

**Transport and Works Act 1992 – Application for the proposed Network Rail  
(Suffolk Level Crossing Reduction) Order  
Ref: TWA/17/APP/04/OBJ/61**

**S22 - Weatherby crossing, Newmarket**

Statement of Case objecting to the above.

I have lived in Newmarket since 2002 and usually travel around the town on foot or by bicycle, using the Weatherby crossing when this is the most direct route. I have used the crossing often during the last 9 years to visit the family's allotment which is located close to Cricket Field Road.

Land use planning decisions are guided by the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) (NPPF) which sets out the Government's planning policies for England. At its heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Section 4 deals with transport and amongst other things highlights the role sustainable transport can have in promoting wider sustainability and health objectives. Forest Heath and East Cambridgeshire District Councils as the local planning authorities are required to make decisions in accordance with the NPPF and the policies in their development plans. These include policies which seek to promote walking and cycling rather than use of the private car, especially for short journeys.

Closure of the Weatherby crossing would result in the loss of a very well used path which connects the New Cheveley Road area with the town centre and gives convenient pedestrian and cycle access to the football ground and Cricket Field Road allotments for people who live north of the railway line. The distance from the top of Cricket Field Road at its junction with New Cheveley Road to the High Street via the Weatherby crossing, Park Lane and Sun Lane is 800 metres (0.5 mile). If the crossing is closed the shortest alternative would be under the railway via The Avenue and Warrington Street which is almost 50% longer. The other route via Cheveley Road and Old Station Road is more than twice as long as via the Weatherby crossing.

Removal of a short, convenient route to and from the town centre would deter some people from walking or cycling, resulting in an increase in the use of cars for short journeys thereby adding to traffic congestion in the town and compromising highway safety. This would be contrary to Government policy. The longer distance of the remaining alternative route may for some elderly and other less mobile people without the ability to drive mean the difference between being able to access the town centre independently or not. This could lead to isolation and loss of well-being. Closure of the Weatherby crossing could reduce the number of children walking or cycling to school or other activities, either accompanied by an adult or independently, and increase the number being driven.

I believe that Network Rail's case that the Weatherby crossing is unsafe is exaggerated. On Mondays to Saturdays there are 17 passenger trains in each direction between 0600 and 2300, an average of 2 per hour. Those from Cambridge generally arrive at Newmarket station a few minutes after the hour and those from

Bury St Edmunds at about quarter past. There are, therefore, almost 50 minutes in every hour when no passenger trains pass through Newmarket. On Sundays the passenger service is reduced to 8 trains in each direction between 0830 and 2330 hours, an average of about 1 per hour. Even if the passenger service is increased to half hourly there would only be 34 trains per weekday or an average of 4 per hour.

The Weatherby crossing is only 400 metres (0.25 mile) from the station and passenger trains travel slowly approaching or leaving it. Few goods trains, which do not stop at the station, use this part of the network which has a line speed of 40 mph. Visibility from the level crossing up and down the tracks in both directions is very good. I believe that the near misses which occurred in 2017 described in Network Rail's Statement of Case are much more likely to happen on the road network.

#### Conclusion

I do not believe that the Weatherby crossing is an unacceptable danger to pedestrians or rail traffic. If the Secretary of State is minded to approve the Order in relation to the Weatherby crossing it should be conditional on a bridge being provided in its place which is accessible to all who can currently use the crossing. This would in my opinion be an acceptable alternative.

Helen Wass

21 December 2017