

BENHALL & STERNFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Rail Noise at Whitearch Park, Benhall

The Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposals for noise mitigation at Whitearch Park, Benhall.

The plan for night movements of freight trains will clearly be a matter of concern for the owner and residents of Whitearch Park, and we believe their views should be of paramount importance. We know that the owner and many residents have been in direct contact with EDF, copying in the Parish Council. The Parish Council is supportive of all the views expressed, which are summarised as follows:

- It is generally accepted that night freight trains will be disruptive to sleep.
- Notwithstanding the noise level contours that you have produced, it is strongly felt that all the Park will be affected because of the otherwise quiet nature of the area.
- The Park homes are of lightweight construction, and not built to be resistant to noise and vibration.
- An acoustic barrier is essential, and strongly supported.
- The barrier must be in place before the first night freight train runs.
- The barrier must be effective. EDF must demonstrate that the material, height and length give the most efficient mitigation, and cost must not be a factor.
- It is not accepted that there will be no ground-borne noise or vibration.
- The proposal does not demonstrate that any effort has been made to reduce the number of night trains through improvements to the rail infrastructure.
- Reinstatement of the second track would allow more daytime trains and reduce the need for night trains.
- Mitigation for rail disruption must be considered on an equal footing to that being delivered for road disruption.

In addition:

The Parish Council notes that along some lengths of the line a 10 mph speed limit for freight trains will be imposed to reduce impact. One such length is one mile away at Saxmundham. This clearly begs the question whether the limit can be extended to include Whitearch Park, and what the noise reduction would be, albeit over a longer time.

The consultation document does not state whether the barrier would be temporary – just for the duration of construction. Will there be night freight train movements during the operation of Sizewell C that will require on-going mitigation.

We note that you acknowledge that further discussion with the owner and residents of Whitearch Park will be required, and the Parish Council strongly advocates that EDF arranges that as soon as possible, as contact restriction are lifted. The Parish Council would be pleased to be represented at any such meeting, if invited.