

OBJ/026 – C20 – 1 Proof of Evidence C20 Leonards Crossing

THE PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (CAMBRIDGESHIRE LEVEL CROSSING  
REDUCTION) ORDER

PUBLIC INQUIRY: 28 NOVEMBER 2017

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT REFERENCE: TWA/17/APP/03

OBJECTION BY **THE RAMBLERS** TO CLOSURE OF C20 LEONARDS  
CROSSING, PARISH OF SOHAM

PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF **JILL TUFFNELL** OF 62 BECHE ROAD,  
CAMBRIDGE CB5 8HU

### **Introduction**

1. My name is Jill Tuffnell and I have been a resident of Cambridge since 1974. I joined Cambridge Rambling Club in 1976 and have been a member of the Ramblers for around 30 years.
2. This statement and accompanying appendix<sup>1</sup> with photographs supplements the objection to the closure of Leonards Crossing, C20, already submitted on behalf of The Ramblers. It is primarily concerned with evidence to show the total inadequacy of the alternative pedestrian route proposed by Network Rail.

### **Leonards Crossing**

3. Network Rail states (page 79 of NR SoC) that “the alternative route is not significantly longer than the current route and Network Rail considers that is a suitable and convenient replacement for existing users.” Length is not the only consideration when evaluating an alternative route.

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<sup>1</sup> See OBJ/026 – C20 – 2 – Appendix to Proof C20.

4. Network Rail claims that for walkers approaching from Wicken — where the Leonards Crossing currently provides a direct, pleasant route into Soham village — it is practical to take Soham FP 114 from Bracks Drove (Byway 113) to a new footpath linking north to meet Mill Drove at TL 588726. The proposed diversion is an unattractive dog-leg, removing the sense of a direct, convenient route.
5. On Friday 22 September 2017 I attempted to walk this section of path. FP114 leaves Bracks Drove at TL 584721 (NE direction). At this point there is a dense 10 foot high hedge (see photo 1). I explored the field behind the hedge, only to find a deep ditch. The cross-field footpath from TL 584721 to the buildings on Mill Drove at TL 588724 is not available; the field is ploughed with no reinstatement (see photo 2). I have never seen this path reinstated, despite there being a clear legal requirement for the footpath to be left uncultivated or to be reinstated after ploughing. There is clearly no regard for providing useable rights of way.
6. I then tried to access FP114 from Mill Drove, where it appears to leave SW at TL 588724. There is no signpost or waymark; the yard is full of buildings and only accessed through a gate which is clearly regularly padlocked. I felt too intimidated to proceed further, even if there is technically a right of way here (see photo 3).
7. Network Rail proposes an extension to FP 114 around fields west of Mill Drove to join the Mill Drove level crossing at TL 588726. Currently there is no

clear field edge as there are heaps of straw etc. dumped here. There is a flooded area which may be a regular problem (see photo 4, taken in the field just west of Mill Drove, looking east at TL 588726).

8. The Mill Drove level crossing at TL 588726 has lights and half barriers. However, Mill Drove crosses on the diagonal (see photo 5, looking north) and a much wider stretch of track has to be crossed by walkers than at Leonards, which is at a right angle (see photo 6, looking east). As there are only half barriers there is nothing to stop a pedestrian from crossing the line, even when the lights are on. Indeed, given the wide stretch of the crossing, some people could just take a chance. This crossing is quite close to a bend in the track from the north and has much poorer sightlines than Leonards (see photo 7). Pedestrians have to share the crossing with vehicular users. Mill Drove and the crossing are subject to the National Speed Limit (60 mph).
9. Whilst I was investigating Network Rail's proposed diversion an HGV came along Mill Drove, illustrating how vehicles can prove just as dangerous as trains to walkers (see photo 8, taken at TL 588725, direction north). The vehicle completely covered the track, causing pedestrians to move onto the verge.
10. I looked at the proposed footpath diversion from just north of Mill Drove crossing eastwards; there is a deep ditch and a hedge, so it is impossible to see what is planned (see photo 9, taken looking east at TL 588726). It should also

be noted that fields to the east of Leonards crossing carry a 'Private — no right of way' sign, backed up by strands of barbed-wire.

11. Trains using this line regularly sound a horn when approaching a level-crossing. This means that trains can usually be heard several minutes before they arrive, because there are many level crossings in Soham. No trains observed travelled fast. In a 40 minute period I observed 4 freight trains and one passenger train.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

JILL TUFFNELL

20 OCTOBER 2017