Jackson

Skelton Farms Cattle Enterprise

I write to follow up the Teams meeting held yesterday 15th September 2020. My wife Helen was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments and I feel that the meeting did not acknowledge the concerns that she and I have about the future of our farming business.

1. Current System

We farm a mixed farming system. Grass as a crop forms part of our rotation. The grassland is utilised by beef cattle and sheep in the winter months. We originally operated a dairy system supporting some 230 dairy cows and associated replacement females. Our son George shows a keen interest in farming and specifically in livestock and we are preparing the business for a succession to take place at some future point.

We farm on the urban fringes. We have regular interaction with members of the public and recognise the public rights of way across our holding. We have in the past had incidences of vandalism and of cattle trespass as a result. Leicestershire County Council (LCC) have assisted with placing styles and gates on public rights of way and have also acknowledged that we must padlock gates to prevent cattle trespass on to the highway and the risk of serious accident. It was LCC that placed the *public footpath* status on to the right of way that passes through our grazing area at Wold House Farm

2. Melton Mowbray Northern Distributor Road

The discussions around the proposed road have centred on the severance of the farm house and buildings in Thorpe Arnold village from the land associated with the farms to the north adjacent to the A607. From the outset we have tried to stress to the authorities that our livelihood is jeopardised by the road. You have settled on the provision of an underpass to coincide with the new road crossing the Thorpe Brook on our land. At the meeting (15.09.20) Jonathan Simons (AECOM) set out the dimensions and specifications for the proposed underpass.

We are gravely concerned that you are underestimating the impact on us for the following reasons:

- (a) our grassland cropping will need to continue to extend to the north of the road as our cattle enterprise develops
- (b) our regular movements of grazing livestock are conducted by one person moving groups of livestock from field to field to optimise grazing grass intakes. In the grazing season cattle economic performance is relative to availability and consumption of grazed grass. This must not be compromised by any restriction or hindrance on cattle movements.
- (c) the movements of members of the public via the public right of way will significantly increase due to the Bridleway status that you intend placing on it. With the new road this will become the primary route for horses, motorcycles, pedestrians who do not wish to walk alongside the new road
- (d) the convergence of cattle movements and of members of the public at the underpass will lead to potential problems. We will not be able to lock gates as we currently do. It is without doubt that gates will be left open and that cattle will escape and potentially get access to a highway causing a serious accident. In any event, the ultimate outcome will be of creating problems and stress for us as we try to keep the cattle under control and more importantly to optimise cattle growth and economic performance
- (e) Our buildings contain cattle housing and handling systems. All cattle vehicle movements are conducted from the farm yard and all veterinary inspections and treatments are conducted from the farm yard. It is essential that a free flow of cattle to and from the yard is unhindered
- (f) Notwithstanding any previous communication with Health and Safety Executive we are clear that it is deemed unsafe to expect members of the public to share an underpass with cattle.
- (g) Should we at any future time engage in breeding cattle enterprises or enterprises that include the use of bulls this safety level will be further threatened.
- (h) We apply farm yard manures to our grassland using farm vehicles
- (i) We take grass silage cuts from our grassland using farm vehicles

3. Proposals

The proposed roundabout on our land (Roundabout 4) will be installed in a cutting (below current ground level). In order that our business activities can function without fear of interference from members of the public we propose that a separate exclusive crossing be provided in proximity to this roundabout and possibly in the form of a bridge over the road. This bridge could be single track but of such dimension and specification that it will take farm vehicle traffic as well as of livestock. Such a

crossing will allow movement of livestock to be conducted at our discretion and with total certainty that public safety is not compromised and that our own cattle management systems will be guaranteed going forward. The proposed underpass would therefore revert back to a public right of way and therefore not present an opportunity for danger to public health or for cattle trespass.

We feel that our economic future viability is threatened and that this proposal allows our farming operations to be carried without the compromise that the single underpass will bring to us and our business.

We ask that you consider these concerns which although previously raised verbally were not thoroughly addressed at the meeting. We would ask that you respond via our agent Mike Greetham.

Yours sincerely

Charles and Helen Skelton

Cc

