

CLOSING STATEMENT FROM NEWMARKET TOWN COUNCIL ON NETWORK RAIL'S PROPOSAL  
TO CLOSE THE WEATHERBY LEVEL CROSSING IN NEWMARKET 24/05/18

Warwick Hirst Newmarket Town Councillor

The Town Council speaks for the Town on this matter. 50+ letters and emails have been received from residents opposing the closing of the Weatherby Level Crossing. These are spontaneous rejections of the Network Rail plan.

This enquiry was set up by the D of T with a STATEMENT OF MATTERS dated 24/08/17 .

There are 2 key issues here .

4<a> What are the impacts on the public , businesses , and statutory undertakers .

4 <f> The suitability of diversionary routes

#### CONSULTATION

With such a huge change , consultation of the travelling public is essential . There was a consultation in BURY ST EDMUNDS . This was absolutely superficial and the resulting evidence was ignored . This took place in a remote location .97% of the respondents disagreed with the planned closure . They were concerned with the length and steepness of the alternative route and with the dangers of walking next to busy roads .

So why close this crossing ? Despite vast volumes of ' proofs ' and reports from Network Rail there are no clear statements of the reasons for this proposed closure .

Does this crossing affect the east to west rail link ? The east to west route from Felixstowe/Ipswich is a vital business link with 50+ containers on the trains , keeping 50+ HGVs off the roads . But this line turns right after Bury and does not go through NEWMARKET . The line here is single track and with the issue of the trench/tunnel and all the houses it is difficult to see any extension of these container trains through Newmarket

#### CROSSING USAGE

The Network Rail survey demonstrates what a very busy crossing this is .It is a vital means of communication between the two parts of the Town .The average daily crossing was 400 people per day with a high of 484 and a low of 324 over a 9 day period .It is used by people going to work every day ,plus adults with children and there were 26 unaccompanied children every weekday .

This survey used cctv cameras .What makes it useless is there was no origin and destination data collected and analysed .

#### SAFETY

Is this crossing safe ?

The visibility for Train drivers is 100 yards + from all directions which for a line with a 40 mph speed limit was adequate .

Network Rail use a system called ALCRM grade crossings for safety . So Weatherby has a D2 rating which means it is a dangerous crossing . But the formula is based on numbers and not actuality . So on this basis the M1 is vastly more dangerous than Newmarket high street .

The actual safety data shows how safe this crossing is .Between march 2006 and June 2017there were 8 near misses .This does not include the 2 unfortunate suicides in this periods .

Network Rail came up with some new data for this enquiry .They listed 4 incidents in 2017 . Even adding these on it is only 1 incident per year .

#### THE ALTERNATIVE ROUTE IF THE CROSSING WAS CLOSED .

I did cover this in detail in my original proof .This covered the impact on a wide range of groups .

Parents with children and with buggies

School age children often unaccompanied

Residents working and shopping .

Cyclists

In fact all the people who you expect to live and to travel from one half of a town to the other half

As I made very clear in my proof this alternative route is very dangerous and exposes residents to fatal outcomes .

I was questioned on the NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK .This is referred to as a key criteria in the STATEMENT OF MATTERS

Overall the Town Council opposes this closure and so do the Residents affected .

Network Rail want to stop several hundred of people a day from using this crossing but have utterly failed to show any good reasons for doing this

Warwick HIRST 24/05/18