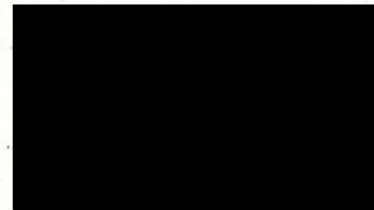


OBJ/16



25 April 2017.

The Secretary of State for Transport,
c/o Transport and Works Act Orders Unit,
General Counsel's Office,
Department for Transport,
Zone 1/18,
Great Minster House,
33 Horseferry Road,
London,
SW1P 4DR.

Dear Sir,

NETWORK RAIL SUFFOLK LEVEL CROSSING REDUCTION ORDER
CLOSURE OF S22 – WEATHERBY (NEWMARKET PARISH) PERMISSIVE CROSSING

The closure of this crossing is ridiculous and Network Rail's application to do so should be rejected.

This crossing is an important link between a growing residential area and the principal shopping area of Newmarket – a fact that Network Rail does not appear to have taken into consideration in its assessment. Network Rail's own survey showed that 405 pedestrians used the crossing on a Monday and an average of 506 over the weekend. It is NOT therefore some minor rural crossing, the closure of which will have minimal impact. Furthermore it currently links a major car park to the local football/sports ground so these numbers would be dwarfed if the survey had been taken on the day of a popular fixture.

Network Rail has also failed to take account of future housing development in the area. Its official map shows a large area of white space implying that few households will be affected by the closure, but part of the white area is used for allotments, which, in the past, have been identified for potential residential development.

What is the point of Network Rail's public consultation if it then ignores the results? According to its own statistics 97% of responses disagreed with the proposals. Attendance at its presentation events would have been significantly greater if Network Rail had had the courage to hold them in Newmarket instead of Bury St Edmunds, 13 miles away. It failed to send a representative to a public meeting of the residents with local MP, Matthew Hancock, held at the crossing.

Then there is the matter of safety. According to Network Rail's risk model (ALCRM) the crossing has a score of D2, which is considered high risk. In its submission, it cites that there have been 8 near misses and 1 fatality (accident) between 2011 and 2015, the latter was regrettably a suicide. Considering the number of people, who use the crossing on a daily

basis, 8 near misses in 4 years is not a surprise, bearing in mind there are no visual or audio warning aids currently installed. Also, visibility in both directions is good, and, although Network Rail says the line has a line speed of 40 mph, trains are actually travelling a lot slower as they are either approaching or leaving the nearby Newmarket Station, which may have prompted pedestrians to cross the line within sight of the train, thus triggering a near miss report. The older locals find Network Rail's new found concern for safety over one line laughable because they had to negotiate two main lines and seven sidings at a time when trains were more frequent and the sidings in active use.

Mention is also made in Network Rail's submission that there is no public right of way at this crossing. This is true, but there should have been and it is only an accident of history that there is not. Unfortunately, the crossing is on the boundary between Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and confusion between the two authorities meant it was never registered as a right of way. So please, do not let the fact that it is still a permissive crossing detract from the importance attached to the crossing by its users.

Finally, I append a copy of my response to the 'benefits' claimed by Network Rail to result from the closure of the crossing.

PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW THIS CROSSING TO BE CLOSED.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. M. SMY

RESPONSE TO NETWORK RAIL'S CLAIMED BENEFITS OF CROSSING CLOSURE

In its proposal Network Rail claim that closing level crossings can help bring about a number of benefits.

- a. **Improve the safety of level crossing users –**
you are not offering any improvements, just closure
- b. **Deliver a more efficient and reliable railway –**
well keeping the crossing open is not going to affect this because the passenger trains have to travel slowly at this point as they approach or leave Newmarket station as do the freight trains otherwise the vibration would cause serious damage to adjacent residential properties; not to mention the speed restriction imposed by the nearby Newmarket tunnel.
- c. **Reduce ongoing operating and maintenance costs –**
the public benefit of the crossing outweighs the minimal costs to Network Rail.
- d. **Reduce delays to trains and pedestrians –**
the trains are not delayed by this crossing for the reasons given in b above; as for pedestrians they do not mind the short wait while a train passes compared to the lengthy detour you have suggested.
- e. **Improve journey time reliability for all railways ... and other users –**
this crossing has no impact on train journey times or reliability for the reasons given in b above, but its closure would have a significant, detrimental impact for pedestrians.