

**PUBLIC INQUIRY**  
**APPLICATION BY NETWORK RAIL UNDER TRANSPORT AND WORKS**  
**ACT 1992**

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

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**OBJ/12-CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

**WILLIAM HUNT**

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

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**INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is William Hunt. I have lived at 32 Cambridge Road, Ely (CB7 4HL) for 30 years since 1987. I have lived within 6 miles of Ely for my entire life with the exception of 10 years between 1977 and 1987.
2. I have been a County Councillor for Cambridgeshire since 2005; a continuous uninterrupted period of 12 years. I was elected to a fourth term in May 2017. My division is Soham South and Haddenham which includes Wicken, Stretham and Little Thetford. I have only recently been involved in Soham since May 2017, when the division boundaries were redrawn.
3. I have also been the East Cambridgeshire District Councillor for Stretham Ward, including Stretham, Little Thetford and Wilburton since 2007.

4. I will be making my objections to Network Rail (NR)'s Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) Application in my role as a Councillor pursuant to their proposed closure of the public footpath crossings at C03 West River Bridge, Little Thetford and C20 Leonards, Soham.

## **GENERAL POINTS**

5. Ely is in the process of growing substantially over the next few years with new developments for over 3,000 homes proposed. The new Ely Bypass to the North of Ely will provide an additional link across the area and I therefore submit to the Inquiry that it is now more important than ever to preserve and enhance its public right of way (PRoW) network, not diminish it.

## **SITE SPECIFIC POINTS**

### C03 West River Bridge

6. Many of the paths in this area are on the river banks, which are always dry. This proposal affects Public footpath No. 7 Little Thetford, which runs along the flood bank from the A1123 to the footbridge at the Fish and Duck Marina, a distance of just over a mile. At this point one can cross the River Great Ouse and head back west into Stretham, a distance of about 1.5 miles; north towards Ely (about 3 miles) or on towards the path network around Wicken and the National Trust property of Wicken Fen.
7. My principle concern is not so much the closure of this crossing as the need for a solution to ensure that NR's proposed diversion route for this footpath can be used by walkers at all times of the year.
8. NR are proposing to divert users from the level crossing on top of the bank to a route down the bank and under the bridge. The river banks are designed to stop flooding in an area that is in some cases lower than sea level. Therefore, water is retained between the

two flood banks, usually in the river, controlled by the sluices at Denver and Earith. The banks are about 3 metres high.

9. There are times when the river floods over to the banks and the route becomes very wet. The water rises by about a foot or two in winter and it would be extraordinarily difficult and potentially dangerous for people to use. Even when it isn't flooded, it gets very damp and muddy in the area under the bridge.
10. Therefore the proposal of NR to provide a stone surface under the bridge is not sufficient to meet users' needs. I think there needs to be a better solution like a pontoon erected to allow passage even when the river is in flood.
11. The new Ely bypass to the north will provide an additional link in the form of a cycle-track and footpath alongside the railway line. The bypass plans are at Appendix 1 to my statement. This will make it more attractive for people to go up the east side of the River Cam, up to the bypass and then back down south on the west side of the Great Ouse, then across the river over the footbridge.
12. The path is a promoted route called the Ouse Valley Way and there was a considerable investment in a new footbridge at the Fish & Duck marina in the late 1990s. The new paths arising from the bypass will be likely to increase the popularity of the footpath, as the river paths are long and the new paths will provide shorter options. There is also a new Community Land Trust Development on the east side of Stretham. Plans include a new footpath down to the Old West River and Public Footpath No. 15 Stretham. It will mean that walkers can avoid the busy A1123 with a nice off-road circular walk. All of this will mean only an increase in the use of the PRoW network in this area, including the path concerned.
13. In my view as the local Member, this path should be preserved and enhanced. I do not wish to see it diminished or made more difficult to use. Unless there is a satisfactory solution on the proposed alternative to ensure that people can use the path during times of flood, then the County Council has to maintain its objection.

### C20 Leonards

14. I have only recently been involved in Soham since May 2017, when the division boundaries were redrawn and the previous County Councillor (CClIr) James Palmer became the Mayor of the new Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and was not able to continue as the local County Councillor. Therefore I have a limited knowledge of this matter myself but I am aware of the local opinion on the proposal which is that the path should not be closed.

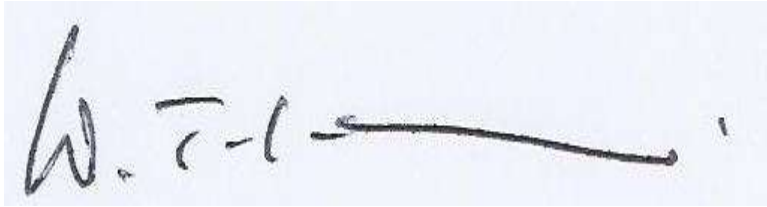
15. James Palmer is a local man and was originally a dairy farmer and the local milkman. He has provided a letter to the Inquiry of continuing support for keeping the crossing open, which he has asked me to read out. It is at my Appendix 2. He has asked me to stress that this is something that he is passionate about keeping open. It would clearly be unfortunate to lose a crossing which is so well used. I have walked the route and it seems to me that the proposals would add an increased cost of maintenance on the public purse. As a Member I am naturally concerned by this.

### C23 Wells Engine

16. Public Footpath No. 23 Ely is a double promoted route, the Fen Rivers Way and the Ouse Valley Way; people is often walk it all the way from Cambridge to Ely.

17. The proposal would divert walkers from crossing the railway on the river bank to a route down the bank and under the bridge.

18. The diversion route is in a high risk flood zone. There has been insufficient data provided by NR as to the risk of flooding of the route. The Environment Agency have suggested that warning signs for users in times of flooding. CCC does not have any system in place for warning users of floods. CCC are therefore changing this objection from being a holding objection to a full objection.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. T. L.' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Signed .....

A handwritten date in black ink, reading '29th October 2017'.

Dated .....