

PUBLIC INQUIRY

APPLICATION BY NETWORK RAIL UNDER TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992

PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION) ORDER 200X

OBJ/12-CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

PROFESSOR GEOFFREY GRIMMETT

C04 NO NAME NO. 20, MELDRETH

INTRODUCTION

1. I have been the Professor of Mathematical Statistics at the University of Cambridge since 1992, a continuous, uninterrupted period of 25 years. In addition to this, since 2013 I have been the Master of Downing College, at the University of Cambridge, a continuous uninterrupted period of 4 years.
2. My address is The Old Manor, 108 High Street, Melbourn, Royston, Herts (SG8 6AL). I have lived there since October 1994, a continuous uninterrupted period of 23 years.
3. I am submitting my Proof of Evidence as a Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) witness as a local user of the crossing C04 No Name No.20, Meldreth Footpath No. 10.

GENERAL POINTS

4. I have personally had very little contact with Network Rail (NR) throughout the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) Application process. My only real interaction with the process to date was lodging my objection letter to the Minister for Transport in objection to the proposed closure of C04.

5. In addition, I lodged a Freedom of Information (FOI) request with NR on 11/08/2016 to request information on their plans for the PROW Network around Meldreth. In their response to me, NR wrongly asserted that the proposed extinguishment of rights on this level crossing were only concerned with a Private Right of Way. Clearly this was a mistake, as Footpath number 10 which crosses C04 is very much a Public Right of Way and is recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement as such. I responded to NR with the said correction but was never vindicated with a reply.
6. My personal perception of NR is therefore limited to these brief interactions. However, I would assert that they have little understanding of or regard for the value of the PROW Network to local users.
7. In addition, I would submit to the Inquiry that the provision of information by NR, as to their overall plans and agenda, has been insufficient and that the way in which of notices of their proposals were posted on site has been inappropriate as notices have been posted so as to be partly illegible to the users.

USE OF FOOTPATH 10 AT C04 NO NAME NO.20, MELDRETH

8. I have been using the Level Crossing C04, No name no.20 at Meldreth since 1994 as part of a circular jogging route. The route I take runs from the village of Melbourn where I live, which is situated to the South-East of Meldreth. I generally follow a route along the byway which runs from Melbourn Bury to Station Road or just follow Station Road from Melbourn. I then follow Footpath No. 10 in a westerly direction across Crossing C04, and proceed on to Chiswick End, Meldreth. I estimate that 25% of the time I continue due south-west along Byway No. 11 and Footpath No. 13 as part of a longer route via Mettle Hill.
9. Depending on weather and workload, I run along this route about 3 times per week.

OBJECTIONS TO NETWORK RAIL'S PROPOSALS

10. According to data provided by NR under my FOI request, there have been no safety-related incidents at this crossing in the last 10 years. I perceive the risk that ensues as a result of this crossing to be zero. The risk cannot be reduced further.
11. Indeed the current proposal decreases the safety of users of Footpath No. 10. It displaces them onto a busy two-way road. It requires them to traverse the steep railway bridge on a narrow footpath, which is only one metre wide, and to enter an industrial area with regular heavy and light traffic. The incline of the bridge will pose physical difficulty for some pedestrians and children. I am personally concerned that as I get older traversing such a route will become significantly more difficult. There is in addition doubt over the junction between the field path and the road footpath at the south-east point of the bridge crossing, where the current infrastructure reduces the width to around 0.70m.
12. The distance from one side of the crossing to the other will, via the road route, be notably longer (by 480 metres according to the NR plan of March 2017 (reference MMD-367516-C04-GEN-003). The closure of this crossing would be a loss of amenity to the users of the rights of way network around the beautiful environs of the local villages.
13. I surveyed the number of vehicle movements on the road bridge during a random minute period at 16:45pm on 06/04/17. During this time there were 13 vehicle movements on the road. The bridge footpath is too narrow to permit the safe passing of individuals, pushchairs, etc, in such traffic conditions.
14. The effect of NR's proposals is to shift risk from the rail network to the road network, and in so doing to increase the level of risk for pedestrian users.
15. I submit to the Inquiry that NR's reasons are confused and based on spurious logic. NR are asserting that closing a crossing that manifests no risk, has relatively limited usage, and with minimal maintenance will help to achieve their targets of improving

the safety of level crossing users and delivering a more efficient and reliable railway.
I submit that this closure will have zero impact on these targets.

16. There is inevitably some cost involved in maintaining any crossing. Having watched this crossing for over 23 years, I estimate that cost to be very tiny indeed. The stiles and the crossing itself are basic and elementary, they receive very little if any maintenance.

IMPORTANCE OF PROW NETWORK TO THE MELDRETH AREA

17. I submit to the inquiry that the PROW Network is immensely important to the public and should be protected and maintained unless a reasonable and balanced proposal which adequately mitigates the effect on public enjoyment of the crossing closure is put forward. The current proposal falls well short of doing this.
18. Personally, I value this specific route greatly and would miss it very much if it were to be closed.

CONCERNS OVER PROVISION OF INFORMATION AND NOTICE PROVIDED BY NR

19. Generally, I submit to the inquiry that the provision of information by NR has been insufficient throughout a protracted process that has put many individual, independent objectors off following through with their objections.
20. More specifically, there has been a serious issue of circulation of the notices provided by NR.
21. The notices have been nailed to planks of wood at either end of the crossing, with no obvious attempt made to draw the attention of users to them. The notices have been printed double sided and nailed to posts, making the back of them unreadable due to the wooden plank being in the way.

22. The notices themselves are difficult to understand and to read. In addition, they do not seem to be up to date and indeed do not show the most current plans for the crossing

Signed 

Dated 