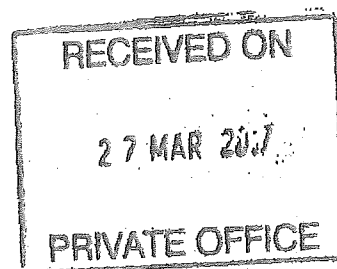


HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA



Paul Maynard MP
Under Secretary of State
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

RIC

Your Ref: MC/191296

22 March 2017

Dear Paul,

Weatherby Level Crossing

Thank you for your letter of 16 March about Network Rail's proposal to close the Weatherby level crossing in Newmarket.

The decision to close the pedestrian crossing does rest with the Department for Transport (DfT) as Network Rail inform me they were submitting an order to close the pedestrian crossing to the DfT this month. I reiterate there is no case to close the level crossing as there is no evidence of any accidents and I would be grateful if you could intervene in this case.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours ever,

PS. We discussed - very
grateful for your help on
this

Working for West Suffolk

London: 020 7219 7186

www.matthewhancock.co.uk
matthew@matthewhancock.co.uk
[@matthancockmp](https://twitter.com/matthancockmp)

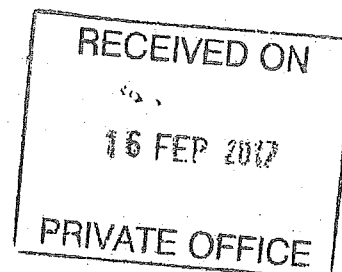
Suffolk: 01638 576 692

THE RT HON MATT HANCOCK MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA



Paul Maynard MP
Minister of State
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Rd
London SW1P 4DR

RIC

7 February 2017

Dear Paul,

Weatherby level crossing, Newmarket

I am writing to ask for your help on a local matter. Network Rail propose to close Weatherby pedestrian level crossing in the middle of Newmarket which has been in use for over sixty years. It is causing uproar locally.

I understand that Network Rail plan to submit an order to the Department of Transport in March 2017 to close Weatherby pedestrian level crossing permanently. I am not against closures in principle, but this one has been mishandled by Network Rail who have not fully examined all options or kept me properly informed.

There is no evidence of any accidents, and no case for the huge upheaval the closure would course. I am not asking for cash – I am merely asking for inaction.

I enclose correspondence with Network Rail. I would be grateful if you could investigate this matter and block proposals to close the level crossing. I am of course happy to discuss.

Yours ever,

Working for West Suffolk

London: 020 7219 7186

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Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Member of Parliament for West Suffolk
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

Route Managing Director
Network Rail
One Stratford Place
Montfitchet Road
London
E20 1EJ

0203 3562532

16 January 2017

Dear Matt,

Re: Weatherby level crossing, Newmarket

Thank you for your letter of 3 January regarding Weatherby level crossing in Newmarket.

I am sorry that we were not able to attend the meeting in December. Unfortunately, the project team were committed to another meeting on the date suggested. We would be happy to set up another meeting at the crossing and we are working on a date with local councillors.

As you know we are looking at closing the crossing and diverting users away from the railway and onto an existing footway alongside the road, some of which is segregated from vehicles by barriers.

We work hard to manage the safety risks at each of our crossings and Weatherby is no exception. Closing level crossings and diverting to alternatives will make the railway safer by removing the point where people can come into contact with trains. The closures will also help improve reliability and will facilitate separate future developments for faster and more frequent train services.

To be clear, this crossing is not a public right of way, although it has been used by residents for some time. At present we are not funded to provide any alternative structure at the crossing, such as a footbridge. There is limited land available, most of which is outside our control, and we would expect any new bridge to be fully accessible, making the route via the ramp a similar length to the currently proposed diversionary route, only with steeper gradients. However, we would be happy to enter into discussions with any third party who would be willing to fund this.

We have explored alternative solutions with West Suffolk Council, which include an alternative footpath next to the railway line. The current estimate for that work is circa £600,000. This is largely due to the relocation of a Network Rail operational

telecommunications mast and its associated equipment. It is also not feasible to install miniature stop lights at this location due to the proximity of the station.

With regard to putting the public in more danger, we have undertaken a Road Safety Audit, which have not flagged any concerns with our proposed diversionary route. The fact that the crossing is near a school gives up even greater cause for concern. If the crossing were closed, it would be adequately fenced to stop people trespassing onto the railway line.

We understand that this is frustrating for some local residents but we do intend to submit this closure as part of our Transport and Works Act Order for Suffolk. It will then be a decision for an independent inspector as to whether the diversionary route proposed is suitable, and the final, decision rests with the Secretary of State. We will be required to demonstrate that we have looked at all the options and the alternative route we have proposed is an adequate alternative and we have mitigated against any concerns.

We will continue our dialogue with the council and will be in touch to let you know when we have a date for the next meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R Schofield'.

Richard Schofield
Route Managing Director (Anglia)
Network Rail



Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP
Member of Parliament for West Suffolk
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

Route Managing Director
Network Rail
One Stratford Place
Montfitchet Road
London
E20 1EJ

15 November 2016

Dear Matt,

Re: Weatherby level crossing, Newmarket

Thank you for your email requesting an update on the potential closure of Weatherby level crossing in Newmarket.

As you are aware we have been consulting on this crossing as part of our level crossing reduction programme for the Anglia route. We recognise that there has been significant feedback on this crossing during the two rounds of public consultation that we have held.

As a result of feedback from the first round of consultation we sought a meeting with Suffolk County Council and Forest Heath District Council. We have a clear idea of their objections to our current proposals and we are working together to try and look at alternative diversionary routes and solutions.

You are also aware from our previous correspondence that Weatherby level crossing is not a public right of way, and Network Rail would therefore be within its rights to close the level crossing at any time. However, we have included this crossing in the formal consultation process in order to have a robust dialogue with the public and to better understand if there is anything further we can do.

We have had safety concerns at this crossing for some time. There have been 8 recorded near misses and 3 fatalities (all of which were non-suspicious deliberate acts) at this crossing. We firmly believe that closing this crossing and removing the point at which people come into contact with the railway is the safest option. However, we appreciate that some level crossings are important for connecting communities and as such we will always look to find an appropriate alternative crossing point and diversionary route.

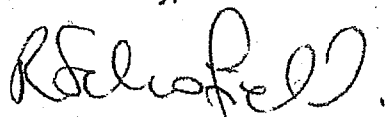
We have considered other safety improvements at the crossings including locking gates. However, a crossing with locking gates cannot function unless it is monitored in a signal box and has protecting signals to stop approaching trains until the crossing is proved clear. The electro-magnetic locks required are often unreliable and prone to vandalism. Miniature Stop Lights (MSLs) have also been suggested but these are not suitable close to a station, as train speeds can vary, and the sighting of approaching trains is sufficient. Whilst some improvements to the kissing gates could be made, these would be aesthetic rather than a significant improvement to the risk at the level crossing. Although a formal feasibility study

has not been undertaken, Network Rail does not own sufficient land at the level crossing to provide a bridge, either ramped or with steps only.

We intend to submit the order for consideration by the Secretary of State in spring 2017. Up until that point no final decisions will be taken. We will continue to work with local stakeholders. We will keep you up to date with our plans ahead of the submission of the order.

If you have any further questions, please contact Hannah Briggs, Public Affairs Manager (Anglia) on hannah.briggs@networkrail.co.uk or 07850 407 340.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Schofield'.

Richard Schofield
Route Managing Director (Anglia)
Network Rail

