From: [redacted]
To: TRANSPORTINFRASTRUCTURE
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Objection to plans to change barriers at Meldreth Road Shepreth Cambridgesh re
Date: 22 September 2022 21:31:41
Attachments: image001.png
Importance: High

I am writing to object in the strongest possible terms to the above potential change to the current half-barrier at Meldreth Road Shepreth.

My objections group into 4 issues.

No proper consultation or local awareness

- The large majority of the village were unaware of the original 2021 consultation. There was no poster at the barrier or within the village. No information meetings were held locally. Even people living immediately adjacent to the crossing were unaware with the only exception of the house affected by land purchase.
- We are unaware of anyone in Meldreth who received a leaflet. Shepreth almost as affected is not mentioned ('NR05 Consultation Report).
- The proof of this lack of awareness is the fact that only 244 responses were made to the total scheme for all the crossings and only 31 of these related to the Meldreth Road level crossing (email from Stephen Deauville of Network Rail 10/8/22) the majority of which it seems were negative. 'NR05 Consultation Report p42 discloses that 10 of these were 'Strongly do not Support and 5 'Do not Support .
- 8.6.12 within 'NR05 Consultation Report p50 noted 'analysis in relation to the levels of support for the Meldreth level crossing upgrade noted that wider highways impacts due to increased barrier down times… resulted in reduced levels of support for the upgrade works at this level crossing. It was noted that the responses cited a large impact on the area after the upgrade of Shepreth Station level crossing which is located nearby. The issues of longer barrier down times and the potential wider highways impacts in the vicinity were notable .
- At that time despite the period of consultation having opened NO traffic or downtime data was even available on the website. In the same email Mr Deauville stated that 'traffic modelling which includes assessments of barrier down time and impact on road users from the proposed upgrade of the crossing is being finalized and will be uploaded to the project webpage in the coming days .
- Despite this point being raised in 2021 by multiple stakeholders at this second stage of the process again there is no local poster publicity meeting. The only local communication is an A4 piece of paper close to the crossing which is not visible to motorists.

A flawed analysis

- The data on the consultation website contradicts itself and it is entirely clear that **the traffic modelling is incorrect.**
- Specifically
  - 'Modelling Methodology – Level Crossing Study Daniel Bent 3/6/21 states in 5.3.4 table (page 27) an expected downtime at Meldreth road of **214 seconds**/3 mins 24 seconds.
  - 'Performance Report – Level Crossing Study Nicolas Contentin 14/6/22 states
    - 1.7.2 page 11 states that 'to inform the proposed barrier down time for the upgraded level crossing Network Rail has provided Modelling Group with the following data – a set of absolute minimum barrier closure times for each crossing with the exception of Meldreth where the times are proposed to be in line with the Shepreth crossing
    - 1.7.5 page 12 shows no current minimum barrier down time for Meldreth with an asterisk stating 'For the Meldreth level crossing as no other data is available the barrier down time has been based on the average downtime form all the other level crossings . That is stated as **169 seconds**/2 m 49 seconds. No minimum barrier down time is recorded **only** in the case of Meldreth level crossing.
    - 9.1.3 page 57 states that a 'max journey time increase of 65 seconds and 'Max average delay of 27 seconds is modelled. And that 'the modelling results show that the impacts of the upgrades on…. Meldreth level crossing [is] minimal with queue increase below 100m and average delays per vehicle below 60s .
    - This is despite figure 8.1 in the report which shows probably very large increase in downtimes.
  - 'Local Model Validation Report – Level Crossing Study Nicolas Cotentin 11/8/22 (2 months later) states
    - 8.2.4 page 35 in section on Meldreth crossing states 'Census data have been captured on Tuesday 6th of July 2021 and have been summarized in Table 8.1 and 8.2 .
    - 8.5.1 page 36 that 'The barrier down time was also captured as part of this study and was used to setup the model as shown in Table 8.5 and Table 8.6 . Table 8.5.
    - Table 8.5 'Barrier Down Time – Meldreth shows an average recorded downtime in am peaks of **49 9 seconds** and an average recorded downtime in pm peaks also of **49 9 seconds**
    - Table 8.6 'Barrier Down Time – Shepreth shows the recorded downtimes on same day at Shepreth station s double/full barrier with an average am downtime of **266 seconds** and an average pm downtime of **159 seconds**.
  - These data are contradictory as modelling is saying all of the following at the same time
    - The current downtime is ~ 50 seconds (which is correct)
    - The current downtimes at Shepreth the crossing Meldreth is 'proposed to be in line with are 159-266 seconds/avg c 214 seconds
    - That is ~ 164 seconds more than current
    - But the modelling expects a 'max journey time increase of 65 seconds and 'max average delay of 27 seconds
  - Patently this is incorrect. The core issue is that – for whatever reason – this level crossing s current average downtime of 50 seconds is unusually low. That data has been discarded the average of 169 seconds from other crossings used and thus the conclusion reached that the increase would be under 60 seconds and therefore be 'minimal .
  - 'Cambridge Resignalling Relock and Recontrol project September 2022 restates this flawed data on page 7 (the 52m queue increase 65 second journey time and 27 second average delay).

An overall INCREASE to risk

- **Minimal/nil actual risk on rail:**
  - The stated rationale for the barrier change is to reduce risk which I understand. However initially no data was available on the website on the risks tracked at the crossing.
  - The local Rail User group which records incidents at all crossings over past 14 years was aware of none.
  - It was not true as stated in 'NR05 Consultation Report pg 42 that 'information based on the findings of the ALCRM for each of the seven no. level crossings… could be viewed via Network Rails Level Crossing Study Safety page .
  - In fact it required me making a Freedom of Information request to get the information – for which thanks to Mr Deaville for this help - with information arriving on 1st September. Analysis showed that of the data tracked since March 1997
    - 19 were not related to this level crossing (but to others nearby)
    - 17 were because of equipment failure
    - 4 were unrelated to the barrier itself ie a double barrier would have made no difference
    - Of the 6 remaining incidents only **1** would have been prevented by a full barrier (a car zig-sagging).
- **A real increase to risk on road:**
  - By contrast precisely because the barriers are not down for long this crossing does not experience the speeding issues at Shepreth station as motorists either race to beat barriers or speed after a long delay.
  - Motorists entering Shepreth enter a **30mph zone at the crossing.** as it is a highly residential area
  - Motorists driving south toward Meldreth encounter a sharp blind left hand bend only just wide enough for two vehicles frequently used by agricultural vehicles and with no footpath. It has already had a number of near misses and a car roll at it c 12 months ago.
  - Risks at both will increase dramatically and should an accident occur Network Rail would have to expect a legal challenge for compensation since this is very clearly foreseeable.
- **Increased risk to the community in emergencies:**
  - 'Level Crossing Study – Modelling Methology p 15 2.8.3 states that 'the level crossing… connects Meldreth to Shepreth. The only alternative route to these destinations would be along the A10 but this is a significant detour . In fact to reach the norther end of Meldreth via the other end of the village to avoid a long barrier downtime would involve c 4 additional miles/6-7 minute drive for an ambulance or police car coming from Cambridge.
- In summary the proposed change would reduce a minimal risk on the rail but create much larger ones on the road and for the community in emergencies.

Reduction of rail use

- As a society we know we need to get out of our cars and into alternate transport. But a consequence of an increased downtime at Meldreth road together with lengthy downtimes at Shepreth Station crossing (above) and the lack of any bridge over the platform at Shepreth Station will mean some journeys at least will divert to road.
- See below table the real prospect of 5 min+ delays at one or both of the Meldreth Road crossing and Shepreth station will divert traffic to roads.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email

Best wishes

Hugh Wood
[redacted]

Even the modelling data supplied shows that downtimes of 12 MINUTES!! would be very likely with the change (as at Shepreth currently).